

The 29th Infantry Division

One of the biggest controversies post war over the poor equipping of US troops was that of the 29th Division's replacement of its M60 tanks with the M48. The 29th was unusual in that it was a reformed unit after its original combat brigades were assigned to the 26th and 46th Infantry Divisions. With there being an excess of trained troops after replacements were despatched, the decision was made to use some of these troops to reform the 29th Infantry Division which was reactivated in January 1997 at Fort Ord. This division had a unique make up based on what assets were available and from what they were trained on. It was made up as follows:



Illustration 1: 29th Division shoulder patch

Divisional assets

- 1-788th Artillery (155 towed)
- 2-788th Artillery (MLRS)
- 3-788th Artillery (155 towed)
- 2-756th Air Defence Artillery (M163 PIVAD)
- 4-745th Cavalry (M60A4/M113ACAV)
- 2-766th Air Cav (AH64)
- 1-721st Engineers
- 2-764th Military Police (A & B Coys only)
- 1-774th Military Intelligence
- 1-712th Signal Battalion
- 1-708th Chemical Battalion (C Coy only)
- 1st "First Strike" Brigade
 - 1-708th Infantry (M113)
 - 2-708th Infantry (M113)
 - 3-708th Infantry (M113)
- 2nd "Interceptor" Brigade
 - 1-722nd Infantry (M113)
 - 2-722nd Infantry (M113)
 - 2-729th Armour (M60A3)
- 3rd "Bullet Thrower" Brigade
 - 1-723rd Infantry (M113)
 - 2-723rd Infantry (M113)
 - 3-729th Armour (M60A4)



Illustration 2: 1-723th Infantry training at Fort Ord. The 723rd was the only element of the 29th issued with the M113A3. Note the commander's gun shield based on the ACAV which was rarely issued pre deployment.

Note that all troops were from the 700 series regiments that were the war raised units.

When it was decided to send the 29th to Korea as part of the 8th Army in March 1997 in response to the North Korean invasion, the decision was made that the M60s currently being used by the unit would be withdrawn for logistic reasons. There were

not enough M60s available in Korea as those there were designated as replacements for the USMC units there that were still using them as their primary MBT. There were however significant numbers of M48s in service with the South Koreans and in storage there and as the 29th would be supplied through South Korean logistics system it was logical for this to be the main armour.

As the M48 was broadly similar to the M60, it did not take long to train the unit in the M48 using the ranges at Fort Ord using tanks drawn from storage in the US. A decision was made to draw tanks from both US Army and Korean Army stocks in

"I couldn't believe it when we saw what we were issued, this tank was older than we were, hell it was actually even older than the sarge! One tank we found out later had even been in 'Nam before being donated to the Koreans. One guy who was a bit of a history and sci-fi buff did some research and called it "Drake's Dragon" after some guy who had been there (if you figure out who can you let me know). Mind you he later admitted (under the influence of too much soju that he 'might have had to fudge a record or two.' The crew didn't care it was a great name and they figured well the guy survived the war, that made it a good omen. Wish it had been... We call ours 'Old Glory'."

*2/Lt George Meredith
2-722nd Infantry, 29th Infantry Division*

Excerpt from a letter to his mother used with kind permission. 2/Lt Meredith is still listed as missing in action presumed killed.

Korea to reduce shipping and to get the unit there sooner. A similar plan was followed with the infantry's M113s and much of the division's other vehicle requirements. The biggest problem was logistic vehicles as the wartime strain had shown that divisions were under equipped, successive defence cuts having given enough logistic support for peace time operations but not wartime needs.

Integrated with the unit while it trained at Fort Ord, were a number of Korean troops. These were known as Korean Advisory Troops and each platoon



Illustration 3: Members of the 1-723rd Infantry practice urban warfare. Note the KATs patch on the centre figure. (US Army)

received one such advisor who was a South Korean soldier who was quickly promoted to 2nd Lt. Whilst they did not hold a command appointment, they did provide an advisor to US troops on customs in Korea and were also intended to help reduce the problems from North Korean infiltrators that had caused such confusion at the start of the invasion. Spotting the similarity between the 29th Divisions Blue and Grey badge and their own national flag, the KATs adopted a version of the national flag with the red replaced by grey and rotated to match the divisional badge on a white background. This was usually worn on both sleeves and whilst never official was almost universal.

The Chon Khee Massacre

When the 29th surrendered, there were a number of incidents of ill treatment. The most well known of these is the massacre of wounded prisoners and medical staff at the village of Chon Khee.

The 30th Brigade's medical station in the village had a number of severely wounded that were unfit to be moved. When a junior officer from the North Korean 92nd Infantry ordered them moved, the senior officer Major John Parker attempted to explain this was impossible. The Korean started to yell at him and drew a pistol. When Major Parker continued to argue, the Korean officer shot him twice in the chest. An unidentified American sergeant grabbed the Korean but was bayoneted by a Korean private. The officer then shot the sergeant twice in the head and ordered the killing of all of the wounded.

For the next half hour the Koreans systematically killed the prisoners, only failing to kill two who hid. After the Koreans left the two Americans took the time to gather all of the dog tags and then tried to make their way west towards friendly forces. Fortunately for them they ran into a unit of Silent Whisper South Korean guerillas who kept them safe and eventually returned them to allied lines four weeks later.

An Eighth army report into this and other incidents concluded that while a number of incidents occurred there was no systematic plan for this, only incidents caused by low level officers, indeed it noted that there was a North Korean High Command order to avoid further incidents and that at least two junior officers were shot after courts martial by the North Koreans. It did not however stop a large number of incidents where the Eighth Army units stopped taking North Korean prisoners (in September when the incident was made public the number of prisoners taken fell by 78%).

As a result the order was given to ship the division by sea with the required logistic vehicles, with advance parties of maintenance teams flying ahead to prepare the vehicles. The vehicles were a mix of M48A5 from US and M48A5K from Korean stocks. There were also a number of M48A3K from Korean war only stocks. These maintenance teams arrived and immediately started working on making all the vehicles fit for service. Many were fitted with attachment points for ERA (using the same blocks as the M60A4). These were known unofficially as the M48A6 (indeed the term appears to even have crept in to official documents on occasion so can be considered at least semi-official). Some also had track skirts modified from the M60A4 or taken from Korean M48A5Ks added although this was not widespread. Some M48s were upgraded to TTS standard with thermal sights flown from the states. These were designated by adding (TTS) at the end of the designation.

There are minor differences between US and Korean tanks but these are relatively minor e.g. most Korean M48A5Ks were fitted with the M219 machine gun in the co-ax role while most of the US M48A5s were fitted with either M60E2s or M240s (a number of the M48A3Ks were fitted with the M73 but these were all upgraded to one of the M219/M60E2 or M240). In addition Korean tanks generally had a Korean made fire control system that was equivalent to that on the US M48A5. The Korean KM68 gun was almost identical to the US M68 and tankers found no difficulty in swapping between them.

The M48A3Ks with their 90mm gun were seen as unsuitable for US use as this would have given logistic nightmares. Instead the divisional armourers converted a number to M67A3K standards using flame throwers drawn from Korean stockpiles (these were functionally identical to the US M67A2 except that on the dummy barrel, the 90mm's muzzle break was not fitted as it would no longer conceal the weapon carried but mark it out as different). These were issued to the 29th's engineers.

"The zippos are great to have with you when you attack a village, it's a lot easier to torch a building than assault it"

PFC Vince Lambert
Diary entry
June 30th 1997

The use of these M48s resulted in the 29th Division being a major US user of the M3 sub-machine gun as the Eighth Army had not been issued the M231 to replace them as crew weapons (although they had been issued as firing port weapons on the M2/M3 and when these were up-armoured they were used by Bradley crewmen as personal weapons).

"There was something wrong about going to war in the same tank as my father and being issued the same SMG as HIS father."

"Blue and Grey in the Hermit Kingdom" by Sgt Carl Grugach, Virginia Free Press 2021

The use by the USMC of the M60 caused great resentment among the men of the 29th but as the M48s they were issued differed little from the M60 in most important respects this was often just used as an excuse for the traditional rivalry.



Illustration 4: 4-745th Cavalry of the 29th Infantry Division M48A5K crossing the Han River under cover of a smokescreen during Operation Capital Wind (CNN)

Reorganising (including amalgamating the infantry of the 1st Brigade into the 2nd and 3rd brigades to bring them back up to strength) the 29th was given the mission of holding the front line. Using this as an opportunity to get the newly combined units to work together the unit dug in holding the strategically important Hill 386. They were still in this position when advance elements of the Chinese 28th Army moving down the west coast linked up with them on 6th July. Moving north east to attack the North Korean 23rd Infantry Division (although some sources indicate it was the 17th Infantry Division), the 29th was isolated with the sudden collapse of the Chinese 28th Army. The US 45th Infantry Division operating to the south managed to break out after abandoning it's vehicles and crossing difficult terrain. The 29th however failed to escape and the divisional commander Major General Kevin Urban ordered the division to lay down it's arms to avoid the massacre of the remnants. The survivors were herded north to a captivity that few would manage to return from.



Illustration 5: Bunker known as "Kate's Kingdom" on Hill 386. This was the subject of hard, hand to hand fighting on the night of the 29th June 1997 when North Korean engineers penetrated the minefields protecting the position. (Private collection of Lt Kate Irving)



Illustration 6: M48A5 "Hot Hannah" of the 2-729th Armour fitted with a dozer blade during the break out. It was abandoned when it threw a track. The crew are all listed as MIA.

this position critics argue that the differences between the M48A6 and the M60A4 are minor and the number of tanks used by the division are not enough to explain the failure to break out. Congressman Lewis however responds that the citizen soldiers of the National Guard are not second class soldiers and are true American heroes and were deserving of the best the most developed country in the world should have been capable of giving them. The book "Deserving the Best – How we betrayed the Guard" by Terry Paul becomes popular although even Lewis states that this overstates the case.



Illustration 7: Unknown sub unit of the 29th training. NBC warfare was given a high priority despite a lack of expected Mexican usage. In his book "Secret War" Tom Rimmington asserts that this was due to a never used plan to launch a major offensive in Texas using chemical weapons. (US Army)

In July 1998 as the Mexican Army pushes into the southern US, the decision is made to reform the 29th Infantry from volunteers fleeing the south and from those in the path of the attackers. Using a cadre drawn from the 95th Infantry Division, the volunteers were quickly (and to be fair inadequately) trained before being thrown into the desperate battles against the Mexicans. Casualties were heavy

The ex-National Guard officer Ed Lewis in his post war political career argues this is another case of National Guard being given substandard equipment and lives wasted. Whilst there is some truth to

Major General Grant Hunter

General Hunter enlisted in the US Army in 1978 when it was in the throes of throwing off the effects of the Vietnam War and turning into an all volunteer army. Initially assigned to the 2nd Infantry Division in Germany, 2Lt Hunter found it hard to deal with the endemic drug taking and racial tensions in his platoon. Fortunately his platoon sergeant took him under his wing and helped him through his initial bursts of over-enthusiasm. After promotion to command a company, the newly promoted Capt Hunter was sent back to the States to act as a junior staff officer at the CENTCOM planning centre. From there he was sent to the 25th Infantry Division to command the chemical warfare company. While he enjoyed his time in Hawaii, he looked forward to returning to a more active role. This he achieved when he was assigned to the logistics staff in the Invasion of Panama. Trying to understand the difficulties that the logistic battalions were reporting he took to undertaking trips with them. During one of these he came under fire for the first time when a DigBat unit ambushed a convoy he was with. Commanding the defence he was recommended for a gallantry award although this was refused (although he did get a Purple Heart for a graze he received in the ambush). After assisting in the reconstruction effort he expected to return to Germany, instead he was given the unlikely job of commanding an air defence battalion in California while he completed his doctorate in international affairs. During the Gulf War, his battalion was deployed to Israel where he made friends with the then Colonel Yoni Noyohni the future Israeli Chief of Staff, with the two spending many long hours playing Monopoly. After his unit returned to California he was assigned a role as a staff officer at the Pentagon. After this he attended the British Army's staff college at Camberley on an exchange posting. In late 1996 he was promoted to Brigadier General

and was due to be assigned to Korea to command a brigade when the war broke out. Much to his disappointment he was then ordered to remain in the States as a battle casualty replacement (US policy was then to create extra headquarters units expecting heavy command losses). In July 1998 he was posted to the reformed 29th Infantry Division. Taking command when the divisional commander was killed in action in June 1999 while fighting Division Cuba and an unknown Mexican unit. Withdrawing north he just evaded the trap set for him and saved most of the division. As the division refitted, he handed over command to Major General Travis and took over the role of second in command. When Travis shot himself, hunter again found himself in charge of the brigade. He is torn between MILGOV and CIVGOV, but above all fears that a civil war would sunder the United States permanently. Still responding to MILGOV orders he knows that he could not order his men to engage CIVGOV troops (and even if he did they would probably not obey). The prospect of having to order this gives him sleepless nights. His wife (and several other family members) died in the Siege of Memphis. He now has no close family alive.

He is an Experienced NPC who speaks English (10), Hebrew (2), German (2) and Korean (1).



but the desperate defenders slowed the Mexicans enough for them to exhaust their supplies.

After this blooding the unit is augmented with the newly formed 2-782nd Armour in captured M4A4E8 Sherman tanks to support the 2-612th Armour's Stingrays that have been roughly handled (at least once source (John Jenkins in “*Anything Can Happen in the Next Half Hour*” published by Tanker Books) asserts that a number of M4s were actually former museum pieces refurbished and used to augment the captured vehicles).



Illustration 8: Post war photo of a 2-782nd Sherman memorial at Fort Sill. Note the large US stars used to show the new owners. (Fort Sill Historical Society)

In June 1999 the Division was part of the 5th Army's Operation Southern Force. It was lucky in that it escapes the 49th Armoured Division's fate against the Soviet Division Cuba as it attacked an as yet unidentified Mexican infantry unit. Unable to make a breakthrough, the 29th was nearly cut off when the Soviets counter-attacked the 49th and only the heroic rearguard of the 95th Infantry Division and the attached School Brigade which had been acting as the Army's reserve enabled the 29th to withdraw north.

In mid 2000 the division launched Operation Geronimo Punch aimed at retaking Fort Sill. With the Mexican defenders dispersed to enable them to live off the land, they were unable to concentrate and by July 22nd the 29th had achieved its objectives with

minimal losses. Pushing further, probes from the 4-745th Cavalry soon encountered more opposition as the defenders had time to concentrate. Holding position the division continued to aggressively patrol south to keep the position secure. For the remainder of the year aggressive patrolling ensured the division held the gains it had made.

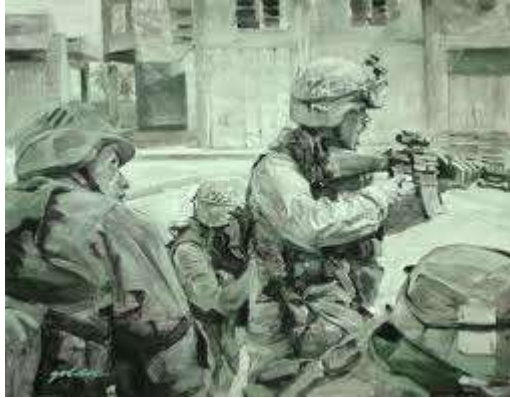


Illustration 9: Troops of F Coy 2-723rd Infantry in action against marauders March 2001. From the state of their equipment they are probably veterans of Europe as the units originally belonging to the 29th were not so well equipped. (WNN)

2001 saw an increase in strength for the 29th when reinforcements from Europe were sent south. As a result the division was able to undertake small scale operations against both the Mexicans and marauders to the division's rear.

The divisional commander of the 29th, Major General Grant Hunter is currently torn in his loyalties, being from Memphis he lost a number of family members in what he sees as MILGOV's botched siege. Added to this he knows that as many of his original troops are really civilians under arms their loyalties lie with CIVGOV. The addition of the reinforcements from Operation Omega have however confused the position as he believes (correctly) that most are loyal to MILGOV.

As long as the Mexicans pose a threat, he can hold the division and his personal loyalties together. Once the Mexicans are no longer a threat however he dreads the future which could see him pitted against his current commanders and subordinates.

Current Composition (as of Jan 2001)

Currently (Jan 2001) the 29th Division consists of the following:

Divisional assets

HQ (1x M577, 10 x 2 1/2 ton trucks, 4 x HMMWV)

1-788th Artillery (Mobile) (4 x 105 towed behind 2 1/2 ton trucks)

2-788th Artillery (Static) (12 x mortars – assorted types of 81mm+)

A Company, 2-756th

Air Defence

Artillery/Divisional Defence Company (2 x M691, 2 x M42 Duster)



Illustration 10: 29th Long Range Recon Company patrol April 2001.

Created for the Twilight 2000 RPG by James Langham

4-745th Cavalry (horse mounted + 1 troop in 3 x M115A1)
 29th Long Range Recon Company (2 x HMMWV, 4 x M151, 6 x civilian
 “jeeps,” 2 x civilian dune buggies)
 29th Divisional Training School (1 x
 AMX30B2 (main gun inoperative), 1 x Stingray, 1 x
 M113)
 29th Armoured Strike Force (Task Force Rio
 Grande)
 1-732nd Anti-Tank (4 x HMMWV TOW + 3
 x M901 – severely limited by lack of missiles)
 2-782nd Armour (6 x Stingray)
 2-612th Armour (4 x M4A3E8 + 6 used for
 static defence due to a lack of spares)
 A Coy 1-708th Infantry (M113)
 1st Brigade
 1-708th Infantry – less A Coy (HMMWV and
 trucks)
 2-708th Infantry (Civilian pick up trucks)
 3-708th Infantry (Horse and civilian vehicles)
 3rd “Iron Guard” Brigade – mainly used for static
 defence
 1-723rd Infantry (foot)
 2-723rd Infantry (foot)



Illustration 11: Major Eric Lucas command of the 29th Division Training School poses with a range target.



Illustration 12: G Company 2-708th Infantry in August 1998. At this point the unit was mainly composed of displaced refugees with a small cadre of instructors from the 95th Infantry Division. Uniforms were starting to be issued but many wore civilian clothes or mixed dress. Helmets and body armour were almost unknown. Weapons were frequently the volunteer's own although M1s, M16EZs and M14s were issued when available.

It is rather ironic considering the furore over the issue of the M48 to the 29th that the reformed division was actually using M4 Shermans!



Illustration 13: 2-612th Armour M4A3E8 Sherman in a typical paint scheme with large white stars typical of captured vehicles. Unusually no other markings are visible although the new paint scheme and base setting suggest this has been just repaired and is ready for issue. DoD

Commanders of the 29th Infantry Division

January 1997 – July 1997
Major General Kevin Urban
(died in North Korean captivity)

July 1998 – June 1999
Major General Oliver Basil
(killed in action)

June 1999 – July 1999
Brigadier General Grant Hunter (temporary command)

July 1999 – June 2000
Major General Sean Travis
(committed suicide)

June 2000-
Major General Grant Hunter