

World War II



Map of landings of the regiment at Safi, Morocco Soldiers of the 47th Infantry Regiment, march through Remagen, in 1945

In August 1940, the regiment was reassigned away from the 7th Infantry Division and into the 9th Infantry Division, and was then activated at Fort Bragg. Initially, it was commanded by Colonel Alexander Patch; after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Patch was reassigned to the Pacific Theater of Operations. In November 1942, the regiment took part in Operation Blackstone in North Africa, where it fought against Vichy French forces during an amphibious landing; the regiment's Company K were the first American troops to land in French Morocco. At the time of the regiment was commanded by Colonel Edwin Randle. Following its actions during Operation Torch, of which Blackstone was a part, the regiment took part in divisional duties of monitor Spanish Morocco, which lasted into early 1943; during this time, the regiment conducted a foot march of more than 200 miles (320 km) from Safi to Port-Lyautey. Still in North Africa, along with the rest of the 9th Division, the regiment fought in the Battle of El Guettar, which resulted in a significant number of casualties; for actions during the battle, the regiment's commander, received the Distinguished Service Cross (he would later go on to be promoted to be the assistant division commander of the 77th Division). Following El Guettar, the regiment moved north, and fought in the Battle of Sedjenane, and soldiers of the regiment's 2d Battalion, were the first Allied soldiers in Bizerte. After Colonel Patch was promoted and parted ways with the regiment, Colonel George W. Smythe became the regiment's commander. Along with the rest of the 9th Infantry Division, the regiment was sent to Sicily, in 1943; in Sicily the regiment was tangentially involved during the Battle of Troina, which saw the 9th Infantry Division's other infantry regiments in significant combat. Remaining in Sicily after the Axis forces retreated, the regiment received orders to move in November 1943, making its way to England; with the rest of the 9th Infantry Division, the regiment trained until June 1944. The division was garrisoned around Winchester and during this time a number of personnel married local

women. While stationed around Alresford, the regiment adopted a dog as a mascot, but it died when struck by a vehicle in May 1944. On 10 June, four days after D-Day, the 9th Infantry Division landed at Utah Beach. Assigned to VII Corps, it was allocated to the liberation of the Cotentin Peninsula and was the division that sealed off the peninsula to prevent additional German reinforcements from breaking through. Medical supplies for the regiment had been lost during its movement from England to Normandy, but were replaced and captured German vehicles were pressed into service by the regiment's medical detachment. By 14 June, the entire regiment had landed, and the following day the 47th began combat operations, fighting alongside regiments of the 82nd Airborne Division, attacking along a path which was near, or included, Orglandes, Hautteville-Bocage, and Ste. Colombe. The regiment reached Saint-Lô-d'Ourville, via Saint-Sauveur-le-Vicomte, Saint-Sauveur-de-Pierrepont, and Neuville-en-Beaumont, by 18 June. Relieved by the 357th Infantry Regiment (of the 90th Infantry Division) along the English Channel, facing Jersey, the regiment moved to Saint-Jacques-de-Néhou where it began its push northward to Vasteville, via Bricquebec; on 20 June it began its push towards Cherbourg, but was initially halted near Sideville by stiff German prepared defenses around the outskirts of the port city. On 22 June, the attack on Cherbourg began, with the regiment errantly being attacked by aircraft of the IX Bomber Command, and the 39th Infantry Regiment following behind its advancement; by the 24th the regiment had broken through the enemy defenses, and along with the 39th, where fighting within the suburb of Octeville. The regiment continued to fight in the western portion of Cherbourg, and by the 26th it captured German General Karl-Wilhelm von Schlieben and Admiral Walter Hennecke. The city fell to the Allies by the next day; following the liberation of the port city, along with the 60th Infantry Regiment, the 47th fought the remaining German forces in Cap de la Hague, ultimately capturing over 6,000 Germans by 1 July. By 10 July, the 9th Infantry Division was tasked to join the effort to liberate Saint-Lô; the next day it was attacked by the Panzer Lehr Division. On 11 July, wounded men and medical officers of the regiment's third battalion, were captured by German forces; one of the medical officers would later be killed by friendly fire and buried at Aisne-Marne American Cemetery and Memorial, while the other was liberated at Château-Thierry while taking care of wounded prisoners of war. In early August the regiment, along with the 60th Infantry Regiment, was fighting in the area of Gathemo. The liberation of Château-Thierry occurred on 27 August, while the 9th Infantry Division was following the wake of the movement of the 3d Armored Division.

On 14 September, the regiment entered Germany, at or near, Roetgen; it was the first German city to fall to the Allies.^[45] The regiment penetrated the Siegfried Line near Schevenhütte on 16 September. This was followed by fighting in the Hürtgen Forest; during the battle the regiment captured Frenzerburg Castle. By 30 September, the regiment had lost 163 officers; one company alone lost 18 officers killed, leading to a loss of experienced leadership over time. During the Battle of the Bulge, the regiment served as a cornerstone of American resistance around Eupen. The regiment had the distinction of another first; on 8 March 1945, soldiers of the regiment became the first infantry troops to cross the Rhine River, doing so at Remagen; for its actions during the crossing of the Rhine, the regiment was awarded a Distinguished Unit Citation. During March the regiment experienced multiple changes in command, at the beginning of the month Colonel Smythe departed the regiment, leaving Lieutenant Colonel Herman A. Schmidt to act as the regiment's commanding officer, only to be succeeded by Colonel Peter O. Ward a week later. By early April, the 9th Infantry Division was assigned to III Corps, and was part of the effort against the Ruhr Pocket; once again the Panzer Lehr Division attacked the 9th Infantry Division. For its actions in repelling the attack the regiment earned another Distinguished Unit Citation. By mid-April 1945, the 9th Infantry Division was reassigned to VII Corps, and fought against remaining German forces in the Harz Mountains; there they encountered concentration camps near Nordhausen. After the Germans surrendered, the regiment conducted occupation duty in Germany, which lasted until late 1946. Part of the Regiment's postwar occupation duty included a stint at the Dachau Concentration Camp. Elements of the 47th were assigned guard and administrative duty from July, 1945. By this time Dachau had been converted to its postwar use as an internment camp that would intern former SS, Nazi functionaries, and officers of the German army.

In December 1946, the regiment was deactivated in Germany.