



The Big Red One: America's Legendary 1st Infantry Division from World War I to Desert Storm (Modern War Studies)

James Scott Wheeler

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"No mission too difficult, no sacrifice too great-Duty First!" For almost a century, from the Western Front of World War I to the deserts of Iraq, this motto has spurred the soldiers who wear the shoulder patch bearing the Big Red One. In this first comprehensive history of America's 1st Infantry Division, James Scott Wheeler chronicles its major combat engagements and peacetime duties during its legendary service to the nation.

The oldest continuously serving division in the U.S. Army, the "Fighting First" has consistently played a crucial role in America's foreign wars. It was the first American division to see combat and achieve victory in World War I and set the standard for discipline, training, endurance, and tactical innovation. One of the few intact divisions between the wars, it was the first army unit to train for amphibious warfare. During World War II, the First Division spearheaded the invasions of North Africa and Sicily before leading the Normandy invasion at Omaha Beach and fighting on through the Hurtgen Forest, the Battle of the Bulge, the Ruhr Pocket, and deep into Germany. By war's end, it had developed successful combined-arms, regimental combat teams and made advances in night operations.

Wheeler describes the First Division's critical role in postwar Germany and as the only combat division in Europe during the early Cold War. After returning to the United States at Fort Riley, Kansas, the division fought valiantly in Vietnam for five trying years, successfully protecting Saigon from major infiltration along Highway 13 while pioneering "air-mobile" operations. It led the liberation of Kuwait in Desert Storm and kept an uneasy peace in Bosnia and Kosovo. Along the way, Wheeler illuminates the division's organizational evolution, its consistently remarkable commanders and leaders, and its equally remarkable soldiers.

Meticulously detailed and engagingly written, *The Big Red One* nimbly combines historical narrative with astute analysis of the unit's successes and failures, so that its story reflects the larger chronicle of America's military experience over the past century.

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