Press Release

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10th Mountain Division celebrates ‘80 Years Alpine’

FORT DRUM, N.Y. (July 14, 2023) -- America’s only Mountain Division was activated on July 15, 1943, to serve as an elite alpine unit capable of fighting in high mountain environments during World War II.

Soldiers of the 10th Mountain Division (LI) celebrated its anniversary today with a cake-cutting ceremony at the 1st Brigade Combat Team Warrior Restaurant.

“Eighty years later, we are here at Fort Drum to honor our legacy and remember the origins of this division,” said Col. Matthew Braman, 10th Mountain Division (LI) deputy commander for support and acting senior commander.

While the activation occurred at Camp Hale, Colorado, Braman said that the idea of the 10th Mountain Division originated in New York – first, with the development of winter warfare training at Pine Camp and the testing of equipment and cold-weather survivability.

Soon after, Charles “Minnie” Dole and the National Ski Patrol advocated for the creation of mountain troops, based on the success of the Finish ski troops in defeating a larger, better-equipped Soviet force in 1939.

With the establishment of the 10th Light Division (Alpine), the War Department recognized the need for a mountain unit that could survive in austere conditions – forgoing heavy equipment for agile, lethal ground troops.

This is not unlike the modern 10th Mountain Division (LI), which continues to honor its alpine origins with specialized training that prepares Soldiers for rapid deployment missions anywhere around the world.

“Mountain Soldiers have led the way since this division’s inception,” Braman said. “Whether it was breaking the Gothic Line (the German mountain defenses in the northern Apennines), climbing Riva Ridge, or bringing hope to those in Somalia, Haiti and the Balkans, Mountain Soldiers were there. When this nation was attacked on 9/11, this was the first division headquarters sent to fight in Afghanistan, and our Soldiers were among the last to come out.”

Braman said that 10th Mountain Division Soldiers recently returned from Finland where they honed their high-altitude, cold-weather skills.

He also cited partnerships with other NATO allies to conduct joint training opportunities abroad, but also closer to home with military mountaineering field training in the Adirondack High Peaks region.

“Once again, the Army is looking for an alpine unit to fight in that environment after 20 years of counterinsurgency in U.S. Central Command,” he said. “We need that capability again, and the Army is looking to the 10th Mountain Division to reestablish that. We are doing that here, as we speak.”

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Photo Caption:

Col. Matthew Braman, 10th Mountain Division (LI) deputy commander for support and acting senior commander, and Staff Sgt. Sakeyna Ledbetter, 1st Brigade Combat Team Warrior Restaurant shift leader, cut the '80 Years Alpine’ cake in celebration of the 10th Mountain Division birthday. The 10th Light Division (Alpine) was activated at Camp Hale, Colorado, on July 15, 1943. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)