

# "Hell for Leather"



A day in the life of a cavalry unit is typified above.

## **Increased Mobility, Heavy Firepower Make U.S. Cavalry Potent Factor In Army's Offensive Plans**

As short a time ago as 1938 both civilians and military officials were referring to the United States Cavalry as a somewhat out-of-date branch of the service. Mechanization was the goal of the Army, and few persons stopped to think that the cavalry might play an important part even in mechanized and modern warfare.

The Nazi's so-called "blitz" campaign in Poland opening World War II gave one of the first indications that perhaps this judgment was premature. Hitler's paper, the *Volkische Beobachter*, frankly stated that "without horses the rapid advance of our armies would have been impossible."

### **STUDY POLISH CAMPAIGN**

American military leaders were not slow in studying the Polish campaign, and by early 1941 the United States was fielding its first full division of modern cavalry...but this U.S. Cavalry was a far different outfit than that commanded by General Custer in the war against the Sioux Indians.

First of all, the new cavalry possessed a mobility never dreamed of even in the hey-day of fighting on horseback. Huge motor trailers called "portees" are now used to transport both men and mounts to or near the point where they will fight. This greatly increases the mobility and striking power of the cavalry, as even in the most favorable circumstances a horse can cover only a limited distance.

### **CONCENTRATION OF FIRE POWER**

The second great difference in the new U.S. Cavalry is its great concentration of fire power. In each cavalry division of four horse regiments, there are anti-tank guns, howitzers, mortars, machine guns and sub-machine guns, semi-automatic rifles, and automatic pistols. In addition armored cars and light tanks are integrated with the cavalry.

U.S. Cavalry officers are now studying particularly the manner in which the Russian Army is using its cavalry. Red Army cavalry units have doubled and redoubled anything the Nazis may have done in Poland.



Gas masked riders at the right plunge their seemingly unafraid mounts into a haze of smoke.

#### RUSSIAN GENERAL LAUDS CAVALRY

General O.T. Gorodoviko of the Red Army cavalry, writing in the U.S. Cavalry Journal, states that in the opening phase of the Nazi invasion of Russia, Soviet cavalry covered the withdrawal of troops and raided the enemy in the rear. With the counter-offensive of the winter of '41, Russian cavalry harassed the enemy troops, and by using masses of cavalry with ample air and tank support, smashed enemy resistance in many points...and they are duplicating and surpassing this performance in the present Russian offensive.

General Gorodoviko reports that Russian cavalry tactics are based largely on the performance of cavalry in our own Civil War, when such famed strategists as General Phil Sheridan and General Bedford Forrest commanded opposing forces.

U.S. cavalymen have to be able to take plenty of punishment--hard riding through rough terrain with spills that result in more than a bruised backside are all part of the game. After a spill, if the man is able to walk, his best chance for overcoming nervousness is to ride again immediately just as a pilot goes up again as soon as possible after a crash.

#### USE RAW RECRUITS

The Army naturally sends men to the cavalry who have been around horses in civilian life, but many men are recruited who've never seen a horse except, perhaps, those hauling brewery wagons. According to cavalry officers, these raw recruits make good cavalymen, and it is seldom that a man asks for a transfer to another branch of service.



About eight weeks is required for basic cavalry training, but it takes about six months for the recruit to become toughened and supple enough to function at top efficiency.

#### TRAINED TO FIGHT MOUNTED & DISMOUNTED

The U.S. Cavalry is trained to fight both mounted and dismounted, depending on the conditions of combat, and the portees and trucks carrying horses, supplies, and fodder allow the utmost exploitation of the cavalry's most important function--to hit the enemy suddenly and hard, leaving panic and destruction among his forces.

Whether fighting on horse alone, with its mechanized units, or operating with other branches of the service, today's new cavalry is trained to strike with deadly effect and courage in the tradition of the brilliant American cavalymen of other generations.

\*

The mechanized cavalry in the foreground and the horse cavalry in the background combine to make this outfit a hard-hitting branch of the service.

## ★ America's Alertmen ★

EDITED AND PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY AND FOR THE  
ANTIAIRCRAFT ARTILLERY COMMAND  
EASTERN DEFENSE COMMAND

JANUARY 25, 1943: P. 8

# OUR NEW ARMY



**HORSE TROOPS.** Well publicized but not yet fully appreciated are the Army's horse and horse-mechan-

[OldMagazineArticles.com](http://OldMagazineArticles.com)



ized units, which are to infantry and artillery what cruisers and destroyers are to battleships. Partially their functions are to pursue and exploit breakthroughs, harass and delay action, seize and hold terrain, cover the withdrawal of other forces, provide liaison and reconnaissance service and act as reserves.



A cavalry division is self-sufficient with 11,676 men, 1,430 motor vehicles and a complete range of weapons and all services to back up its 6,570 mounts.



A cavalry regiment is equipped with portees which hold eight horses, eight men and equipment; can travel 300 miles in twenty-four hours



Basic Riley course lasts three months, includes six departments, two being for specialists like those shown above, who are learning to work with leather



Well-conditioned divisions can cover thirty miles a day. In emergencies they can march seventy-five miles in twenty-four hours, or 125 miles in forty-eight hours



On the cavalry's vehicle list is the bantam jeep which, wrapped in canvas like a canoe, has been floated across rivers by Ft. Riley's Major Charles H. Valentine

**Collier's for October 4, 1941**

[OldMagazineArticles.com](http://OldMagazineArticles.com)