

# Perspectives in Military History Roundtable

## The First Infantry Division and the U.S. Army Transformed 1st Infantry Division in Desert Storm

**Colonel Gregory Fontenot, U.S. Army, Retired**  
Author

When the dust settled after Desert Storm in 1991, the First Infantry Division had engaged and defeated at least twelve Iraqi divisions, taken over 14,000 prisoners of war, and destroyed over 1,000 enemy tanks and armored vehicles. As they rolled into Safwan, Iraq to secure the air strip as a base for later surrender talks, the unit's leaders looked back at a rocky, but ultimately successful, evolution stretching back to Vietnam. Desert Storm proved that the 1st ID was indeed prepared for modern war. On Saturday, March 17, 2018, at 2:00 PM, Colonel (Retired) Gregory Fontenot will be joined by scholars to lead a roundtable lecture at the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center in Carlisle, Pennsylvania to discuss how the First Infantry Division underwent rapid and dramatic change between Vietnam and Desert Storm.

In the two decades between Vietnam and Desert Storm, the First Infantry Division was faced with institutional collapse, required to adapt rapidly to volunteer manning, and dealt with a radical change of mission orientation. The U.S. Army's post-Vietnam leadership rewrote service doctrine and revised unit organization, training, and leader development for all ranks. As a result, when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in August 1990, the First Infantry Division began preparing for war, though they were not on the announced troop list. Then the Division spearheaded the rapid ground attack with minimal loss of life. This roundtable event will feature a lecture from Colonel Fontenot, a veteran of Desert Storm, as he describes how the history of the division fits into the wider story of the U.S. Army, the stories and experiences of Soldiers who fought in Desert Storm, and why understanding the experience of the First Infantry Division in the Gulf War is relevant to preparing for the wars of the future.

Colonel Gregory Fontenot retired from the U.S. Army after 28 years of service as an Armor officer in the United States, Europe, the Balkans, and Southwest Asia. He also taught history at the United States Military Academy, and served as Director of the School of Advanced Military Studies. After retirement, he served as Director, Training and Doctrine Command's Wargaming Directorate, and later, as part of the Army's Red Team Leader Course for the University of Foreign Military Studies Course. He left the civil service in 2013 to pursue his interest in writing military history.

**DATE: Saturday, March 17, 2018**

**TIME: The USAHEC opens to the public at 10:00 AM, and the roundtable discussion is from 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM.**

**PLACE: USAHEC, Visitor and Education Center, Multipurpose Room**

**For more information and any last-minute changes in meeting times/places, please check the USAHEC website: [www.USAHEC.org](http://www.USAHEC.org) or call the Information Desk: (717) 245-3972.**