

DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS REGIMENT



LIEUTENANT COLONEL HERBERT AVEDON

Inducted November 2016



Lieutenant Colonel Herbert Avedon served in the Army National Guard from May 1933 until 1934, enlisting in the regular Army in September 1940 as an Infantryman. He graduated Officer Candidate School at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, as a Reserve Signal Corps officer in March 1934, specializing in codes and ciphers. In 1943, he joined the 1st Ranger Battalion as its signal officer for the Salerno and Anzio campaigns. On Jan. 29-30, 1944, the 1st and 3rd Rangers led the attack towards Cisterna. The Germans quickly recovered and counterattacked in force, surrounding the two attacking Ranger battalions, killing or capturing nearly 800 Rangers. The Germans repeatedly beat back attempts to relieve the two encircled battalions. After Cisterna, the Rangers in Italy were combat ineffective.

In October 1944, the Office of Strategic Services recruited him for the Morale Operations Branch to produce and disseminate 'black propaganda' to destabilize enemy governments, encourage resistance movements and undermine enemy morale. The OSS sent him to Burma as a Psywar officer to head the MO section in the Arakan Field Unit of Detachment 101.

After the capture of Rangoon, Avedon was reassigned to North China to perform MO functions. When the OSS disbanded in October 1945, Avedon transferred to its post-war successor, the Strategic Services Unit. Decorated with awards, which include the Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, campaign medals for the American, European (two stars and an invasion arrowhead), and Asian and Pacific Theaters (two stars and an invasion arrowhead) among others, Avedon returned from World War II and left the SSU in 1946, reverting back to reserve duty.

Avedon was recalled to active duty in 1951 for the Korean War. He attended the first-ever Psywar Officer Course in 1951 at the Army General School, Fort Riley, Kansas. Capt. Avedon assumed command of the only U.S. Army tactical psywar unit operating in Korea, the 1st L&L. He instituted immediate changes establishing an ad hoc Psywar course and demanding greater precision in Psywar products, accounting for culture, education and literacy of enemy target audiences. The Korean War was a formative period in U.S. Army PSYOP history. Recommendations from experienced Psywarriors like Avedon proved critical to the progress of the Regiment. Avedon argued that Psywar should focus on quality rather than quantity; that Psywar requires adequate intelligence, research materials and linguistically and culturally attuned personnel to develop effective products, and that Psywar training should not be an afterthought, but is of critical importance to preparing Psywarriors for their operational mission.

Avedon was discharged from active duty on Feb. 28, 1957, rejoining the active reserve in Honolulu, Hawaii. He returned to active duty in 1958 as an advisor for Psywar and unconventional warfare "planning, research, operations and policy including training of U.S. Army Reserve-Pacific Psywar and UW units," becoming known as 'Mr. Psywar.' These assignments gave him sufficient time to get promoted and retire as a lieutenant colonel in the Army Reserve on Dec. 1, 1966. He continued to serve as a Department of the Army Civilian within USARPAC, as a Military Intelligence Operations Specialist until Nov. 19, 1962. Afterward, he returned stateside to be a Psywar Specialist with the U.S. Continental Army Command at Fort Monroe, Virginia, consulting on Psywar training, research and development at the Army major command level. Due to family health problems, Avedon returned to the West Coast in August 1967, serving as the Historian, G-3, Sixth United States Army. He established the museum at The Presidio of San Francisco. He retired in 1975 after decades of loyal government service, mostly in the field of Psywar.

Avedon helped ensure that Psychological Operations became a core element of Army Special Operations. Lt. Col. Herbert Avedon passed away on May 20, 2004, and was buried with military honors in Arlington National Cemetery.