



FSSFA to honour The Devils Brigade in Regina at 77th annual reunion

The First Special Service Force (FSSF) was an elite commando group in World War II. It also became known as The Devils Brigade. Created in July 1942 at the behest of Winston Churchill, Dwight Eisenhower and Franklin Roosevelt, and under the command of Lt. Colonel Robert Frederick, the Force's home base and training was at Fort William Henry Harrison, Helena MT.

With an original contingent of 1,800 American and Canadian volunteers, it was the first and only military outfit representing both nations. The men were recruited for their hardiness and, through intensive training, became expert at parachuting, demolition, skiing, mountain climbing, weapons (including the enemy's), hand-to-hand combat and amphibious warfare. Eighty of the recruits called Saskatchewan home and 15 of those men were killed in action. The Canadians in the FSSF were concurrently members of the 1st Canadian Special Forces Battalion.

The Force's military action ranged from the Alaskan Aleutian Islands to Italy, then France. The Force's most noted action was clearing the German forces from the mountain tops of the Winter Line in Italy in December-January 1943-44 and, thereby, enabling the U.S. 5th Army's movement towards enemy-occupied Rome.



The Force then moved to the Anzio Beachhead in Italy where, with reinforcements, and numbering fewer than 1,100 men, faced a full division of 10,000 enemy soldiers. For 99 days without relief, the Force held its position and conducted continuous patrols and night raids into enemy territory at a cost of 106 members killed and over 300 wounded.

It was at Anzio that the Germans nicknamed the First Special Service Force the "Black Devils" because, with blackened faces, they conducted covert, nighttime raids behind enemy lines. The Force led the breakout from Anzio, liberated several villages and is recognized as the first Allied unit to enter Rome on June 4, 1944, two days prior to the D-Day landings at Normandy. The final action of the Force was amphibious landings in southern France to clear enemy and liberate villages along the coast to the Italian border.

The Force was deactivated in December 1944. In 251 days of combat, the FSSF suffered 2,314 casualties (wounded and dead), 134% of its combat strength, captured over 30,000 prisoners, won five U.S. campaign stars, eight Canadian battle honours, and never failed a mission. In February 2015, the United States Congress presented its highest honour, the Congressional Gold Medal, to the First Special Service Force. Today the FSSF is acknowledged as the forefather of the Canadian Special Operations Regiment (CSOR) of the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command and the 1st Special Forces Regiment of the United States Army (The Green Berets).

In August 1947, Force veterans formed the First Special Service

Force Association (FSSFA) and committed to holding annual reunions alternating between USA and Canadian locales. Now, 76 reunions later, Regina will be home to the 77th annual reunion. Association membership is about 650 people, the vast majority of whom are descendants and relatives of Force veterans. While once the largest contingent at reunions, Force veterans are not, unfortunately, expected in Regina. Those living are at or near 100 years of age. At least 16 books have been written and a Hollywood movie made about the FSSF.



The Regina reunion will be held at the Hilton DoubleTree hotel August 14-17, with an expected attendance of about 125 people from across Canada and the United States. The four-day program includes social gatherings, educational sessions, tours of the RCMP Heritage Centre and the Royal Saskatchewan Museum, a memorial service at the Saskatchewan War Memorial and a gala banquet and dance.

Attendees do not need to be members of the Association (although we do encourage it). People interested in attending can register at this [website](#). You can register for the full reunion or the Banquet only.

We are looking forward to welcoming our visitors to Regina and showing off some of the city's attractions.

UPCOMING REGINA CHAMBER EVENTS

THURSDAY, AUGUST 15
Member Appreciation BBQ
@ Access Communications
11 a.m. -- 2 p.m.

MEMBER APPRECIATION BBQ

THURSDAY, AUGUST 15TH

Access Communications
2250 Park Street

11 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Complimentary
*** Please register ***



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Tourism Regina introduces e-newsletter

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