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Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5021
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WWII-Pacific Theater

OKINAWA, MAR-JUN 1945

A Working Bibliography of MHI Sources

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NOTE: UNITS INFLICTING MOST CASUALTIES, OKINAWA

This research resulted from an inquiry about the 96th Division having achieved the "record" of having killed the most enemy in a single day during World War II.

The Guinness Book of World Records (1977 edition), does not include any category for most enemy killed by a particular unit, nor did we find any such official compilation or comparison of casualties inflicted by units. The raw statistics upon which to make such distinctions might be found in journals and other retired unit records in the custody of National Archives. Possibly, comparative data can be found in records of the higher commands under which the 96th Division served, i.e., XXIV Corps and Tenth Army. For example, the following report (which happens to be in our unit history collection) contains some data and a time-chart on total number of enemy dead in the Ryukyus campaign:

U.S. Tenth Army. "Action Report, Ryukyus, 26 Mar to 30 Jun 1945." Vol. 1. Report, 3 Sep 1945. pp. 9-II-1 & 9-II-2. #03-10.1945v.1.

Listed below are some of the sources searched. The official histories do not mention highest casualties inflicted by the 96th, nor do the various official summaries of the division's service. Kahn's brief account emphasizes the division's reputation for proficient marksmanship, noting 7,000 total "kills" on Leyte and 20,000 on Okinawa. The narrative portion of the division's unofficial history, The Deadeyes, p. 190, contains this description of the 21 Jun 1945 assault on Medeira Ridge in the Yaeju-Dake hill mass of Okinawa: "Although the 21st had not been a day of violent action, mopping up on that single day netted the amazing total of 1,347 Japanese known killed." In the book's end section (pp. 307-08), among various reprinted newspaper articles, these statements appear:

Rolfe, (IA) Arrow - "Statistics of the Battle [on Okinawa] Tell the story. The 96th killed more Japs than any other division on the island - Marine or Army."

Buffalo (NY) Courier Express - "The 96th... ended World War II with a record crediting it with killing more of the enemy in one day than any division in U.S. Army history.... In the final stages of the island fight, the 96th marked up a record for a single day's hunting more than 1,800 Japanese were killed on the Yaeju-Dake escarpment.

The important question is, of course, on what source did the Courier Express rely? See:

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