

World War 1 Code Talkers instrumental in ending war

When World War I broke out a huge percentage of Choctaw men volunteered, along with about 10,000 other Native Americans, for service in the U.S. Military. The language the Choctaws spoke was considered obsolete. That same language later helped bring about a successful end to the war by confounding German eavesdroppers



During World War I, with the tapping of the American Army's phone lines, the Germans were able to learn the location of where the Allied Forces were stationed at, as well as where supplies were kept. An idea was born to put Choctaw Indians on the phones and let them talk in their Native speech. The German soldiers had never heard this language before.

The Choctaw Nation also had tribal members who used their language to transmit messages in World War II. The native language was an excellent tool to use on behalf of the American forces in both wars. Until the use of the Choctaw language in World War I, the Germans had decoded all transmitted messages sent by the Allied Forces.

In World War I, according to a memo dated January 23, 1919, from the commanding officer of the 142nd Infantry Division, Col. A.W. Bloor, "The first use of the Indians was made in ordering a delicate withdrawal of two companies of the 2nd Bn. From Chufilly to Chardoney on the night of October 26th. This movement was completed without mishap, although it left the Third Battalion greatly depleted in previous fighting, without support. The Indians were used repeatedly on the 27th in preparation for the assault on Forest Farm. The enemy's complete surprise is evidence that he could not decipher the messages.

"After the withdrawal of the regiment to Louppy-le-Petit, a number of Indians were detailed for training tin transmitted messages over the telephone. The instruction was carried out by the Liaison Officer, Lieutenant Black.

It had been found that the Indian's vocabulary of military terms was insufficient. The Indian for 'Big gun' was used to indicate artillery. 'Little gun shoot fast,' was substituted for machine gun, and the battalions were indicated by one, two, and three grains of corn."

"It was found that the Indian tongues do not permit verbatim translation, but at the end of the short training period at Louppy-le-Petit, the results were very gratifying, and it is believed, had the regiment gone back into the line, fine results

would have been obtained. We were confident the possibilities of the telephone had been obtained without its hazards."

"The Choctaw Nation is very proud of the story of the original Code Talkers, and even has a granite monument at the entrance to our capitol grounds that bears the engraved names of the men who used the Choctaw language to help win World War I," said Chief Gregory E. Pyle. "The language is so important to the tribe today that there are classes offered in 43 public schools, two colleges and three universities, as well as on the Internet and in many community centers."

Verbal history, combined with written history, has revealed the names of the 18 Choctaws who were trained to use their own language to transmit messages that the enemy was never able to decipher. These men were Tobias Frazier, Victor Brown, Joseph Oklahombi, Ben Hampton, Albert Billy, Walter Veach, Ben Carterby, James Edwards, Solomon Louis, Pete Maytubby, Michell Bobb, Calvin Wilson, Jeff Nelson, Joseph Davenport, George Davenport, Noel Johnson, Otis Leader and Robert Taylor.

Originally, only eight men were asked to be Choctaw Code Talkers, but as the success of using their native language as a "code" was recognized, others were quickly pressed into service.

When the Choctaw tongue was spoken over the field telephones, the Germans stopped attacking the supply dumps and counter attacking the American troops. This is because they had no idea what the Choctaws were saying and couldn't effectively spy on the message transmissions. A captured German officer later said they were completely confused by the "code".

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma has formalized a request to Congress that recognition be given to the Native American Code Talkers of all tribes who used their own language during WWI or WWII as a "code" to confuse the enemy. Honor from the United States Government to these unsung heroes is long overdue.