

# History of the 76th patch

*Indiana's AG reflects on Nighthawk Brigade heraldry*

**By Staff Sgt. James Bowie**

*76th IBCT Public Affairs*

Soldiers with the 76th Infantry Brigade Combat Team wear a unit patch born during the years following the Cold War when restructuring took the 76th from the 38th Infantry Division and made it one of 15 separate infantry brigades within the Army National Guard.

Previously known as the Blue Devils, and having a long lineage, the 76th received a complete rebranding. The brigade needed a motto, nickname, unit crest, and a patch. The Department of the Army's Institute of Heraldry asked for suggestions.

After becoming the brigade's deputy commander in 1994, Indiana's Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. R. Martin Umbarger, then a lieutenant colonel, began convening regularly with other brigade leadership to develop these suggestions, based on the theme that the 76th was a light infantry brigade.

Brigade leadership wanted a rectangular patch, in keeping with most unit patches, and they decided on an arrow in the middle because that symbol represents forward movement on a military map.

There would be three background colors. The bottom third would be blue, the color designating friendly forces on a map. The middle third would be black, because being light infantry, the brigade would have to move with stealth and especially operate at night.

"When you're light infantry you better own the night," said Umbarger, who served as the brigade's commander from 1996 to 2000. He's been the adjutant general since 2004.

The background's upper third would be red, which represents being in enemy territory and on the attack.

Altogether, the patch represented light infantrymen who would move with great stealth from safety and into the enemy's teeth.

Brigade leadership submitted the patch design, along with one for the unit crest, a motto, "Point the Way," and a nickname, "Nighthawks."

The patch came back with some changes. The multicolor background had been changed to blue, and there was a bayonet inside the arrow.

"Quite, frankly, it's not quite infantry blue," Umbarger said, of the new background color, but it still made for a strong patch, and they liked the bayonet idea, so they agreed to the changes the heraldry institute made.

The Nighthawks had their patch, along with a unit crest and "Point the Way" as their motto.

"It's a once in a lifetime opportunity," said Umbarger of being a part of the process.



*Photo by Staff Sgt. James Bowie*

Indiana's Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. R. Martin Umbarger, shows off the 76th Infantry Brigade Combat Team patch. Umbarger helped design and select the patch in the mid 1990s.



76th IBCT distinctive unit insignia