

Fifth Army was activated Jan. 5, 1943, in Oujda, French Morocco, to assist with the Anglo-American invasion of French North Africa and subsequent invasion of Italy. Its first commander was Lt. Gen. Mark Clark.

After North Africa was secured, Fifth Army served as the main U.S. component of Operation Avalanche, the amphibious assault at Salerno, Italy in September, 1943. For the first few months of the invasion, Fifth Army made good progress up the Italian peninsula until the German Army established defensive positions at San Pietro Infine and Monte Cassino.

In the spring of 1944, the Allied forces were able to break through the German defenses and continue their march to Rome.

It was at this point, in early June, 1944, that one of the most controversial incidents in the history of Fifth Army occurred. British General Harold Alexander, commander of 15th Army Group, (Fifth Army's senior command), had decided that VI Corps (United States), would trap the retreating German forces coming out of Anzio, and then Fifth and British Eighth Army would annihilate them. However, Clark diverted his forces to Rome, and thus, on June 4, 1944, Fifth Army became the first Allied military force to liberate a Fascist controlled capitol.

Unfortunately, Clark's refusal to obey Alexander's orders allowed the German forces to escape and reestablish a line north of Rome.

The Fifth did not stop in Rome for long, they continued to fight their way through Italy and on May 5, 1945 they linked up with the U.S. Seventh Army near the Austrian-Italian border and three days later, the war in Europe was over. Fifth Army had fought in sustained combat for 602 days, a record for any modern American military unit. Fifth Army was deactivated on Oct. 2, 1945 at Camp Myles Standish, Mass.

The Fifth would find new life when it was reactivated nine months later June 11, 1946, in Chicago, Illinois. It would later move to Fort Sheridan, Illinois, where it would stay until it merged with Fourth Army June 30, 1971.

This merger also necessitated a move to Fort Sam Houston where the newly enlarged Fifth Army took up residence in the historic quadrangle where it assumed responsibility for 14 states, (Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas and Wisconsin). In 1983, as the result of a reorganization of the Army, Fifth Army's area of responsibility was reduced to eight states.

In 2004, with the War on Terror in full swing, Fifth Army was given a new mission - to be the dedicated Army Service Component Command to U.S. Northern Command. NORTHCOM is the unified command responsible for defending the U.S. homeland and coordinating defense support of civil authorities. Army North, or Fifth Army, achieved full operating capability between September 2005 and October 2006. Army North assumed responsibility for operational control of Joint Task Force - Civil Support and Joint Task Force - North in October 2008.