

COLONEL PETER A. PETITO **US Army, Retired (Deceased)**



Peter A. Petito was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1913. He received a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics from Illinois Technical University of Chicago. Enlisting in the Army in 1933, he was commissioned as an Infantry officer in 1936. He was placed on active duty status in 1940.

In World War II, COL Petito first fought with the Americal (Infantry) Division alongside the US Marines in the heroic effort to secure the island of Guadalcanal from the Japanese. He was also involved in the 600-mile march over the mountains between India and Burma and spent three months in Burma conducting raids and skirmishes behind enemy lines as part of "Merrill's Marauders."

Armed with this experience, COL Petito served as an Instructor in jungle tactics at the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia, from 1944 to 1946.

Petito left the Army in 1946 as a Lieutenant Colonel to continue his career in Mathematics. However, missing the professional challenges and camaraderie of the military, he returned to active duty a year later as a Major in the Army's Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC).

COL Petito began intelligence training at the newly established CIC Center at Fort Holabird, Maryland. With his proficiency in the Italian language, he was assigned to the 428th CIC Detachment in Vicenza, Italy. This assignment only lasted eight months as he participated in the closeout of the Mediterranean Theater of Operations. He then transferred to the 7970th CIC Group in Frankfurt, Germany before returning to Fort Holabird to serve as the Executive Officer of the CIC Center for two years.

In 1953, Petito was sent to Austria to take charge of the closeout operations of the 430th CIC Detachment there. In 1955, he found himself back at the CIC Center as a department head. In 1957 he was assigned as Executive Officer and then commander of the 109th CIC Group.

COL Petito retired from active duty in 1961 with 26 years of active military service. In 1964, he joined the civil service as an Intelligence Specialist. Again, his knowledge of Italian landed him a position as Liaison Officer with the 7970th in the Vicenza area where he stayed until 1972. He spent one tour with the 902nd Special Operations Unit in

Virginia working as a Special Agent. Wanting to get back to Italy, he took a job as a Liaison Officer in Naples with the NATO Military Intelligence Unit. In 1982, he transferred to his final civil service assignment, the 584th MI Detachment in Vicenza, serving as the Chief of the unit's Liaison Section. In this final tour of duty, he served three different commanders of the 584th and saw many changes within the 66th MI Brigade.

COL Petito retired in 1987 at the age of 73, with more than 50 years of government service. When asked what he felt was his most important accomplishment, he replied, "My time in combat, because I survived."

COL Petito was inducted into the MI Hall of Fame in 1988. He passed away in November 1998 at the age of 84.