



HISTORY

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SCHOOL AND TRAINING CAMPS

In summer 1941, war against Japan seemed imminent. General John Weckerling and Colonel Kai E. Rasmussen recognized the importance of having Army men skilled in the Japanese language. They proposed to the War Department the necessity of a Japanese language school. Despite the doubt of such a program succeeding, Rasmussen was given permission and a \$2,000 budget to start a school.

On November 1, 1941, five weeks prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, the [Military Intelligence Service \(MIS\)](#) and the [Military Intelligence Service Language School \(MISLS\)](#), then-called the Fourth Army Intelligence School, was created at Crissy Field, Presidio, San Francisco. School commenced at an abandoned airplane hangar where classrooms consisted of boxes and crates to serve as chairs and tables. All the materials needed were scrounged from the main post while mimeographs were used to reproduce textbooks. John Aiso, chosen the chief instructor of the school, worked with seven other instructors in its first class.

The MISLS curriculum mainly emphasized military aspects of the Japanese language (*heigo*). Translation of textbooks and documents, POW interrogation and studying the cursive style of Japanese writing (*sosho*) was also included. Though students had to learn everything within six months, all passed with flying colors.

The first class of the MISLS consisted of 60 students and 45 of them graduated in May 1942. These graduates were sent to [Guadalcanal](#) and the [Aleutian Islands](#). The MIS proved its worth by translating documents and interrogating captives, obtaining vital information that led to victory. Upon hearing its value, several units and field commanders of both American and Allied forces who were once skeptical of the MIS requested its assistance. While the school proved its success, the outbreak of war and [Executive Order 9066](#) forced the school to the interior.

Camp Savage, located in Savage, Minnesota near Minneapolis was chosen as the new MISLS site. The governor of Minnesota, Harold E. Stassen kindly welcomed the school to his state. With new students and a larger staff, classes began in May 1942. By 1944, over 1,000 students, including [Nisei](#) and Caucasian soldiers enrolled at Savage. It became apparent that a larger facility was needed, so the school moved again to nearby Fort Snelling, Minnesota. More than 3,000 students went through training at the new school. In May 1946, Fort Snelling graduated its last class of students and moved back to the historic Presidio, Monterey site in June. The school was renamed the U.S. Army Language School.

After the surrender of Japan on August 15, 1945, the MISLS shifted its emphasis from military to general Japanese. Instead of learning *heigo* and military tactics, the focus became civil terminology, Japanese government and administration.