The current US Army South derives its heritage from the Panama Canal –

- **The Panama Canal Guard** operated 1907-17 and was involved in the early defence of the Canal, both before and after its opening in 1914.
- **The Panama Canal Department** was the Army command established in 1917, as a separate geographic command, and was to survive until into World War 2.
- **The Caribbean Defense Command** was formed on 10 February 1941, as the senior Army headquarters for the larger region and assumed control of Army, Army Air Corps and naval assets assigned to the region.
- **The Sixth Army** was activated in January 1943. It was also involved in operations in Rabaul, New Britain and in New Guinea. Units of the Sixth Army were later deployed at Leyte and Luzon in the Philippines, and its troops were earmarked for use in the invasion of Japan. After occupation of Japan it later returned to the US, with headquarters at the Presidio in San Francisco and took on a training role until deactivated in June 1995.
• The US Army Caribbean, as part of the US Caribbean Command, was established on 15 November 1947, with the deactivation of the Caribbean Defense Command, and the reorganisation of the Army, Navy and the newly independent US Air Force. After the failed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961 and rumours of Soviet assistance to Cuba, the US enhanced the forces available in the Canal Zone in 1962.

• The US Army Forces Southern Command became part of the new US Southern Command in 1963, which had replaced the former US Caribbean Command. The new designation reflected the fact that its primary responsibility was in Central and South America, rather than in the Caribbean. Forces in the Canal Zone saw changes, including a move of its headquarters from Amador to Fort Clayton, close to the Miraflores Locks.

• US Army South, as a component of US Southern Command, was activated as a major Army command in 1986, still with a headquarters at Fort Clayton. These headquarters were the headquarters for the US invasion in December 1989 – January 1990 (Operation Just Cause) as the headquarters of the Joint Task Force-South.

• US Southern Command acquired unified command for all US military forces in the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico in June 1997 (the area of responsibility excludes Puerto Rico and Mexico). By this time a drawdown of US forces in the Canal Zone had begun, in preparation for a handover of control to Panama in 1999.

• US Southern Command moved its headquarters from Fort Clayton in 1999, initially to Fort Buchanan in Puerto Rico, and then to Fort Sam Houston in Texas in 2002.

In the wake of changes in response to the 9/11 attacks in 2001, in 2008 the US Army South and US Sixth Army merged, with responsibility for operations anywhere in the area covered by US Southern Command. The “new, combined lineage and heraldry of the 2 historic organizations — one that played a pivotal role in the security of the Panama Canal and the broader region of Latin
America and the Caribbean, and one that fought a series of famous battles in the Pacific theatre of the Second World War”. Its insignia was based on that originally approved for the Caribbean Defense Command on 3 May 1944, and currently applied to the US Army Caribbean in February 1948, and US Army Forces Southern Command in 1963. It was reassigned for US Army South in 1987.

The white star seen on US and other Allied vehicles during World War 2 and became synonymous with America and the Allied cause. However, by the 1990s, as a national symbol it faded in prominence when the US Army began painting it as 4-inch black stars on vehicle bumpers instead of white stars on the hoods and sides. However, in 2006 a newer version with black, white and yellow elements (said to represent the components of gunpowder – charcoal, saltpetre and sulphur) was adopted as the official US Army logo.

This shoulder sleeve insignia was originally approved for use by the Sixth Army in 1927. The original design was cancelled and a new design approved on 10 January 1945. It was later amended to change the background colour from olive drab to Army Green in 1960.

https://www.arsouth.army.mil/About/History/