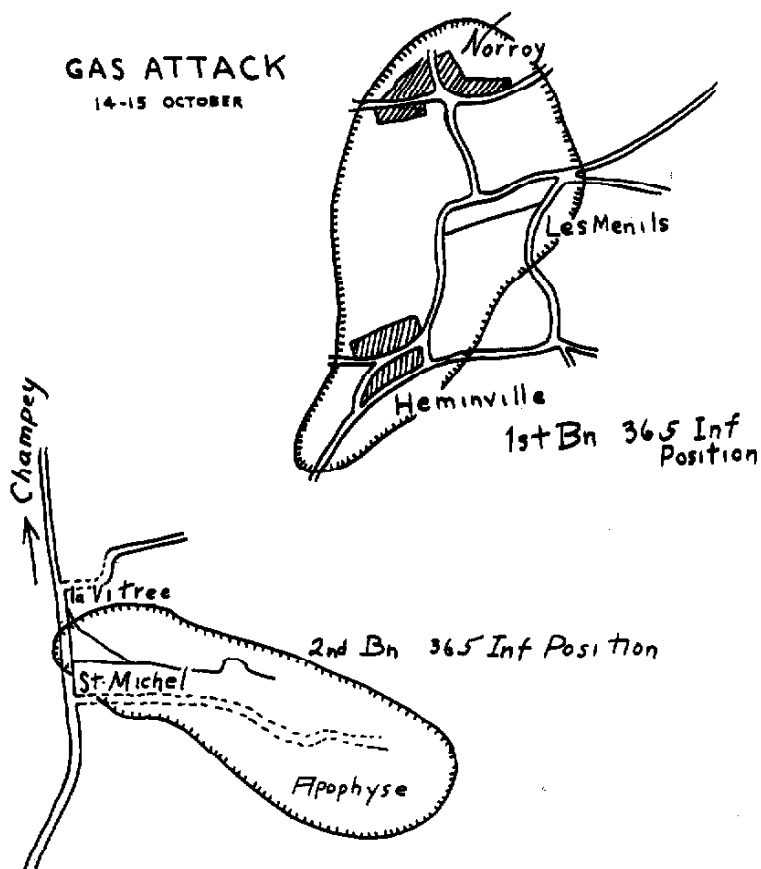


**U. S. ARMY CHEMICAL CORPS HISTORICAL STUDIES**  
**GAS WARFARE IN WORLD WAR I**  
**THE 92nd DIVISION IN THE MARBACHE SECTOR**  
**October 1918**



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**Washington, D.C.**

The 92nd Division in the Marbache Sector

by

Rexmond C. Cochrane

GAS WARFARE IN WORLD WAR I

Study Number 16

U.S. ARMY CHEMICAL CORPS  
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The 92nd Division in the Marbache Sector

Prepared by

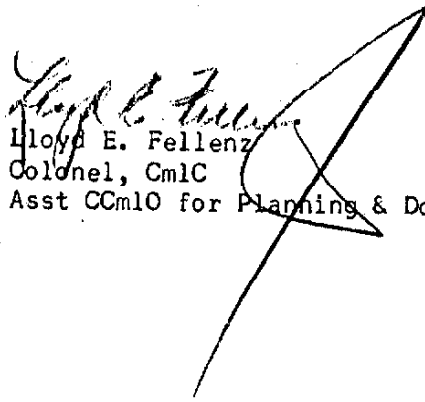
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with

U.S. Army Chemical Corps

This is an accepted draft study on gas warfare in World War I

  
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### Foreword

This is a tentative study of the gas experience of the 92nd Division during World War I. This study is not presented as a definitive and official history, but is reproduced for current reference use within the Military Establishment pending the publication of an approved history.

The author was assisted in his research by Mrs. Charlotte M. Bolin, Mr. Guy F. Goodfellow, and Mr. George H. Dengler.

Note to Reader: Comments and suggestions relative to accuracy and adequacy of treatment are invited, and may be transmitted to the Chief, U.S. Army Chemical Corps Historical Office, Army Chemical Center, Maryland.

## THE 92nd DIVISION IN THE MARBACHE SECTOR

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## THE 92nd DIVISION IN THE MARBACHE SECTOR

Except for its staff and unit commanders down to battalion, the 92nd Division was an all-Negro outfit. The 367th Infantry, for example, had 9 white staff officers, 97 colored company and other unit officers and 3,699 colored enlisted men.<sup>1</sup>

The division with its preponderance of colored officers was an experiment, formed under considerable political pressure in the States, and as it turned out, unfortunate in its choice of commander and some of its unit officers.<sup>2</sup> The weaknesses of the division were those of its sentimental, weak, or unsympathetic higher officers and of its junior officers who, though the highest type of men available, had no tradition of leadership. Despite its handicaps, the division performed on the whole with considerable credit and was certainly no worse than some of the other divisions in the AEF.

1

Emmett J. Scott, Official History of the American Negro in the World War (n.p., 1919), p. 190; Memo, CofS War Dept for TAG, 24 Oct 1917, sub: Orgn of 92nd Div, Colored (92nd Div Box 1, 13.6).

Other works consulted for this study include John H. Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom (New York, 1947); Kelly Miller, History of the World War for Human Rights (n.p., 1919); J. A. Jamieson, Complete History of the Colored Soldiers in the World War (New York, 1919).

2

Maj Gen R. L. Bullard, Personalities and Reminiscences of the War (New York, 1925), p. 292. The 92nd Div was in Bullard's Second Army in the Marbache sector. Bullard devotes a chapter to the 92nd and is generally unsympathetic.

So far as can be learned, the troops of the 92nd never joked about gas, though like troops everywhere they grew careless about gas discipline at times and in action even discarded or lost their gas masks. Yet, if the records of the division are valid evidence, the 92nd had perhaps the most conscientious gas personnel of any division so far examined, and its gas training was as thorough as its gas officers could make it. For all its innate respect for gas and all its training, approximately half the total casualties in the division in its seven months in France were the result of gas. How this came about is the subject of the present study of the 92nd Division.

The two principal operations of the division, in the Argonne and in the Marbache sector, east of the Moselle, have been described in some detail in this study. Both were minor operations but of considerably significance because they reveal the circumstances under which Negro troops in the AEF fought and how they reacted to those circumstances.

Little gas was encountered by the single regiment involved in the Argonne episode but that little was exaggerated, by its white officers as well as the men. The operation itself was essentially a series of battalion patrol actions between full-scale divisional attacks on the right and left. Largely through ignorance of the circumstances of the operation, the effort of the Negro regiment was belittled, and the insult rankled to the end of the war.

In the Marbache sector, in the attack of Second Army on 10 November, the 92nd made the best advance of any division in the line. Again, it was a relatively minor action, but it was carried out in the face of a major gas attack,

and proved that the 92nd Division could face gas and HE as well as the next division.

### In the Trenches at St. Die

The 92nd Division, organized on 29 November 1917 under the command of Maj. Gen. Charles C. Ballou, was made up of elements trained at seven different camps, located in Kansas, Iowa, Illinois, Ohio, Maryland, New Jersey, and New York.<sup>3</sup> The widely scattered elements of the division began moving overseas in May 1918 and the next month were brought together for the first time in the training area at Bourbonne-les-Baines, in the Haute Marne.

When consolidated, the 92nd comprised the 365th and 366th Infantry, 183rd Brigade, under Brig. Gen. Malvern H. Barnum; the 367th and 368th Infantry, 184th Brigade, commanded by Brig. Gen. William H. Hay; the 349th, 350th, and 351st FA, 167th FA Brigade, under Brig. Gen. John A. Sherburne; and machine gun, engineer, signal, medical, and train components.

The 92nd was one of the two Negro combat divisions in the AEF. The organization of the other Negro division, the 93rd, was never completed. The only components of the 93rd, its four infantry regiments, arrived in France in April 1918 and were brigaded with French divisions operating in the Champagne and Verdun regions. They remained with the French as separate

---

3

The troops were trained in localities where it was believed little racial prejudice existed and were scattered to keep the proportion of white troops to colored in the camps at least three to one. See Memo, Col J. D. Leitch, GS for CofS War Dept, 9 Oct 1917 (92nd Div Box 1, 13.6).



units to the end of the war.<sup>4</sup>

At Bourbonne-les-Bains it was mid-July before the 92nd Division received its gas masks and training in gas defense could begin. Soon after, the first officers and NCOs went off to the AEF gas schools, and the officer who had originally been appointed Division Tuberculosis Specialist was made Division Medical Gas Officer.<sup>5</sup>

The gas officers under Capt. G. H. Hardesty, Division Gas Officer,<sup>6</sup> apparently had all the gas instruction material that was available at

4

That the French thought highly of them is evident in Cable P-1335, Pershing to CofS Washington, D.C., 19 Jun, and Ltr 3315, Foch to Pershing, 26 Aug (U.S. Army in the World War, Washington, D.C., 1948, II, Policies, pp. 479, 585).

The exploits of the 93rd appear in the works cited in fn. 1 and in Arthur W. Little, From Harlem to the Rhine (New York, 1936); Monroe Mason and Arthur Furr, The American Negro Soldier with the Red Hand of France (Boston, 1921); Z. Withers, Heroes of 1918: Stories from the Lips of Black Fighters (n.p., 1919), and many others.

5

Ltr, CG IV Corps to CG 92nd Div, 29 Jul, sub: Gas Officers and NCOs (92nd Div Box 4, 52.3); Ltr, Div Surg to C Surg, AEF, 12 Jul, sub: DMGO (Med Dept Box 4005, Memos).

6

Hardesty was DGO until his death (lobar pneumonia, not associated with gas) in early Oct, when for six weeks Lts Allen and Anderegg and Capt Wicklisse B. Lyne, in succession, took over. The last DGO, Capt Louis S. Davis, came in on 13 Nov. See Ltr, DGO to C CWS, 2 Dec, sub: Monthly Rpt (92nd Div Box 81, fol 7).

the time,<sup>7</sup> and gas training was entered into with enthusiasm. As the Division Gas Officer said shortly after the troops arrived in their first battle sector, "The gas discipline is good with these colored troops as they take to gas training like a duck to water, [since] they fear gas more than 'Boche Germans'." <sup>8</sup>

On 21 August advance infantry elements of the 92nd arrived in the St. Die sector, high in the Vosges, to begin the relief, with the 87th French Division, of the 5th Division in training there.<sup>9</sup> Five days earlier, the 5th Division had disrupted the peace of the sector by assaulting and capturing the village of Frapelle, and the Germans had thoroughly gassed the village following the operation.<sup>10</sup> The enemy activity was just beginning to subside as the 92nd came in.

Until 30 August, while the French retained command of the sector, the 92nd by companies was instructed in trench maneuvers and in patrolling in the mountains.

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7

"Instructions for Gas Defense Service," 1917, is in 92nd Div Box 60, fol 151; "Defense Against Gas," the 1918 manual, is in 92nd Div Box 81, fol 17. See also ltr, Actg C of Def Div, Gas Serv to all gas officers, 14 Jun, sub: Orders for Gas Defense, same file, fol 6. Memo, Actg CGO V Corps to DGO 92nd Div, n.d., forwarded "Standing Orders for Defense against Gas," issued by 30th Div, 24 Jul, as guide for gas orders (92nd Div Box 82, fol 40).

8

Ltr, DGO 92nd Div to C CWS, 1 Sep, sub: Gas atks on our front (GAF - 92nd Div).

9

FO 4, 92nd Div, 18 Aug (92nd Div Box 2, 32.1); FO 8, 92nd Div, 29 Aug.

10

See Study No. 7, "The 5th Division Captures Frapelle."

On 1 September, two days after the division took over the sector, small enemy units supported by heavy fire, tear gas, and sneeze gas made a series of raids over a period of four days on Frapelle in an effort to retake it. The raids were repulsed at a cost of 8 killed, 39 wounded, and 45 gassed in the 92nd, and the vicious artillery and mortar fire by the supporting French discouraged further enemy efforts against Frapelle.<sup>11</sup>

As a result of these raids, and the discovery that masks were not always carried or were not carried correctly, practice in the use of gas masks was ordered as a regular part of daily training. "Soldiers will be required to wear them during a portion of all exercises, such as bayonet, bomb-throwing and target practice." <sup>12</sup>

It may have been the gas used prior to these raids that first raised the problem of the fit of the Small Box Respirator (SBR) on Negro troops. Apparently their original training masks gave no trouble, since it is known that all the troops went through gas chamber tests satisfactorily before leaving the States. But in France the standard SBR proved ill-fitting, and in early August the Division Gas Officer reported that at least 1,500 men in the division could not be fitted properly and many others were still not safely protected from gas, much less able to see out of the eye-pieces properly when masked.

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<sup>11</sup>

DOR 8 - 10, 92nd Div, 31 Aug - 4 Sep (92nd Div Box 3, 33.1).

<sup>12</sup>

Bul 85, 92nd Div, 2 Sep (92nd Div Box 5, 64.4); Opns Memo 9, 92nd Div, 4 Sep (Box 2, 32.14).

Efforts made to modify the SBR for them were unsatisfactory and in early September the 92nd was granted priority "on the new Tissot face-piece respirator when they arrive." <sup>13</sup> Later gas attack reports suggest that neither Tissot or ARS masks were ever issued, and that in some cases the mouthpiece of the mask alone may have been used during and after gas attacks.

The mountainous terrain of the St. Die sector made extensive military operations impractical and the war there was confined for the most part to minor forays on one another's trenches and brief skirmishes between patrols out in no man's land. Artillery fire on both sides was negligible, and by tacit agreement the French and Germans refrained from shelling each other's headquarters at St. Die and Saales, confining their daily schedule of fire, usually precise to the minute, to the trenches between those towns and the roads and villages beyond.<sup>14</sup>

The terrain also made training exercises all but impossible. Corps reported that training and discipline were falling off badly everywhere in the sector and insisted that battalion problems and exercises in open warfare be carried out intensively, despite the terrain, since there would be little chance for such training later on. It may be suspected that the

<sup>13</sup>

Ltr, DGO to G - 4 2nd Army through IV Corps, 7 Aug, sub: Large Respirators (IV Corps Box 95, fol 172); Ltr, Actg C Def Div, CWS to DGO 92nd Div, 5 Sep, sub: Trip of Gas Officer; Ltr, ibid., 10 Sep, sub: Miscellaneous (92nd Div Box 81, fol 21). See further corresp in Aug and Sep in AEF GHQ G - 4 Box 4455, 470.6, fol 89.

<sup>14</sup>

Scott, Official History, pp. 135 - 36; DCRs, 92nd Div, passim.

criticism by corps that "too much time [was] wasted" and "what training there was was perfunctory" in the divisions in the sector also applied to the 92nd.<sup>15</sup>

Life in the sector was thus largely limited to constant repair work on the trenches, construction of new trenches and gas proof shelters, particularly in and around Frapelle, construction and repair of camouflage, and patrolling both day and night. Twenty patrols a day were common, and in one 24-hour period a total of forty patrols was made as groups went out to bring in a German body near the lines, to reconnoitre the enemy lines, examine and repair wire, and to intercept enemy patrols that might be out.<sup>16</sup>

Except for the occasional enemy raids the short month in the sector, from 29 August to 19 September, was not particularly hazardous. Artillery fire came into the area more or less on schedule, and periodic bursts of rifle and machine gun fire sometimes caught the unwary, but most dangerous, where the lines came close to one another, were the hand grenades lobbed over without warning.<sup>17</sup>

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15

Ltr, CG VII Corps to CGs 6th, 29th, 92nd Divs, 30 Aug, sub: Tng Memo; Tng Memo, 92nd Div, 5 Sep (both in 92nd Div Box 4, 50.4).

16

SOI 18, 92nd Div, 15 Sep (92nd Div Box 1, 20.1).

17

A greater hazard was the frequency with which night patrols were fired on from their own trenches and day patrols fired on by the neighboring units and the artillery. The consequent lack of aggressiveness in patrolling was the subject of Opns Memos 13 and 19, 92nd Div, 7 and 13 Sep (92nd Div Box 2, 32.14)

During those three weeks G - 2 generously estimated that enemy artillery had fired a total of 22,366 shells into the sector. "Considerable" gas fire was reported between 31 August and 4 September in the raids on Frapelle, but the only gas attack designated as such was one on 2 September, when an officer failed to recognize the odor of mustard gas mixed with HE fire and he and eight men were gassed in a dugout, and another on 7 - 8 September, when a reported 730 gas shells fell on the trenches, resulting in one gas casualty.<sup>18</sup>

In the same period, 25 August - 19 September, G - 3 reported 24 killed, 108 wounded, 49 gassed, and 5 men missing as a result of small arms fire, patrol skirmishes, raids, and shell fire. Only one man was specifically reported as killed by artillery fire. In addition to combat casualties, 12 men were killed accidentally and 31 wounded as a result of careless handling of weapons.<sup>19</sup>

Hospital records and Medical Department records vary considerably with these division figures as well as with each other. Official Medical

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18

SOI 1 - 22, 29 Aug - 19 Sep; DOR 14, 7 - 8 Sep; Ltr, BGO 2nd Bn 367th Inf to RGO, 2 Sep, sub: Gas Shell Atk (92nd Div Box 81, fol 7).

Spencer, "History of Gas Atks on the AEF," III, 575 - 79, has a gas atk of 29 Aug, with 2 casualties, and another on 2 Sep, when approximately 200 - 250 shells were rpted to have caused 54 casualties, all but 4 returned to duty within a day.

19

DOR 1 - 25, 25 Aug - 19 Sep. The excessive number of gas casualties reported in the Army sector (in Opns Memo 17, 92nd Div, 11 Sep, Box 2, 32-14) was not applicable to the 92nd Div.

Department statistics reveal 21 killed, 202 wounded and 99 gassed between 20 August and 25 September. Field Hospital 366, which did not record deaths, shows 130 wounded and 168 gassed in the same period. However, 94 of the gas cases admitted 2 - 5 September as "mustard inhalation" cases had their records changed on 8 September to "Observation. No disease found." Actual gas cases in FH 366 were therefore 74.<sup>20</sup>

#### Combat Liaison in the Meuse-Argonne

On 20 September the 81st American Division, brigaded with a French unit for training purposes, took over the St. Die sector and the 92nd left for the Meuse-Argonne front. On the eve of battle, the division less the 368th Infantry was placed in I Corps reserve, back of the 77th Division, in the woods northwest of Clermont-Beauchamp Farm. In the opening days of the campaign, battalions from each of the three regiments in reserve were engaged in constructing passages for supplies and ammunition across no man's land. Only the 368th Infantry, commanded by Col. Fred R. Brown, took part in the battle.<sup>21</sup>

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20

FH 366 admission lists, Med Dept Box 4012; Med Dept of the U S Army in the World War, XV, Medical and Casualty Statistics (Washington, D.C., 1925), pp. 1030-1180.

21

FO 8a, 92nd Div, 17 Sep; FO 11, 24 Sep; FO 12, 25 Sep. NOTE: Divisional SOIs and DORs for the period 20 Sep - 8 Oct are missing. Details of 368th Inf opns are largely confined to a 58-page rpt cited below.

In the attack on 26 September, two liaison regiments, one French and one American, were to cover the gap along the west edge of the Argonne Forest between Gourard's Fourth French Army and Pershing's First Army. The day before, the 368th Infantry was attached to Groupment Durand, the French-American liaison force under XXXVIII French Corps direction, and moved up to the line in column of battalions, taking over a 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>-kilometer front from a battalion of the 11th Cuirassiers of the 1st D.C.P. (Dismounted Cavalry Division), north and south of the Biesme river. The 11th Cuirassiers on the left was the French liaison force, and on the right of the 368th was the 77th Division which was to advance through the Argonne Forest (Map No. 1).

In the attack that opened the Meuse-Argonne offensive, said the official history of the 92nd Division, "at least two unsuccessful attempts were made to advance before the first objectives were reached....During the five days in which the 368th held this position a total advance of five kilometers was made and the village of Binarville was taken....The total casualties exceeded 450 men killed, wounded and gassed." 22

This statement, frequently repeated in substance in other histories of the 92nd Division, is misleading on several counts, in that the 368th Infantry made no attack, had no orders to attack, and had no "objectives" as such. The mission of the regiment was to keep in contact with the enemy on its front as the French and Americans on either side drove forward, to maintain

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22

Scott, Official History, pp. 141 - 42.



24 SEP 1918

MAP NO. 1

liaison with the 11th Cuirassiers and the 77th Division, and in the event of an enemy retreat, to follow, in the direction of Binarville, regulating its movements on those of the 11th Cuirassiers.<sup>23</sup>

Although First Army may have been under the impression that the French and American liaison force was "to flank the Argonne on the west,"<sup>24</sup> no such phrase appears in any order for the operation. The 368th was not to attack but to push out strong reconnoitering patrols, occupy the first line of enemy trenches if they were found abandoned or lightly held, and from them dispatch further patrols toward the second enemy line to seek and maintain contact with his forces. Nothing was said in any of the orders about what the patrols were to do if they met strong opposition, but since they had no weapons except their rifles and bayonets it must have been assumed they would retire until the main forces on either side had broken the enemy line.

The front of the 368th Infantry on the edge of the Argonne Forest was heavily wooded, rolling terrain through which a complex of well-built trenches, boyaux, dugouts, and tramways had been constructed during the four years that the sector had been occupied by German Landwehr units. Boyaux or branch trenches and tramways connected the intricate trench system vertically; there were no roads or paths in the regimental sector and "the

<sup>23</sup>

Opns O 10, Gpmt Durand, 25 Sep, and Opns O 37, 368th Inf, 1500, 25 Sep, both reproduced in ltr, CO 368th Inf to TAG AEF, 15 Nov, sub: Rpt of engagement per 816 A.R. (92nd Div Box 10, 33.6). This ltr and atchd documents totaling 58 pages will be cited hereafter as Brown Rpt, 15 Nov.

<sup>24</sup>

Ltr, CofS First Army to CG I Corps, 22 Sep (U.S. Army in the World War, IX, Meuse-Argonne, p. 119).

intervening terrain was a jungle of wire entanglements, chevaux de frise [spiked timbers or angle irons strung with barbed wire], and ruined forest." 25

On the night of 25 - 26 September, the two Landwehr divisions holding the Argonne front were reenforced by the 76th Reserve Division, which was inserted between the Landwehr units so that parts of two regiments, the 83rd and 254th (9th Landwehr and 76th Reserve Divisions), faced the 368th Infantry (Map No. 2). The 76th Reserve had been brought from the Eastern Front in March, and though far from fresh at this time was to give a good account of itself throughout the Meuse-Argonne campaign. 26

In the operations that began on 26 September, said Colonel Brown, the 368th Infantry commander, "owing to the extent of the front covered and the necessity of advancing by small groups, the battalion commanders could influence only a small part of their command....The character of the terrain and the German defense system made the advance depend entirely on the aggressiveness and leadership of the company and platoon commanders," 27 and they were in no way prepared or equipped for the task that confronted them.

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25

Brown Rpt, 15 Nov, pp. 17, 19.

26

Third Army Order Ia 10090, 24 Sep (I Res Corps Annexes to WD, German Files Box 111, fol I, p. 1); History of 251 Divisions of the German Army... (Washington, D.C., 1920), p. 530. Note: German Files Box will hereafter be abbreviated GFB.

27

Brown Rpt, 15 Nov, p. 5.

76. Res. Inf. Dir.

SHOWING DISPOSITIONS ON 25 SEP, 30 SEP, AND 4 OCT

Conde  
Regiduría  
#

Source: situation maps, 76<sup>th</sup> Res Div,  
in German Files Box 200, fol II

R. J. R. 253

P. F. R. 252. (P. F. R. 254)

1Z298 L. J. R. 116

1 Komp L.F.R.  
830

17 Zugl. J.R. 183

Levinson

1000 1500 2000 meters

Rs. 1.25,000

MAP NO. 2

Although a six-hour preparatory bombardment was carried out on the fronts of the units on either side of them,<sup>28</sup> no artillery preparation was made to destroy the wire on the front of the 368th on the morning of 26 September, and the small wire-cutters issued the troops proved almost useless against the massive wire defenses. As was customary, a company of heavy machine guns was attached to the leading battalion. With clearances of no more than 20 yards, these weapons could not be used in the woods. The troops had no Chauchat or automatic rifles, no hand or rifle grenades, nor could their 37-mm. guns or Stokes Mortars be maneuvered over the terrain. Operating in small detachments, they had no flares for signaling, and wire communications quickly broke down, as did water and rations supply, for which division was responsible.<sup>29</sup> It seems clear that the 368th Infantry was not organized for attack but only for limited reconnaissance patrol action.

At 0525 on 26 September, Major Max A. Elser's 2nd Battalion, 368th Infantry, moved out, but the mass of wire made progress slow and resulted almost at once in considerable disorganization in the leading companies. The morale of the troops was not improved by several gas alarms sounded between midnight and H hour or by the major's complaint of "slight gas here occasionally."

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28

See Journal de Marche, 38th Corps, 26 Sep (French Files Box 108, 30.6).

29

Summary, Brown Rpt, 15 Nov, pp. 18 - 19; Opns Rpt, 351st MG Bn, n.d. (92nd Div Box 11, 33.6); Rpt of 37-mm. Platoon, Brown Rpt, p. 36; Rpt of Reg Mun O, Brown Rpt, pp. 34 - 35; Compte-Rendu, 1st D.C.P., 26 Sep (French Files Box 108, 30.9). For enemy confirmation of lack of fire from 368th Inf front, see 252nd Regt WD, 26 Sep (76th Res Div, GFB 200, fol II).

**THE ADVANCE  
WEST OF THE  
ARGONNE**  
26-30 SEPTEMBER

9th Cuir and 1st Bn 368th Inf 30 Sep

Binarville

1st D.C.P. on 10 Oct 30 Sep

77th Div (30th-Inf) 30 Sep

Dépôt des machines

77th Div 28-29 Sep

Tr. de Dromadaire

Tr. de l'Euphrate

Vallée de Moreau

28 Sep

27 Sep

26 Sep

25 Sep

24 Sep

23 Sep

22 Sep

21 Sep

20 Sep

19 Sep

18 Sep

17 Sep

16 Sep

15 Sep

14 Sep

13 Sep

12 Sep

11 Sep

10 Sep

9 Sep

8 Sep

7 Sep

6 Sep

5 Sep

4 Sep

3 Sep

2 Sep

1 Sep

368th Inf

11th Cuir held by 368th Inf on 23 Sep

evening 26 Sep

21-23 Sep

la Harazée

la Biesme

Vienne-le-Chau

Scale: 1/20,000

Source: maps in 92nd Div Box 16, 92.6, and in Battle Mon Comm study of 92nd Div operations.

MAP NO. 3

Two hours after the men moved out he reported that he had no water carts and demanded that headquarters at once "arrange a plan to obtain water" for his men.<sup>30</sup>

At 1035, five hours later, the regimental commander, Colonel Brown, reported his "Front Bn. [still] against Boche wire and working their way through.....With no tools nor artillery preparation passage of enemy's wire is very difficult." <sup>31</sup> Some time later the battalion reconnoitered the first enemy trench positions and found them empty.<sup>32</sup> Elements of one company continued on for almost three kilometers to Tirpitz Trench where, after killing six Germans and taking one prisoner, the group was taken under fire by machine gun nests and withdrew (Map No. 3).

Just after noon Major Elser, who had set out at 0800 to advance his command post, was reported to have "temporarily lost his way." At 1630 the

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<sup>30</sup>

Msg, Elser to CO 368th Inf, 0505, 26 Sep; Msg to Adj 368th Inf, 0725 (Brown Rpt, 15 Nov, pp. 48, 49); SOI, 368th Inf, 25 - 26 Sep (92nd Div Box 9, 20.1).

On 25 Sep, Group Argonne rptd firing over 7,700 yellow cross (mustard gas) shells into the area southwest of Varennes, including traffic points in the Briesme and Courtes-Chausses valleys. See Evening rpt, Gp Arg to AOK 3, 25 Sep (GFB 25, fol I, p. 24). Some of the gas may have later drifted into the 368th Inf area.

<sup>31</sup>

Msg, CO 368th Inf to CG 184th Brig (Brown Rpt, p. 11).

<sup>32</sup>

Intel Memo, O & I, 368th Inf for CG 184th Brig, 1510, 26 Sep (92nd Div Box 9, 27.7).

battalion PC still had not been found,<sup>33</sup> and by that time the wire, the woods, the maze of the German defense system, and the inexperience of the junior officers had resulted in almost complete dispersal of the battalion into platoons and section units across the sector.

By nightfall the larger part of two companies had returned to the lines, and during the night Major Elser himself brought back all but three platoons of the other two companies from the second line of enemy trenches. Long out of touch with regimental headquarters and unable to establish liaison with any unit on his flanks, said Major Elser, "I decided to withdraw until I could get in touch with the Commanding Officer, 368th Infantry." <sup>34</sup>

The machine gun battalion commander, leading two largely helpless platoons of guns that day, said the infantrymen around him had got about fifty yards into the woods above the wire when the enemy opened fire. The panic that followed was "due, I think, to lack of definite operation orders and the nervous state of the battalion commander." <sup>35</sup>

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33

Msg, LO 2nd Bn to CO 3rd Bn, 1215, 26 Sep; Msg, CO Co I to CO 3rd Bn, 1630 (Brown Rpt, 15 Nov, pp. 48, 50).

34

Brown Rpt, 15 Nov, pp. 6, 14, 16; Rpt of Opns, 2nd Bn (p. 27). Msg, CO 368th Inf to CG 184th Brig, 2000, 26 Sep (p. 51), rptd Elser's return, the battalion's need for water, and said that though it had encountered frequent artillery and machine gun fire, it had "apparently roamed at large without interference from or encountering Boche infantry."

35

Capt S. H. Dickey, Opns Rpt, 351st MG Bn, n.d. (92nd Div Box 11, 33.6).



The regimental surgeon reported that the battalion medical staff had "changed and formed new stations six times" during the day in an effort to keep up with the troops. This had been its principal activity since it treated just one casualty, a machine gun wound in Company F.<sup>36</sup>

The next day, 27 September, on orders from the French, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, echeloned in depth, reenforced again by a heavy machine gun company, and supported by a group of 75's, moved out with orders to push reconnaissance forces towards Clotilde and Dromadaire Trenches. Elser's 2nd Battalion advanced about two kilometers against considerably more opposition than it had met the first day but got to Finlande Trench and later to Tirpitz Trench. Major B. F. Norris's 3rd Battalion reached Euphrate Trench, and despite some panic as a result of enemy shelling, these positions were occupied through the night. Reports of gas that day by the two battalions were probably greatly exaggerated, since gas officers were to report no casualties in the zone of advance during the operation.<sup>37</sup>

On the morning of 28 September, with orders to get into Dromadaire Trench and then send forces towards the town of Binarville, the 2nd Battalion advanced approximately 800 meters, just beyond Tirpitz Trench, when enemy machine guns opened up on it. "Again the officers failed to hold their companies and platoons together and failed to hold the ground gained." (Major

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36

Opns Rpt of Med Dept, 368th Inf (Brown Rpt, 15 Nov, pp. 31, 33).

37

Brown Rpt, 15 Nov, pp. 6, 12, 14, 16, 17.

Elser later could not recall receiving either order, though they were "delivered personally" to him that morning.)<sup>38</sup>

Another advance was made that afternoon, and again meeting machine gun fire the troops retired without orders back to their starting point. At 1700 Major Elser, because of "physical exhaustion," was replaced by Capt. James T. Burns, regimental O & I officer.<sup>39</sup>

The Germans on the front of the 368th Infantry reported the loss of their outpost positions and penetration of the first line of resistance on 27 September, but a counterattack with reinforcements the next morning restored the line. Enemy reports agreed that "Raids over the whole front" continued on the 28th, with four assaults on the outpost positions in the afternoon, all of which were driven back by rifle fire and hand grenades.

A renewed attack against 9th Company 254th Regt was repulsed, two prisoners from American Negro Regt 368 and two machine guns were captured. 25 to 30 enemy dead noted in front of 9th Company. Losses: 1 dead, 4 wounded, 28 missing.<sup>40</sup>

Meanwhile, the 3rd Battalion on the right had moved out and against fairly

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38

See Msg, CO 368th Inf to Elser, 0720, 28 Sep, and notation on msg by CO 368th Inf (Brown Rpt, p. 52); Msg, CO 368th Inf to Elser, 1230, 28 Sep (p. 52), urged the necessity of extreme measures to get into Binarville as soon as possible.

39

Record of Events, Brown Rpt, p. 15. On 1 Nov Elser, then Lt Col, again commanded the 2nd Bn (Roster of officers in 92nd Div Box 82, fol 36).

40

Evening rpt, Gp Arg to AOK 3, 27 Sep (GFB 25, fol I, p. 26); 76th Res Brig WD, 28 Sep; 252nd Regt WD, 28 Sep; 354th Regt WD, 27 - 28 Sep (76th Res Div, GFB 200, fols II and III).

heavy fire came within 200 meters of Dromadaire Trench before machine gun fire supported by an artillery barrage halted it. All but a company retired without orders back to Euphrate Trench. The company that held was relieved the next day by the 9th Cuirassiers, coming up on the left to make an attack towards Binarville.<sup>41</sup>

It was about noontime on 29 September when the elements of the 2nd Battalion left in Euphrate and Tirpitz Trenches were relieved by Colonel J. N. Merrill's 1st Battalion, with orders to occupy all of Tirpitz Trench and prepare to advance. The 3rd Battalion in support in Breslau Trench and the 2nd assembling in the rear were to be reorganized for possible further action, although this would be difficult since they had lost or discarded much of their personal equipment.<sup>42</sup> That same day, after "an intense artillery bombardment," the 9th Cuirassiers were said to have successfully raided the Clotilde-Dromadaire Trenches.<sup>43</sup>

On the night of 29 September, 38th French Corps reported its line south of Bois de Cernay-south of Hill 140-Vallee Moreau-Hill 182-the wood one kilometer south of Binarville, with advance elements of the 77th American Division held up at Dépôt des Machines (see Map No. 1). The 9th Cuirassiers had not reached Clotilde-Dromadaire after all, their progress "held up before Tr. Gothe

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41

Brown Rpt, 15 Nov, pp. 12, 15, 17.

42

Brown Rpt, 15 Nov, p. 13; Gpmt Rive Droite, 38th Fr Corps, Order 55, 29 Sep (Brown Rpt, p. 10); Msg, CO 368th Inf to CO 1st Bn 368th Inf, 0900, 30 Sep (Brown Rpt, p. 55).

43

Brown Rpt, p. 13.

by machine guns." In general, corps reported, "l'ennemi oppose une sérieuse résistance." 44

The French had reached Bois de Cernay and Hill 140 on the first day and had been held there since; and as a glance at Map No. 3 indicates, the 77th Division had done no better than the 368th in its part of the Argonne.

German records of the first four days of the campaign describe repeated "patrol probing" and "patrol thrusts" [Patrouillenvorstossen] in both the French and 92nd Division sectors, with penetrations of the first line of resistance on the 27th and 29th thrown back by counterattacks. No enemy withdrawal was contemplated until the night of 28 - 29 September when the outposts were withdrawn to the first line, and on 29 - 30 September when the left flank of the 76th Reserve Division drew back to the second line "to maintain contact with the retiring 2nd Landwehr Division" (see Map No. 2). The withdrawal had been made necessary by the "success of the enemy in the vicinity of Varennes" on the 27th, that is, the 35th Division, east of the Argonne. 45

Moving out once again on the afternoon of the 30th and apparently unaware of the enemy withdrawal, 3rd Battalion forces advanced to Hill 188 and stopped there. Although Colonel Merrill's 1st Battalion had orders to hold Tirpitz

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44

Orders 6 and 7, 1st D.C.P., 29 Sep (French Files Box 146, 30.1);  
Compte-Rendu, 38th Fr Corps, 2200, 30 Sep (French Files Box 108, 30.3).

45

76th Res Div WD, 26 - 29 Sep; 76th Res Brig WD, 27 - 29 Sep (GFB 200, fols I and II); I Res Corps Order Ia 1273/18, 27 Sep (GFB 111, fol I, p. 11); 252nd Regt Order, 29 Sep (GFB 200, fol II, p. 40).

Trench and send patrols only beyond, at 1430 Merrill deliberately advanced on Binarville, with the 9th Cuirassiers on his left. Farther left, French forces that day moved against Conde-les-Autry.<sup>46</sup>

About 1600, Merrill with approximately 200 men from all companies entered Binarville, followed shortly after by the remainders of A and B Companies. When heavy machine gun and shell fire began falling into the town as they advanced through the streets, both the French and American forces moved out some 200 meters above the town, halting there for the night. At that point orders arrived recalling Merrill and his forces to Vienne-le-Chateau, six kilometers to the rear. The regiment was to be relieved.<sup>47</sup>

#### The French are Not Convinced

Casualties in the German 76th Reserve Division between 26 - 30 September were reported as 29 killed, 94 wounded, 38 missing, and 22 gassed, the latter presumably the result of French fire on the morning of the 26th against the right elements of the division.<sup>48</sup> But its 254th Regiment, opposite the 368th, declared it alone had lost 171 men since the start of operations,

<sup>46</sup>

Msgs, Merrill to CO 368th Inf, 1335 and 1500, 30 Sep (Brown Rpt, p. 56): "I am not going to sit here uselessly any longer, orders or no orders." Compte-Rendu, 38th Fr Corps, 2200, 30 Sep (French Files Box 108, 30.3).

<sup>47</sup>

Brown Rpt, pp. 8 - 10, 13, 15, 17; Msg, CO 368th Inf to CO 1st Bn, 1630, 30 Sep (Rpt, p. 57); Msg, CO 2nd Bn to CO 368th Inf, 2130, 30 Sep (Rpt, p. 57); Rpt of Opns of 1st Bn (Rpt, pp. 25 - 26); Ltr, Merrill to CO 368th Inf, 3 Oct, sub: Opns of Bn (92nd Div Box 1, fol 5).

<sup>48</sup>

76th Res Div WD, 30 Sep, and 76th Res Brig WD, 30 Sep (GFB 200, fols I and II).

52 of them said to have been gassed. This exaggeration of its losses is possibly explained in its report, on completing the withdrawal on 30 September, that its forces were near exhaustion: "The report on the condition of the troops is...not exaggerated. Reenforcements or relief is urgently needed." 49

Colonel Brown reported that the casualties of the 368th Infantry in those five days were 38 killed, 96 severely wounded, 88 slightly wounded, 50 gassed, and 7 missing, a total of 279, ten of which were officers.<sup>50</sup> The Regimental Surgeon reported only 130 wounded and 45 "gas suspect" cases, most of the latter (25) admitted on 28 September. The "gas suspects" were so tagged by the battalion surgeons; the Regimental Surgeon agreed, saying he "did not see a veritable case of gas intoxication throughout the period."<sup>51</sup>

The Regimental Gas Officer reported 51 gas cases in the period, all suspect. None had occurred in the zone of advance; all were in the rear

49

254th Regt WD, 1 Oct (GFB 200, fol III); Msg, 254th Regt to 76th Res Brig, 2245, 30 Sep (ibid., p. 51). Rpt of Losses, Field Armies All Fronts (GFB 9, fol I, pp. 75, 78), shows that between 21 - 30 Sep losses in the 9th Ldw Div were 1,273, in the 76th Res Div, 183, and in the 2nd Ldw Div, 1,210.

50

Brown Rpt, 15 Nov, p. 18; cf. Record of Events, 368th Inf (92nd Div Box 9, 11.5), and DCR, 368th Inf, 2 - 3 Oct (Box 10, 33.1). Battle Monuments Comm study, 92nd Div Summary of Opns (Washington, D.C., 1944), p. 25, shows 58 killed, 226 wounded in the period.

51

Ltr, Surg 368th Inf to CO 368th Inf, 16 Oct, sub: Opns Rpt, Med Dept, 25 - 30 Sep (Brown Rpt, pp. 31 - 33, and 92nd Div Box 10, 43).

area between Vienne-le-Chateau and la Harazée.<sup>52</sup> Eight mustard gas shells were reported on the morning of 25 September (not the 26th, when Elser reported gas), sending two officers and seven men to the hospital. On 29 September a strong concentration of persistent gas (presumably mustard gas) was reported along the Vienne-Harazée road, but masks were worn for two hours by the troops in the vicinity and no casualties resulted. Then on 30 September an unspecified number of mustard and sneeze gas shells fell near the regimental command post at Vienne and 42 men claimed to have been gassed.<sup>53</sup> No German record of this gas fire has been found.

On 30 September the 368th Infantry above Binarville was as far forward as either unit on its flanks (Map No. 4). Learning of the tenuous hold of the 368th, corps ordered a battalion of the 367th Infantry up on the right of the 368th, and the other two battalions of the 367th to move into support positions above the Biesme river.<sup>54</sup>

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52

Four of the eight company commanders in the 2nd and 3rd Bns, none in the 1st Bn, reported encountering gas during the operation. See their letter reports in Brown Report, 15 Nov, pp. 38 - 46.

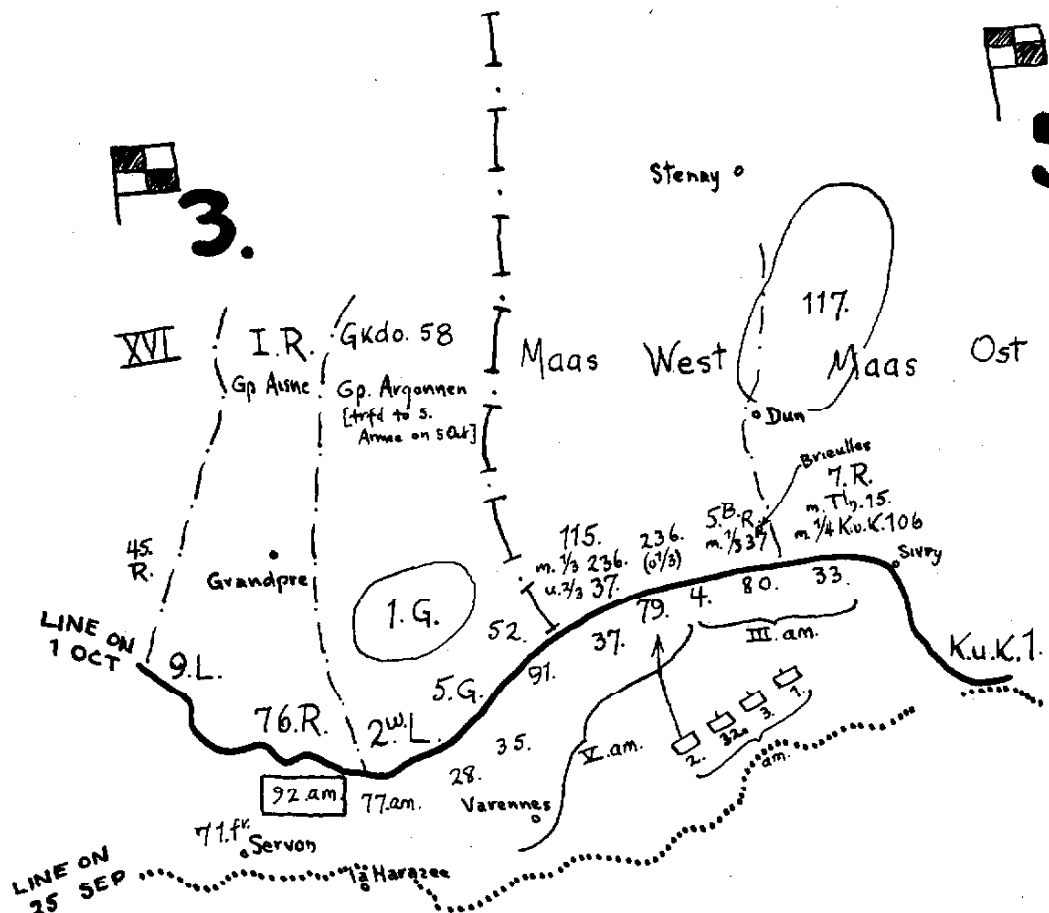
53

Letter, RG 368th Inf to CG 368th Inf, 16 Oct, sub: Report on Operations, 25 - 30 Sep (92nd Div Box 10, 63.33, and Brown Report, p. 33). Compte-Rendu, 38th Fr Corps, 1100, 29 Sep (French Files Box 108, 30.3), reported mustard gas that morning on Cernay-en-Dormois. Comptes-Rendus, 1st D.C.P. (Box 146, 30.9), reported 2 gas cases on 27 Sep, 19 on 28 Sep, none on 29 or 30 Sep, in that division.

54

Spec Order 2497/3, 38th Fr Corps, 1615, 30 Sep, quoted in Letter, Martin, CG 92nd Div to G - 3 GHQ AEF, 14 Dec, sub: Report of operations with allied units (92nd Div Box 1, 11.4). Cf. Letter, CG 92nd Div to G - 3 GHQ AEF, 18 Nov, sub: Operations 92nd Div...Sep 26 - Oct 5, and letter, CG 92nd Div to G - 3 First Army, 21 Nov, sub: Report on Argonne-Meuse Operation (92nd Div Box 3, 33.6).

# SECTION OF O.H.L. SITUATION MAPS FOR 25 SEPTEMBER <sup>and</sup> 1 OCTOBER



Source: German Files Box 12, 32.6,  
Situation maps, G.H.Q. Field  
Armies All Fronts.

MAP NO. 4



Apparently on the advice of the 92nd Division staff (though it was later said the change of orders and subsequent relief were made at the request of the French),<sup>55</sup> on the night of 30 September corps ordered the 11th Cuirassiers, then expecting to be relieved shortly by fresh units of the 92nd Division, to cover Binarville. The 368th Infantry was to drop back to the Blesme valley and reorganize, and the 367th was to remain in reserve. A subsequent order, said corps, would regulate the entry of the 92nd into battle again.<sup>56</sup>

In contrast to the American command, the French apparently believed that much more could be expected of the 368th Infantry and the 92nd Division, for the next day, 1 October, General Ballou was directed to take over the zone spanned by the 11th Cuirassiers. With a fresh French regiment<sup>57</sup> and the whole of his 184th Brigade, he was to advance and seize the heights

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No such request has been found in the French records examined, but it is reported in Hunter Liggett, AEF: Ten Years Ago in France (New York, 1928), p. 169, and R. L. Bullard, Personalities and Reminiscences, p. 292.

56

SO 2502/3, 38th Fr Corps, 1920, 30 Sep, cited in ltr, CG 92nd Div, 14 Dec, above; Gen Opns O 192, 38th Fr Corps, 30 Sep (92nd Div Box 3, 32.7). Robert Alexander (CG 77th Div), Memories of the World War, 1917 - 1918 (New York, 1931), pp. 200 - 201, suggests it was the comdrs of the 92nd and 77th Divs who insisted on the relief of the 368th Inf.

57

221st Inf, 74th Fr Div.

south of Grand Pré, to aid the attack of I Corps.<sup>58</sup> But the heights below Grand Pré and Grand Pré itself were not to be taken for almost a month. More immediately, the furious resistance of the enemy over the next two days, and the near breakdown in First Army lines of communications, resulted in virtually no gains anywhere on the Meuse-Argonne front.<sup>59</sup>

By 3 October corps had been convinced that the 368th should be relieved, and that day the regiment and its brigade were returned to First Army and I Corps.<sup>60</sup> Plans to detach battalions of the 92nd to the three corps in the battle line for salvage work were scotched by Pershing at the last minute.<sup>61</sup> Four days later the 92nd Division, assembled at Passavant, was ordered to the Marbache sector along the Moselle.<sup>62</sup>

In his final report on the 4½ kilometer advance made by his regiment,

58

Gen Opns O 193, 38th Fr Corps, 2230, 1 Oct, above file; Memo, Actg Adj 184th Brig for CO 368th Inf, 2 Oct (92nd Div Box 9, 32); Journal de Marche, 38th Fr Corps, 30 Sep and 1 Oct (French Files Box 108, 30.6).

59

The French seem to have made better progress: on 4 Oct two German corps on the French front made plans to withdraw to their Brunhilde Stellung, but the adjacent Groups Aisne and Argonne, facing the Americans, were ordered to remain in place. See I Res Corps Order Ia 1343/18, 4 Oct (GFB 111, fol 1, p. 35), and Alexander, Memories of the World War, p. 184.

60

Gen Opns O 195, 38th Fr Corps, 1115, 3 Oct; FO 14, 92nd Div, 1130, 4 Oct.

61

SO 349, G - 3 First Army, 3 Oct, and ltr, CofS I Corps to CG 92nd Div, 4 Oct, sub: Assembly of Div (92nd Div Box 2, 32.13).

62

FO 17, 92nd Div, 1630, 7 Oct.

Colonel Brown acknowledged the fine aggressive spirit of "the great majority of officers and men" despite the hazards of terrain and the lack of weapons and supplies for the job they had to do. If through the failure of individuals the regiment and division had been made to look bad,<sup>63</sup> the 368th Infantry had nevertheless "successfully performed its original mission of liaison.... [and] had advanced as rapidly as did the French units on our left."<sup>64</sup>

#### The St. Mihiel-Marbach Sector

By train and foot, the 92nd Division crossed from one extreme of the First Army front to the other, and to one of the most gassed sectors on that front.

After the loss of the St. Mihiel salient on 12 September, the Germans, fearing that the attack would soon be resumed and that the American intended to take the Briey basin with its coal mines and to cut the Sedan-Metz railroad, proceeded to keep the new front under constant harassing fire using large quantities of mustard gas.<sup>65</sup> By 18 September, when Dickman's IV Corps extended its front to the Moselle, releasing I Corps for the Argonne operation,

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<sup>63</sup> See corresp of CO 368th Inf and CG 92nd Div, dated 9 and 12 Oct (92nd Div Box 1, fol 5), requesting reassignment of 30 junior officers.

<sup>64</sup> Conclusions, Brown Rpt, 15 Nov, p. 19. See 1919 corresp in 92nd Div Box 1, 11.4, relative to granting combat credit to the 368th Inf while "acting as combat liaison" west of the Argonne.

<sup>65</sup> See Study No. 5, "The Use of Gas at St. Mihiel," pp. 2, 34 - 37.

mustard gas casualties had become so serious a problem that gas defense plans were concerned entirely with that agent. A new gas defense plan said:

Men who remain a short time in an area contaminated with mustard gas are almost sure to become casualties. Whether the urgency of the situation is such as to demand that men remain...must be decided on the spot by the officer in charge. There will be few situations so urgent...as to demand this sacrifice. It must be thoroughly understood that the only defense against mustard gas is the avoidance of the dangerous ground. For this reason, alternate positions should be prepared and complete plans made in advance for removal to such positions.<sup>66</sup>

Increasing amounts of mustard gas shell rained over the sector as Armee Abteilung C [Army Detachment C] ordered greater use of yellow cross gas in order to forestall the expected attack. "Strong contamination shoots are important means of cancelling the enemy's attack intentions or of destroying the enemy infantry in the process of preparation." <sup>67</sup> Capt. Edward Mack, IV Corps Gas Officer, estimated that in the last two weeks of September approximately 12,000 gas shells fell in his corps sector alone, between 90 and 95 percent of them mustard gas shells. Out of some 10,000 men exposed, 1,492 became gas casualties, with six deaths.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>66</sup>

Annex 4 to FO 30, IV Corps, 19 Sep, Plans for Defense against Gas in the 4th Corps Sector (in 92nd Div Box 81, fol 18). These directions were frequently repeated, as in Memo 10, VI Corps, 25 Sep (92nd Div Box 11, 64.4) and Instru Memo 1, VI Corps, 26 Oct (VI Corps Box 3, 32.11), the latter per request in ltr, DGO 92nd Div, 19 Oct (92nd Div Box 81, fol 7).

<sup>67</sup>

AAC Order Ia 3126, 25 Sep (GFB 107, fol I, p. 22).

<sup>68</sup>

Rpt of IV Corps Gas Officer, atchd to ltr, AG IV Corps to CG 92nd Div, 11 Nov, sub: Enemy gas opns...Oct 1 - 31 (92nd Div Box 81, fol 18).

The 92nd Division arrived in the Marbach sector of IV Corps, relieving a French division, just as Bullard's Second Army was formed to take over from First Army the front from Fresnes-en-Woevre to Port-sur-Seille, then occupied by the 2nd Colonial Corps and IV Corps. Ten days later, on 21 October, VI Corps was formed between IV Corps and French Eighth Army on the right, with the 92nd as its only division and General Ballou both division and temporary corps commander.<sup>69</sup>

The 365th and 366th Infantry spanned the Marbach sector until 24 October when the "corps" front was extended west across the Moselle to the edge of the Bois des Rappes and the 367th Infantry relieved a regiment of the 7th Division on that front (Maps No. 5 and 6).<sup>70</sup> The St. Mihiel operation west of the river had straightened the front but left a re-entrant on the east bank. While not good military posture, the re-entrant caused no great concern, as the 7th Division learned, for the enemy showed few signs of offensive activity, confining himself to raids, to vigorous defensive action against patrols, and to the frequent use of mustard gas to discourage aggressive notions on his front.

Shortly after mid-October, Army G - 2 in an appraisal of the situation reported that there was a tendency to regard this front as stabilized. Admittedly, said G - 2, there was little probability of an enemy offensive there,

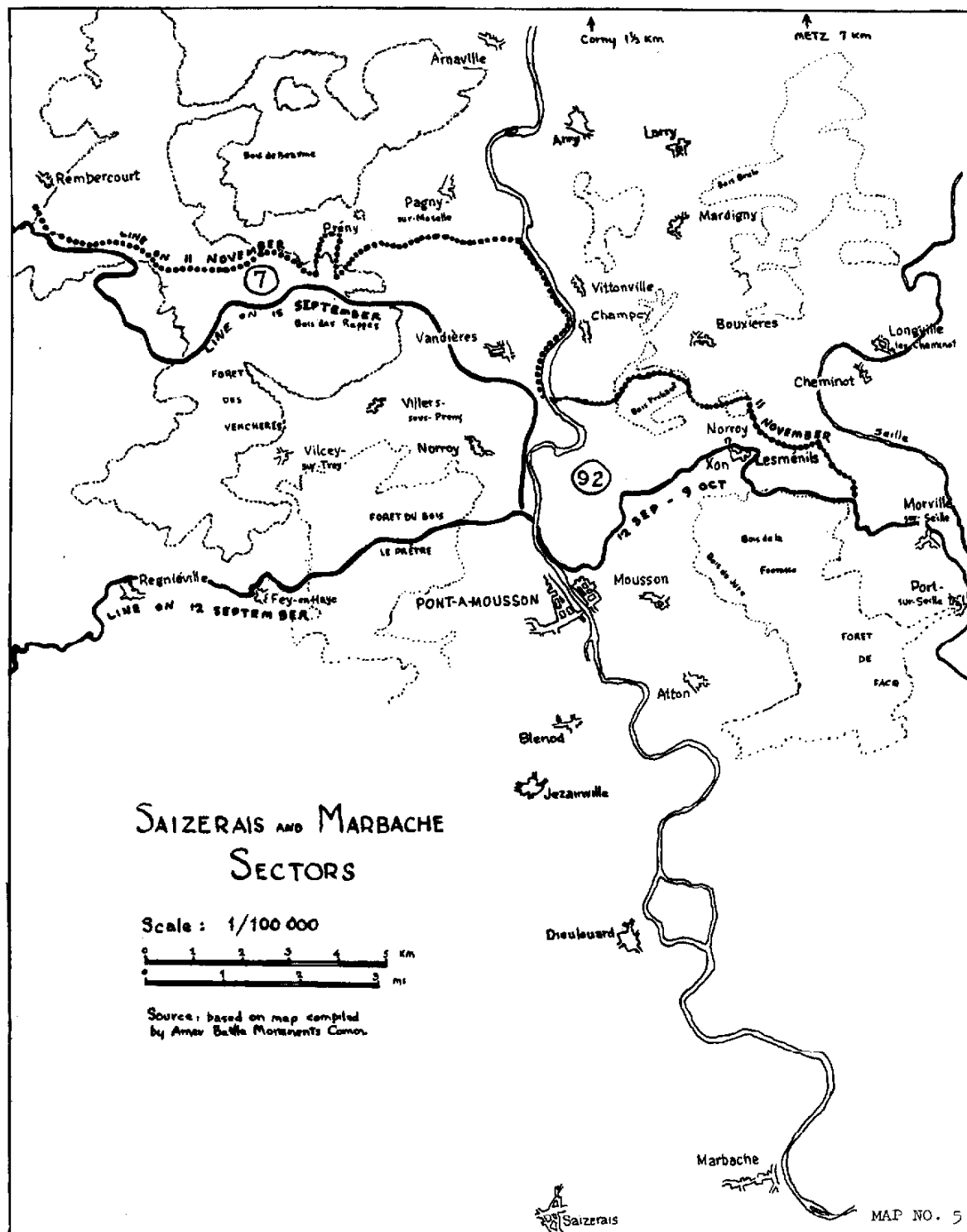
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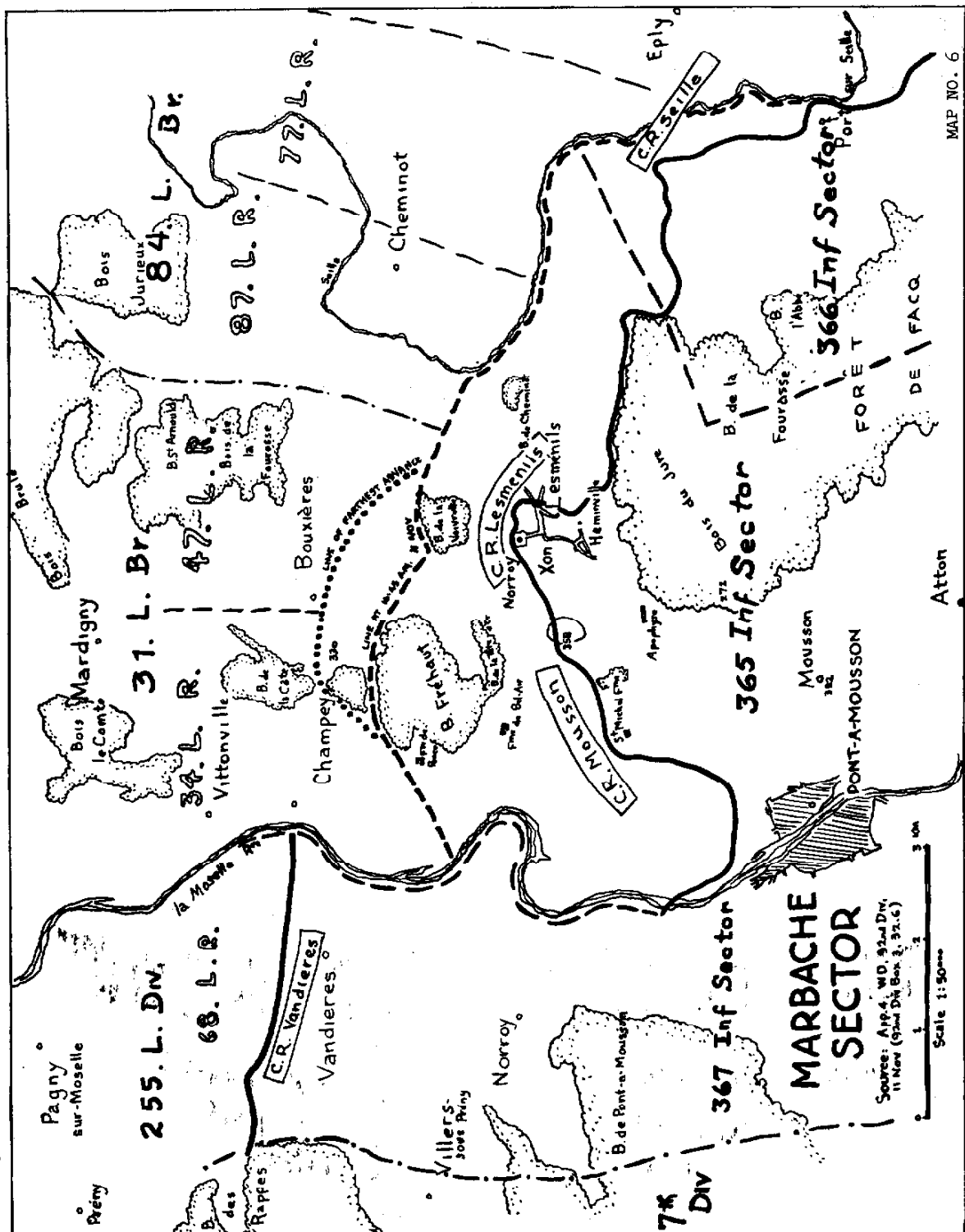
<sup>69</sup>

FO 1, 2nd Army, 11 Oct (2nd Army Box 6, 32.1); FO 5, 2nd Army, 21 Oct; DOR 15, 92nd Div, 23 - 24 Oct.

<sup>70</sup>

FO 19, 92nd Div, 11 Oct; FO 20, 92nd Div, 1600, 24 Oct; FO 6, 2nd Army, 24 Oct.





though the possibility did exist should the enemy decide it necessary 1) to relieve the pressure of First Army to the west, 2) to restore failing German morale by a victory over American forces, 3) to stem the political tide at home, 4) to set up a new front for operations in the spring of 1919, 5) to ensure further protections for the Briey basin, or 6) to take advantage of the obvious weakness of Second Army forces.

Opposite ten Landwehr, Austro-Hungarian, and Bavarian divisions, with a rifle strength of 24,335 and a gun for each 2.4 meters of front, said G - 2, Second Army had at most at any one time seven divisions including those in transit. The effectiveness of these divisions was low, since they arrived in an exhausted condition from First Army front, remained only long enough to be rehabilitated, and then left for the First Army front again. Again, the organization of the front could not compare with that of the German sector. The enemy had fallen back on partly organized positions and had excellent rail communications. Second Army had no such facilities, and was faced with the necessity of covering no man's land with continually changing divisions. Finally, G - 2 concluded, "The colored division [on our front] further decreases our strength of resistance." <sup>71</sup>

The concluding remark was not wholly unfair, for the 92nd Division came into the Marbache sector with its morale badly shaken. In the great Meuse-Argonne

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<sup>71</sup>

Ltr, G - 2 2nd Army to CofS 2nd Army, 23 Oct, sub: Enemy opposite our front (2nd Army Box 5, 22.3). For the enemy orgn opposite the Marbache sector, see map in 92nd Div Box 1, 22.21, and SOI 1, 2nd Army, 11 - 12 Oct (2nd Army Box 4, 20.1).



campaign most of the division had served only as laborers, building roads and hauling up supplies from the rear. The one regiment in the fighting line had been poorly equipped and badly led, and though it had not failed in the light of its orders, it had not made a good showing. The lowering of morale showed up even before the division left the Argonne sector in the "straggling of an exaggerated nature" back of the front and the severe measures imposed to stop it.<sup>72</sup>

On arriving in the sector, General Ballou admitted that "conditions since leaving the St. Die sector have not been conducive to the discipline or morale of troops." Both had deteriorated "by reason of much marching at night, exposure to rain and cold, irregularity of supply, insufficient clothing, conditions that remove men from the supervision of their officers, and from neglect on the part of these officers to render that proper supervision." More energy and care by superior officers were necessary, and General Ballou ordered his brigade, regimental, and battalion commanders to get out and inspect their commands and restore discipline and morale.<sup>73</sup>

Life in the Marbache sector was much like that at St. Die except that gas fire was more frequent and consisted largely of mustard gas, to the great

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<sup>72</sup>

Memo Bul, 92nd Div, 1 Oct (92nd Div Box 4, 34.8).

<sup>73</sup>

Memo, 92nd Div, 11 Oct, n.s. (92nd Div Box 5, 64.8). Criticism of the 368th Inf performance in the Argonne and the necessity for more and better training appear in Tng Announcement, 92nd Div, 18 Oct (Box 4, 50.4). Continued poor morale is evident from Memo, CO 1st Bn 368th Inf to all co comdrs, 17 Oct (Box 10, 32.15).

concern of the troops. Reconnaissance and ambush patrols were out day and night, bringing down frequent machine gun fire on them in no man's land and filling the night with the light of flares.<sup>74</sup> Planes on both sides patrolled overhead all day in clear weather in search of observation balloons or ground targets for bombing, and in all weather enemy shell fire fell in bursts across the sector, now five shells on a crossroad, a hundred shells on a town, at the rate of 600 to 700 shells a day. Bombardments were rare -- only in the period 25 - 28 October did the daily HE fire go over 1,000 shells -- and in the quiet sector those not engaged in patrols or raids were kept busy training behind the front, making frequent reliefs, repairing revetments and roads, and constructing new trenches.<sup>75</sup>

The lightly held forward positions of the enemy made identity difficult, and several weeks passed before the 225th Division of Group Gorz was identified west of the Moselle, the 31st Landwehr Brigade east of the river, and on its left, astride the Seille, the 10th Division, both of Group Metz

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74

Until 15 Oct when regtl and bn comdrs were prodded out of "thinking it's a defensive war," there was little patrolling. See Opns Memo 24, 183rd Brig, 15 Oct (92nd Div Box 6, 32.14). As at St. Die, patrolling was often hazardous because of the frequency with which patrols were fired on by those in the line. Memo Bul, 92nd Div, 16 Oct; Ltr, CofS IV Corps to CG 92nd Div, 19 Oct, sub: Carrying out of Instructions (both in 92nd Div Box 2, 32.15). See the files of patrol rpts and sketches for period 23 Oct - 10 Nov in 92nd Div Box 4, 33.7 and Box 7, 33.7.

75

DOR 1 - 23, 92nd Div, 9 - 31 Oct (92nd Div Box 3, 33.1).

(Map No. 7).<sup>76</sup> Enemy artillery fire was observed originating from every wood above the sector, with long-range guns emplaced near Mardigny and Fagny.<sup>77</sup>

#### Second Army Front is Gassed

The division had been in the sector less than a week when it was hit by its first mustard gas attack. It had fair warning (although neither Army nor corps seem to have recognized it), for during the week of 9 - 15 October the Germans systematically gassed the entire front of Second Army. One after the other, the five corps of Army Abteilung C carried out large-scale yellow cross shoots, each firing approximately 10,000 mustard gas shells.

On 9 October Group Combres fired its mission, on the 12th Groups Ebene and Gorz, and on the 13th and 14th Groups Mihiel and Metz carried out their missions. Group Gorz actually fired 12,800 yellow cross shells, of which 2,660 alone were put into the Bois des Rappes, occupied by the 7th Division, which had relieved the 90th Division just west of the Moselle five days earlier.<sup>78</sup>

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76

SOI 7, 2nd Army, 17 - 18 Oct (2nd Army Box 4, 20.1); SOI 15, 92nd Div, 23 - 24 Oct (92nd Div Box 1, 20.1); DOR 23, 92nd Div, 31 Oct - 1 Nov; Recon Rpt, 367th Inf, 27 Oct (92nd Div Box 11, 32.4); Rpt, Exam of German Prisoners, 8 Nov (92nd Div Box 1, 22.3).

The 10th Div, battered at the Marne on 15 - 18 Jul, had lost most of its 47th and 6th Gren Regts in the St. Mihiel atk, and after being reconstituted was sent to the Moselle sector, relieving the 84th Ldw Brig. The brigade returned to the line on 4 - 5 Nov.

77

SOIs, 92nd Div, passim.

78

Army Order Ia 3628, 13 Oct (AAC WD&A, GFB 107, fol I, p. 122); Daily Rpt of Arty, AAC, 0300, 13 and 14 Oct (ibid., pp. 123, 128); Intel Rpt, 225th Div, 12 - 13 Oct (GFB 233, fol I, p. 64).



All the divisions on Second Army front suffered heavy casualties in the German corps shoots, the most concentrated and severe cases occurring in the 7th Division, with over 600 casualties as a result of an estimated 1,500 gas shells (actually 2,660). There, the Corps Gas Officer reported, the battalion commander deliberately ignored earlier corps gas instructions to evacuate the Bois des Rappes if it were subjected to mustard gas.<sup>79</sup>

The 92nd Division was gassed on the mornings of 14 and 15 October as Group Metz carried out its contamination shoot "on assembly and support areas" on its front. The evidence indicates that the corps probably fired at least 10,000 rounds and that the 92nd Division received the major part of it. 10th Division reported that on the night of 13 - 14 October "Our artillery took part in our right neighbor's [i.e., 31st Landwehr Brigade] gas shoot on Lesmenils with about 1,000 rounds." And on the next night, it fired another 620 yellow cross shells.<sup>80</sup> These missions were obviously part of the "contamination shoot on Norroy and Lesmenils (3800 rounds)" reported by Group Metz artillery on the morning of 14 October and a second shoot on these towns the following morning with 2,200 rounds, for a total of 6,000.<sup>81</sup>

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79

Capt. Edw Mack, Actg CGO IV Corps, Rpt on Gas Defense in the 13th Brig, 7th Div, 15 Oct (2nd Army Box 93, fol 17).

80

10th Div WD, 12 Oct; Arko 10 WD, 14 and 15 Oct (GFB 160, Marbach file, fol I, pp. 1, 103).

81

Daily rpt of arty msg center to AAC, 0300, 15 Oct, and 0300, 16 Oct (GFB 107, fol I, pp. 132, 136).

An Army Abteilung C instruction order on 14 October suggests that the shuttling of American divisions to that front, and the recent arrival of the 7th and 92nd, both fresh divisions, indicated possible preparations for a large-scale offensive. The instruction order gave directions for further yellow cross shoots, saying that small yellow cross supply points were to be established in the vicinity of each battery, to make certain that the contamination of enemy assembly areas and batteries begin as soon as observed preparations or prisoners' statements indicated an imminent attack. If the contamination shoot began too late, and the enemy was already moving into readiness positions, the batteries were to resort at once to shrapnel and blue cross gas.<sup>82</sup>

On 16 October, 92nd Division G - 3 reported that "Salient Norroy-Les Mesnils is being subjected to continual Mustard Gas fire." The gas officers said that both attacks on the area, occupied by the 1st Battalion, 365th Infantry, had occurred between 0240 and 0400 hours, and in the two attacks the enemy had fired a total of at least 800 77-mm. and 105-mm. mustard gas shells, mixed with some 200 HE shells. The 2nd Battalion near St. Michel Farm suffered only a single attack, on the first morning, with about 200 mustard gas shells and over five times as many HE shells (Map No. 8). Since no other areas were reported gassed on either morning, it would appear that something closer to 6,000 rather than 1,000 mustard gas shells actually fell in these areas.

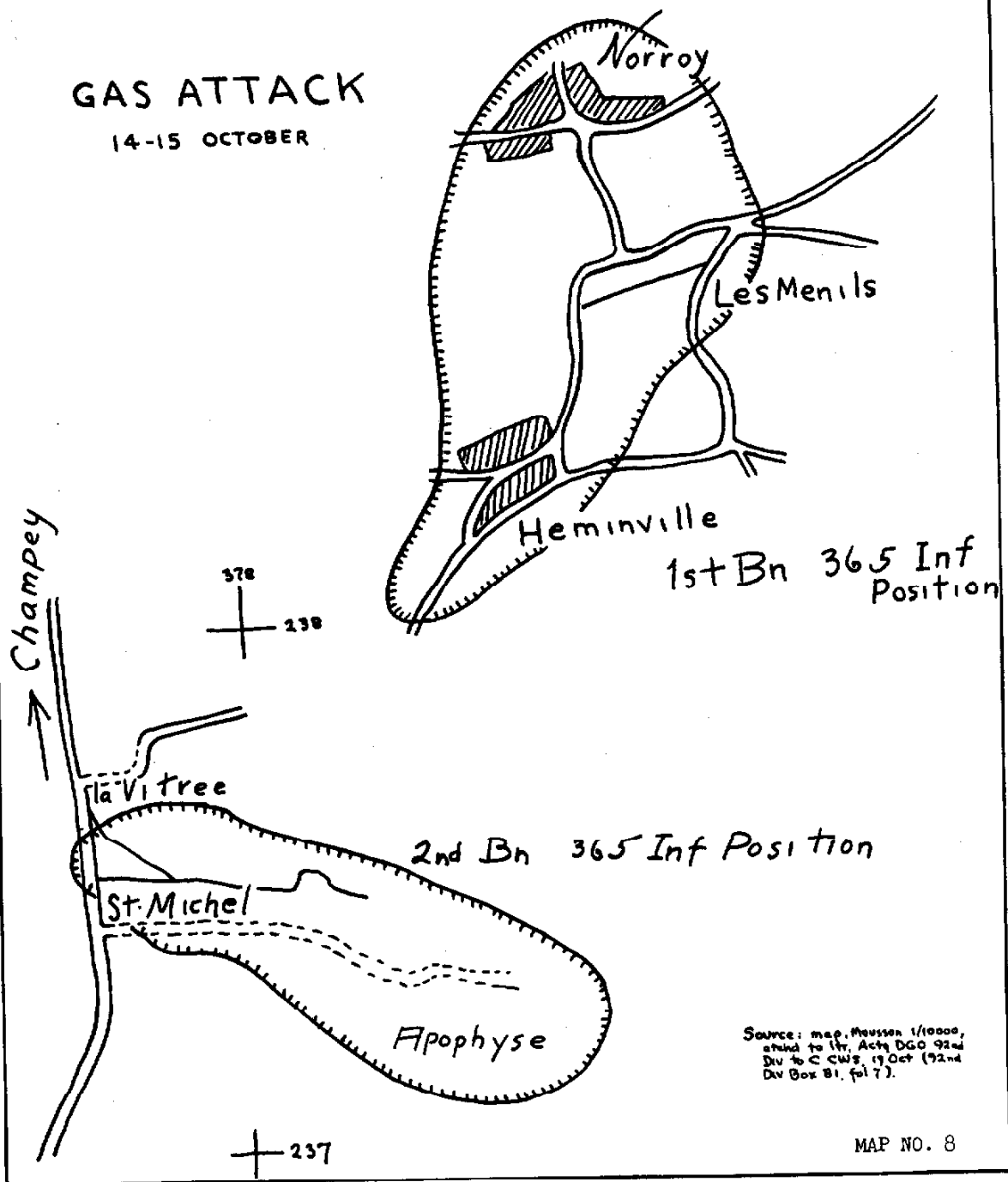
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<sup>82</sup>

Army Order Ia 3652, 14 Oct (GFB 107, fol I, p. 126).

# GAS ATTACK

14-15 OCTOBER



An enemy attack over contaminated ground was most unlikely, but the Regimental Gas Officer said he was told that several enemy raids were attempted and repulsed at Norroy immediately after the first bombardment.<sup>83</sup>

Although the Regimental Gas Officer warned the 1st Battalion Gas Officer and Battalion Adjutant shortly after the bombardment to evacuate the Norroy area at once, the regimental commander, Col. Vernon A. Caldwell refused because of "the tactical importance of the salient." Gas discipline fell apart. There were few shelters in the area and no gas-proof dugouts, and decontamination measures were only partially carried out. Ambulances were misdirected, delaying the evacuation of men in contaminated clothing, and the first relief of troops in the area was not begun until more than 12 hours after the initial bombardment.

There seemed no need of haste, for the battalion gas officer in his initial report of the bombardment counted just 6 casualties. At dawn on the 15th, after the repeat gas attack, the first relief entered the area and another 48 men were brought out, all of them with skin and eye burns. Some of the burns had resulted from splashes, but one company commander had ordered masks off a half hour after the first bombardment, and all had had to remove their masks periodically during the previous day. When they arrived at the hospital, almost 30 percent of them were also found to have lung complications. Delayed cases, many of them men who had slept the previous night in gas-contaminated

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83

Rpt of Gas Atk, RGO 365th Inf, 14 Oct.



dugouts, began to appear on the morning of the 16th.<sup>84</sup>

By the evening of the 17th, the Regimental Gas Officer reported 78 mustard gas cases in the battalion. Hospital lists show 112 admitted from the 1st Battalion by that date, with just 2 cases from the 2nd Battalion, where the gas officer had begun decontamination procedures as soon as the shelling stopped.<sup>85</sup>

A final report said that approximately 800 mustard gas shells at Norroy had made casualties of 2 officers and 112 men among the four infantry platoons, headquarters, and mortar units occupying the salient. Almost 90 percent of them, it was believed, were avoidable. But in its first mustard gas attack, the gas officers agreed, the battalion had violated almost every standing order and special order on gas defense. At St. Michel Farm, where the shelled area had been decontaminated at once, an estimated 150 shells had caused just 2 casualties.<sup>86</sup>

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84

Rpt of Gas Atk, RGO 365th Inf, 14 Oct; Ibid., 15 Oct (92nd Div Box 81, fol 7); Memo Bul, 92nd Div, 16 Oct (92nd Div Box 2, 32.15).

85

Rpt of Invest of Recent Gas Atks, RGO 365th Inf, 16 Oct (fol 7); Field Hospital 366 admission lists, Med Dept Box 4012; Ltr, Surg 1st Bn to Surg 365th Inf, 16 Oct, sub: Rpt on Gassed Cases (Med Dept Box 4005, Memos).

86

Ltr, 2nd Lt. R. A. Anderegg, Actg DGO 92nd Div to C CWS, 19 Oct, sub: Rpt on Gas Atk (fol 7). Ltr, Capt L. S. Davis, DGO 92nd Div to CO 365th Inf, 22 Nov, sub: Wound Stripes (fol 7), denied wound chevrons to the two officers gassed in the 1st Bn for their failure to take proper precautions for themselves or their men.

Both division and corps were to make much of the disparity of casualties in the two battalions, but no one ventured on a comparison with the battalion of the 7th Division, where similar violation of orders and far fewer gas shells created considerably more havoc. It appears that the 92nd Division never learned how many yellow cross shells the Germans actually fired into the Norroy area or how good its gas discipline really must have been when compared with other divisions.

In what may have been retaliation for the gassing of Norroy, the 62nd FA Brigade (37th Division), which supported the 92nd from 12 October until the division's own 167th FA Brigade came in on 18 October, fired 300 yperite (mustard gas) shells into the ravine north of Eply during the night of 16 - 17 October.<sup>87</sup>

Enemy reaction to the yperite was slight. After their own Army-wide gas program and the failure of 2nd Army to show clear intentions of an attack, the Germans had determined to keep their store of yellow cross for better signs:

During recent weeks the enemy has been surprisingly quiet on the entire army front. Even our large contamination shoots have brought forth at most only a slight reaction....

The groups will prepare contamination shoots on support positions in their sectors in such a way that, in the event of a threatened attack, the shoots can be carried out within 48 hours of the time of the army order.

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87

DOR 8, 92nd Div, 16 - 17 Oct. . Ammo Rpt, 2nd Bn 134th FA, 62nd FA Brig, 19 Oct (92nd Div Box 3, 32.8), indicates that that unit alone fired 386 #4 (cyanogen chloride) shells, 75 #5 (phosgene), 819 #20 (mustard gas), 1100 shrapnel, and 7000 HE shells on that front.

For this purpose each group will hold ready 12,000 rounds. Anything above this amount can be expended for smaller shoots on group order. We cannot, however, count on a sure supply of yellow cross ammunition in the near future.<sup>88</sup>

On the night of 25 - 26 October a sharp shelling of the Norroy-Lesmenils area with HE and shrapnel was said to have been followed by a volley of 50 or more yellow and green cross (mustard and phosgene) shells. Some said blue cross (diphenylchloroarsine) gas was also included in the burst. Six of nine men in the 349th FA were hospitalized as a precaution, the other three returned to their guns after several hours, and nine in the 365th Infantry were evacuated, "all...very slight [cases]; some suspiciously so." <sup>89</sup>

German records show that Group Metz fired 1,000 yellow cross shells on Blenod, Jezainville, and Dieulouard (see Map No. 6), in retaliation for Second Army gas fire, and it is possible that slight effects of that shoot were noticed in the 92nd Division sector.<sup>90</sup> The same records indicate other retaliatory fire missions -- without mention of gas -- on Blenod, Pont-a-Mousson,

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88

Est of Situation, AAC to ACK, Id 3715, 18 Oct (GFB 107, fol I, p. 142); Army Order Ia 3713, 17 Oct (ibid., p. 138).

89

Rpt of Gas Shell Bombardment, RGO 349th FA, 25 Oct; Rpt on Gas Atk, BGO 3rd Bn 365th Inf, 26 Oct; Ltr, DGO to C CWS, 1 Nov (92nd Div Box 81, fol 7).

90

DOR 15, 2nd Army, 25 - 26 Oct (2nd Army Box 13, 33.1), reported putting a concentration of gas and HE on enemy btys east of the Moselle. The retaliation is rptd in daily rpts from arty msg center to AAC, 25 Oct (GFB 107, fol I).

and Atton on 26, 27, and 29 October. After that date other group gas fire data are available but there is nothing for Group Metz. Yet 92nd Division records show that Group Metz units continued to fire gas at irregular intervals.

The frequency with which patrols were fired on by enemy artillery and the apparent enemy habit of including several gas shells in his fire led to numerous claims of gassing.<sup>91</sup> A number of such "doubtful" cases from small patrol actions had occurred when on the night of 29 - 30 October two 200-man patrols from the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, 365th Infantry, were caught by enemy fire out in no man's land (Map No. 9). The gas fire seems to have been part of a general gas bombardment across Second Army front that night and the next.<sup>92</sup>

The 2nd Battalion patrol had gone out through Bel Air Farm and was in the German trenches just beyond when a barrage of HE and blue cross gas fell around it, holding the men in the trenches for almost five hours. One officer and 56 men later claimed to have been gassed, saying that the gas had not immediately been identified and they had not masked until some time after the attack began. Three officers and 57 men of the 3rd Battalion reported back as gassed after being held in the Bois de Voivrotte under a similar barrage. No estimate was made by either patrol of the number of gas shells involved, and the high explosives in the barrage wounded no more than

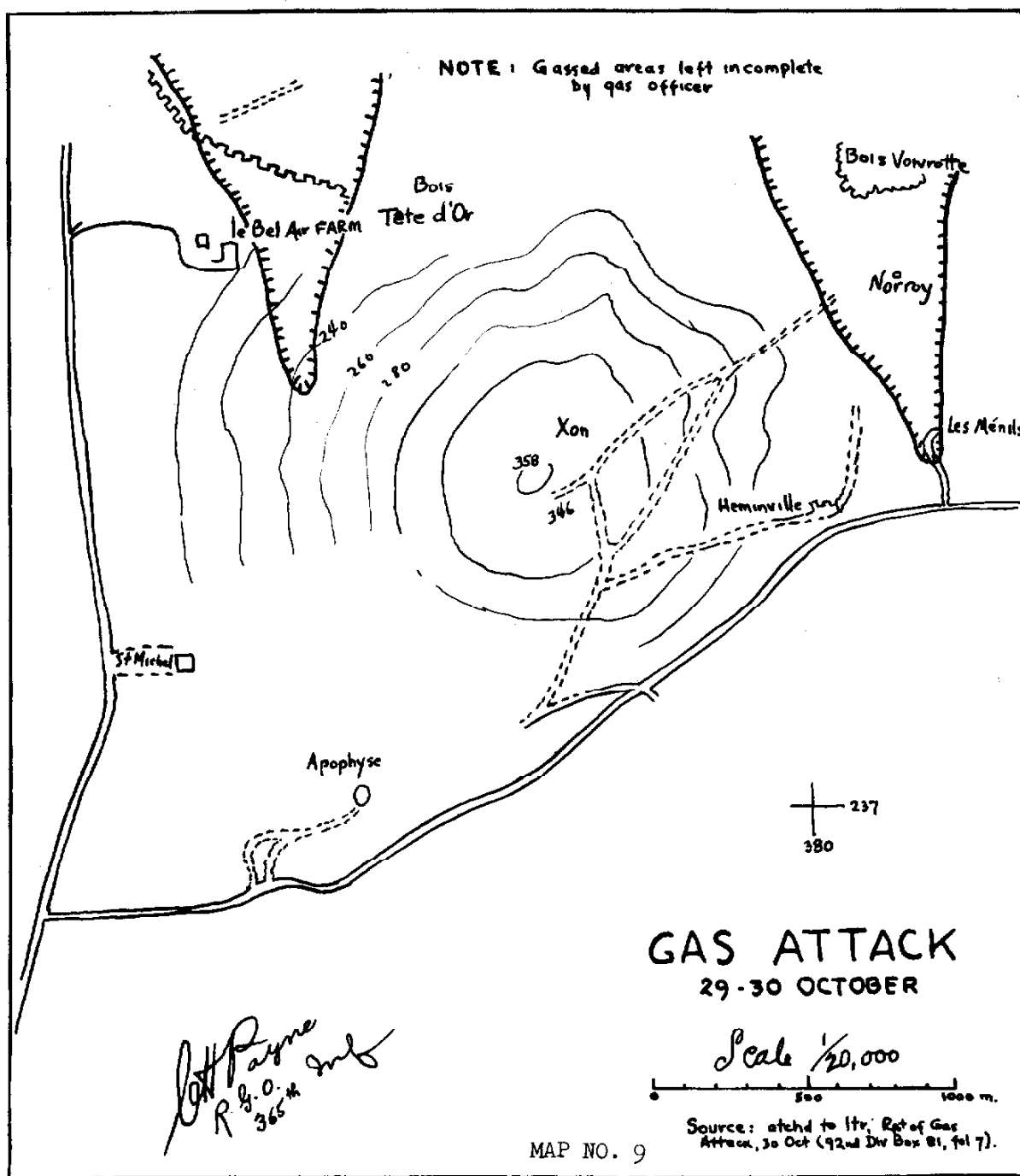
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91

Invest of Gas Atks, RGO 365th Inf, 28 Oct (92nd Div Box 81, fol 7).

92

AAC Order Ia 3961, 31 Oct (GFB 107, fol I, p. 200).



two or three and killed none.

The Regimental Gas Officer said that all 117 were mild gas cases, but the battalion surgeons declared that less than a third had been really gassed, the rest probably apprehensive because of slight effects of gas and the incidence of grippe and influenza in the division at the time. In at least two cases, however, lung congestion at first attributed to grippe was found later to be the result of gassing.<sup>93</sup>

Altogether, gas officers of the 92nd reported a total of 248 gas cases in October. Considering the amount of gas said to have been encountered in the sector, the Division Gas Officer rated the general state of gas training and discipline as good.<sup>94</sup> G - 2 and G - 3 reported "some gas" on nine days that month, including the attacks on 14 - 15 and 29 - 30 October. Probably no more than 1,500 gas shells could be included in their total of 14,938 shells counted falling in the sector, with the most heavily shelled areas around Xon, Norroy, Heminville, Mousson, and Pont-a-Mousson. Casualties as a result of patrol actions, enemy snipers, machine gun fire, and artillery fire, according to G - 3 daily reports, totaled 10 killed, 32 wounded, 145 gassed (sic),

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93

Rpt of Gas Atks, RGO 365th Inf, 30 Oct; two ltrs, Lyne DGO to C CWS, 31 Oct, sub: Rpt on Gas Atk (92nd Div Box 81, fol 7). See changed diagnoses in FH 366 records, Med Dept Box 4012.

94

Ltr, Lyne DGO to C CWS, 2 Nov, sub: Monthly Rpt (92nd Div Box 81, fol 7). Cf. Monthly Rpt of Gas Casualties, Oct 1918 (GAF-92nd Div), with 244 casualties in 12 days that month. Spencer, III, 580-88, shows just two atks, on 14 - 15 Oct, resulting in 146 casualties, and on 29 Oct, 97 casualties.

and 10 missing.<sup>95</sup>

Almost all the casualties were in the 365th Infantry. The 366th Infantry, in C. R. [Centre de Résistance] Seille, opposite 10th Division, reported "very little activity" and just 2 killed and 9 wounded that month; casualties in the 367th Infantry in C. R. Vandieres, west of the Moselle, were said to be 4 killed and 2 wounded who later died.<sup>96</sup> According to hospital records, there was one single gas casualty in these latter regiments, in the 366th.

The division gas hospital, FH 366, reported 258 cases of gas poisoning, 131 from mustard gas and 127 from arsenes, with an unspecified but apparently large number of mustard gas cases the result of eating food that had been exposed to the gas. One mustard gas case in the 15 October attack collapsed on arrival and on the second day developed broncho-pneumonia and died. Of the remaining gas cases, 135 were evacuated to the base hospital, 51 were returned to duty, and 71 were still hospitalized or recovering in billets at the end of the month.<sup>97</sup>

In the corps summary for October, the only gas attack reported on the 92nd Division was that on the 14th and 15th, resulting in 114 cases. Of

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<sup>95</sup>

SOI 1 - 22, 92nd Div, 9 - 31 Oct; DOR 1 - 22, 9 - 31 Oct.

<sup>96</sup>

Record of Events, 366th Inf (92nd Div Box 8, 11.5); Record of Events, 367th Inf (Box 9, 11.5).

<sup>97</sup>

Rpt of Gas Cases, 14 - 31 Oct, 366th FH, 1 Nov (Med Dept Box 4008, fol 705).

seven divisions in IV Corps that month, the 7th Division with 665 gas casualties and the 89th with 401 had been hardest hit. The Corps Gas Officer estimated that approximately 19,000 gas shells, most of them yellow cross, had been fired into the corps sector, causing 1,720 casualties and 1 death out of 11,180 men exposed.

Repeating earlier corps instructions, Captain Mack said that the only way to cut down on the very large number of gas casualties in the sector was to evacuate gassed terrain immediately. "It is impossible for the men to wear respirators for a much longer time than is necessary to leave the dangerous ground after the shelling has ceased." Brigade and division commanders must instruct unit officers that decisions had to be made at once and actual withdrawal carried out without waiting for instructions from higher headquarters. More important than training and schooling of officers and men, than inspections, or training of gas sentries was that evacuation must be "IMMEDIATE AND AUTOMATIC." 98

"Benefit of the Doubt"

After 1 November, as the final assault of First Army forced the Germans in the Argonne-Meuse sector into withdrawal after withdrawal, the nervousness of the enemy on Second Army front and the frequency and aggressiveness of 92nd Division patrols resulted in increased artillery fire and greater use

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98

Rpt, Mack CGO IV Corps, 7 Nov, sub: Enemy Gas Opns from 1 - 31 Oct (IV Corps Box 33, 63.33; this rpt also atchd to ltr AG IV Corps to CG 92nd Div, 11 Nov. See 92nd Div Box 81, fols 7 and 8).



of gas. Further provoking enemy fire, the artillery of the 92nd on 1 November began putting small bursts of gas shells daily on enemy targets, including 75 rounds on Pagny that day, "a general mustard gas and HE bombardment of Bois la Côte, Bois la Compte, and Bois Fréhaut regions [totaling 1,300 rounds], in support of local operations by 7th Division" on 3 November, and a gassing of Bois Volvrotte on the night of 4 November.<sup>99</sup>

In enemy fire on the night of 2 - 3 November, over 400 blue and green cross shells on the outpost zone and on Villers-sur-Preny claimed but a single casualty in the 367th Infantry, a runner, when the battalion in the town and the staff at the nearby command post evacuated the gassed areas immediately after the attack (Map No. 10). On the afternoon of the 4th, 15 men acting as rearguard protection for the withdrawal of a patrol under heavy fire south of Bel Air Farm were unavoidably gassed with blue cross, and that evening an officer and 3 men in two patrols of about a platoon each were gassed in a barrage near Bouxieres. Reporting these casualties, the 365th Infantry gas officer said that "company commanders had been made to enforce the strictest gas discipline and this seems to be bearing results."<sup>100</sup>

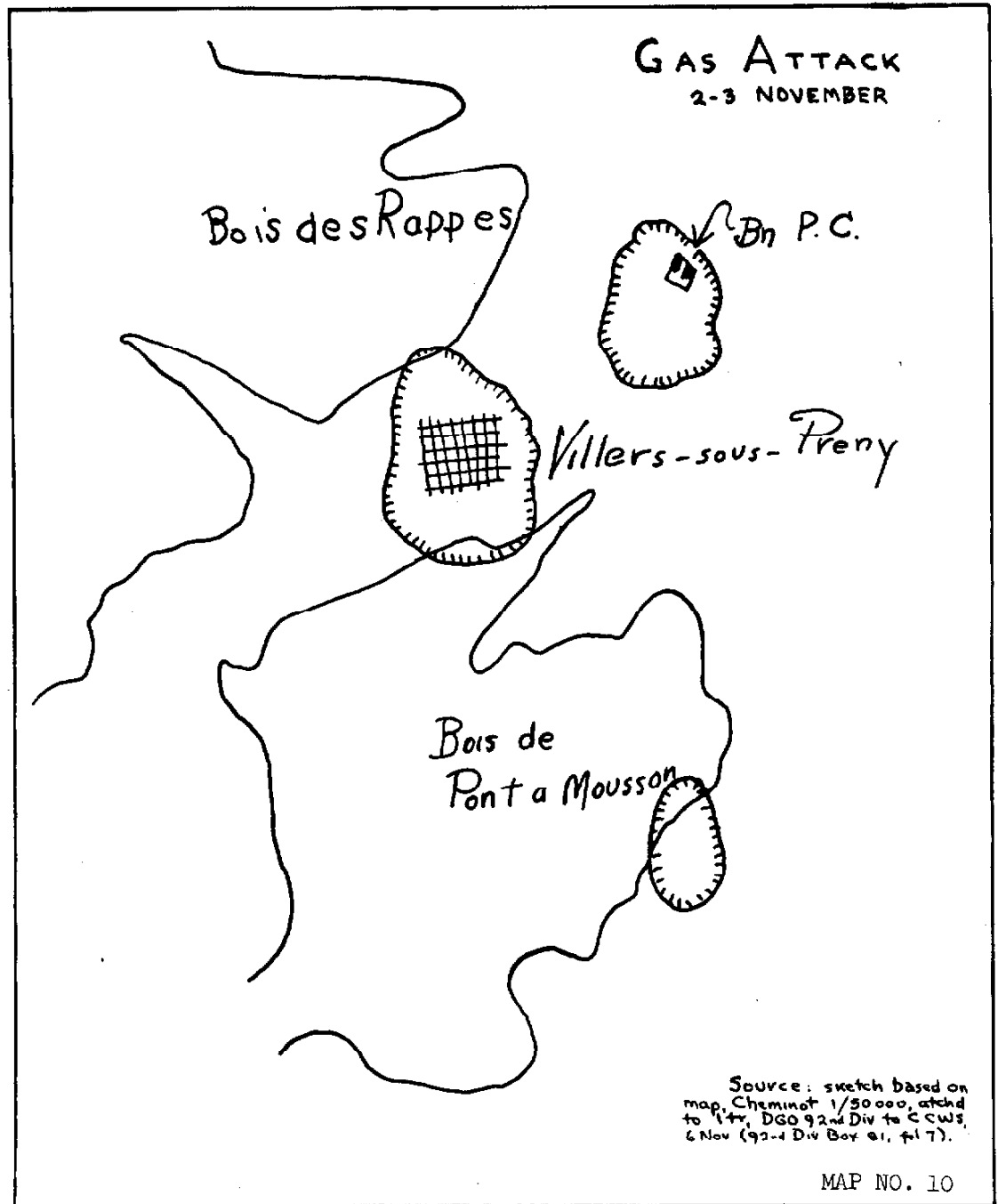
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99

DOR 24 - 27, 92nd Div, 1 - 5 Nov; VI Corps Daily Ammo Rpt, 9 Nov (in 2nd Army Box 14, 44.2); Schedules of Fire, 167th FA Brig, 22 Oct - 10 Nov (92nd Div Box 11, 32.11 and 32.9). See also Ltr, IO 167th FA Brig, 92nd Div to O CofArty AEF, 30 Jan 1919, sub: Info for CWS AEF (GAF - 92nd Div).

100

Ltr, RGO 367th Inf to DGO 3 Nov, sub: Enemy Gas Atk; Ltr, DGO 92nd Div to C CWS, 6 Nov, sub: Rpt on Gas Atk; Rpt on Gas Atk, RGO 365th Inf, 5 Nov (all in 92nd Div Box 81, fol 7).



But the improvement was short-lived when 3 officers and 21 men of the 365th Infantry were gassed while on raiding patrols near Bel Air Farm and Bois de la Tete d'Or on 5 November. One patrol failed to recognize gas and had 9 casualties; the other, company size, removed their masks "because they had to run up a hill and through a barrage," and 3 officers and 12 men became gas casualties. Hospital records show 87 gassed and 15 wounded in the raids that day.

In the 365th Infantry, at least, an effort was to be made to reduce the casualties to a minimum or prevent them altogether [by requiring] training of troops in this area [in] skirmishing, aiming and pointing exercises, and running through brush with masks on....Officers will always be furnished Tissot masks if this office is notified in time....The Regimental Surgeon has taken steps to eliminate the malingerers as far as lies in his power. If the Division Gas Surgeon will also take steps I think that with a little court martialling that phase of our problem [will be overcome].<sup>101</sup>

These remarks may have been prompted by a recent letter from the Chief of the Chemical Warfare Service to all Division Gas Officers in the AEF that the appointment of Division Medical Gas Officers and medical gas NCOs had been made to keep the increasing numbers of men merely claiming to be gassed from being sent to the rear. Only those whose symptoms were acute or clearly indicated a potential delayed case were to be marked unfit for duty. The faker was to be returned to the line.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup>

RGO 365th Inf, Rpt on Gas Atk of Nov 5, 6 Nov (fol 7); see Analysis, p. 73 for the effort of the DMGO.

<sup>102</sup>

Ltr, C CWS, 25 Oct, sub: Orgn of Gas Med Dept (92nd Div Box 81, fol 7). The 92nd had had its Div Surg, Div Psychiatrist, and DMGO all stationed at the triage north of Belleville since 7 Oct. See Admin Order, 92nd Div, 30 Sep; Admin Order 4, 92nd Div, 7 Oct (Box 1, 10.3).

But not even the medically trained could infallibly detect the latent gas casualty and despite lack of symptoms tended to rely on the man's word that he had been caught in gas. The Division Gas Officer, while admitting that the nightly patrols were almost invariably shelled with HE and blue cross, "or probably nothing but blue cross," and that masks were frequently torn by the wire or had to be taken off to see, nevertheless thought that "all gave themselves the benefit of the doubt" when they smelled gas out on patrol.<sup>103</sup> A summary report for the period 3 - 8 November said that patrols had encountered blue cross or blue and yellow cross gas every one of those days, resulting in a total of 82 gas casualties.<sup>104</sup>

#### The Attack of 10 - 11 November

The increased aggressiveness of patrols was at the instance of Second Army which daily after 1 November looked for signs of a withdrawal of the enemy on its front, particularly on the left flank, since he was expected to pivot on Metz when he began his withdrawal. The almost continuous spectacle of fires, explosions, rockets, lights in the enemy rear areas, and increasingly strong opposition to patrols, all seemed to indicate

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103

Ltr, DGO 92nd Div to C CWS, 14 Nov, sub: Gas Rpt for Nov 1918 (fol 7).

104

Rpt on Gas Atk of Nov 8 - 9, RGO 365th Inf, 9 Nov (fol 7); SOI 31, 92nd Div, 8 - 9 Nov; Rpt of Men gassed on Patrols, RGO 365th Inf, 13 Nov (fol 7).

such preparations.<sup>105</sup>

No immediate end of the war was seen with this anticipated withdrawal. Even the German armies in the field did not foresee that end as they began their great Kriegsmarsch on 1 November to their prepared Antwerp-Meuse line, where they would hold through the winter.<sup>106</sup>

The Germans to the west were using gas in their retreat before First Army, and Second Army warned that they would surely use it in quantity when Second Army attacked. The troops therefore must not only learn to protect themselves against gas in the advance but use it themselves as well. Beginning 11 November, said Army, all divisions were to start intensive instruction in gas defense, in the use of chemical weapons, especially thermite, gas and smoke grenades, and above all training in assault tactics while wearing respirators.<sup>107</sup>

On 5 November Pershing wrote to Bullard that First Army would probably expel the enemy between the Meuse and Bar rivers in the next few days. After

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105

FO 13, 2nd Army, 0535, 1 Nov (2nd Army Box 6, 32.1); Memo, CofS VI Corps for CG 92nd Div, 0930, 4 Nov (VI Corps Box 3, 32.15); SOI 25 and 29, 2nd Army, 4 - 5, 8 - 9 Nov.

106

Study No. 10 "The Use of Gas in the Meuse-Argonne Campaign," pp. 67-68.

107

G - 5 Tng Memo 4, 2nd Army, 3 Nov (2nd Army Box 15, 50.4). SO 247, 92nd Div, 8 Nov (92nd Div Box 4, 52.3), established the Div Gas School in the area between Marbache and Saizerais.

taking Stenay-Mouzon, First Army would turn and drive the enemy forces from the heights of the Meuse beyond the Theinte and Chiers rivers. Then First and Second Army together would destroy his organization and force him "beyond his existing frontier in the region of Briey and Longwy." Meanwhile, Second Army was to conduct raids and local operations towards Gorz and Chambley and prepare to attack in the direction of Briey along the axis Fresnes-Conflans-Briey (Map No. 11).<sup>108</sup>

On 6 November, as First Army drove north, Second Army announced that on D-Day (later designated as 11 November), IV Corps was to attack in the direction of the Bois d'Harville, pivoting on V Corps. The corps on either side (including the 92nd Division, comprising the whole of VI Corps) were to do no more than make raids and artillery demonstrations on their fronts.<sup>109</sup>

Plans included the use of No. 5 (phosgene) gas or No. 6 (a chlorformate lachrymator, then obsolete) gas in the woods to the front during the preparation for the attack and No. 20 (yperite) gas, when authorized by Army. Gas troops would be available with 4-inch Stokes Mortars employing gas and thermite as required, and all lead battalions would have No. 27 white phosphorus rifle grenades for individual use against machine gun nests. Because of the armistice, the Second Army Gas Officer later said, it was "impossible to give

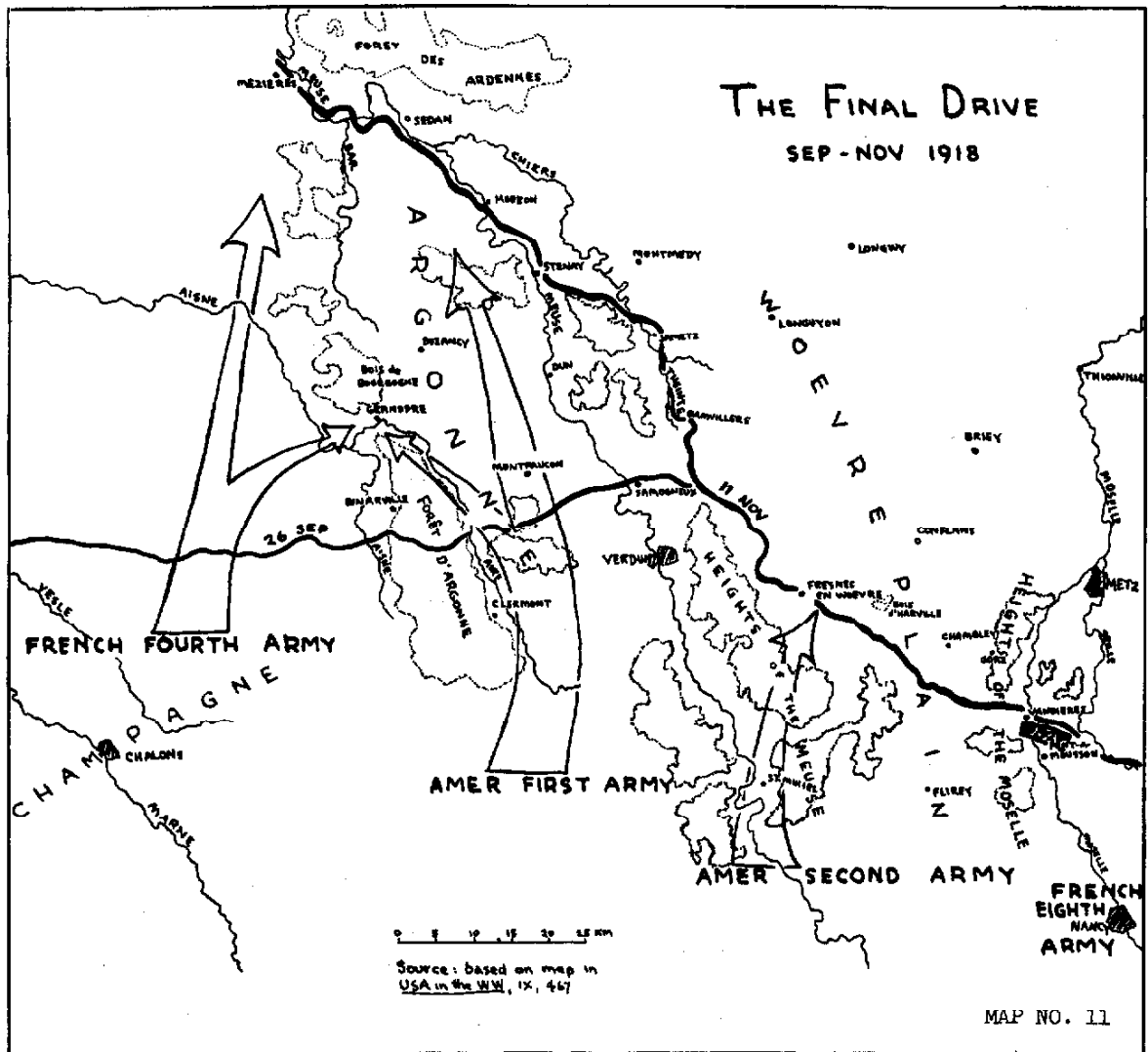
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<sup>108</sup>

Ltr, C-in-C to CG 2nd Army, 5 Nov, sub: Instructions for Future Opns, attached to ltr, CG 2nd Army to G - 3 GHQ AEF, 29 Dec, sub: Spec Rpt of Opns of Second Army (2nd Army Box 13, 33.6).

<sup>109</sup>

FO 14, 2nd Army, 1730, 6 Nov; FO 17, 2nd Army, 1745, 9 Nov.



reliable data on the actual programs carried out."<sup>110</sup> Although Second Army had "fairly liberal quantities" of chemical munitions on hand, no evidence has been found that any were used.<sup>111</sup>

More elaborate plans were not possible at the time, since Second Army forces in early November were reduced to XVII French Corps (33rd Division), IV Corps (28th and 7th Divisions), and VI Corps (92nd Division), the reason for these sparse corps said only to be "due to other than tactical considerations."<sup>112</sup> Until more divisions arrived, those in the line were to continue sending out reconnaissance patrols in force "to seize a limited portion of the enemy's main line of resistance and be ready to exploit his weakness." The 92nd Division's field order said that "no opportunity [was to] be lost to harass and weaken the enemy by activity in patrolling and control of no man's land."<sup>113</sup>

But all was not well in the division. Overly optimistic, and obviously

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<sup>110</sup>

Annex 4 to FO 13, 2nd Army, 7 Nov (2nd Army Box 6, 32.1); Annex 4 to FO 2, VI Corps, 2300, 9 Nov (VI Corps Box 2, 32.1); LT Col Byron C. Goss, Rpt on Activities of CWS, 2nd Army, 12 Oct - 11 Nov (2nd Army Box 93).

<sup>111</sup>

G - 3 Memo 1, 2nd Army Arty, 16 Oct, atchd to Rpt of Opns of G - 4, Mun Branch, n.d. (2nd Army Box 14, 44.2).

<sup>112</sup>

For earlier orders of battle, see DORs in 2nd Army Box 13, 33.1. Expected to bolster these corps for the attack were the 88th, 4th, and 35th Divs, but none would be available until after 10 Nov, per Ltr, CG 2nd Army to G - 3 GHQ AEF, 29 Dec, above.

<sup>113</sup>

FO 14, 2nd Army, 1730, 6 Nov; FO 23, 92nd Div, 1400, 8 Nov.



intended as a morale builder, a division memo on 7 November said:

Our patrols have raided Bel Air Farm, Bois de Tête d'Or, Bois de Fréhaut, Voivrotte Farm and Wood, Bois de Cheminot, Marlon Brook and Eply. The enemy has been driven northward beyond Fréhaut and Voivrotte woods and eastward from Cheminot woods across the Seille.....These results should greatly stimulate and encourage every man in the Division.<sup>114</sup>

All these places, and Bouxieres as well, had been raided at one time or another and in most cases had been found lightly occupied or not occupied at all.<sup>115</sup> But the enemy frequently returned later, as he did at Eply, and met the raiders head on. Three days after finding Eply unoccupied, for example, a raiding party of 3 officers and 14 men (it was to have been a company raid) crossed the Seille again to destroy enemy works in and around the town. Although preceded by an artillery preparation of 2,500 rounds, the raid was unsuccessful owing to unexpected difficulties in bridging the river and the determined stand by enemy forces again in the town.<sup>116</sup> There seemed to be little point or profit in the raids.

Although Second Army had ordered its attack for the 11th, on the night of 9 November Pershing's headquarters telegraphed that the enemy was withdrawing everywhere and Second Army was to develop the situation promptly on

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<sup>114</sup>

Opns Memo 41, 92nd Div, 7 Nov (92nd Div Box 2, 32.14).

<sup>115</sup>

See Opns Orders 2 - 8, 183rd Brig, 29 Oct - 8 Nov, and Summaries of Patrols, 183rd Brig (92nd Div Box 6, 32.2 and 32.7).

<sup>116</sup>

Orders 32, 366th Inf, Scheme...for Raid on Eply, 5 Nov (92nd Div Box 3, 32.8); DOR, 92nd Div, 7 - 8 Nov,

its front. When the corps and divisions reported that their artillery and infantry concentrations were not yet complete, Army ordered them to advance anyway. The enemy was pulling out.<sup>117</sup>

"The enemy, disorganized, is withdrawing along the entire front," said Second Army. All corps would advance at 0700, 10 November, and follow the retreating enemy closely. VI Corps (92nd Division) was to "push forward west of the Seille along the heights on both banks of the Moselle in the direction of Corny," maintaining liaison with the French Army on its right.<sup>118</sup> Since the French on the right were to take no part in the operation, flank protection "to some extent at least" for the 92nd Division would depend on its advance along the heights.<sup>119</sup>

On the night of 4 - 5 November the reserve battalions of each of the regiments in the line were brought up for final preparations. On learning that the attack was to be made a day earlier than planned, the 2nd Battalion commander of the 365th at once began a conference lasting almost eight hours with his company and platoon officers, going over in detail every step of the operation. On the evening of the 9th all gas masks were carefully

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<sup>117</sup>

Ltr, CG 2nd Army to G - 3 GHQ AEF, 29 Dec, above.

<sup>118</sup>

FO 19, 2nd Army, 0130, 10 Nov; FO 24, 92nd Div, 0300, 10 Nov. An unsigned pencil note on the Army FO reads: "This is some Field Order! No objectives. Is it supposed to supplement No. 18 and No. 13? Suppositions! Great stuff!"

<sup>119</sup>

Msg, G - 3 VI Corps to CofS 92nd Div, n.h., 10 Nov (VI Corps Box 4, 32.16).

inspected, sag paste was freely issued, and the troops east of the Moselle moved up to their jump-off line through the Bois de la Tête d'Or.<sup>120</sup>

Without artillery preparation except for HE and white phosphorus by three batteries on enemy OPs in Bois la Côte at H hour, the battalion of the 365th Infantry advanced on Bois Fréhaut at 0700 on the 10th. On its right two platoons of the 366th Infantry moved against Bois Voivrotte, while another platoon advanced on Bois Cheminot. Across the Moselle, a battalion of the 367th Infantry waited for the 7th Division to take the heights of Preny before advancing up the river bank. The 368th Infantry remained in corps reserve.<sup>121</sup>

The attack company of the 56th Infantry, 7th Division, advanced to Preny ridge, became caught in the wire, and was thrown back by heavy enemy fire. Two company combat groups of the 367th with machine guns and mortars, advancing with the attack, covered the withdrawal before retiring themselves.<sup>122</sup> No further effort was made against Preny either that day or the next.

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120

Maj Warner Ross, 2nd Bn 365th Inf, Rpt of Capture...of Bois Fréhaut (92nd Div Box 7, 33.6). See also Ross, My Colored Battalion (Chicago, 1920), an excessively sentimental account of his command; and Extracts from the Autobiography of Capt. Walter R. Sanders, CO Co E 365th Inf, n.d. (92nd Div Box 7, 33.6).

121

Ltr, CG 183rd Brig to CG 92nd Div, 19 Nov, sub: Rpt of Offensive Opns (92nd Div Box 6, 33.6); Schedule of Fire, 167th Fa Brig (Box 11, 32.11 and 32.9).

122

Rpt of Opns, CO 367th Inf, 19 Nov (92nd Div Box 9, 33.6); DOR 32, 92nd Div, 9 - 10 Nov.

By 1115 hours, Bois Fréhaut, Bois Voivrotte, and Bois Cheminot had been invested and four prisoners captured. The woods had then reportedly come under heavy gas and shell fire, and counter-battery fire by the heavies was called for on known enemy gun positions to the north. At 1130 the division called up brigade reinforcements to continue the attack at 1700 towards Champey, Bouxières, and Bois la Côte, but this advance was cancelled at 1600 when the troops in Bois Voivrotte reported they had had to fall back to the south edge of the woods because of the gas and HE fire. For the advance the next day another battalion of the 365th Infantry was sent up in support of the men holding fast in Bois Fréhaut.<sup>123</sup>

Contrary to G - 2 and later operations reports, the gas officers with the battalions were to report no gassing or gas casualties until the morning of the 11th, though hospital records show 8 men from the 365th admitted the day before.<sup>124</sup>

On the right, the 366th Infantry, ordered at midnight to the top of Bois Voivrotte again for the next day's advance, said it did not reach there until 0300 owing to the gas fire along its northern edge.<sup>125</sup>

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123

DOR 33, 92nd Div, 10 - 11 Nov: "Region of Xon, Bois Fréhaut, Bois Voivrotte heavily gassed." Ltr, CG 183rd Brig, 19 Nov, above; Ltr, Martin CG 92nd Div to G - 3 GHQ AEF, 30 Nov, sub: Rpt of Opns, 10 - 11 Nov (92nd Div Box 4, 33.6).

124

SOI 32, 92nd Div, 9 - 10 Nov (the final G - 2 daily rpt); Analysis, p. 75.

125

DOR, 366th Inf, 10 - 11 Nov (92nd Div Box 8, 33.1).

On the evening of 10 November, Second Army reported the surprisingly stubborn resistance met on its front that day. The German withdrawal was by no means as general as had been reported and the troops had run into "well-organized resistance from well-manned defenses" everywhere. Although the 33rd Division on the left had broken the enemy line in the Bois d'Harville and the 92nd had made a  $3\frac{1}{2}$  kilometer advance, the 28th and 7th Division in the center had been stopped within half a kilometer of their lines.

Army ordered the attack continued the next day, the 92nd Division to take the heights of Champey, secure the line Champey-Bois la Côte-Bouxières, and exploit beyond. The 3rd, 29th, and possibly the 36th Divisions were reported on their way to VI Corps, and with the 92nd Division would attack on 14 November in the direction of Port-sur-Seille.<sup>126</sup>

The advance towards Champey and Bouxières was made behind a rolling barrage at 0500 on 11 November, and by 0730 troops of the 365th Infantry were said to have reached the wire in front of Bouxières. At that point, machine gun and artillery fire drove them back to the top of Voivrotte. On the left, the 365th Infantry advanced a short distance along the Champey road when they too were forced back to the woods. No other gains had been

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126

FO 21, 2nd Army, 1450, 10 Nov; FO 25, 92nd Div, 1800, 10 Nov; Ltr, CG 2nd Army, 29 Dec, above; SOI 30, 2nd Army, 9 - 10 Nov (2nd Army Box 4, 20.1). Group of Armies Gallwitz WD, 10 Nov (USA in the WW, IX, 597).

made on Second Army front that morning when word of the armistice was received.<sup>127</sup>

#### The Last Gas Attack

The enemy fired gas all across the Second Army front on the morning of 11 November.<sup>128</sup> The gas officer of the 366th Infantry reported that between 0500 and 1030, during the advance on Bouxières, five companies claimed to have encountered a sudden high concentration of gas shells, estimated at 1,000 blue, green, and yellow cross rounds.

Infirmary records, said the Regimental Gas Officer, showed "186 alleged casualties...[but] only three or four men were actually gassed," and he questioned every remark in his gas attack report and omitted the customary map of the gassed area. The Division Gas Officer agreed with his RGO and in his report counted 128 casualties, "all very slight cases, most of the men going to the hospital for the ride."<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup>

SOI 31, 2nd Army, 10 - 11 Nov; FO 26, 92nd Div, 0830, 11 Nov; Rpt of Events, 366th Inf (92nd Div Box 8, 11.5); Ltr, CG 183rd Brig to CG 92nd Div, 11 Nov, sub: Opns of...366th Inf (92nd Div Box 6, 33.6).

Ltr, CG 2nd Army, 29 Dec, above, rptd casualties in those two days as 614 in the 33rd, 245 in the 28th, 236 in the 7th, and 285 in the 92nd Div.

<sup>128</sup>

See Study No. 8, "The 33rd Division Along the Meuse," pp. 75 - 76.

<sup>129</sup>

Rpt on Gas Atk, 12 Nov, and ltr, RGO 366th Inf to CO 366th Inf, 13 Nov, sub: Rpt on Gas Casualties (92nd Div Box 81, fol 7).

The field hospital said that on 11 November almost 300 men were admitted within one hour as gassed, but upon examination at least 160 were found entirely free of symptoms. More came in later and with the earlier non-gassed all were sent to the division casual camp before being returned to their organizations.<sup>130</sup>

The attack on the 365th Infantry around Bois Fréhaut and along the Champey road was more serious, said the Division Gas Officer, for apparently considerably more mustard gas than diphenylchloroarsine or phosgene had been used (Map No. 12). When the Regimental Gas Officer arrived at the regimental command post (PC) at St. Michel Farm about 0300 he found the staff carrying on, without masks, despite the obvious gas concentration around the PC. Warned by the Regimental and later the Division Gas Officer, the commander at the PC, Lt. Col. A. E. Deutsch, and his staff (a major, two captains, and a lieutenant) insisted they could not evacuate without brigade orders and "could not carry on wearing the masks and would not wear them."

When later ordered out by brigade, the entire staff had become serious casualties, along with 145 officers and men in the area who had removed their masks soon after the shelling, using only the mouthpiece to keep from breathing the vapor around them.<sup>131</sup>

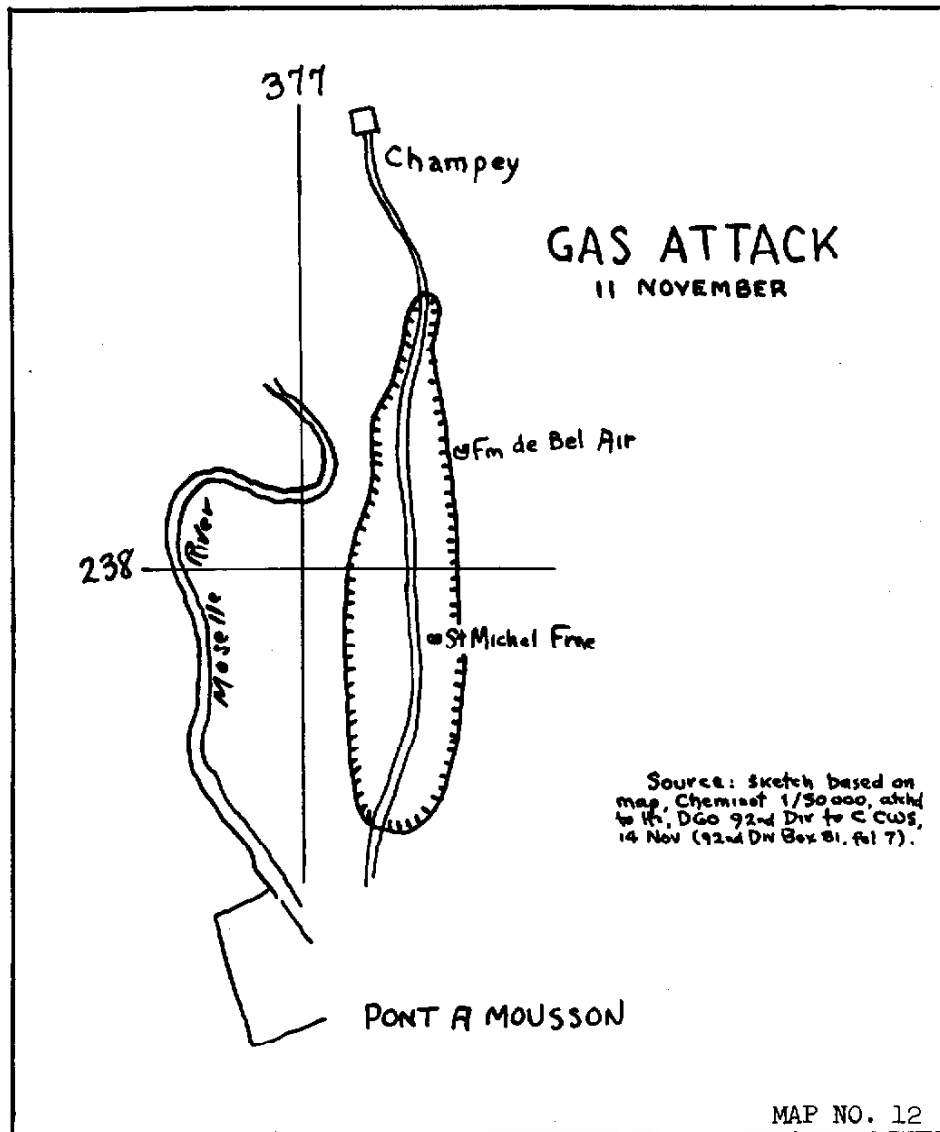
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<sup>130</sup>

4th Ind, Evac Officer FH 366 to Div Surg, 23 Nov (Med Dept Box 4008, fol 705); Ltr, Adj 183rd Brig to CO FH 366, 12 Nov, sub: Slackers, and 1st Ind, 13 Nov (ibid.), listed 5 officers and 161 men who showed no signs of being gassed.

<sup>131</sup>

Ltr, Lyne DGO 92nd Div to C CWS, 14 Nov, sub: Mustard Gas Atk; Ltr, Davis DGO 92nd Div to CofS 92nd Div, 30 Nov, sub: Wound Stripes (92nd Div Box 81, fols 7, 28).





Among the 145 officers and men were those at the battalion PC in Bois de la Tete d'Or. The 2nd Battalion commander reported that "During the night of the 10th this PC became infested with mustard gas and we temporarily withdrew to...the trench leading to it." Chloride of lime was spread around the PC, sag paste was freely used, and as a result "only slight burns were suffered by those occupying the PC." He could not estimate the casualties because the battalion medical officer was gassed and many men sent to the hospital of which "no record was kept." 132

The first report of G - 3 said that in the operations on 10 - 11 November 25 had been killed, 50 wounded, and about 100 gassed. Several days later the final count was given as 285 casualties in the 365th and 366th Infantry, with none in the 367th across the Moselle: 27 killed, 79 wounded, 169 gassed, and 10 missing. At the end of the month the division commander reported a total of 444 casualties in the operation: 32 killed, 119 wounded, 285 gassed, and 8 missing. 133

In sustaining those casualties, the 92nd Division had proved itself. "Some details of the operation," said General Hill, the brigade commander, "were not carried out as well as might have been done by more experienced troops [but] these were the results of mistaken judgment...rather than lack

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132

Maj Warner Ross, Rpt of Capture...of Bois Fréhaut, above.

133

DOR 34 and 38, 11 - 12, 15 - 16 Nov; Ltr, CG 92nd Div to G - 3 GHQ AEF, 30 Nov (92nd Div Box 4, 33.6). Spencer, III, 589 - 90, cites but two gas atks in Nov, one on the 2nd causing a single casualty, and that on 11 Nov, resulting in 150 casualties.

of the offensive spirit." General Hill was of the opinion that "these men were just finding themselves. The improvement in the aggressive spirit from day to day was manifest." 134

The troops in Bois Fréhaut and Bois Voivrotte held their positions until 14 November when Tenth French Army elements came in to relieve them and the 92nd Division moved to the west bank of the Moselle. Three days later the Third American Army was formed to take over the fronts of First and Second Armies and begin the march to the Rhine. Until their relief, the troops of those Armies were to abandon all existing defensive works and fortifications "as required by French Civil Authority in order to free ground for agriculture," and begin the training programs that had been planned earlier that month. 135

The thought of more training seems to have been resented. The problem of morale and discipline, which few officers in the 92nd Division were temperamentally equipped to handle, lost its last check with the end of the war. Trouble threatened in a few units in the rear, and a division memo issued the day after the Armistice said that "Summary punishments must now be found in hard labor, as the front line no longer has any terrors. All concerned must see and know that the labor is hard." Three weeks later a

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134

Ltr, CG 183rd Brigade, 19 Nov, above.

135

FO 27, 92nd Div, 1500, 14 Nov; FO 26, Second Army, 1000, 17 Nov.

disciplinary detachment was formed in each regiment to handle AWOLs.<sup>136</sup>

It is unlikely that the general feeling of higher headquarters about the 92nd could be concealed from the officers and men,<sup>137</sup> and the disillusionment of the troops themselves with their limitations, with their leaders, and their part in the great war had not been dissipated either in the States, at St. Die, in the Argonne, or along the Moselle. There was nothing for the division to do now but return the men home as quickly as possible.

On 5 December the division left the Moselle on the first leg of the trip across France. Ten days later it entrained for le Mans, on the way to the embarkation port of Brest. After a ten-week delay enroute the division finally boarded ship, arriving in the States in March 1919.<sup>138</sup>

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136

Memo, 92nd Div, 12 Nov (92nd Div Box 2, 32.14); Admin Memo, 7 Dec (Box 5, 64.8). In contrast is ltr, Insp Gen VI Corps to CG 92nd Div, 12 Nov, sub: Extracts from Div Insp's Daily Rpt (✓) Corps Box 6, 66.2), which said: "Morale of men during present attack has greatly improved, probably due to more experience on the line and under shell fire. In my opinion, the morale of this Division is now very good."

137

See Charles H. Williams, Sidelights on Negro Soldiers (Boston, 1923), p. 166.

138

FO 31, 92nd Div, 0230, 4 Dec; FO 35, 1030, 14 Dec; Scott, Official History, p. 163.

## ANALYSIS

### 92nd Division Casualties

The highest casualty total reported for the 92nd Division during its seven months overseas is that in Ayres' statistical summary of AEF data which shows 185 battle deaths and 1,495 wounded, or 1,680.<sup>139</sup> Scott's official history of the division breaks down its total of 1,593 casualties as follows:<sup>140</sup>

Killed in action	6 officers	208 men
Died of wounds	1	40
Severely wounded	6	203
Slightly wounded	46	348
Gassed	43	672
Missing	0	20
	<u>102</u>	<u>1491</u>

The final report of 92nd Division casualties, provided by the division and accepted by GHQ AEF, provides a still lower casualty total of 1,399.<sup>141</sup>

Killed	6 officers	106 men
Severely wounded	10	344
Slightly wounded	6	199
Gassed	39	661
Missing	0	28
	<u>61</u>	<u>1338</u>

<sup>139</sup>

Leonard P. Ayres, The War With Germany (Washington, D. C., 1919), p. 117. The Battle Monu Comm study, 92nd Div Summary of Operations (Washington, D.C., 1944), pp. 25, 34, shows a total of 1,293 casualties between 24 Sep - 11 Nov.

<sup>140</sup>

Emmett J. Scott, Official History, p. 164.

<sup>141</sup>

Ltr, Martin, CG 92nd Div to G - 3 GHQ AEF, 7 Dec, sub: Rpt; Memo, G - 3 GHQ AEF Washington DC for CofS, 15 Aug 1919, sub: Record of 92nd Div (both in 92nd Div Box 1, 11.4).

It is probable that the true casualty total, one of the lowest in the AEF, lies somewhere between the figures of Scott and those of the division itself.

### Gas Casualties and the 92nd Division

#### Reaction to Gas

Except for the Division Gas Officer, all gas personnel in the 92nd were Negroes, almost all of whom seemed to have established a fine record for industry, diligence, and devotion to their duties. None in the division was more aware than they of the excuse gas offered to get out of patrolling for a day or two or away from the battlefield, and their scepticism is recorded in their detailed gas attack reports.

How much malingering through fear of gas may be properly laid to the ill-fitting small box respirator (a few officers but none of the troops ever got the Tissot mask) cannot be estimated. The Division Gas Officer thought the SBR a hazard to the troops, but regimental and battalion gas officers did not mention it in their reports or offer it as an excuse for the casualties they reported.

Although the troops of the 92nd tended to panic in the face of machine gun and artillery fire (excusable, perhaps, considering their training and the apparent quality of some of their leaders), no record of their panicking in the face of gas has been found. The report of the gas hospital, that on 11 November over 300 men came in claiming to be gassed, more than half of them found wholly without symptoms, said nothing about gas panic or apprehension.

(narrative, p. 66).

The Division Medical Gas Officer capped this account with his report that from 1 - 13 November a total of 763 men came in to aid stations and field hospitals as gassed. Of these, 339 were not considered gassed and were returned to their units via the casual camp set up in the rear. The remaining 424 cases were apparently true gas casualties, 211 of them with mustard gas symptoms and 213 with symptoms of arsenical poisoning, although "not over 10 percent of the cases were serious."<sup>142</sup> Again, nothing was said about panic.

Supporting the contention that the problem of the 92nd Division was in its leadership rather than in the caliber of the troops is the relatively few psychoneurosis cases in the division while in France. The Division Psychiatrist reported 6 cases in August, 15 in September, 15 in October, and 33 in November, a total of 69 out of 10,250 hospital admissions, and not one of them attributed to apprehension concerning gas. Of the 69, 34 were subsequently returned to duty.<sup>143</sup>

With qualifications, the statement of Lt. Col. T. A. Rothwell, who commanded the 368th Infantry during the last six weeks of the war, that "The Negroes proved themselves especially good soldiers during gas attacks,"

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<sup>142</sup>

Ltr, Maj E. H. Johnson, DMGO to C CWS, 25 Nov, sub: Rpt of Gas Casualties (GAF - 92nd Div).

<sup>143</sup>

Ltr, Div Psychiatrist to Senior Consultant AEF, 4 Dec, sub: Special Report (Med Dept Box 4005, NP Rpts).

may very well have been true.<sup>144</sup> And Major Ross, commanding the battalion of the 365th Infantry in the Bois Fréhaut on 10 - 11 November, said his men remained for 28 hours there under "intense and prolonged gas and HE fire... without showing the faintest symptoms of panic or retreat."<sup>145</sup>

The totals of gas casualties reported by Scott and the division, 715 and 700 respectively, agree fairly well with that reported by the Medical Department statistical section (Table No. 1). But there are large areas of apparent disagreement between Table No. 1 and Table No. 2, the latter representing an actual count of the admission lists kept by the 92nd Division gas hospital.

One reason for the disparity lies in the failure of the division field hospital to show more than 2 casualties for the period 26 September - 10 October, when the division was in the Argonne sector. Medical Department records show 81 gas casualties and 205 wounded in that period (Table No. 1. Cf. Regimental count in narrative, p. 25). The greatest disparity in gas casualty totals occurs in the period 1 - 14 November, during which time the field hospital admitted gas cases every day, over and above the numbers it sent to the casual camp as non-gassed (narrative and analysis, pp. 65 - 66 and 73). The daily casualties admitted in that period are shown in Table No. 3.

It seems possible that the field hospital may have recorded as gas

<sup>144</sup>

Quoted in W. Allison Sweeney, History of the American Negro in the Great World War (Chicago, 1919), p. 207.

<sup>145</sup>

Ross, My Colored Battalion, p. 64.

TABLE NO. 1

MEDICAL DEPARTMENT STATISTICS  
OF 92nd DIVISION CASUALTIES

(Med Dept of the USA in the WW, vol IX, pp. 1030 - 1180)

Date	365th			366th			367th			368th			Other			TOTALS		
	K	W	G	K	W	G	K	W	G	K	W	G	K	W	G	K	W	G
20-31 Aug	0	5	3	2	14	3	1	12	0	2	10	8	0	1	0	5	42	14
1-25 Sep	5	42	2	7	65	49	3	15	20	1	27	7	0	11	7	16	160	85
26-30 Sep	0	5	3	1	14	1	0	8	5	39	136	40	1	5	4	41	168	53
1-8 Oct	0	9	5	0	6	5	0	5	3	1	15	13	0	2	2	1	37	28
9-31 Oct	11	23	230	2	18	12	0	13	1	1	16	4	0	9	8	14	79	255
1-11 Nov	20	80	211	17	59	65	0	9	3	0	7	2	2	21	9	39	176	290
	36	164	454	29	176	135	4	62	32	44	211	74	3	49	30	116	662	725

TABLE NO. 2

FIELD HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS  
92nd DIVISION

(FH 366, Med Dept Box 4012)

Date	365th		366th		367th		368th		Other		TOTALS	
	G	W	G	W	G	W	G	W	G	W	G	W
20-31 Aug	0	2	10	4	3	2	8	10	0	0	21	18
1-25 Sep	3	31	11	38	21	14	2	20	14	9	51	112
26 Sep-10 Oct	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
11-31 Oct	232	13	1	6	0	3	1	0	10	0	244	22
1-14 Nov	277	55	171	50	11	2	2	4	24	16	485	127
	512	101	193	98	35	21	13	36	48	25	801	281



TABLE NO. 3  
HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS 1 - 14 NOVEMBER

Date	365th		366th		367th		368th		Other		TOTALS	
	W	G	W	G	W	G	W	G	W	G	W	G
1 Nov	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
2 Nov	0	5	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	3	5
3 Nov	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
4 Nov	0	1	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	1	5
5 Nov	4	25	2	0	0	1	0	0	3	1	9	27
6 Nov	11	62	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	12	64
7 Nov	2	1	4	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	7	2
8 Nov	1	3	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	2	6
9 Nov	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1
10 Nov	9	8	4	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	16	12
11 Nov	24	78	19	18	0	1	1	0	4	5	48	102
12 Nov	4	51	18	115	0	0	0	2	3	9	25	177
13 Nov	0	34	0	36	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	73
14 Nov	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	6
	55	277	50	171	2	11	4	2	16	24	127	485

patients a number who later proved without symptoms. The true number may be somewhere between the 379 reported by the Division Gas Officer for November and the 290 found in Medical Department statistics. In any event all casualty estimates for the 92nd Division tend to suggest that gas casualties represented approximately half of the total casualties suffered in France.<sup>146</sup>

<sup>146</sup>

The narrative shows 99 gas cases at St. Die (p. 10), 51 in the Argonne (p. 25), 258 in October (p.50), and 424 in November, the latter figure according to the DMGO ( p. 73), a total of 832.

In a postwar report, the Division Gas Officer made tables of the gas attacks in the St. Die sector (11 attacks with 132 casualties) and the Marbach sector (20 attacks with 677 casualties), and estimated that this total of 809 gas casualties had been the result of approximately 3,640 gas shells, or a casualty for every 4.5 shells.<sup>147</sup> He made no mention of the 45 "gas suspects" in the 368th Infantry while in the Argonne (narrative, p. 25), and obviously was unaware that at least 6,000 mustard gas shells (not 1,000) had been fired in the bombardments of 14 - 15 October (narrative, pp. 40 - 44) thereby lowering his ratio from 4.5 to almost 11 shells per casualty.

The estimates of G - 2 and G - 3 that the 132 killed and wounded in the St. Die sector were, in part at least, the result of 22,366 shells fired by the enemy (narrative, p. 9 ) represents a casualty for every 170 HE shells. In the Marbach sector, 14,938 shells were counted in October, including approximately 1,500 gas shells. Total casualties reported by G - 3 that month were 42 killed and wounded and 145 gassed (narrative, p. 49). On the basis of these division figures, 320 HE shells were required for each shell casualty, 10 gas shells for each gas casualty.

A study by the Army Gas Officer of the eleven divisions in Second Army during the period 12 October - 9 November arrived at the same ten - to-one ratio of gas shells to gas casualties. The results of the study

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<sup>147</sup>ltr, Davis DGO 92nd Div to C CWS, 22 Jan 1919, sub: Rpt (GAF-92nd). DGO Monthly Rpts of Gas Casualties (92nd Div Box 81, fol 7) show 244 gas cases in Oct and 379 in Nov, with none recorded after 11 Nov.

are presented here as Table No. 4.<sup>148</sup>

TABLE NO. 4  
ANALYSIS OF GAS ATTACKS ON SECOND ARMY

Division	No. of Atks	No. of Shells	No. of men Exposed	Casualties (Deaths in parens)	Ratio of Casualties to Gas Shells
6th Div	4	231	1828	23	1 to 10
7th Div	9	4920	4480	609 (1)	1 to 8
28th Div	8	3750	3830	656	1 to 5.7
33rd Div	4	4200	1165	72 (1)	1 to 60
37th Div	3	3000	1350	220	1 to 14
78th Div	5	3500	1300	36	1 to 9.7
79th Div	9	4000	2480	220 (3)	1 to 18
88th Div	3	764	99	3	1 to 225
89th Div	16	4250	4150	401	1 to 10
90th Div	2	1020	700	190	1 to 5.4
92nd Div	9	4250	2900	492	1 to 8.6
	72	33,885	24,282	2,922 (5)	1 to 11.6

It is suspected that this chart, like many such prepared by corps and army, whether French or American, was constructed largely from divisional G - 2 and G - 3 daily reports and gas officer reports of gas attacks. It is therefore probable that the number of casualties, at least, are minimal, since gas officer and daily reports seldom account for delayed casualties of gas attacks.

<sup>148</sup>

Lt Col B. C. Goss, Rpt on Activities of CWS, 2nd Army, Oct 12 - Nov 11 (2nd Army Box 93, fol 13). Note: Another chart in this file shows 3 atks on the 92nd Div with the same total of 492 casualties, i.e., 116 casualties on 14 Oct, 97 on 29 Oct, and 279 on 7 Nov.

### Lessons Learned

When properly led, the Negro soldier is a good combat man. General Pershing thought highly of his Negro troops on the Mexican expedition, and welcomed their arrival in France. The French had large contingents of Senegalese and other colonials in their armies -- General Mangin's black demons were famous -- and made much of the four regiments of the 93rd Division that fought with French units. But in 1918, Pershing, as well as the French, knew that Negro troops ought not to be commanded by Negro officers.

At that time the American Negro soldier had not yet <sup>had</sup> an opportunity to develop leadership qualities, nor was he at all willing to accept another Negro as leader. Although the highest type of men were selected for OCS training at Des Moines, Iowa, and handily won their bars, in the field many of them found the enormous responsibility -- to their men, to their race, to those in the States who had fought for their right to command -- beyond them. The almost unanimous statement in 92nd Division operations reports was that the junior officers could not gain the respect of their men.<sup>149</sup>

Few of the white officers of the 92nd Division appear to have been

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149

Brown Report, 15 Nov, passim; Ltr, CO 1st Bn 365th Inf to CO 365th Inf, 11 Oct, sub: Officers of 1st Bn (92nd Div Box 7, 56.3), said all his junior officers were good men but the troops did not respect them enough.

competent to handle Negro troops in the field.<sup>150</sup> General Ballou seems to have thought of himself primarily as a crusader for race rights, a "father" to his division, and only remotely as a military leader. Such was Bullard's belated verdict on him. After more than a month's observation and trial of General Ballou, he said on 14 November, it was obvious that Ballou was unable to get results, either in offensive operations or in the ordinary management of the troops, and recommended that he be replaced.<sup>151</sup> Actually, Maj. Gen. Charles H. Martin took nominal command of the division on 9 November, replacing Ballou.<sup>152</sup>

In his book of reminiscences after the war, under date of 5 November, Bullard said of the 92nd that its "commanding general is not very strong as a military man. I'm inclined to think he will have to be 'SOS'd, and I'll have to have this done." Again, on 11 November, after what seems a wholly unfair comment on the lack of progress of the 92nd Division attack, Bullard said, "It seems to be as much the fault of the general as of the Negroes....The general who commands them can't make them fight. The general seems to me...to have lost sight of military efficiency in the racial 'uplift'

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150

"Nothing disconcerted us so much as the attitude of white American officers to their colored forces." Gen. Eugene Savatier, "The A.E.F. in the Meuse Argonne," As They Saw Us, ed. G. S. Viereck (New York, 1929), pp. 303 - 306.

151

Telg, Bullard to C-in-C, 14 Nov (Pershing Papers, Box 36, in Library of Congress).

152

Corresp in 92nd Div Box 1, 11.4.

problem which seems to fill his mind."<sup>153</sup> He said nothing about the much less successful progress of his other divisions in that attack.

Except for the division and brigade commanders, few of the white officers appear to have worked with or trained Negro troops before the war, and became easily and progressively discouraged and consequently ineffective. It is quite likely that the "perfunctory" training at St. Die (narrative, pp. 7 - 8). had a longer history than was evident in that report, as seems clear from General Ballou's later remarks on the lack of supervision of the troops by brigade, regimental, and battalion commanders (narrative, p. 36).

The training of the troops was thus far from satisfactory when they arrived in the Argonne, and considering the vagueness of the orders for that operation, the unjustified expectations of higher headquarters, and the lack of equipment and preparation for the mission (narrative, p. 14), the small degree of success by the single regiment engaged seems more than should have been expected.

That the division as a whole did little better in the advance on 10 - 11 November than earlier can only be properly judged in relation to the accomplishments of the other three divisions in Second Army. Second Army does not appear to have entirely understood its mission (footnote 118, p. 61), for though Pershing had said it was to assist in destroying the enemy's organization, its orders to the divisions asked little more than to follow up a retreating enemy. As Army G - 2 had made clear earlier (narrative, pp. 34-35), Second Army was not a fighting organization but a large-scale rehabilitation center.

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<sup>153</sup>

Bullard, Personalities and Reminiscences, pp. 295 - 296.

The gas experience of the 92nd Division demonstrates that neither overwhelming respect for gas nor continual and rigorous training in gas defense and discipline were sufficient to prevent gas casualties. Nor were they enough to prevent, to some extent, the loss of gas masks or carelessness when in the presence of gas (narrative, p. 22).

The ill-fit of the mask on the Negro face may have accounted for some gas casualties, but most of them were, as elsewhere, the result of removing the mask too soon or remaining in a gassed area longer than the mask could be comfortably worn. Gas officers agreed that gas sentinels were highly alert and a few men were ever gassed owing to failure to mask in time. When kept in a gas atmosphere for more than two or three hours, the troops removed the mask, retaining only the mouthpiece (narrative, p. 67). Casualties were inevitable.

The conviction that GHQ AEF and even the Chemical Warfare Service seems to have labored under, that training and discipline, if strict enough, would almost entirely prevent gas casualties, was a myth from the beginning. It is doubtful whether any division in the AEF had a healthier respect for gas than the 92nd, had more ambitious gas officers, or more interested troops. But like shell and shrapnel casualties, gas casualties simply were not wholly preventable.

On the other hand, the troops were quick to seize every opportunity offered by gas and false alarms to shirk (narrative, p. 26). Where general discipline and morale were low, such shirking was bound to be exaggerated.

But it cannot be demonstrated that fear or panic ever played any part in that shirking. As the Division Gas Officer said of the swollen numbers of gas claimants, they were just going to the hospital for the ride.

Although criticized from time to time by their perfection-seeking gas officers, the troops of the 92nd apparently maintained a relatively high standard of gas discipline, as the Division Gas Officer acknowledged. This is the most probable explanation for the comparatively few casualties that occurred on 14 - 15 October, when the Germans reported firing 6,000 mustard gas shells into Norroy-Lesmenils. The low total of 116 gas cases, despite the intransigence of the regimental commander and the errors of direction and judgment committed on that occasion, seems fairly remarkable.