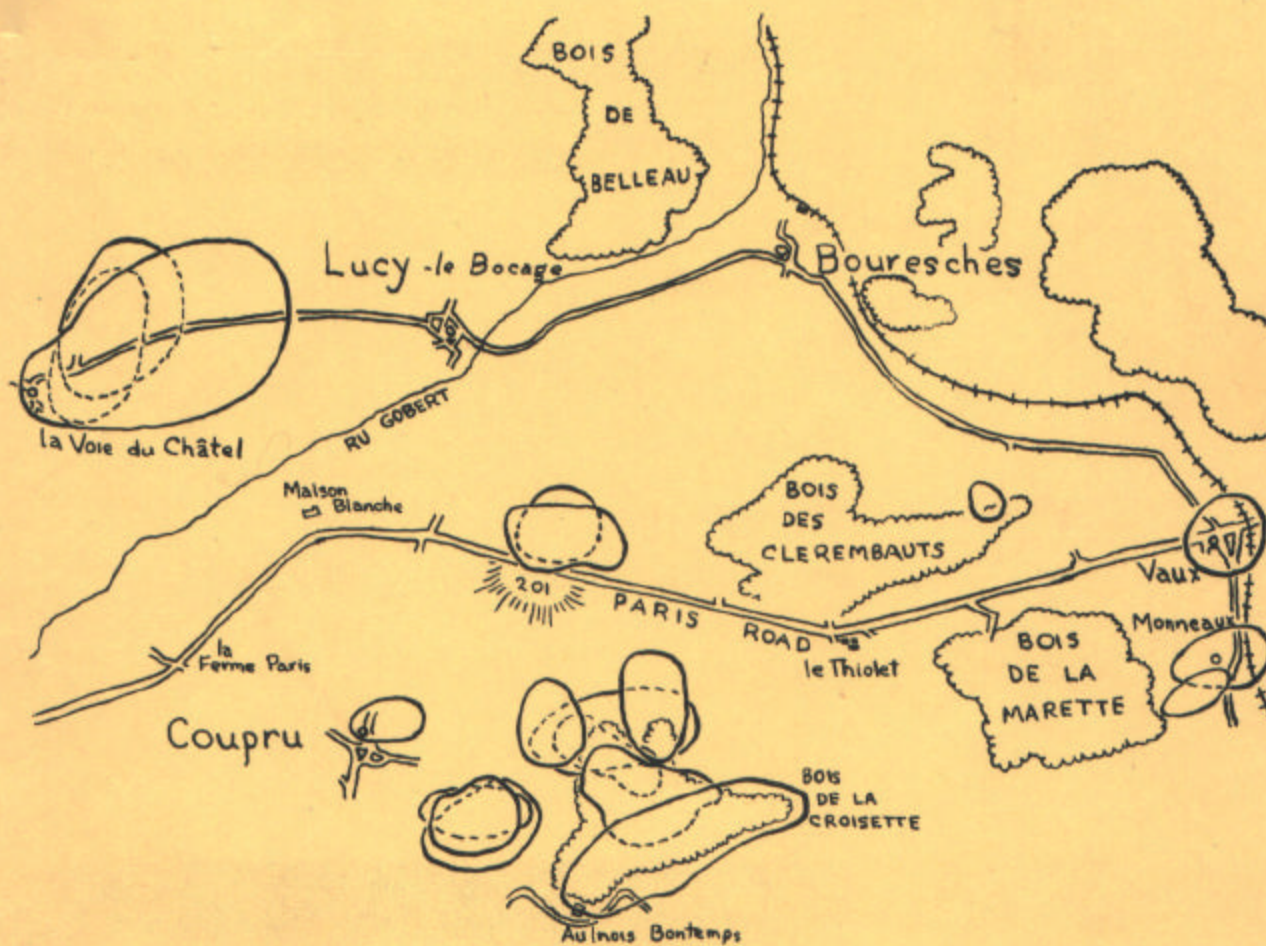


U. S. ARMY CHEMICAL CORPS HISTORICAL STUDIES
GAS WARFARE IN WORLD WAR I
THE 26th DIVISION IN THE AISNE-MARNE CAMPAIGN
July 1918



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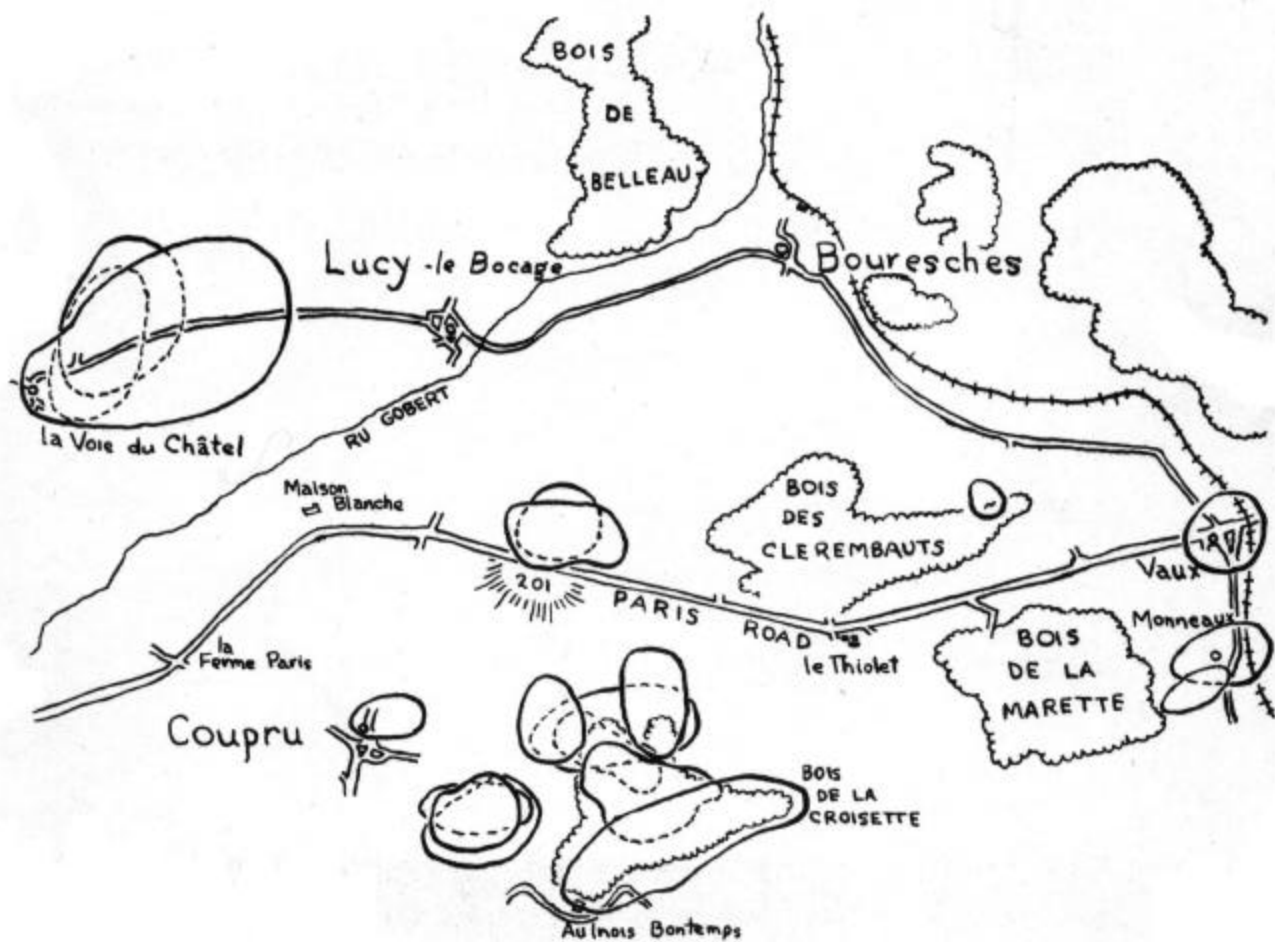
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**The 26th Division in the Aisne-Marne Campaign
July 1918**

by

Rexmond C. Cochran

GAS WARFARE IN WORLD WAR I

Study Number 4

**U.S. ARMY CHEMICAL CORPS
HISTORICAL STUDIES**

**U.S. Army Chemical Corps Historical Office
Office of the Chief Chemical Officer
Army Chemical Center, Maryland**

1957

The 26th Division in the Aisne-Marne Campaign
July 1918

Prepared by

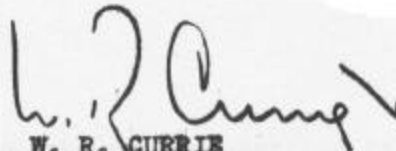
Rexmond C. Cochrane, Ph.D.

Under contract DA-18-108-CML-6214

with

U.S. Army Chemical Corps

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



W. R. CURRIE
Brigadier General, USA
Asst OCmlO for Planning & Doctrine

Foreword

This is a tentative study of the gas experience of the 26th Division in the Aisne-Marne Campaign 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 Mr. Walter O. Moeller and Mrs. Charlotte Bolin.

Note to Readers: 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 26TH DIVISION IN THE
AISNE-MARNE CAMPAIGN**

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THE 26TH DIVISION IN THE AISNE-MARNE OFFENSIVE

JULY 1918

At the Turn of the Tide

By 31 May 1918, after advancing for five days, the German Seventh Army had lost its forward drive. In a surprise breakthrough, it had reached the Marne. That day the Germans turned their efforts to a westward expansion of the bulge, down the valley between the Oureq and the Marne towards Paris. Petain's reserves, including the 2nd American Division, checked the spent and overextended German forces, and through the month of June the enemy sought to consolidate the terrain he had won.

This breakthrough, which Ludendorff had planned as a diversion for his principal effort against the British in Flanders, was to be followed in mid-July by another diversionary assault on either side of Reims, preparatory to a final assault on the British center at Hasebrouck. On 15 July, the German First and Third Armies to the east of Reims were to drive towards Chalons (see Map No. 1 and Overlay), while the Seventh Army crossed the Marne near Dormans and converged with the main advance towards Epernay. Paris was to be taken from the east, rather than through the valley of the Marne. Ludendorff's main attack in Flanders was to follow on 20 July, when the artillery and aircraft used to launch the Reims attack had been transported north.

The attack on the 15th on either side of Reims was the last German offensive on the western front. The great French and American artillery counter-preparation just before the German advance, followed by the Allied counterattack on July 18 against the flank of the German Seventh Army, so jeopardized the German situation that Ludendorff was compelled to postpone

and then abandon his whole plan for final victory. The ebb had begun.

Degoutte's "Study for a Renewal of the Offensive by the Vth Army," in which the 26th Division was to have a part, foresaw that an Allied attack on the 12-kilometer front between the Ourcq and Clignon rivers was possible with his present limited means if the enemy were to weaken or to "distend" himself elsewhere. There were three divisions with part of a fourth in the line on 8 July, the date of his study, but he would soon have seven divisions at his disposal, four in the line and three in reserve, with possibly one or two American divisions available later.¹

Applying the lesson taught by the German artillery in the breakthrough between the Oise and the Somme in March, the French artillery, said Degoutte, would open the attack with an intense but brief preparation, with intensive use of gas shells on enemy battery positions. With his Army artillery, he would have thirteen battalions of 155s on his front, "to more completely neutralise enemy artillery. This neutralisation will be made as much as possible with gas shells."² Yet, when the time for the attack came, the French ordered no artillery preparation whatever, in order to achieve maximum surprise.³ Later, with the recovery of the enemy from the surprise

¹ Actually, he was to have seven divisions, including the American 4th and 26th, in the first line for the attack and one in reserve, with the American 28th, 32nd, and 48th made available later.

²

G-3, Hq Vth Army, Study for Renewal of Offensive by the Vth Army, 8 Jul (26th Div Box 12, 31.2). See also G-3 study, Armies of the North and Northeast, Tactical Lessons Drawn from Operations between the Oise and the Somme, 6 Jun (tr at GHQ AEF, 14 Jun) (ibid., 31.7).

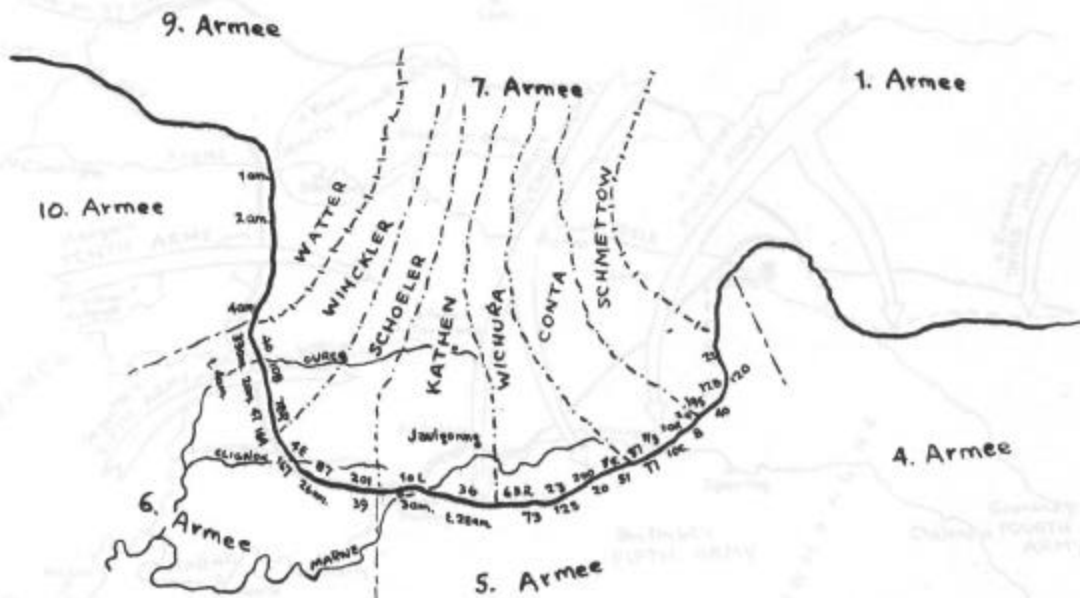
³

Order 81, French 167th Division, 17 Jul (26th Div Box 19, 32.11, 167th Div).



7. Armee

Lage am 18. Juli 1918 6^o morg
Feindfeststellungen bis 17. Juli 9^o abends



Source: 7th German Army
Order of Battle Map, 18 July
(reduced scale)
German File Box 79

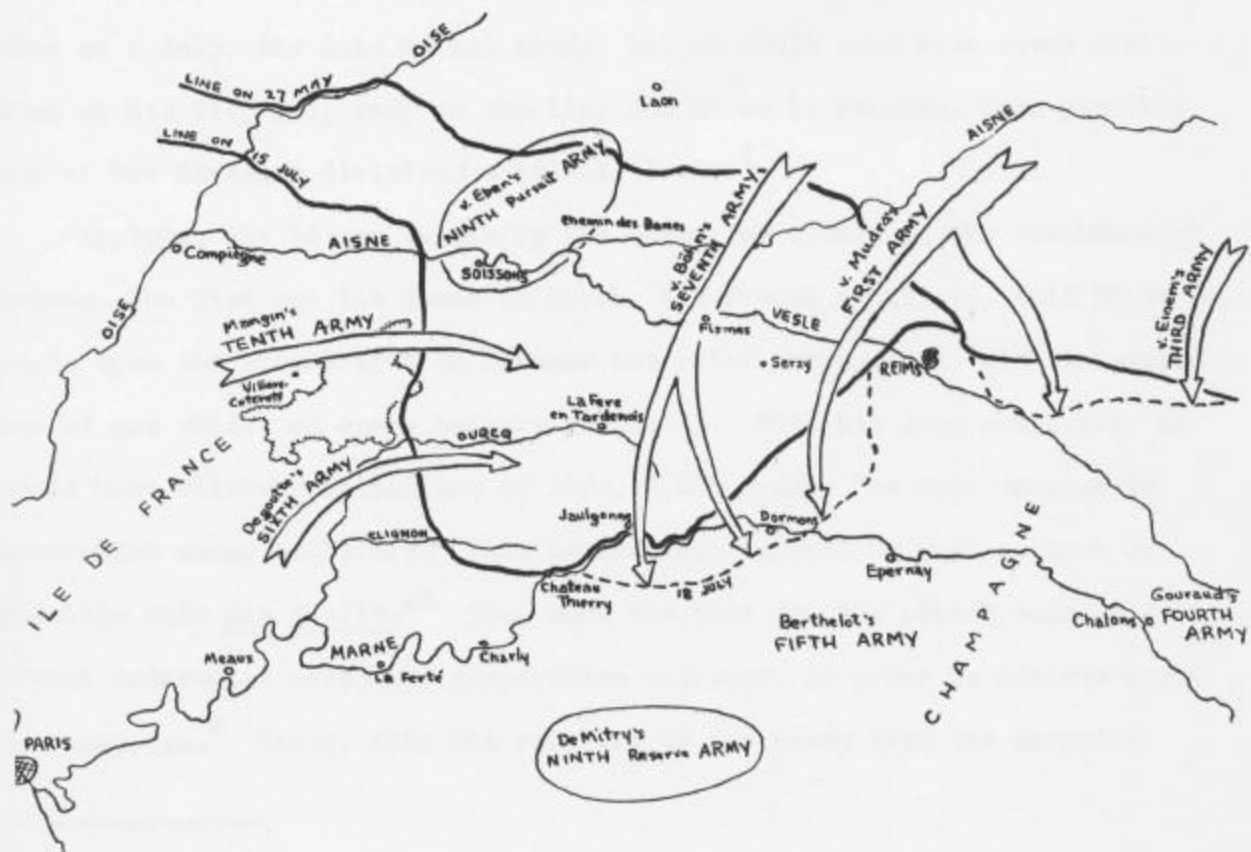
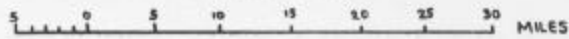
Note: t. 4 am. = part of 4th Amer Div

OVERLAY
FOR MAP NO. 1





SECOND BATTLE OF THE MARNE JULY - AUGUST 1918



MAP NO. 1



counterattack, the French found it necessary to use considerable gas on their front in order to advance.

In the great Allied counterattack, Degoutte's French Sixth Army played a subsidiary role to Mangin's Tenth, and in Degoutte's Army the role of the 26th Division, in a pivotal position, was relatively inconspicuous. Nevertheless, in its week of fighting, the 26th Division advanced seventeen kilometers, the first real advance made by an American division as a unit in World War I. Unlike the French divisions on its flanks, the 26th Division made that advance without the advantage of gas. Its gas casualties, on the other hand, were all out of proportion to those suffered by the French divisions.

The emphasis in this report is almost equally divided between the gas experience of the division in the two weeks prior to its advance and, partly as a result of that experience, its reaction to gas during the advance.

In the Pas Fini Sector

On 4 July, six days after being relieved in the Boucq sector, in the Weevre, the 26th Division arrived in the Pas Fini ("Unfinished") sector, near Chateau Thierry. It had been ordered to relieve the exhausted 2nd Division, which for thirty-five days had fought across a kilometer of ground against the German forces on the Paris-Metz road. Coming up to the left of the sector were the 103rd and 104th Regiments, 52nd Brigade, under Brig. Gen. Charles H. Cole; to the right were the 102nd and 101st Regiments, 51st Brigade (in that order from left to right), under Brig. Gen. George H. Shelton. The 51st FA Brigade was under Brig. Gen. Dwight E. Aultman, and Maj. Gen. Clarence R. Edwards commanded the division.

The relief began that day with elements of the 52nd Brigade replacing the 4th Brigade (Marine) in the left sector. The next day further relief was postponed when information was received that a large-scale German attack was about to be made somewhere between Reims and Chateau Thierry.⁴ Until the attack actually began, on either side of Reims ten days later, it was believed the enemy advance would be made down the Marne valley. The relief was not to be resumed until 7 July, and was completed on the night of 8-9 July.⁵

On 5 July, as the 52nd Brigade took over the left side of the line, the German units opposite were two regiments of the 4th Ersatz Division, between Bussiares and Belleau, completing the relief of the 5th Guard Division that day and taking over a sector of the 87th Division; the 87th Division, between Belleau and Bouresches; elements of the 28th Division, between Bouresches and Vaux, soon to withdraw; and a regiment of the 201st Division, encircling Vaux (Maps No. 2 and 3).⁶ The 5th Guard Division was completely used up. It was to be reported on 12 July as no longer capable of battle. The 4th Ersatz and 87th Divisions were still fully capable of fighting in positional warfare but badly in need of rest and retraining. All but one

⁴

Jul 0, 2nd Div, 4 Jul; War Diary, 2nd Div, 5 Jul.

⁵

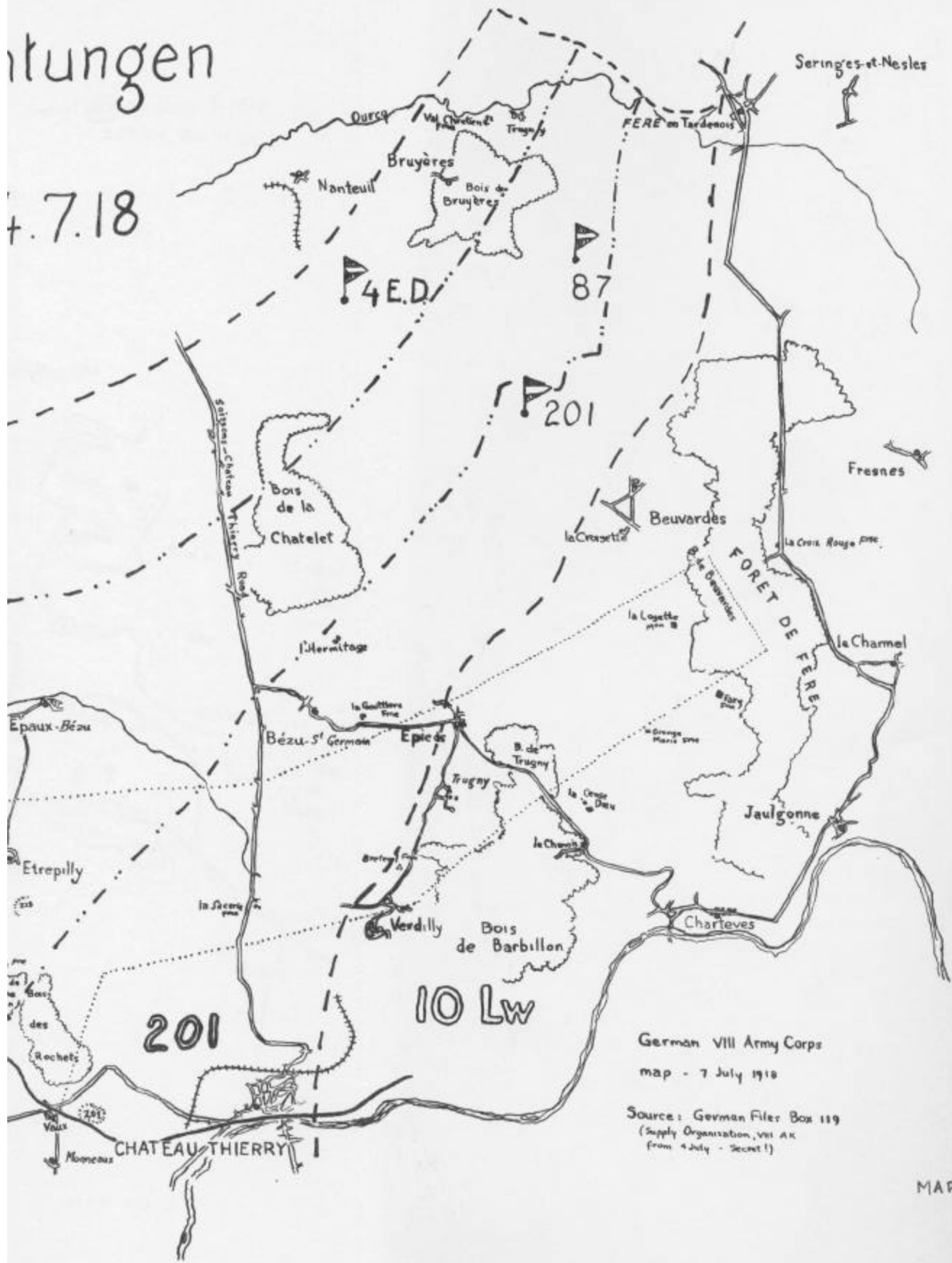
SO 3391, Vith Army, 2 Jul, and GO 545, 3rd Fr C, 2 Jul (26th Div Box 22, 32.7, Fr orders) ordered the piecemeal relief of the Marine brigade and its arty support between 4-7 Jul, that of the 3rd Brig and its arty between 7-9 Jul. GO 3403, Vith A, 3 Jul, ordered immediate alert dispositions and alert exercises in preparation for the attack. Cf. FO 48, 26th Div, 1600, 5 Jul (26th Div Box 13, 32.1).

⁶

SOI 86, 2nd Div, 4-5 Jul.

ntungen

7.18



German VIII Army Corps
map - 7 July 1918

Source: German Files Box 119
(Supply Organisation, VIII AK
from 4 July - Secret!)

MAP NO. 2

Nachschubeinrichtungen VIII. A. K.

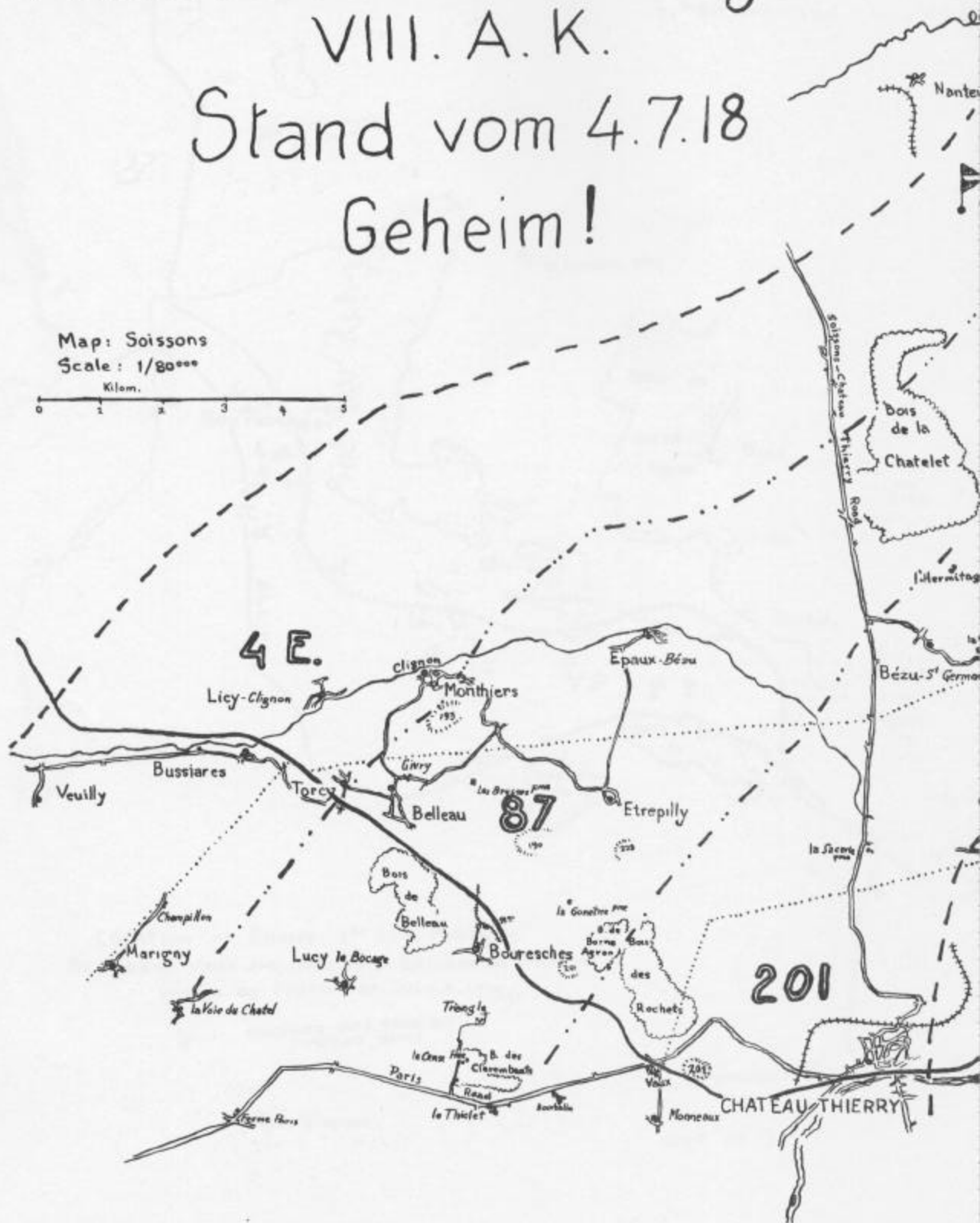
Stand vom 4.7.18

Geheim!

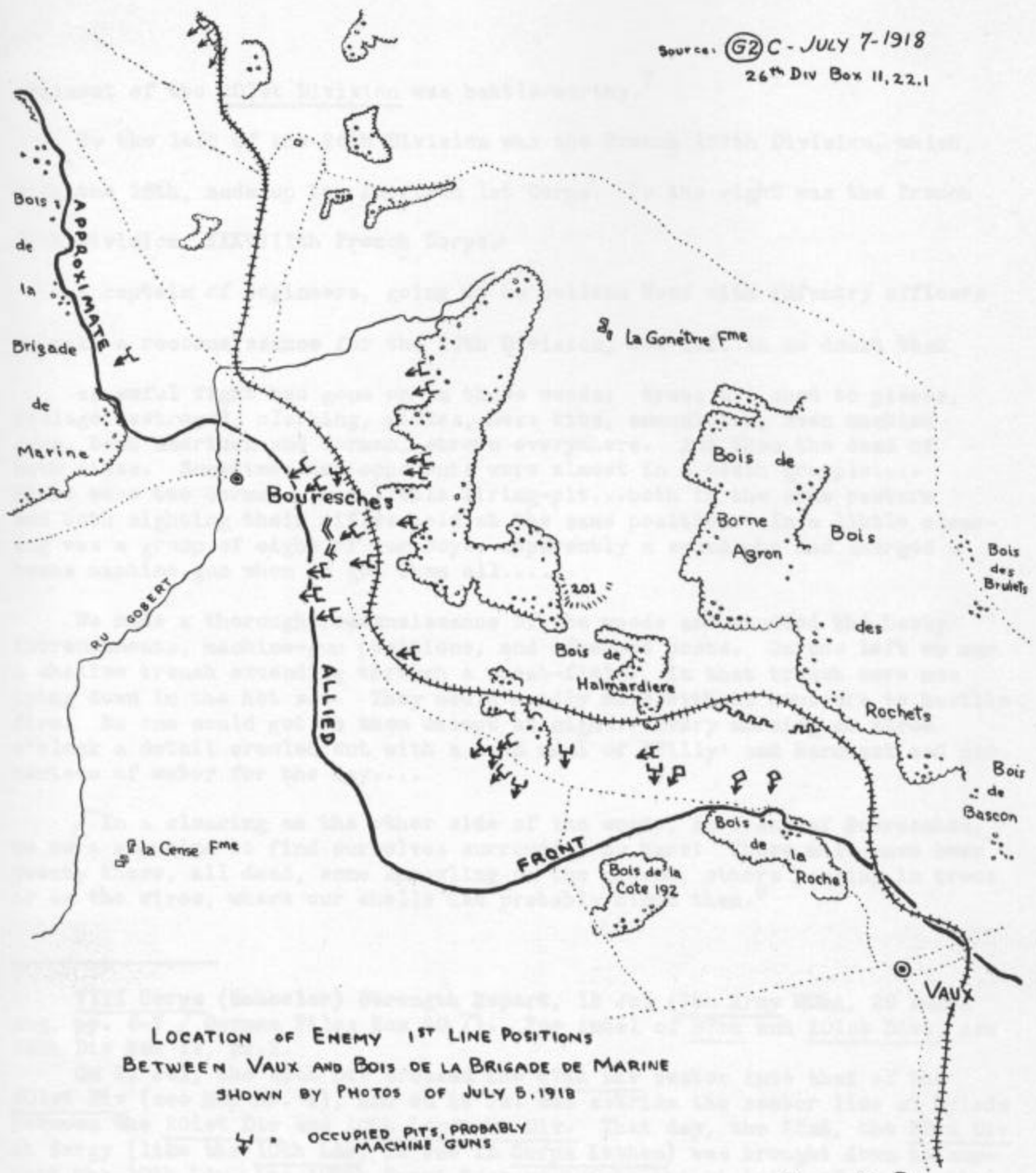
Map: Soissons

Scale: 1/80000

Kilom.



Source: G2C - JULY 7-1918
26th Div Box 11, 22.1



LOCATION OF ENEMY 1ST LINE POSITIONS
BETWEEN VAUX AND BOIS DE LA BRIGADE DE MARINE
SHOWN BY PHOTOS OF JULY 5, 1918

← * OCCUPIED PITS, PROBABLY
MACHINE GUNS

Scale: 1/20,000

MAP NO. 3

regiment of the 201st Division was battle-worthy.⁷

To the left of the 26th Division was the French 167th Division, which, with the 26th, made up the American 1st Corps. To the right was the French 39th Division, XXXVIIIth French Corps.

A captain of engineers, going up to Belleau Wood with infantry officers to make a reconnaissance for the 26th Division, was left in no doubt that

an awful fight had gone on in those woods; trees all shot to pieces, foliage destroyed, clothing, rifles, mess kits, ammunition, even machine guns, both American and German, strewn everywhere. And then the dead of both sides. Sometimes two opponents were almost in a death grapple.... There were two Germans in a little firing-pit...both in the same posture and both sighting their rifles held at the same position. In a little clearing was a group of eight of our boys, apparently a squad who had charged a boche machine gun when it got them all....

We made a thorough reconnaissance of the woods and studied the hasty intrenchments, machine-gun positions, and advanced posts. On the left we saw a shallow trench extending through a wheat-field. In that trench were men lying down in the hot sun. They could hardly move without exposure to hostile fire. No one could get to them except at night. Every morning at three o'clock a detail crawled out with a cold meal of 'Willy' and hardtack and one canteen of water for the day....

[In a clearing on the other side of the woods, in front of Bouresches,] we were startled to find ourselves surrounded by huns! There must have been twenty there, all dead, some sprawling on the ground, others hanging in trees or on the wires, where our shells had probably blown them.⁸

VIII Corps (Schoeler) Strength Report, 12 Jul (7th Army WD&A, 29 Jun-8 Aug, pp. 6-7 [German Files Box 80]). For intel of 87th and 201st Divs, see 26th Div Box 11, 22.2.

On 21 Jul, the 26th Div crossed the 87th Div sector into that of the 201st Div (see Map No. 2), and on 22 Jul was astride the sector line at Epieds between the 201st Div and 10th Landwehr Div. That day, the 22nd, the 23rd Div at Sergy (like the 10th Ldw, it was in Corps Kathen) was brought down to support the 10th Ldw, its 108th Saxon Regt moving to the vicinity of La Logette Maisen (23rd Div WD, 22 Jul [23rd Div WD&A, fol I, German Files Box 174]; Corps Kathen Opns O 3208, 3215, 20 Jul [Box 161]).

8

Carrell J. Swan (Co D, 101st Eng), My Company (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1918, 263 pp). pp. 165-168.

For five days after the arrival of the 26th Division, its headquarters and 51st Brigade remained in the second or Army defense position, with its 52nd Brigade in the front line and first position under the command of the 2nd Division (Map No. 4). Detailed Corps orders and instructions were issued daily on the maintenance of the alert and counter-offensive preparations. One order made the 26th Division responsible for blowing the Marne bridges in the event of a breakthrough.⁹ On 7 July and again on 13 July higher headquarters issued special warnings that the expected attack was imminent, but on the front the enemy appeared only to be organizing defensive positions in depth, stringing accordion wire and double barbed wire, and constructing new machine gun and rifle positions.¹⁰ On the American side, all troops were similarly engaged in constructing or strengthening machine gun emplacements, wire entanglements, and firing trenches, particularly around the recently won Bois de Belleau and village of Vaux. And daily the artillery on both sides put down fire on targets of opportunity.

9

FO 4, 1st C, 7 Jul (1st C Box 15); ltr CofS 26th Div to CO 102nd Inf, 2230, 7 Jul, sub: Employment of troops on Position 2 (26th Div Box 19, 32.14).

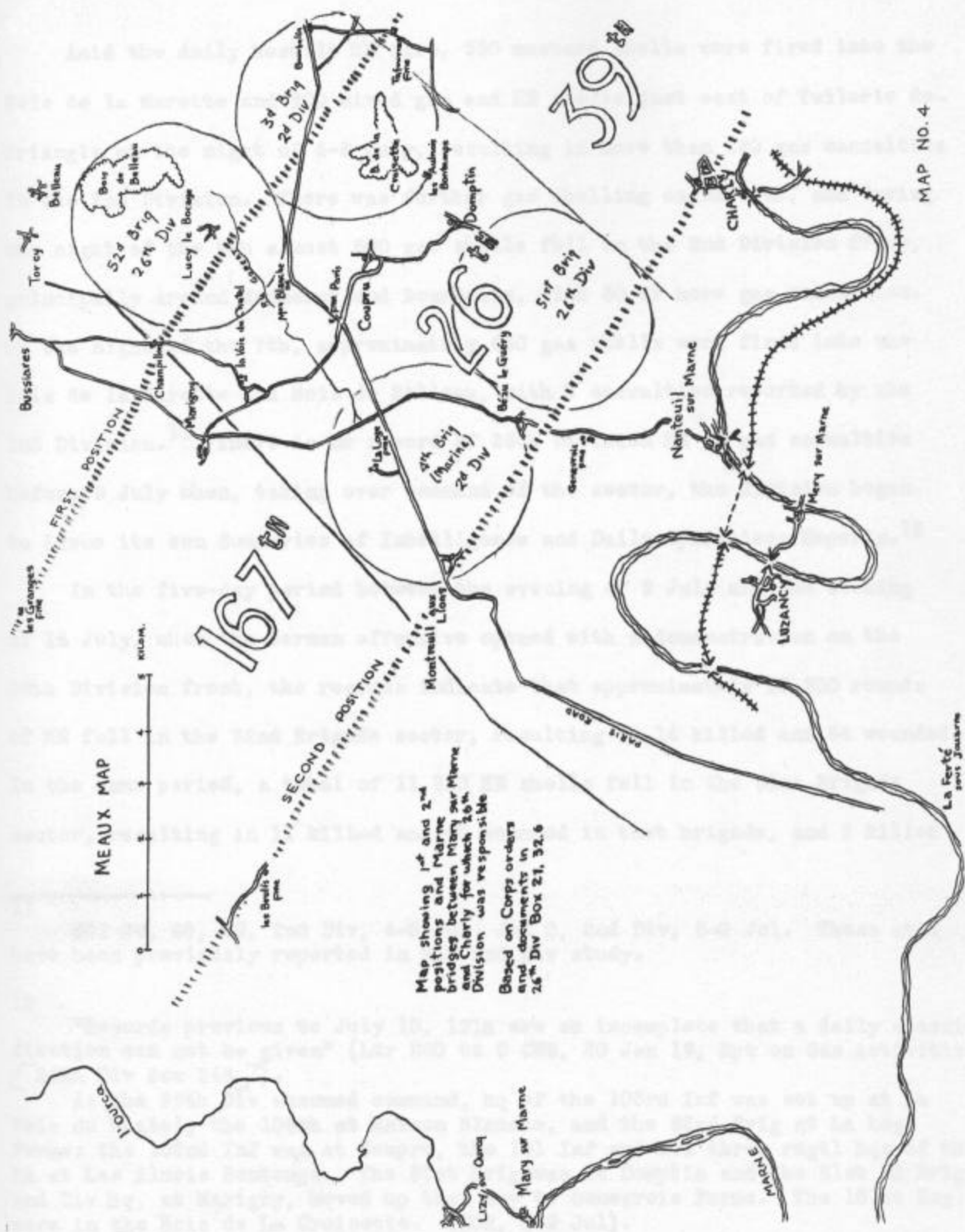
The detailed plans for defense of the 1st and 2nd positions, as part of With Army's mission to resist a crossing of the Marne, are in FO 6, 1st C, 8 Jul. See Corps instructions in 26th Div Box 16 and Box 19, 32.15.

On 8 Jul, Opns O 4, 1st C Arty, said: "Certain batteries, whose zone of action is beyond 1000 meters from our line of outposts, will be required to fire 70% gas shell."

On 16 Jul, Opns O 6, 1st C Arty, said: "It is recommended that a large proportion of gas be employed in the neutralization of the enemy batteries. Division and Artillery Commanders will submit to these headquarters as soon as possible an estimate of the number of gas shells needed...." No such estimates have been found. (Opns O in 1st C Box 36, 60.11, Rpt of Opns, and in 1st C Box 38, 60.32).

10

SOIs for the period, and G-2 1st C Rpt, Resume of Study of Enemy's Sector Opposite 1st C from June 1st to July 15th (26th Div Box 32, 31.5).



MAP NO. 4

Map showing 1st and 2nd positions and Marne bridges between Mary sur Marne and Charly for which 26th Division was responsible. Based on Corps orders and documents in 26th Div Box 21, 32.6

Amid the daily hostile HE fire, 350 mustard shells were fired into the Bois de la Marette and 200 mixed gas and HE shells just east of Tuilerie de Triangle on the night of 4-5 July, resulting in more than 120 gas casualties in the 2nd Division. There was further gas shelling on the 5th, and during the night of the 6th almost 500 gas shells fell on the 2nd Division front, principally around Monneaux and Bourbelin, with 50 or more gas casualties. On the night of the 7th, approximately 650 gas shells were fired into the Bois de la Marette and Bois de Belleau, with 8 casualties reported by the 2nd Division.¹¹ There is no record of 26th Division HE or gas casualties before 9 July when, taking over command of the sector, the division began to issue its own Summaries of Intelligence and Daily Operations Reports.¹²

In the five-day period between the evening of 9 July and the evening of 14 July, when the German offensive opened with a demonstration on the 26th Division front, the records indicate that approximately 10,350 rounds of HE fell in the 52nd Brigade sector, resulting in 14 killed and 84 wounded. In the same period, a total of 11,350 HE shells fell in the 51st Brigade sector, resulting in 11 killed and 48 wounded in that brigade, and 2 killed

11

SOI 86, 88, 89, 2nd Div, 4-8 Jul; Jnl O, 2nd Div, 5-8 Jul. These atks have been previously reported in the 2nd Div study.

12

"Records previous to July 10, 1918 are so incomplete that a daily classification can not be given" (Ltr DGO to C GWS, 20 Jan 19, Rpt on Gas Activities [26th Div Box 248]).

As the 26th Div assumed command, hq of the 103rd Inf was set up at La Voie du Chatel, the 104th at Maison Blanche, and the 52nd Brig at La Loge Ferme; the 102nd Inf was at Coupru, the 101 Inf and all three regtl hqs of the FA at Les Ainois Bontemps. The 51st Brig was at Dompnin and the 51st FA Brig and Div Hq, at Marigny, moved up that day to Genevrois Ferme. The 101st Eng were in the Bois de La Creissette. (DOR, 8-9 Jul).

and 13 wounded in the 101st Engineers.¹³

Although the enemy fired some gas on each of those five days, it reportedly produced little effect. On the 10th, "La Voie du Chatel received an intense burst of shells...at 16:00 o'clock, [50] blue cross gas shells being used in the bombardment," with 25 gas rounds on an unidentified target and 20 on the Bois de la Marette that evening, all without causing any casualties.¹⁴ Approximately 50 rounds of gas were put on Vaux and the Bois de la Roche on the night of 11-12 July, and again on Vaux and the ravine between Vaux and Monneaux on the evening of the 12th. On the night of 13-14 July, 50 gas shells fell on Triangle Ferme and Bois de Triangle and 25 more in the Bois de Belleau.¹⁵ That same night between 7:20 p.m. and 5:45 a.m., the 102nd FA of the 26th Division fired 130 No. 5 (phosgene) shells into the Bois des Rochets.¹⁶

Only 3 gas casualties resulting from about 270 gas shells, were reported by the division for the five-day period. Division Surgeon records, however, show 46 gas casualties during that period, while an actual count of the hospital admission lists reveals 57 gas casualties between 10-14 July.¹⁷

¹³

SOI 87-91, 26th Div, 9-14 Jul (26th Div Box 8, 20.1); DOR, 26th Div, 9-14 Jul (Box 24, 33.1).

¹⁴

SOI 87, 88, 9-11 Jul; DOR, 9-10 Jul.

¹⁵

SOI 89, 90, 11-13 Jul.

¹⁶

Ops Rpt 101, 51st FA Brig, 14 Jul (26th Div Box 59). This is the only record of this gas mission. 26th Div arty fired 7703 rounds of HE that same day.

¹⁷

DOR, 9-14 Jul; chart, Med Dept (26th Div) Box 3593, 704 Casualties; admission lists, Med Dept (26th Div) Box 3616.

It appears just as well that there were no serious gas attacks during the period, for some of the troops in the 26th Division arrived in the sector without gas masks, having lost them enroute. As the gas officer of the 102nd Infantry reported on the 7th: "Am badly off for S.B.R.'s [small box respirators]. Men have losted [sic] them in large numbers. So far I've had 45 cases reported but understand that there were more....No reserve stocks left....I'll try and get them from Division that we relieve but they may not want to do so. A supply of 100 would just about fix me up until the ---- fools move again."¹⁸ After investigating this report, the Division Gas Officer notified General Edwards: "The same fault that has been noticed on previous moves was noticed during this last move. That is the fact that respirators were lost. For example, the 3rd Battalion of the 102nd Infantry called for 25 respirators after they had used up their 5% reserve when they reached the front line....Each of the Battalions requested Respirators after the move."¹⁹

Almost a week later, when the relief of the 2nd Division had been completed and the troops were in the front line positions, the Assistant Division Gas Officer and Division Gas Officer, after inspection tours of the infantry and artillery regiments, reported a number of flagrant violations of gas alert discipline involving the gas mask, the most serious occurring in the 101st

¹⁸

FM Washburn RGO 102nd Inf to DGO, 7 Jul (26th Div Box 249, fol 1).

¹⁹

Ltr DGO to CG 26th Div, 9 Jul, sub: Insp of Gas Disc (ibid., fol 5).
In P. P. Sibley's With the Yankee Division in France (Boston: Little, Brown, 1919), facing p. 84, is a picture taken in April of "General Cole [52nd Brig] lecturing [three] soldiers caught without gas masks, Xivray-Marvoisin."

Infantry. On 11 July and again on 13 July, it was found that "orders regarding the wearing of respirators in the 'alert' position in the 'alert' zone [were] not being obeyed by a large number of men and officers." Fifteen men were carrying their respirators in the slung position, twenty-four were wearing their masks at the carry, one had an unauthorized ARS French mask, and thirty-one had none at all.²⁰

Concerning gas discipline in the division at large, it would be interesting to know how generally it was understood before the advance that "excusable gas casualties are ones in which (a) a man was knocked down by the gas shell, (b) runners who had to go through infected areas or (c) instances where men took off respirators in battle to be able to fight better. The inexcusable ones are those in which respirators were adjusted tardily, (d) taken off too soon or (e) inexcusably remained in infected areas when not necessary."²¹

While the survey and replacement of gas masks was being carried out, it was reported daily that "we are improving our positions," with the infantry in the front lines digging shelters and repairing their rifle pits, and the engineers, with infantry help, putting in from three to six thousand man-hours each day on construction work in the zone of resistance, digging trenches, putting up camouflage, constructing dugouts and command posts,

20

Memo Asst DGO to ACoFS G-1, 12 Jul and memo DGO to ACoFS G-1, 15 Jul (ibid., fol 5).

21

Ltr DGO to C CWE, 20 Aug. sub: Examples of Good and Bad Gas Disc (26th Div Box 249, fol 3).

cutting lots, and preparing wire entanglements. Nightly, patrols went out in aggressive forays to scout enemy positions and secure identification of the forces opposite.

Gas for "Strassenbau"

During the early evening of 14 July, as the light rain gave way to heavy ground fog, the enemy fired his normal harassing missions. Then

starting about midnight, our front lines and intermediate areas were heavily shelled with High Explosive and gas. The Marne bridges and back areas were shelled intermittently during the night. As time went on the firing became more intense and it became evident that the 101st Infantry was receiving special attention. The Bois de la Brigade Marine got severe punishment but, as a whole, the fire was concentrating towards Vaux. This concentration continued until about 3:45 o'clock when it reached the intensity of a barrage in front of Vaux.²²

Reporting the gas attack thus minimized by division headquarters, Capt. Thomas H. Cutler, the Division Gas Officer, said: "In conjunction with the start of his fifth grand offensive the enemy protected his right flank by means of a heavy gas attack on positions of our troops." He estimated that during the ten-minute preparation with diphsogene and chlorpicrin, followed by a four-hour mustard gas bombardment, almost 1500 gas shells had been fired on the 101st Infantry, 101st Engineers, and 102nd MG

²²

DOR 14-15 Jul. Opns Rpt 101, 15 Jul, 51st FA, said: "In response to the enemy's bombardment our batteries fired C.P.O.'s and at 1:26 o'clock on a report from the Infantry that the action was localized at Vaux, the Light Artillery Grouping fired 575 Gas shells [No. 5] opposite the 101st Infantry....At 2:00 o'clock [our] barrage was finished and a C.P.C. was started on the woods north of Vaux with gas" (26th Div Box 59; also Intel Rpt, 102nd FA, 14-15 Jul [Box 61, 20.7]).

NOTE: C.P.O. stands for counter-preparation offensive fire. Cf. C.O.P. (counter offensive preparation). "The C.P.O. on the line of main resistance is fire on a zone extended from the barrage line for a depth of 500 [or more] meters" (Opns O 169, 101st FA, 13 Jul [26th Div Box 60, 32.12]).

Battalion in the Bois de la Croisette and at Vaux and Monneaux; 6200 rounds had fallen on the 102nd Infantry at Hill 201 and in the woods around Coupru; 1500 rounds on the 103rd Infantry in the woods near La Voie du Chatel; and 200 rounds on the 101st FA northeast of Maison Blanche (Map No. 5 and Overlay).²³

The 101st Infantry reported 22 inhalation and 130 burn casualties sent to the hospital on the morning of the 15th, the 101st Engineers reporting 10 inhalation and 52 burn cases.²⁴ A field message from the 102nd Infantry at Coupru read: "Have had about 6,000 to 6,500 gas shells in our sector last night. Most of it Mustard with some Phosgene and Diphosgene. Woods still full of it. About 30 to hospital up to now. Will be a lot more before the next two days are over [FM RGO 102nd Inf to DGO, n.h., 15 Jul (26th Div Box 248)]." The 1st Battalion Gas Officer, 102nd Infantry, was to say that the gas attack that night began with a high concentration of phosgene and diphosgene for fifteen or twenty minutes, then the battalion area in the woods was drenched "with fully 6000 mustard gas shells."²⁵ The regiment later reported:

Between midnight and four o'clock, 15th July, the enemy threw approximately five thousand mustard-gas shells into the woods on Hill 201, Bois des Clerembauts, and the woods south of the Paris-Metz Road....The two companies on Hill 201 and the two in the woods south of the road, comprising the First

²³

Ltr DGO to CG 26th Div, 20 Jul, Rpt of Gas Atk Evening of July 14-15 (26th Div Box 25, 33.6).

²⁴

RGO and BGO Rpts on Gas Attack (26th Div Box 248).

²⁵

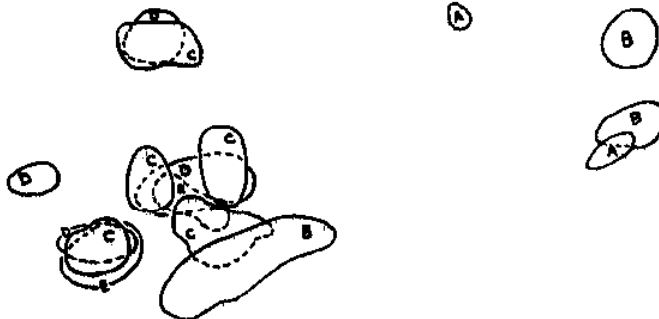
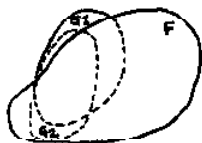
Ltr BGO 102nd to DGO, 16 Jul (ibid).

KEY

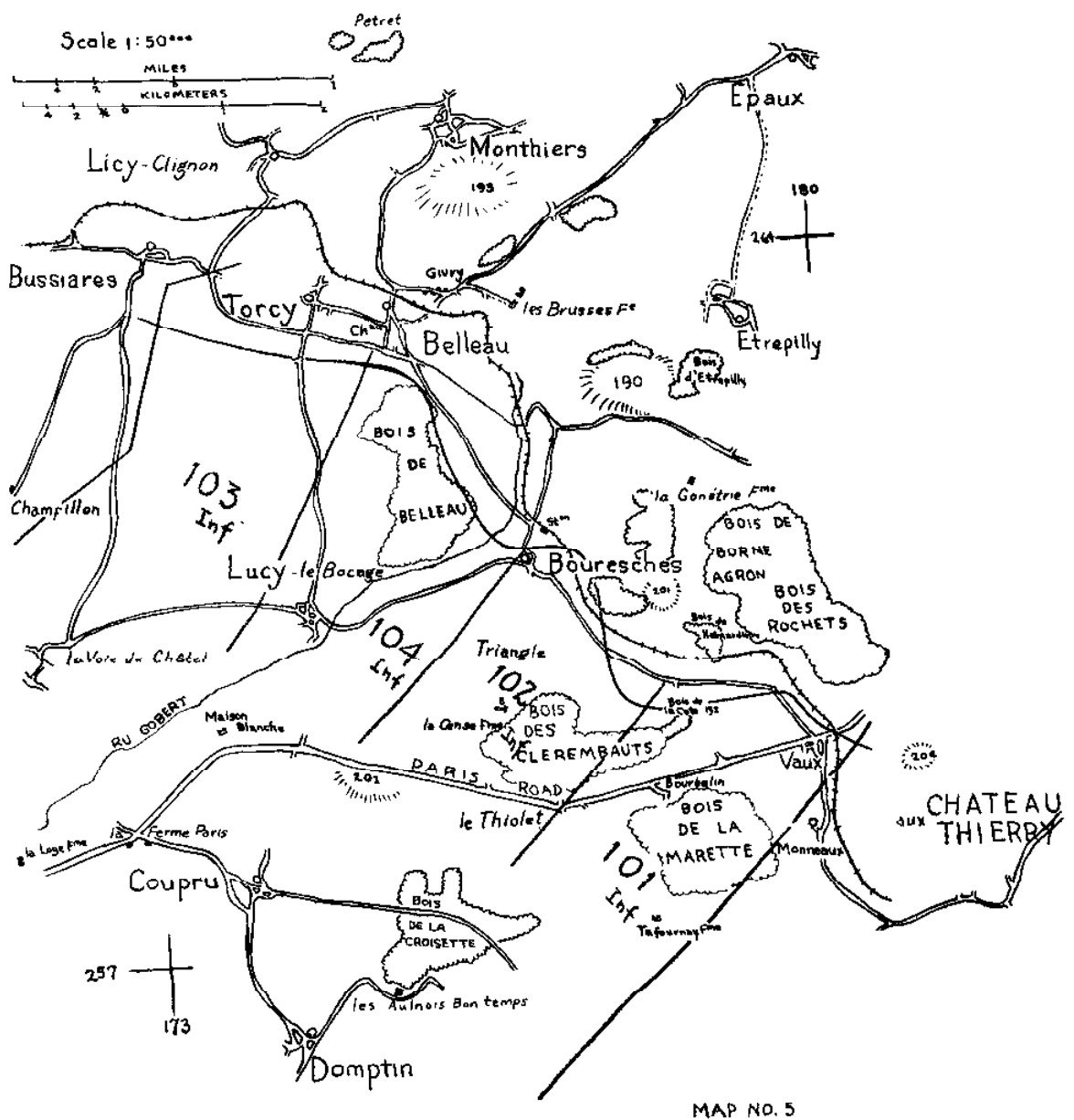
- A. 101st Inf in Bois de la Côte 192 and Monneau ravine, 7:30-8:15 PM, 14 July (?)
- B. 101st Inf in Bois de la Croisette, Vaux and Monneau, 12:30-2:45 AM, 15 July
- C. 102nd Inf at Hill 201 and woods E and NE Coupva, 12:30-4:30 AM, 15 July
- D. Appears to be a second attack, 102nd Inf, same date as C
- E. 102nd M.G. Bn. in Bois de la Croisette, 12:30-4:00 AM, 15 July
- F. 103rd Inf. near La Voie du Chatel, 11:30 PM-1:30 AM, 16-17 July
- G1. 103rd Inf. near La Voie du Chatel, 1:30-4:30 AM, 15 July
- G2. 103rd Inf. near La Voie du Chatel, 1:30-3:30 AM, 16 July



Source: Spencer, EACD 460
 A consolidation of Maps 9-15
 in Part IV of the report



OVERLAY
 FOR
 MAP NO. 5



Battalion in support, suffered heavily, the casualties being chiefly body burns developing during the ensuing days, the gas hanging in the woods, alternately held down by rain and again volatilized by the warm sun.²⁶

The 103rd Infantry, south of Torcy, reported the bombardment of mustard gas and HE as in the "Proportion of gas to high explosive shell 2 for 1. 1500 gas shells fell, 500 in woods occupied by 2nd Battalion and 1000 in adjacent area." At 6:30 a.m. on the 16th, only two men in the 103rd had been reported evacuated as a result of the gassing.²⁷

The particular target of the gas attack on the morning of the 16th, the divisional artillery, reported 1 officer and 2 men gassed on the 16th, and 39 men of the 101st FA and 1 officer and 19 men of the 103rd FA gassed on the 16th.²⁸

Corps Schoeler, whose units had fired gas missions all along its front that morning, did not appear to agree with Captain Cutler that the gas was for flank protection, but said: "On the 15th the offensive "Strassenbau" ["Road Construction," code name for the Marne-Reims offensive] was begun by the troops in the left sector. In order to divert the attention of the enemy, bursts of annihilation fire were delivered and raids executed on the entire corps front." Schoeler's 4th Ersatz Division, however, was more explicit concerning the general strategy:

²⁵

Hist of the 102nd Inf (26th Div Box 41, 11.4). Rpt of Opns & Intel, 102nd Inf, 14-15 Jul (ibid., 20.7), reported only 2500-3000 HE and gas shells over these four hours, coming from German guns at Monthiers and Etrepilly.

²⁷

FM Rpt of Gas Shell Atks on 103rd; Rpt on Gas Atk, RGO, 103rd Inf (26th Div Box 246).

²⁸

Opns Rpts 101-103, 15-17 Jul, 51st Brig (26th Div Box 59).

Of paramount importance for the success of the attack [of the German Armies] is complete assurance of the protection of the right flank, by fully repulsing enemy attacks against the Ninth Army and west front of the Seventh Army without requiring more forces than are in line at present, in order not to withdraw any troops from the attack....Waves of annihilation fire will be delivered daily between 4:30 and 5:30 a.m. on the enemy assembly areas. Abundant use will be made of gas.²⁹

The raid on the 26th Division, simultaneous with raids on the French forces on either side, materialized as the gas and HE bombardment ceased. At 4:15 a.m., approximately a hundred 201st Division troops advanced and occupied the railroad out north of Vaux. Boxing the German force in with a barrage, the 101st Infantry attacked and dispersed the raiders in a short fight.

The division estimated that approximately 15,000 shells were fired into its sector on the night of 14-15 July, with the chief concentrations on the forward positions of the 101st in the Bois de Belleau and on the battery positions near the Paris-Metz road. There was "much gas," the number of rounds presumably included in the above total.³⁰

In his original report, the Division Gas Officer said that approximately 9,320 gas shells were fired on the morning of the 15th, and implied the same number the next night, the 16th, speaking of it as "practically a duplication of the first attack."³¹ Hanslian says that the German 87th Division fired

²⁹

Rpt on Action, 15 Jul, VIII C (Schoeler), 11 Jul-31 Aug, tr from fol 1 (German Files Box 119); 4th Ers Div Opns O 534, Preparations to Resist Counter-atk, 15 Jul (4th Ers WD, Fol II, pp. 16-17 [German Files Box 146]).

³⁰

SOI 92, 14-15 Jul

³¹

Ltr to CG 26th Div, 20 Jul, above. A postwar report on these attacks, "on the basis of his records" then, is contradictory in its estimate of 2,850 diphenylchlorarsine, phosgene, and mustard shells on the 14th [night of 14-15] and 9,700 phosgene, diphoagens, and mustard shells on the 15th, resulting in 159 gas casualties and 2 gas deaths. (ltr DCO to C GWS, 20 Jan 19, sub: Rpt on Gas Activities [26th Div Box 248]).

approximately 8000 yellow cross shells on the morning of the 15th and 750 yellow cross shells between 2:00 and 3:00 a.m. on the 16th, all against the battery positions of the 26th Division. He further observes: "This gas bombardment took place in conjunction with the German offensive across the Marne and was designed to hold the enemy batteries and prevent their enfilading the German troops participating in this attack, and at the same time to pave the way for local patrol raids."³²

The casualties reported by the division as a result of the shelling (15,000 rounds) and the fight at Vaux on the 15th were 1 officer and 4 men killed, 54 men wounded, and 1 officer and 175 men gassed, with almost all the killed and wounded and 63 of the gas cases in the 101st Infantry, and 99 gas casualties in the 102nd Infantry.³³

On 16 July, however, the 102nd Field Hospital reported that over the previous 24 hours, a total of 560 cases had passed through the hospital at

³²

Gasangriffe an der Americanischen Front, pp. 115-118. Hanslian remarks on the very incomplete German data for these two bombardments, but believes Spencer's data equally incomplete regarding casualties among the division batteries.

Note may be made here concerning the records of the 4th Ersatz, 87th, and 201st Divisions in the German Files of the National Archives. The records of the 4th Ersatz indicate it was engaged principally with the French 167th, as the 201st was engaged with the French 39th. Gas data in those German records reveal that the French kept Monthiers, to the left of the 26th Div, and Hill 204, to the right, covered with gas. By comparison, gas data in 87th Div records are meager. The only figures that have been found for the gas atks of 15-16 July relate to ammo replacement for the heavy arty of the 87th; 350 yellow cross on 11 July, 1100 yellow cross on 13 July, and 100 yellow cross on 14 July. On 15 July consumption of 903 yellow cross is reported and on 16 July, 5 blue cross and 348 yellow cross, with 395 yellow cross received as replacement (34th Foot Arty WD / 87th Div (Sub Units) WD&A, 14 Jun-30 Jul, pp. 251-256), German Files Box 204). No comparable data for the light arty has been found.

³³

DCR 14-15 Jul.

Bezu le Guery, of which 418 were gas casualties, with mustard gas prevailing.³⁴ The Division Gas Officer on the 20th reported 518 gas casualties, of which 26 were lung cases, the rest "eye and body burns, mostly light." Many more cases were expected, he said, because "evacuated areas were not properly guarded and men were permitted to go back into these areas in a few hours, no guards being posted to prevent them. There will undoubtedly be more cases develop from this omission."³⁵

The enemy artillery continued its bombardment of the divisional sector all day on the 15th. "There has been," the division said,

an enormous amount of firing over our whole sector all the time, but especially in the first part of the night [of the 15th]. We have been drenched with gas. Between 18:30 o'clock and midnight the front lines received intense bombardments....The gas we have been receiving is mustard. The fire was general and widespread, even over the back areas, but Vaux, Bois de la Brigade Marine, Lucy le Bocage, the Paris-Metz road, and the entire front lines of the 51st Brigade have received special attention.³⁶

As a result of an estimated 1600 rounds of HE on the front lines through the night of 15-16 July, infantry casualties were 3 killed and 21 wounded. Two hundred rounds of HE on battery positions apparently caused no casualties. No estimate of the number of gas shells was made, but the mustard gas put

³⁴

Memo for CO 101st San Train, 16 Jul (Med Dept Box 3589, fol 63).

³⁵

Ltr to CG 26th Div, 20 Jul, above.

³⁶

DOR 15-16 Jul. The gas shelling is confirmed in the 87th Div WD, 16 Jul: "Our arty delivered several annihilation fire waves and gassed the brook bottom NW of Maison Blanche with yellow cross, as also the depression south of Hill 201 on the Paris road and the depression near Ru Gobert" (87th Div WD&A, 11 Jul-29 Aug, fol I, German Files Box 204). See also VIII Corps noon rpt, 16 Jul: "87th I.D. gassed patches of woods and draws...besides annihilation barrages on the whole group front" (7th Army WD&A, 15 Jul-6 Aug, pp 8-9 [German Files Box 80]).

down on the batteries near Maison Blanche and Paris Farm resulted in 1 officer and 58 artillerymen being gassed, while 4 officers and 193 men, principally in the 102nd Infantry and 101st Engineers, were reported gassed in the shelling of the front lines and back areas.³⁷

Through the night and day of 16-17 July, an estimated 7,000 rounds of HE fell in the divisional sector. Yet the Daily Operations Report, estimating 3 killed and 24 wounded by this shell fire, reported enemy artillery activity below normal.³⁸ In addition, between 3:30 and 4:15 on the morning of the 17th there was another "heavy bombardment of the entire left half of the right brigade with gas, H.E. and shrapnel...with especially heavy concentrations around Bouresches."³⁹ The HE casualties following this bombardment appear to

37

DOR 15-16 Jul; SOI 93, 15-16 Jul.

The 102nd Inf reported successive bombardments of 563 gas rounds, 60 HE & gas, 78 HE & gas, and 40 HE & gas, all from batteries at Monthiers, causing 107 "slightly burnt" casualties in the regiment (Rpt of Opns & Intel, 15-16 Jul [26th Div Box 41, 20.7]).

The 103rd Inf reported 300 mustard mixed with HE in the proportion of 2 for 1 between 9-10:30 p.m., 15 Jul and 1:15-4:00 a.m., 16 Jul, all in the vicinity of the regimental PC. No casualties were reported up to 9:30 a.m., 16 Jul (Rpt of Gas Shell Atke on 103rd [26th Div Box 248]).

The 103rd FA reported 100 mustard shells, large caliber, on its positions in the valley NE of Dompnin on the morning of the 16th, causing 26 casualties (Rpt on Gas Atk, GAF-26A).

Cf. Manslian's report of 750 yellow cross rounds above.

38

SOI 94, 16-17 Jul; DOR 16-17 Jul.

39

Approx 125 88s, 105s and gas shells fell in the Bois des Clerembauts, and 1200-1500 77s, 105s, and gas shells in the Bois de Marine (SOI 94). The 102nd Inf rptd 50 HE & gas rounds in its sector in those hours, causing 9 casualties (Rpt of O&I, 16-17 Jul).

Arty Comdr WD, 17 Jul, Battle Activitys "The enemy batteries...were gassed by 1/34 [34th Foot Arty] with 100 yellow cross shells" (87th Div WD&A-Sub Units, 14 Jun-30 Jul, p. 216, German Files Box 204). 87th Div WD 17 Jul, said: "Our artillery gassed a hostile battery and also fired on other hostile batteries."

be included in the figures above; gas casualties reported at the time were 4 officers and 50 men. But the 101st Field Hospital said: "The 17th day [was] light on wounded, most of the 220 admitted being gas cases."⁴⁰

Division headquarters reported 486 gas casualties as a result of the series of gas attacks on 14-17 July. The Division Surgeon was to show 728 gas casualties for that period, not including 4 deaths due to gas. It is also probable that the additional 19 gas deaths reported on 19 July were the result of these same bombardments.⁴¹

The 26th Division had arrived in the Pas Fini sector after less than a week's relief from front line duty and without receiving replacements. As a fighting unit, it was approximately at three-quarters strength and could ill afford the gas casualties it had taken. A staff officer was to say: "A large number of casualties resulted from gas. The woods in which the forward companies were collected against observation were frequently dosed heavily with mustard, as also such traps as the villages along the forward area. The numerical strength of both infantry and machine-gun units was impaired to a degree which aroused not a little concern."⁴²

⁴⁰

Hist of FH Co 101, Part 5 (Med Dep Box 5589, fol 77).

⁴¹

Chart, Med Dept Box 3593, 704-Casualties.

⁴²

B. G. Taylor (Actg ACofS, 26th Div), New England in France, 1917-1919 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1920), pp. 163-164.

The Second Battle of the Marne Begins

Two weeks after arriving in the sector, the 26th Division received its orders to attack. It had six hours in which to get out its orders and to move up from their support positions the units that had been selected to make the attack.

Sixth Army, in conjunction with Tenth Army on the left, was attacking "with the object of taking the enemy in reverse between Chateau Thierry and Rheims." As its part in the great flank assault on the German Seventh Army, the 26th Division was to pivot first on Vaux and thereafter upon the Marne near Chateau Thierry, and with the French 187th Division on its left, it was to advance towards the Fere en Tardenois road [Map No. 2]. In the first maneuver, on the 18th, the 51st Brigade was to remain in place, while the 52nd Brigade, reinforced, attacked between Givry and Bouresches. H Hour was 4:35 a.m.⁴³

But "at 3:55...a C.P.O. with gas started on the first and second lines of the left brigade and lasted until about 5:00 o'clock." The reported gas casualties of 1 officer and 48 men, all but 11 in the 52nd Brigade, did not fully measure the confusion that followed.⁴⁴

43

FO 9, 1st C, 1750, 17 Jul; FO 51, 26th Div, 0030, 18 Jul. The French 39th Div, on the right of the 26th, remained in place as the anchor of the pivot.

44

SOI 95, 17-18 Jul; DOR 17-19 Jul. "Shells of large and small calibre were used, as well as shrapnel and some gas" (Rpt 1st Lt J. A. Everts, CO Co B 106rd MG Bn [26th Div Box 25, 23.61]).

This gas was fired by the 402nd FA, at Bezu St. Germain, according to its WD, 18 Jul; "An attack was made against the 87th Div, and for its support we gassed the Belleau woods" (201st Div-Sub Units, German Files Box 218).

The German records also indicate that the French 187th Div (despite its order) used gas as well as smoke on its front at 5:30 a.m. on the 18th (4th Ers WD and rpts, in 4th Ers WD&A, 29 Jun-13 Aug, pp. 4, 21, German Files Box 146).

Supported by an artillery barrage by the 51st FA and 3rd Battalion of the French 181st FA (220mm mortar), but without previous artillery preparation, the attack battalion of the 103rd Infantry jumped off at H hour in a heavy mist and entered Torcy at 5:40 a.m. (Map No. 6). "We took our objective before the enemy woke up.... [The main enemy] positions are along Hill 193.... Hill 193 is bristling with guns and the excellent observation makes our movements impossible. Must give this hill a thumping to-night."⁴⁵ The 3rd Battalion, 104th Infantry, however, got lost in Belleau Wood and became thoroughly disorganized as a result of the enemy gas and HE fire. Its commander, McDade, was relieved on the spot. At 8:20, with a new leader, it came up to the jump-off line and an hour later had taken the villages of Belleau and Givry. The 2nd Battalion, 103rd Infantry, was also delayed by the enemy fire, and became mixed up in Belleau ravine with the battalion of the 104th whose path it had to cross. As a result, it did not attack until after 7:30 a.m. By 8:00 o'clock it had crossed the Ru Gobert and had taken Bouresches station. But intense fire from Hill 193 and from Bouresches Wood forced the battalion at nightfall to fall back to Belleau Wood, where it was relieved by the 1st Battalion of the regiment.⁴⁶

At the request of the French division on the left, the battalion at Givry reportedly advanced and occupied Hill 193 in the French sector that

⁴⁵

SOI, Bliss 3rd Bn BIO, 0435-1200, 18 Jul (26th Div Box 20, 32.16).

⁴⁶

Opns & Intel Rpt, 104th Inf, 17-18 Jul (26th Div Box 49, 20.7); Rpt Capt Hosford CO 2nd Bn 103rd, 6 Aug (Box 47, 33.6).

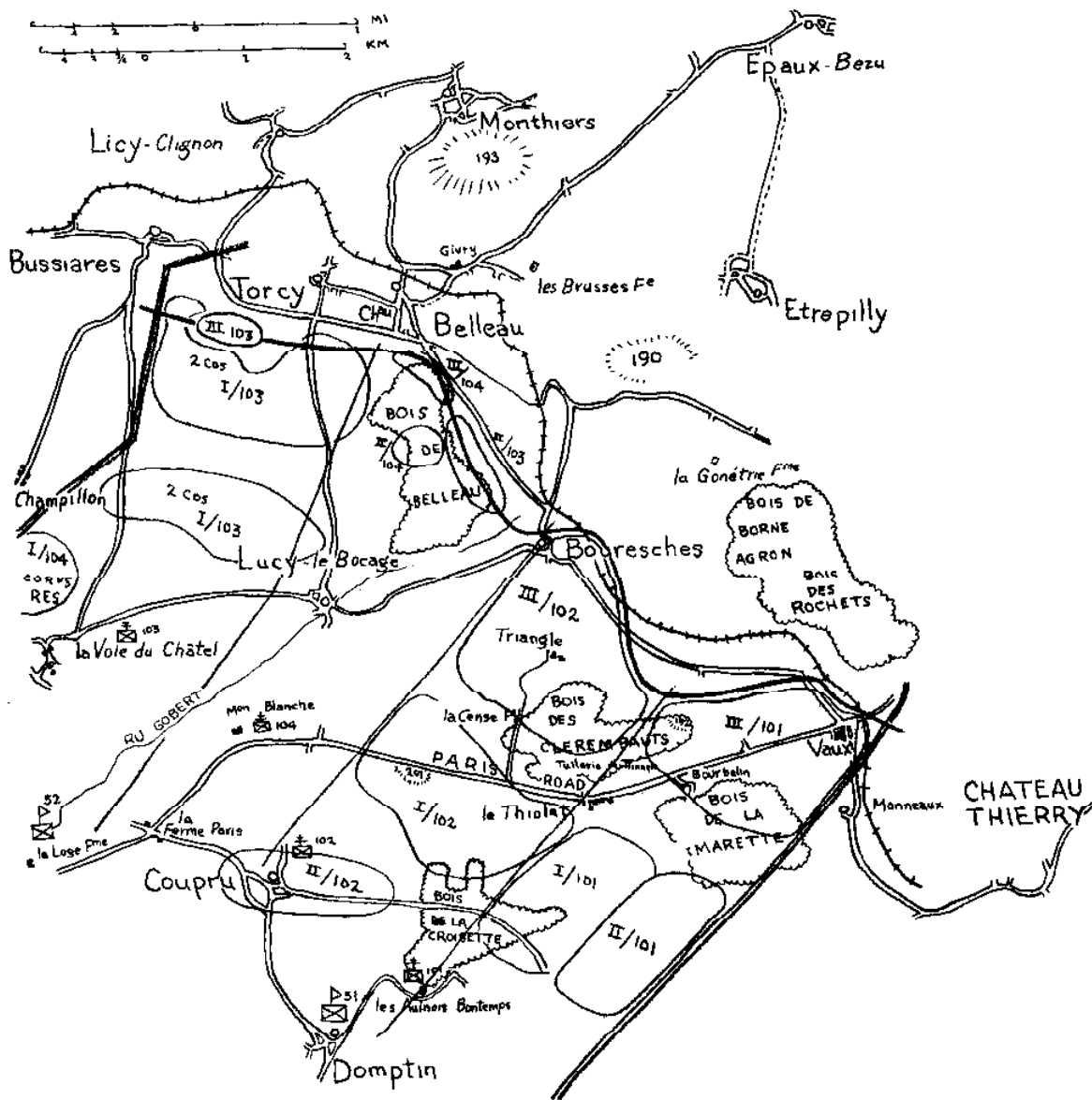
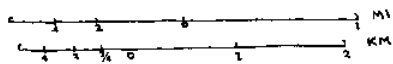
"Owing to the effect of our annihilating fire, the Americans streamed back into Belleau woods and suffered great losses" (Rpt on Action, 18 Jul, VIII Corps [Scholer], 18 Jul, 11 Jul-31 Aug, tr from fol I, German Files Box 119).

DISPOSITION FOR THE ATTACK

Night of 17/18 July

Source:
Cartographie Rec Div
National Archives
26th Div maps in R.G.120

Scale 1 : 50⁰⁰⁰



MAP NO. 6

night, but withdrew when the French signalled that they could not support the attack (see Field Sketch).⁴⁷

In the operations that morning, 254 men of the 52nd Brigade were reported wounded, an undetermined number killed.⁴⁸ In the 51st Brigade, which had remained in place, casualties were listed at 2 dead and 16 wounded. No gas casualties were reported by its 101st Infantry despite a later report that said: "While [in Vaux on the 18th] we were shelled quite heavily with high explosive, gas and also trench mortars. Remained in this position until about 8 o'clock, July 21st, 1918."⁴⁹ The Surgeon General's report of 139 gas casualties that day may have included delayed cases from earlier attacks as well as new cases.⁵⁰

"During the night of July 18th-19th [a platoon of the 103rd MG Battalion, to the west of Torcy] was gassed with mustard gas and the entire platoon evacuated." The area south of Belleau was also gassed, for "the

⁴⁷

A postwar study of the opn was to say: "As to statements in reports [and histories]...that they did or could have occupied Hill 193 on the night of July 18th, they are believed to be totally groundless and extravagant" (Lt Col John Magruder, FA, Field Notes, Apr 1919 [26th Div Box 7, 18.8]).

FM G-3 167th Div to G-3 26th Div, 1515, 18 Jul, said machine guns in the Bois de Petret continued to hold the French on the Licy-Torcy line.

See also Rpt of Opns, CG 26th Div, 7 Aug, reprinted in Harry A Benwell, History of Yankee Division (Boston: Cornhill, 1919), pp. 116-136 (especially p. 118). Hereafter cited as Benwell.

⁴⁸

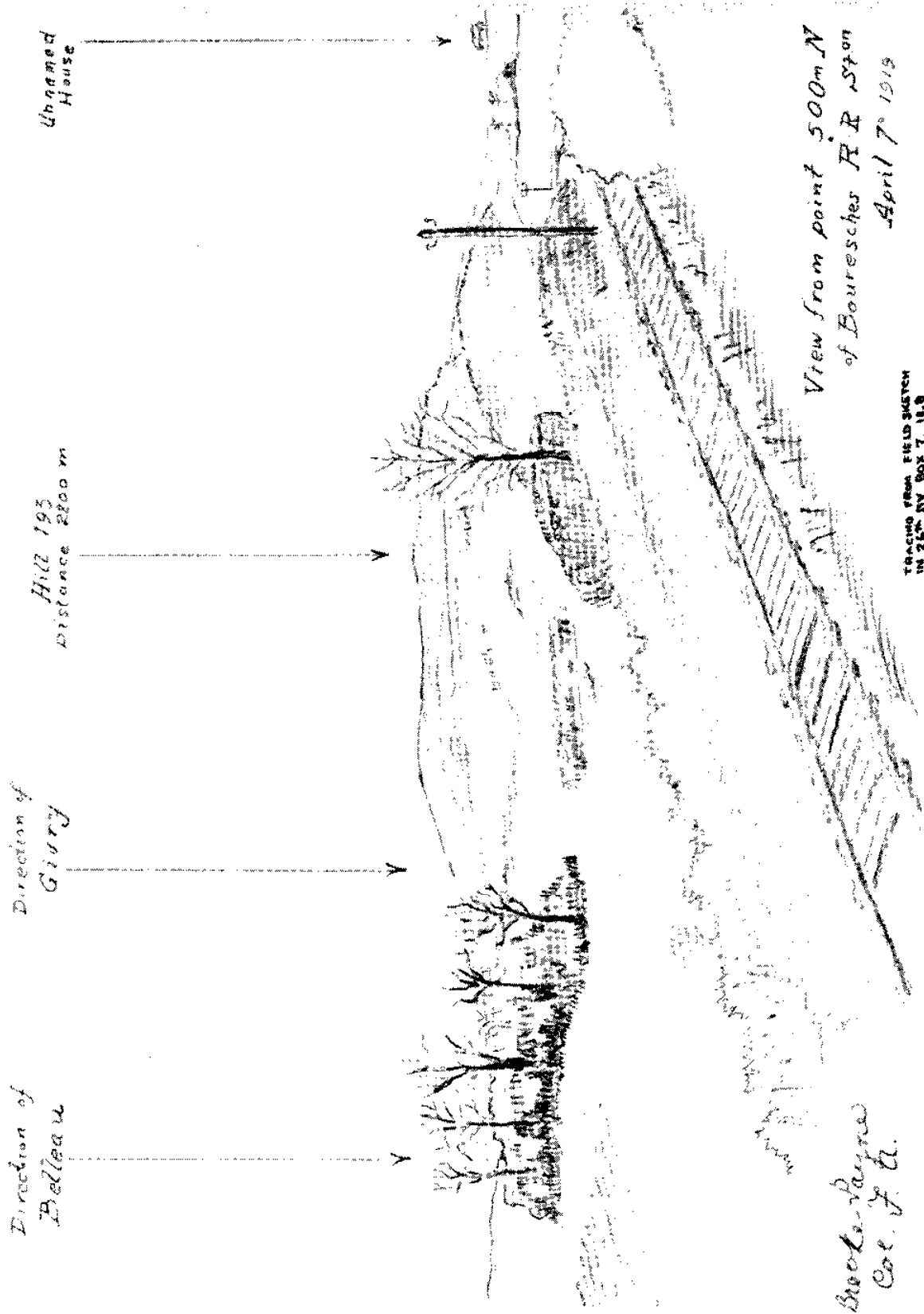
DOR 17-18 Jul.

⁴⁹

Rpt 1st Lt E. R. Densmore, CO Co G 101st Inf, 4 Aug (26th Div Box 39; 33.6).

⁵⁰

Chart, Med Div Box 3593, 704.



View from point 500m N
of Bauresches F.R. Station
April 7th 1919

Brooks-Payne
Col. J. A.

TRACING FROM FIELD SKETCH
IN 254. NY BOX 7, 18.8

rations delivered to Belleau wood that morning were all covered with mustard gas" and two of the train handling them, as well as the 104th Infantryman reporting the incident, were "gassed considerably."⁵¹

Despite Corps orders to resume the attack on the 19th and again on the morning of the 20th, the inability of the French forces on the left to take Hill 193 kept the 26th Division in place above Torcy and Givry, since it had orders to regulate its movements with its neighbor.⁵² While the troops consolidated their new positions on the 19th, farther back work was commenced on a new defensive position, along Brussieres-southwest of Torcy-north and northwest of Lucy le Boeage, to provide against the expected counterattack.⁵³ "During the day the battalions holding Torcy, Belleau, and Belleau Woods were again subjected to artillery fire with shells of gas and machine gun fire," with other "concentrations of gas on Bouresches, south of Bouresches, south of Belleau."⁵⁴ The 51st Brigade's report that "we fired...gas on Bois

51

Rpt 1st Lt J. A. Everts, CO Co D 103rd MG Bn (26th Div Box 25, 33.61). Jnl of Opns, 104th Inf, entry for 3:58 a.m., 19 Jul (26th Div Box 52, 33.3, Jnl O).

52

FO 11, 1st C, 2240, 18 Jul; FO 13, 1st C, 2200, 19th Jul; FM (Tel) G-2 to G-3 26th Div & 51st, 52nd Brigs, 2310, 19 Jul, said 167th Div would not attack Monthiers that night.

53

FO 54, 26th Div, 0030, 20 Jul; FM Corps to CG 51st, 52nd, Eng, 1100, 20 Jul (26th Div Box 20, 32.16).

54

Rpt CG 52nd Brig to CG 26th Div, 3 Aug (26th Div Box 37, 33.6); SOI 96, 18-19 Jul.

Confirmed in WD 402nd EA, 19 Jul (201st Div-Sub Units, German Files Box 204): "For support of the 87th Div we are again gassing the Belleau woods and delivering annihilating fire on Vaux."

Etrepilly, Bois Agron⁵⁵ on the night of the 19th may have been in retaliation.

Since the number of shell fired by the enemy on the 19th was said to be below normal, the 652 "wounded and gassed" that day in the 52nd Brigade must have included many unaccounted for on previous days. The Surgeon General reported but 32 gas casualties up to 6:00 p.m. on the 19th.⁵⁶

With the French Ninth Army on the right driving the enemy back to and across the Marne, resumption of the attack on the whole Sixth Army front was ordered for 3:00 o'clock on the afternoon of 20 July (see Map No. 7 for Corps objectives).⁵⁷ After a two-hour artillery preparation, but without counterbattery fire by Corps, the attack on the 26th Division front was launched.

On the right, the 101st Infantry of the 51st Brigade at once met intense machine gun and minenwerfer fire from the western edge of the Bois de Borne Agron and Bois des Rochets and enfilade fire from Hill 204, in the French sector to the right. Not so the 102nd. At 3:30, it crossed the railroad,

55

51st FA Intel Rpt 11, 12-12 hr, 19-20 Jul (26th Div Box 57, 20.7), repeated in Intel Rpt 102nd FA, 19-20 Jul (Box 61, 20.7). See Rpt Capt N. D. MacLeod, CO Bty B 103rd FA, 12 Aug: "On the night of the 19th we fired a lot of gas on Bois de Boin Agron and on Etrepilly and Bois de Etrepilly" (Box 62, 33.6).

The Rpt of Activ of 101st Ammo Tr that on "18 July from Villemeneux to Montreuil aux Lions, 250 gas shells" (Box 63, 33.6) is the only clue to the probable number fired.

Confirmation appears in FM 345th Regt to 179th Brig, 87th Div, 1:45 a.m., 20 Jul (87th Div WD&A, 18 Jul-29 Aug, p. 3, German Files Box 204): "Sporadic surprise attacks on the main line of resistance and rear areas. Many gas shells....Casualties; 1 man wounded, 5 gas sick." VIII Corps noon rpt, 20 Jul, said that the 87th Div had lost 7 gas sick, the 201st 13 gas sick (7th Army WD&A, 15 Jul-6 Aug, p. 33, German Files Box 50).

56

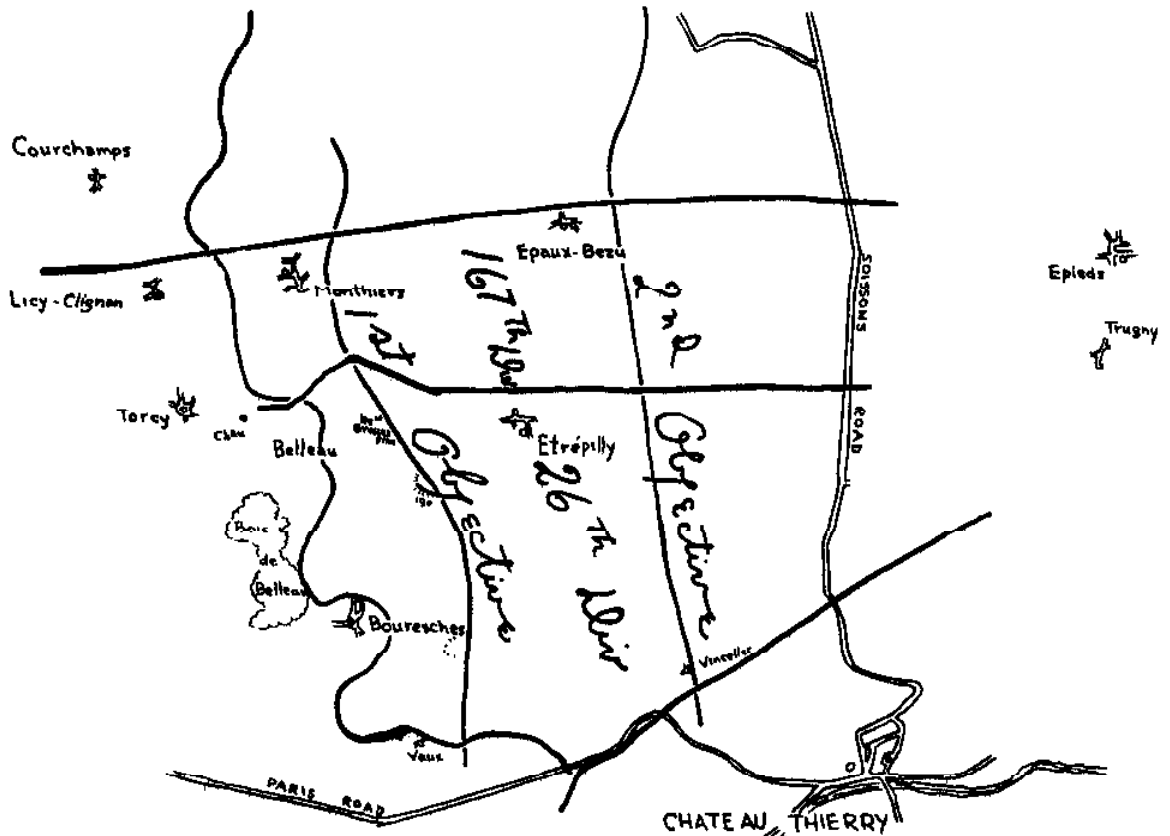
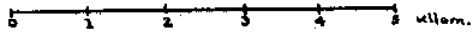
DOR 18-19 Jul; Chart, Med Dept Box 3593, 704.

57

FO 15, 1st C, 1120, 20 Jul; FO 55, 26th Div, 1400, 20 Jul.

MEAUX map

Scale 1:80,000



1st A.C. A.F.H. 20 July 1918

Source: Corps map in
26th Div Box 21, 32.6

MAP NO. 7

and "entered Bouresches Woods, going like hell....The advance across the open country to Bois de Bouresches was rapidly made, the men moving on the run and throwing off their packs which hindered their speed. The abandoning of the packs caused much subsequent hardship because of the loss of all protective covering and reserve rations....The far edge of the woods were consolidated by 5:00 p.m."⁵⁸ On the left, as the French again failed to take Hill 193, the 52nd Brigade attacked against disastrous artillery and machine gun fire, but elements of the 103rd Infantry nevertheless succeeded in occupying Hill 190. By 8:00 o'clock that night the line of the division ran from Givry Woods-north of Les Brusses Ferme-Hill 190-La Gonstrie Ferme-Hill 201-Point 192-Vaux. (See Map No. 5).⁵⁹

All during the day of the 20th there were enemy "bombardments of considerable intensity against Bouresches, Bois de la Brigade Marine and our front line generally. A good deal of gas was used....The enemy artillery was not a great menace in its intensity, however,"⁶⁰ An artillery unit of the German 201st Division said in its war diary: "Our batteries are putting annihilation fire on Hill 204 and are gassing the Belleau woods....So as not to let more ammunition than possible fall into hands of the enemy, all

⁵⁸

Hist of the 102nd Inf (26th Div Box 41, 11.4).

⁵⁹

SOI 97, 19-20 Jul; Benwell, p. 119.

⁶⁰

DOR 19-20 Jul. There are no DORs for the remaining five days of the campaign.

"20 Jul. Advanced with infantry from Torcy to Belleau under heavy Mustard [sic] Gas and high explosive fire" (Rpt Signal Plat 103rd Inf, 26th Div Box 64, 33.6).

ammunition which the columns could not carry off, especially the gas ammunition, was fired [verfeuert].⁶¹ The casualties resulting from this shelling as reported by headquarters that day were 8 killed, 4 officers and 157 men wounded, and 2 officers and 166 men gassed.⁶²

At 8:00 p.m. on the 20th, learning that the enemy was preparing to withdraw, Sixth Army ordered the advance continued energetically on the whole front "this evening and tonight," the divisions to push forward without reference to the progress of neighboring divisions.⁶³ Again, the French on the left could not move and the 26th delayed, so that it was 4:00 a.m. on the 21st before the division advanced, to find the enemy gone from the front. Beginning an hour before midnight, the main body of troops of the German 87th and 201st Divisions, with their artillery, had "retreated in great haste during the night," leaving behind small groups of machine guns and minenwerfers to cover the withdrawal and abandoning some light artillery

61

402nd FA WD, 20 Jul (201st Div WD&A-Sub Units, 14-31 Jul, p. 68, German Files Box 218).

62

At 6:00 p.m. on the 20th, the SG reported 84 gas cases (chart, Med Dept Box 3593). An hour later, "the 3rd Bn, 101st Inf [between the Bois de Halmardiere and Vaux] was subjected to a very heavy machine gun fire, minenwerfer, heavy artillery and gas bombardments and the 2nd Bn at Tafourney Fmc was subjected to heavy artillery and gas bombardments" (Rpt CO 101st Inf to CG 51st Brig, 2 Aug [26th Div Box 39, 33.6]). The SG would account for these casualties on the 21st.

63

FO 17, 1st C, 2000, 20 Jul; FO 56, 26th Div, n.h., 20 Jul. FO 18, 1st C, 2330, 20 Jul, said: "The advance will continue at dawn...pressed with the utmost vigor"; FO 57, 26th Div, 0315, 21 Jul.

pieces and considerable ammunition.⁶⁴

The grain fields over which the troops advanced were filled with accor- dian wire entanglements. Hurdling these, the advance guard of the division reached the Chateau Thierry-Soissons road shortly after noon and halted, al- most eight kilometers from the line of departure. At 4:30 p.m., as orders caught up to them, the brigade commanders were told to press the advance with vigor, and the corps commander directed the troops to reach the Fere en Tardenois-Jaulgonne road, ten kilometers distant, by daylight on the 22nd.⁶⁵

The troops resumed their advance. At 6:00 p.m., elements of the left column were on the Bezu-Epieds-Charteves road and still not in contact with the enemy. Farther south, along the Breteuil Ferme road and trails toward Trugny "every road was found lined with artillery positions from which the guns had been hurriedly dragged, leaving quantities of ammunition, many of the shells already primed and ready to put in the gun."⁶⁶ Night fell and the

64

87th Div WD, 21 Jul: "Farther north, the enemy had gained ground...so that should he advance farther, there was great danger of the division being enveloped from the north. For that reason...the division was taken back dur- ing the night of the 20/21st to the west edge of the Chatelet woods....At 1:20 a.m. our infantry regiments disengaged from the enemy, the artillery having done so earlier" (87th Div WD&A, fol I, German Files Box 204). Map No. 3 shows that the 87th was now out of the 26th Division's sector.

Cf. WD 1st Bn 403rd Inf 201st Div, 20 Jul: "Ordered to retire to new line l'Hermitage-Epieds at noon" (201st Div-Sub Units-WD, 14 31 Jul, Fol II, German Files Box 218).

65

Memo Liggett 1st C to 26th Div, 167th Div, CofArty 1st C, 21 Jul: "The With Army is marching on Fismes...."(26th Div Box 16, 32.11).

FM No. 1, CofS to SG 51st, 52nd Brigs, 1625, 21 Jul: "It would appear your advanced troops are halted on line of Chateau Thierry-Soissons road.... Push forward."

FO 58, 26th Div, 1725, 21 Jul.

66

Hist of 102nd Inf (26th Div Box 41, 11.4).

troops continued on.

"The approach to the village [of Trugny] led through a valley in which was a concentration of [mustard] gas. Gas masks had to be worn, which made the hiking in the darkness extremely difficult." The advancing elements of the 104th Infantry entered Trugny and continued up the roads towards Epieds, when they were suddenly hit by intense machine gun fire and fell back to the woods southwest of the town.⁶⁷ The leading battalions of the 101st and 102nd Infantry coming up to the vicinity of Trugny that night met the same machine gun fire and gas and withdrew to the Bois de Breteuil as the general advance came to a halt. The enemy had elected to stand in the Epieds-Trugny area, while preparations were made in the rear of that line for a further retreat.⁶⁸

The 214 gas casualties reported by the Division Surgeon on the evening of the 21st probably represent previously unreported and delayed casualties brought into the gas hospital at Luzancy since the beginning of the advance. It is unlikely that gas casualties sustained at Trugny were that numerous or could have been reported that day.

Sometime around midnight of the 21st, a corps message was received directing the 51st Brigade to take over the entire zone of the division at 3:30 a.m. At the same time the 52nd Brigade was to move to its left, taking over the French 167th sector.⁶⁹ The French would then follow in support of

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Rpt of Action, CG 52nd Brig to CG 26th Div, 4 Aug (26th Div Box 37, 33.6).

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SOI 98, 20-21 Jul.

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FM CofS to CGs 51st, 52nd Brigs, 0100, 22 Jul - recd 0230; FM CofS to 51st FA, 0110, 22 Jul (26th Div Box 20, 32.16).

the 26th. The converging forces of the two French armies against the enemy flank were narrowing the corps sector.

Fearful of the confusion these orders might produce if carried out in darkness amid assault preparations, the division commander, who had not seen the order before his chief of staff forwarded it to the brigades, at once called Corps and obtained permission to suspend the order. But some units had already taken their new positions. The 51st Brigade received the message at 2:00 a.m. on the 22nd, and the 102nd Infantry was ordered into the zone of the 52nd Brigade. The order did not reach the 52nd Brigade until 5:30 a.m., at which time it had already launched its attack against Epieds and Trugny, with the 102nd Infantry participating.⁷⁰

In the Narrowing Corridor

In the attack on the morning of the 22nd, savage resistance was met on the whole front of Sixth Army as the enemy flank covered the withdrawal of the main body to the north. The artillery of Corps Katheren, into whose sector the 26th Division was moving, was ordered to "contaminate the front line with yellow cross" and "prepare surprise bombardments with mixed gas, all types, of enemy nests of batteries in the case of increased artillery activity."⁷¹

70

Benwell, pp. 121-123.

The amended (?) corps order, FO 19, 10:40 p.m., 21 Jul, directed a continuing, "strenuous pursuit of the enemy, each unit driving ahead with all its power, without waiting for the other or paying attention to alignment, to make the enemy's retreat a rout." To hasten the advance, division commanders were to go forward and take personal control of the fight. Through the night of 21-22 July, the 26th and the 167th Fr Divs would continue abreast. At daylight, in the narrowing corps sector, the 167th would stand fast, while the 52nd Brig passed through, at which time the 26th Div would cover the entire corps front. The 167th would then follow the 26th as a second line at a distance of three km.

71

Corps Katheren Order, 22 Jul (23rd Res Corps WDA, 15 Jun-1 Aug, pp. 106-107, German Files Box 128).

Crossing the wide wheat fields before Epieds, 26th Division forces were met by "murderous direct and cross fire from machine guns" in Epieds and Trugny. "in addition to shell fire and gas" from La Goutterie Farm, in the French sector to the left rear.⁷² A German war diary said of the attack: "The Americans charged forward [between Epieds and Besu] in dense crowds accompanied by numerous tanks, and were caught by our artillery and machine gun fire."⁷³ The troops retreated, were re-formed and sent forward again, to occupy the edge of Epieds briefly before being hurled back by counter-attacking forces (Map No. 8).⁷⁴ Over a hundred men were left in enemy hands.⁷⁵

72

Rpt 1st Lt H. W. Robbins, CO 1st Bn 104th Inf, 9 Aug (26th Div Box 52, 33.6); Rpt Capt Hosford, CO 2nd Bn 103rd Inf, 6 Aug (Box 47, 33.6).

73

402nd FA (201st Div) WD, 20 Jul (201st Div-Sub Units, German Files Box 218).

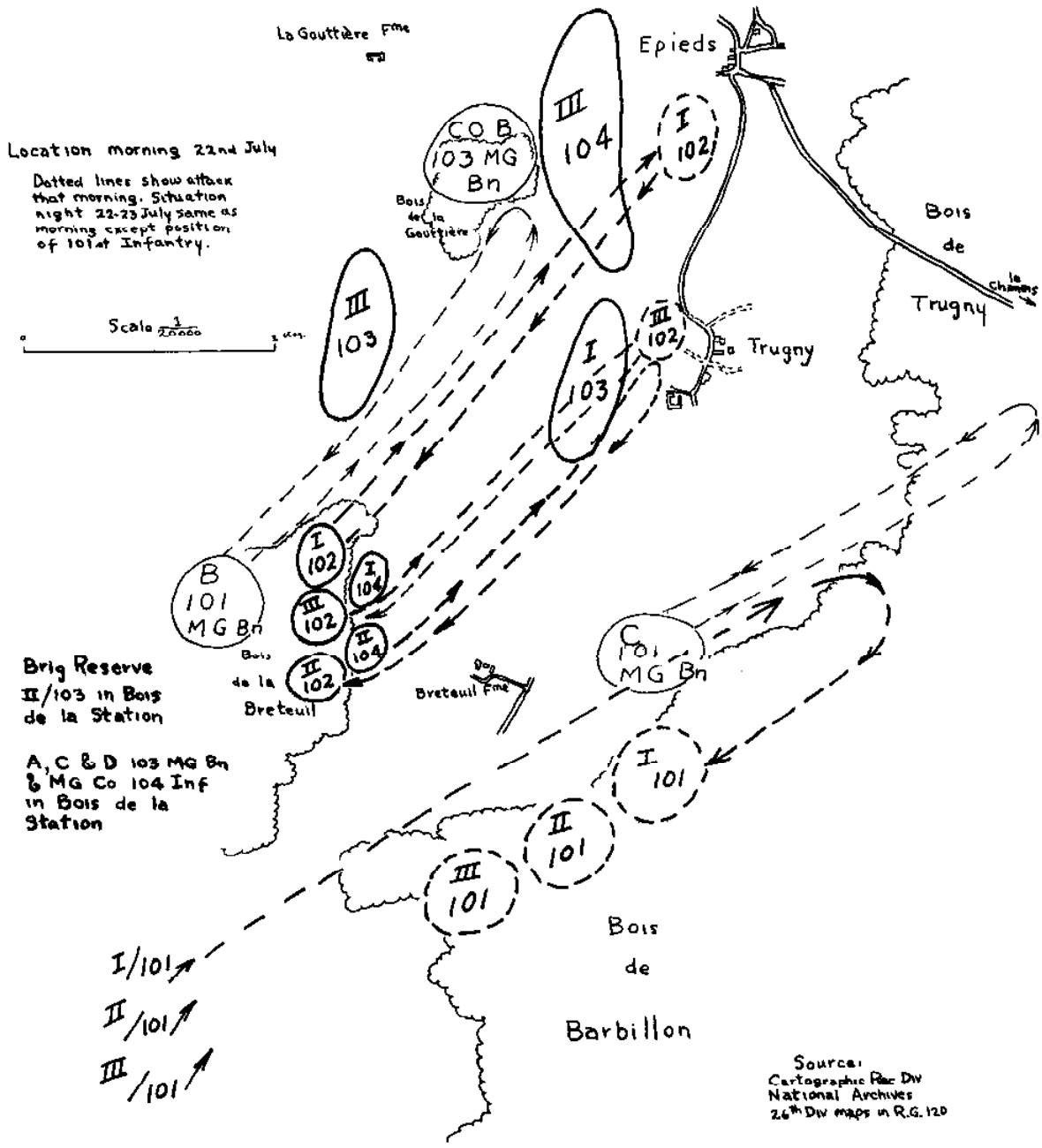
74

A postwar "Note on Epieds-Trugny" was to say: "The fact that la Goutterie Farm was not taken by the French Division on the left resulted in a very hasty breaking up of the attack against Epieds....Two attempts were made to take Epieds by the 52nd Brigade, one in the morning [of the 22nd] and one in the afternoon. Both failed....The 51st Brigade also attacked twice through Trugny; the 102nd in the morning actually took Trugny and then had to withdraw. The 101st in the woods south of Trugny did not actually attack on the 22nd" (Lt Col John Magruder, FA, Field Notes, Apr 1918 [26th Div Box 7, 18.8]). But see German data below.

75

"Eight officers, 130 Americans and 12 machine guns were captured in re-taking Epieds" (201st Div WD, 22 Jul, German Files Box 218).

"101st and 108th Inf of 23rd Div ordered to counteratk Epieds, but about noon the 201st Div with assistance of Elisabeth Regt [3rd Gd Gren, 5th Gd Div] restored the situation. 377th and 378th Regts, 10th Ldw captured 26th Div prisoners" (10th Ldw WD, 22 Jul [10th Ldw WD&A, 19-27 Jul, fol I, German Files Box 161]).



MAP NO. 8

Unable to learn the infantry positions or the location of enemy nests, the division artillery close behind dared not fire.

By 2:00 p.m. on the 22nd, the mixup of the brigades that had begun in the night was complete. The 52nd Brigade was occupying and operating in the same sector with the 51st. At Major Hanson's P.C. [1st Battalion, 103rd Infantry] were two companies of his battalion and two of the 102nd, while in front of this line were detachments of the 102nd, 103rd, and 104th, intermingled. This assembly advanced once more in three waves about 2:15 and were shortly joined on the left by an element of the 2nd Battalion and two companies of the 3rd Battalion, 103rd Infantry. A half hour later all forward motion stopped in the face of machine gun fire from nests on the reverse slope beyond Trugny.⁷⁶

"As we went forward the word came back that the infantry would retreat." Suddenly, the 52nd Brigade commander later said, three companies of Lewis's 3rd Battalion, 104th Infantry, "could not be found, having fallen back, all claiming to have received orders to do so, although no such orders were given by any officer having authority to do so." Lewis with one company was pinned down on the road. The other three companies fell back from the vicinity of Trugny to the woods at Hill 218. Meanwhile, the support battalion of the left column (the 3rd Battalion, 103rd Infantry) became split during the advance that morning, two companies becoming lost after crossing Chateau Thierry-Soissons road, the other two found in Besuet the next afternoon. Later, all four

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Rpt Capt Bisbee, RIAOO, 103rd Inf (26th Div Box 25, 33.6). "There was much confusion at this time. Men from all four regiments of the Division were reporting to the first officer they saw for duty" (Rpt 1st Lt D. F. McGrew, CO 37mm bty, 103rd Inf, 6 Aug [Box 47, 33.6]).

companies claimed to have received orders to fall back to their original positions at Chante Merle, which they did. "The troops [that had fallen back to Breteuil woods and Hill 215 woods] practically remained in these positions during the night of 22 July under heavy shellfire and gas" (Map No. 9).⁷⁷

Recounting his part in this action, the commander of the 1st Battalion, 104th Infantry, following the 1st Battalion, 103rd Infantry, reported that at 3:00 p.m. he moved out and after crawling about 600 yards, both units were stopped again by machine gun fire.

While lying there [planning a flank attack against the machine guns to his front] the enemy gassed the thick clover in which we were lying, making it uninhabitable....The fire and gas became so concentrated that the battalion in the lead was obliged to fall back out of the gassed area, and then withdrawal was ordered....The harassing fire that followed was kept up all night....All the next day, July 23rd, the battalion remained in the woods...undergoing a heavy harassing fire of both high explosive and gas all day [Rpt of 1st Lt H. W. Robbins, CO 1st Bn, 104th, 9 Aug (Box 52, 33.6)].

The Company A commander in the battalion, reporting the withdrawal, said:

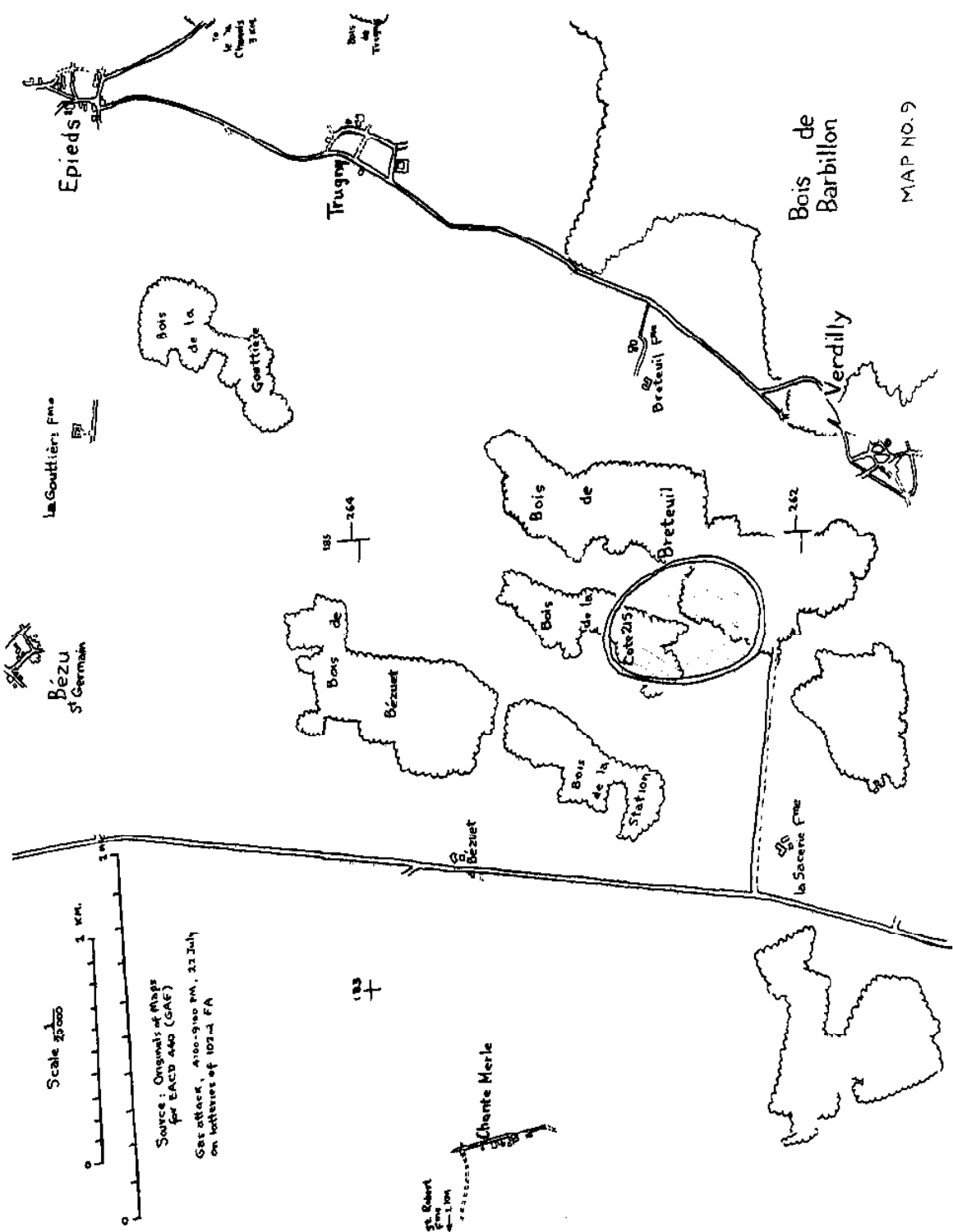
I received verbal orders passed down from the front, to hold until the machine gun nest had been wiped out, but almost immediately I found that the front files were withdrawing upon me and I ordered that they hold fast. Our machine gun troops on my right passed the word that the withdrawal was ordered by "The Lieut." whereupon I drew my pistol and threatened to shoot any men who did not turn and face the front. Meantime we were pressed by troops coming in from the front, who passed down the word purporting to come from the Major....I withdrew [my men] and formed them in the position which I held before starting to the line of departure; and from there I reported immediately to my Battalion Commander, and learned that no withdrawal had been ordered [Rpt of 2nd Lt R. A. Harmon, CO Co A, 104th, 9 Aug].

A journal of operations kept by the 104th reported that

in the attack this afternoon, the woods one kilometer from Trugny were reached. Here the left end of the line was gassed and outflanked by machine

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Rpt of Action, CG 52nd Brig to CG 26th Div, 4 Aug (26th Div Box 37, 33.6); Rpt Capt Andrews, temp CO 3rd Bn 103rd Inf (Box 47, 33.6).



MAP NO. 9

gun fire. Major Lewis [CO 3rd Bn, 104th] had just been badly gassed, and he had ordered a withdrawal to the woods [NW of Trugny], where the line would be established. Captain Hoeford [CO 2nd Bn, 103rd] also had ordered withdrawal to the line from whence the advance was made this morning [Jnl O, 104th Inf, 2205, 22 Jul (Box 52, 33.3)].

An apparent prior draft of this journal said of the withdrawal that late in the afternoon of the 22nd orders were received to move forward 12 kilometers that night in order to reach La Croix Rouge by daylight on the 23rd. But "Machine gun nests in the Bois de Trugny prevented accomplishment of the movement and fire was so heavy that a retirement was necessary to the woods just NE of Bezuet. Two companies of the 103rd Infantry became panic stricken owing to their great fatigue and left their position in the line. They were returned under the personal supervision of Lt. Col. Foote [CO 104th]... whose energy at this time prevented a spread of the hysteria."⁷⁸

Although there is no specific acknowledgement in these after-action reports or in other records, it seems reasonably clear that the panic and retreat of a number of elements on the 22nd was motivated in large part by the gas. There were, according to Division Surgeon records, over 400 gas casualties that day. The panic seems corroborated by a remark made by the 104th Infantry surgeon in a meeting of the divisional medical staff on 28 July: "When troops are moving ahead somebody starts the rumor going that a certain shell was gas. Immediately there is a certain amount of hysteria and men

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26th Div Box 52, 33.6, draft of Jnl O. The companies were in Capt Andrews' 3rd Bn.

Elements of the 2nd Bn, 104th Inf, and the 101st Eng to its left, in the woods near Espieds, were also affected by the gassing: "Enemy arty was shelling this timber with gas and high explosive and we were compelled to wear gas masks for 45 minutes. Numerous casualties were caused at this point. The position became untenable because of gas, high explosive and machine gun fire [and]...we fell back about 100 yards" (Rpt 2nd Lt W. L. Day CO Co F 104th Inf [26th Div Box 53, 33.6]).

begin coming in saying they are gassed and the nervous individuals will immediately empty out their stomachs and come in in droves."⁷⁹ The gas was accessory to the state of fatigue of the men, the deadly accurate machine gun fire they were meeting in the open fields, and the almost complete confusion resulting from the mix-up of units.

That night panic was apparently past, but not the disorganization. As the commander of the 102nd Infantry reported the next morning: "Am collecting and organizing remnants.....All of 103 and 104 Inf seemed to be collected in my sector last night in great confusion....got my own people separated and organized for defense. There is no disorder or confusion in my own regimentPersonally I am mighty near end of coherent thinking but am holding on hard and have situation in hand" [FM CO 102nd in Breteuil woods to CG 51st Brig. 6:50 a.m., 23 Jul].

There was to be still more gas that evening. The 102nd FA reported that almost 500 77mm diphosgene shells landed among its six batteries in the woods "south of Epieds" (i.e., near Cote 215) between 4:00 and 9:00 p.m. on the 22nd, sending 60 men to first aid as "slight lung cases". (Map No. 10).⁸⁰ At 7:00 p.m., before LaGoutterie Ferme and the village of Epieds, where the

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Rpt of Meeting of Medical Officers Held at Office of Div Surg, 26th Div, 28 Jul, p. 15 (Med Dept Box 3586, fol 21). This file contains almost weekly reports of medical meetings from 16 Apr-12 Aug 1918.

There is no question about panic in a 26th Div report in November: "Only one small example of 'Gas fright' appeared in which 95 casualties, including one officer, turned back after a rather brisk bombardment with evidently arsenical shell. The cases were held and 79 returned to duty next day" (ltr Div Med Gas Off to Med Dir GWS thru Div Surg 26th Div, 23 Nov, sub: Rpt...month of Oct, and Nov 1st to 10th [26th Div Box 248]).

80

Rpt of Gas Atk, RGO, 102nd FA (26th Div Box 248). This same report noted in the Remarks that "a wealth of gas material, including various types of gas shells [had been] left behind by the Germans, at every farm and village re-occupied."

103rd MG Bn had been held up since 2:00 p.m., "The enemy...started to search the field in which we were located, with artillery fire. As we were withdrawing several of our men were gassed and one seriously wounded by shell fire."⁸¹

The 101st Infantry, in the woods east and southeast of Breteuil Ferme, and an element of the 102nd MG Battalion, on the western edge of the Bois de Trugny, were also caught in the gas shelling: "Heavy gas and H.E. shelling by the enemy entailed severe losses at 7 and 9 p.m."⁸² "G Company suffered the heaviest loss, losing several killed, about 15 wounded and many gassed, leaving us with about two platoons."⁸³ One platoon reported that "27 men were removed to hospital as a result of a sudden burst of gas shells in our very midst, with no opportunity to adjust respirators."⁸⁴ Other platoon and company leaders insisted there was "heavy gas and high explosive shelling throughout the day and night" of the 22nd.⁸⁵ As the division headquarters said: "The enemy seems to be fighting a good rear guard action, using... considerable artillery, a large number of machine guns and apparently a small

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Rpt of Capt W. H. Munsell, CO Co C, 103rd MG Bn (Box 25, 33.61).

⁸² Rpt 1st Lt E. R. Densmore, temp CO 2nd Bn 101st Inf, 4 Aug (26th Div Box 38, 33.6). Rpt 1st Lt J. R. Sanborn CO Co A 102nd MG Bn, 5 Aug (Box 56, 33.6).

⁸³

Rpt 1st Lt E. R. Densmore, CO Co G 101st Inf [sic], 4 Aug (26th Div Box 39, 33.6).

⁸⁴

Rpt 1st Lt L. M. Prouse, CO 1st Plat, Co G, 101st.

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Rpt 2nd Lt E. E. Machamer, CO 2nd Plat, Co H, 101st (Box 39, 33.6); Rpt Lt S. H. Stone, CO 3rd Plat Co H, 101st.

amount of infantry. Prisoners have stated that detachments of about 8 men with machine guns and unlimited ammunition have been left to hold the line while the rest of the line withdrew. These men have delayed our advance and caused us heavy losses."⁸⁶

The battle casualties reported for 22, 23 and 24 July are here presented together, for while the daily totals may be accurate, it seems doubtful whether the ambulance and hospital companies were able in those three hectic days to count each day's casualties precisely. The records show 523 wounded and 85 gassed brought in on the 22nd; 566 wounded, 368 severely gassed, and 1 gas death on the 23rd; and 169 wounded and 216 gassed on the 24th -- a total of 1358 wounded and 570 gassed on those three days. Almost all wound casualties, said the sifting station [triage] in the field, were "caused by machine gun bullets." The "greater number [of the gas casualties] seemed to be suffering from respiratory gas than from vesicant. None were severe."⁸⁷

The German Retreat

Before continuing with the operations of the 26th Division on the 23 and 24 July, something should be said of the enemy situation at that time and particularly about the German forces whose rear guards so skillfully hamstrung the 167th and 26th Divisions.

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SOI 99, 21-22 Jul.

⁸⁷

Chart, DS records (Med Dept Box 3593); Rpt Maj F. L. Bogan, CO 102nd FH, Opns 18-26 Jul, 15 Aug (Med Dept Box 3588, fol 58).

On 15 July, while the German Ninth Army and Corps Winokler and Corps Schoeler of the German Seventh Army held the flank (see Maps No. 1 and 2), Corps Kathen, Wichura, and Conta crossed the Marne. In three days the German Seventh and First Armies advanced almost six miles before being halted by Berthelot's Fifth Army and the right flank of Degoutte's Sixth.

At that point, a Corps Kathen order said, "In order to make troops available [for the attack in the north against the British at Hazebrouck], the Marne front will pass from the offensive to the defensive....on the north bank of the Marne." The forward artillery was to recross the river on the night of 18-19 July, and on the next night the main defensive line would be established by Corps Schoeler and the right wing of Corps Kathen in the vicinity of Epieds, Breteuil Ferme, Verdilly-Chateau Thierry Road, to permit the center of Seventh Army to retire unhampered.⁸⁸

But on the 18th the "completely unexpected French counterattack" was launched by the French Sixth and Tenth Armies from Belleau and Fontenay, and the protecting flank forces for the center of the German Seventh Army were themselves forced into a defensive retreat. On the 20th, Seventh Army reported: "The enemy continues his great attack between the Aisne and Marne, as unnoticed, Gruppen Winokler, Schoeler and Kathen retire."⁸⁹

But Corps Schoeler, against whose 87th and 201st Divisions General Edwards' 26th Division advanced, did not retire unscathed. In the withdrawal, as Corps Schoeler admitted, "Our own losses were considerable. The

⁸⁸

Corps Order, 18 Jul (23rd Res C / Kathen / WD, 15-24 Jul, trans from fol I, German Files Box 129).

⁸⁹

7th Army WD, 20 Jul-9 Aug, German Files Box 79.

offensive strength of our infantry was estimated in the evening [of the 21st] as follows: 4th Ersatz---400 men; 201st---1800; 5th Guard---1000 men; 87th---1000." That night the 4th Ersatz Division was relieved by the 36th Division.⁹⁰

One loss the Germans dared not contemplate was that of their Paris gun. Originally set up near Laon, southeast of Amiens and almost 80 miles from Paris, it had fired its first shot into the city on 23 March 1918, as part of the Spring offensive that was to overrun the British armies in Flanders, the French to the South, and destroy the will of the French people to continue the war.

In May, the gun had been moved near Noyon, east of Montdidier and 88.9 miles from Paris, and began firing again on the 27th, as the German armies advanced from the Chemin des Dames. Then in June the Paris gun, with its companion 11-inch railway gun, was moved into the Bois de Bruyeres, below Val Chretien Ferme, with a 15-inch railway gun installed in the Bois de Chatelet to the southwest (see Map No. 3). It began firing on 15 July, at a range of 56.6 miles, as the fifth offensive began.

On the 19th, as the French Ninth and Sixth Armies advanced, dismounting the great gun began, and two days later, with the railway guns, it was moved

90

Rpt on Action, 21-22 Jul (VIII Corps [Schoeler], 11 Jul-31 Aug, trans. from fol I, German Files Box 119).

NOTE: An American division had about 12,000 riflemen at full strength, a German division about half that.

By the 24th, the 201st Div WD was to report its losses as 60% its effective strength down to 22 officers and 547 men in the 401st Regt, 19 officers and 500 men in the 402nd Regt, and 17 officers and 518 men in the 403rd Regt.

The 87th Div reported its losses for July as 14 officers killed, 41 wounded, 2 missing; 261 men killed, 1115 wounded, 596 missing (87th Div WD, 1 Jul, in War Diaries of German Units Opposite Second Division, Vol. 3).

back to the site near Noyon. As a result of the stubborn defense of Corps Schoeler, it was not until 28 July that the elaborate gun pits, shell crates, and other abandoned accessories for the guns in the Bruyeres and Chatalet woods were examined for the first time by Allied Intelligence.⁹¹

On 22 July, as it cut across German Corps lines, the 26th Division was opposed in the Epieds-Trugny area by the 201st Division, and around Breteuil Ferme by outposts of the 10th Landwehr Division of Corps Kathen (see Map No. 10).⁹²

With the retreat of the Seventh Army from the Marne accelerated by the attack of the French on its flank, two defensive positions were selected and hastily prepared north of the Marne and named "Berta" and "Caesar" (Map No. 11). On 23 July, a third position, "Dora," was ordered constructed on the south side of the Oureq, curving down through Seringes, Sergy, and Fresnes (see Map No. 2).

At noon on the 23rd, the hard-pressed German forces on the French Sixth Army front, protecting Seventh Army as it withdrew its advanced center, were ordered to retire to the Berta position that night, and on the night 24-25 July to the Caesar position, held by the 23rd and 10th Landwehr Divisions,

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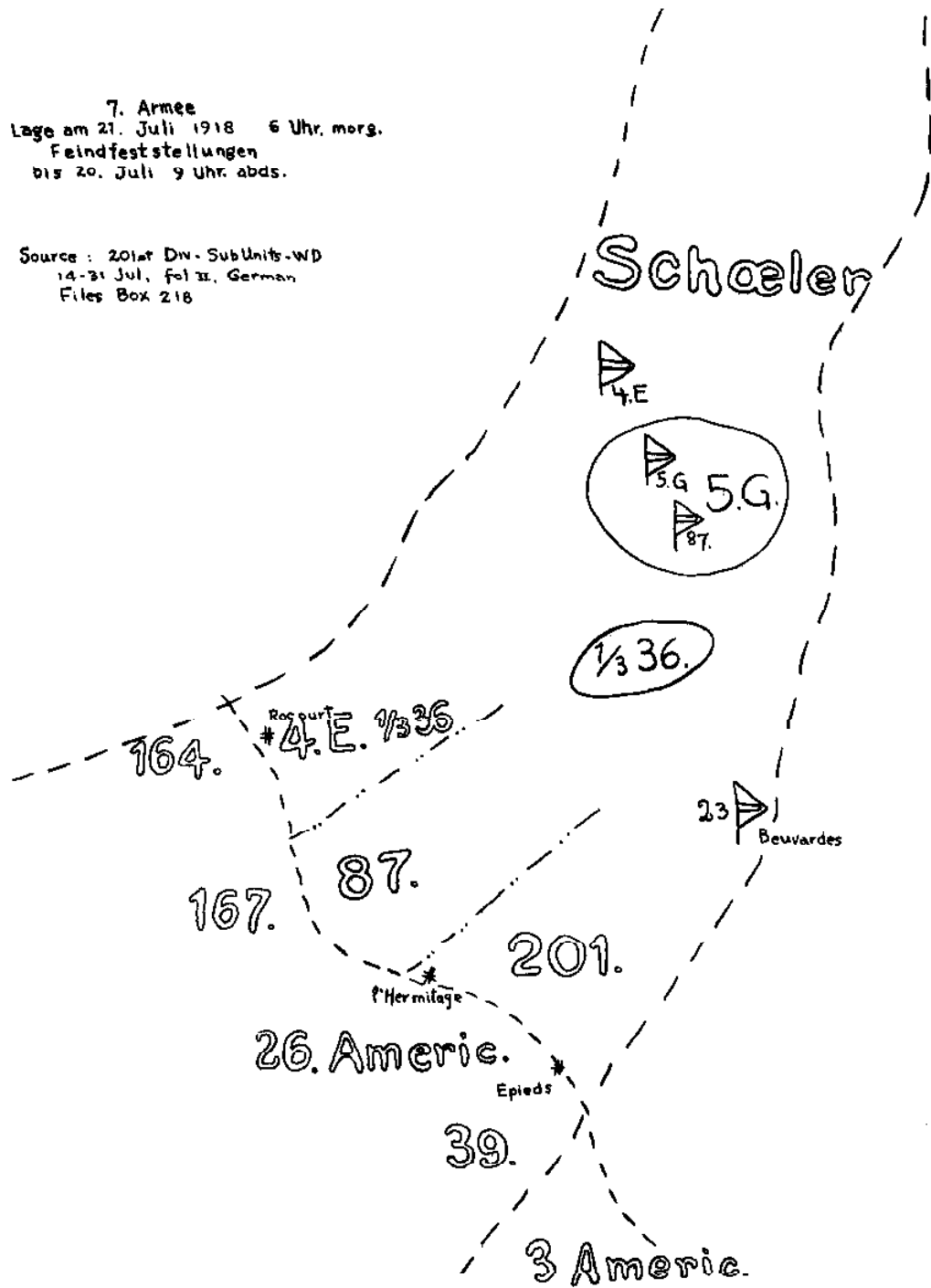
H.W. Miller, The Paris Gun (New York: Jonathan Cape & Harrison Smith, 1930), pp. 70, 202, 239, 243-44, 263, 277, 282-83. On 12 August, the bombardment of Paris ended. The gun and its replacements had fired 367 shells into Paris since 22 March (pp. 278, 285).

92

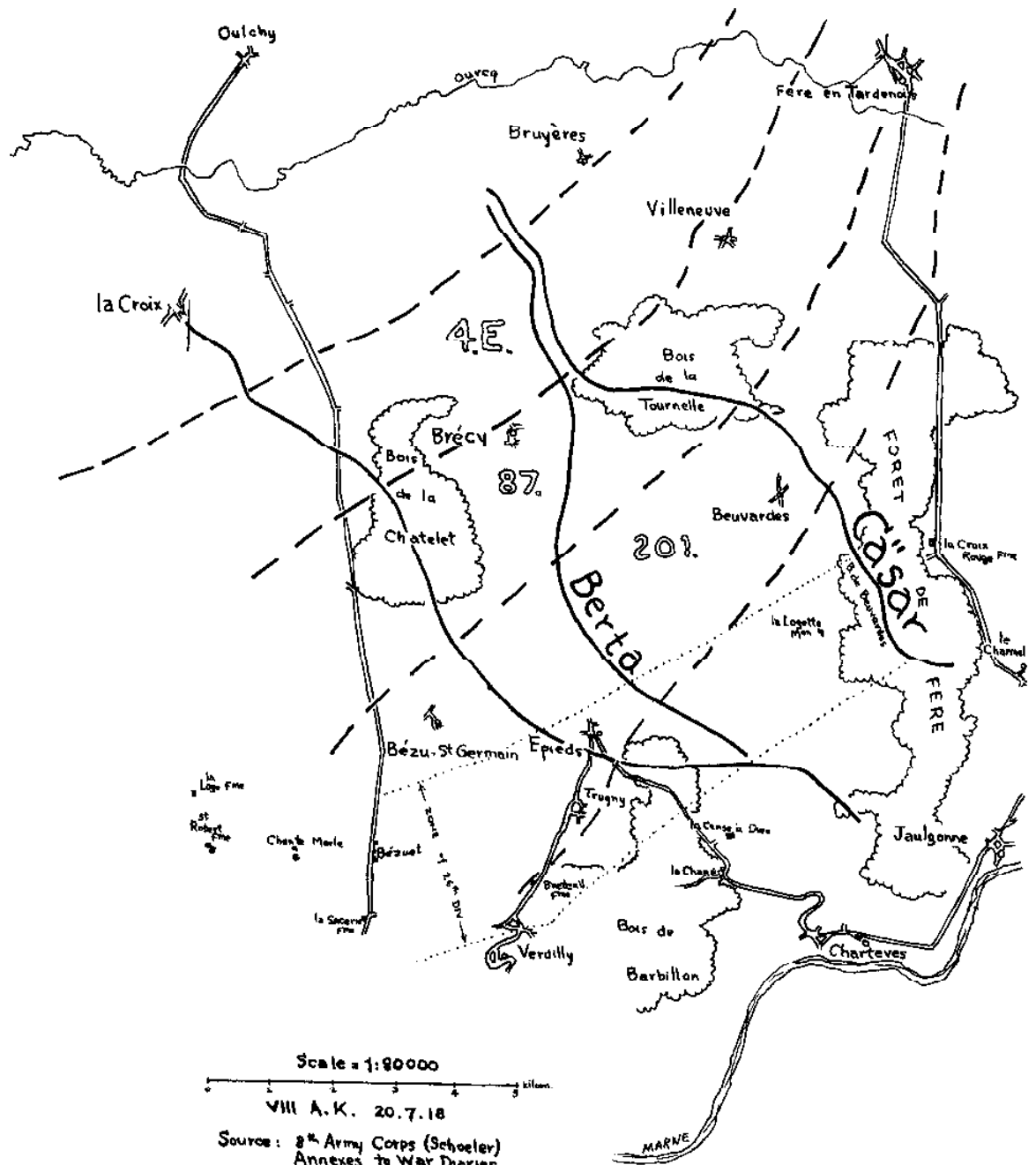
Corps Order, Kathen, 20 Jul, item 128 (23rd RC WD&A, 15 Jun-1 Aug, p. 13, German Files Box 128); Corps O, Kathen, 21 Jul, item 71, (7th Army Annexes, 24 Jun-27 Jul, trans from fol III, German Files Box 79).

7. Arme
Lage am 21. Juli 1918 6 Uhr. morgens.
Feindfeststellungen
bis 20. Juli 9 Uhr. abds.

Source : 201st DW - Subunits - WD
14-31 Jul. fol II. German
Files Box 218



MAP NO. 10



"where the battle will be fought to the finish."⁹³ In view of the temporary success of the holding forces, the planned retirement of the Seventh Army behind the Ourcq was to be postponed. The next transfer of defense, instead, would be from Caesar to the Dora position, whose construction and defense was assigned to the 10th Landwehr, 23rd, 1st Guard, and 6th Bavarian Reserve Divisions of Corps Winckler.⁹⁴ (Map No. 12 and Overlay show the retreat of Seventh Army between 19-25 July.) For this operation, Corps Kathen was phased out on the 24th, as its troops were transferred to Corps Winckler and the corps commander and his staff went north to lay out the Vesle position, the ultimate line of defense.⁹⁵

In the Bois de Trugny

Stopped on the enemy's line l'Hermitage-Verdilly, 1st Corps felt that continued head-on divisional attacks against the enemy's machine gun and gas shell resistance would be futile. Instead, on the night of the 22nd, Corps ordered a wedge attack on the enemy front:

93

Corps Order, Kathen, item 37 (7th Army Annexes....German Files Box 79). However, 87th Div WD, 24 Jul, said: "During night of 23/24, Corps [Schoeler] fell back to Caesar position, this position along south and east edge of Bois de la Tournelle" (87th Div WD&A, fol I, German Files Box 204).

"Withdrew front line at 11:15 p.m. through Caesar position (Beauvarden-le Charnel), occupied by 23rd Division during the afternoon" (10th Ldw WD, 23 Jul [10th Ldw WD&A, 19-27 Jul, fol I, German Files Box 161]).

Corps Schoeler Order, 23 Jul, said field trains of 5th Gd, 87th, 201st, and 36th Divisions were to cross the Vesle on the 23rd (App to 87th Div WD, fol I, German Files Box 204).

94

Corps Order, Wichura, 23 Jul, item 56 (7th Army Annexes, German Files Box 79).

95

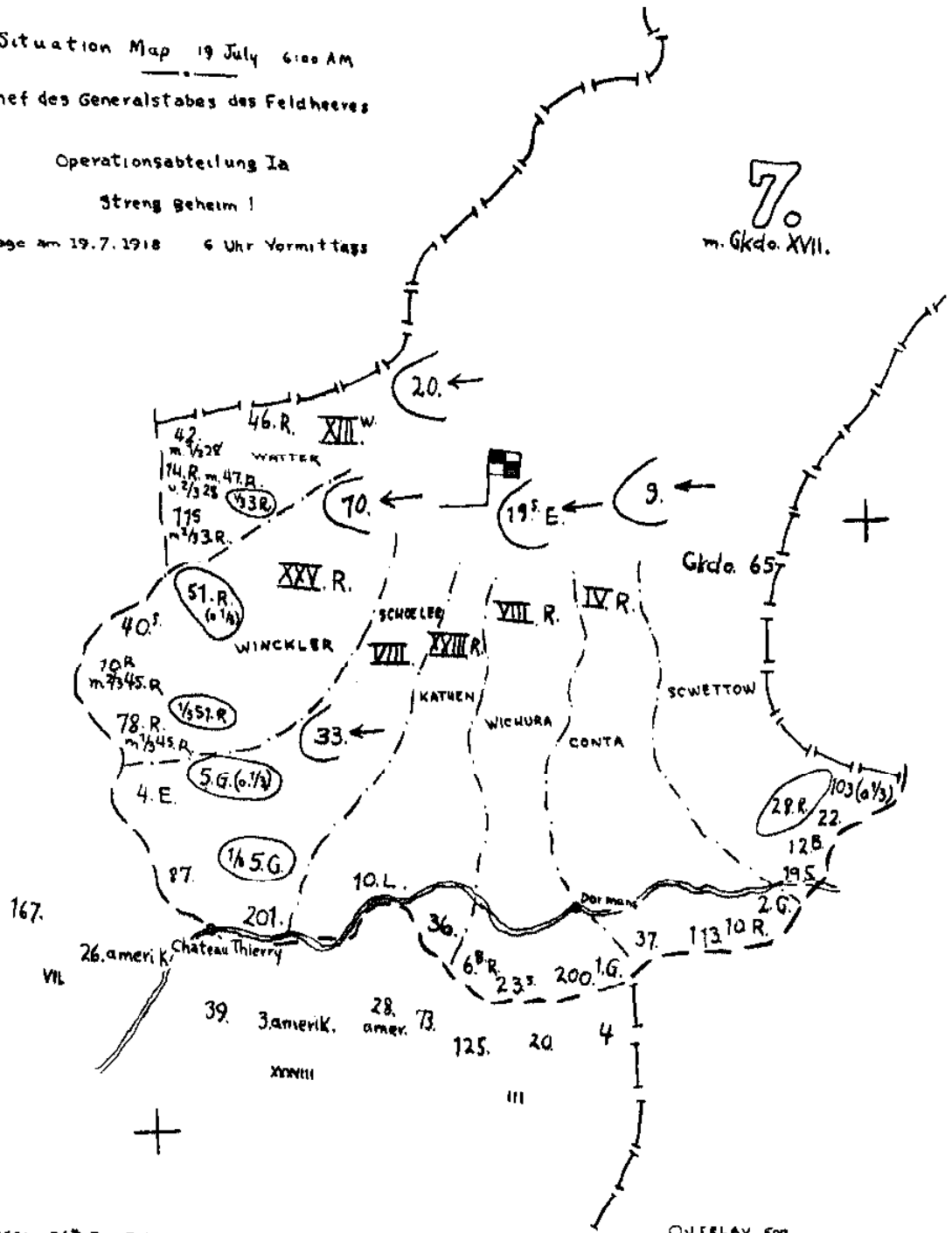
Note appended to file, 23rd Res Corps (Kathen) WD, German Files Box 129.

Situation Map 19 July 6:00 AM
 Chef des Generalstabes des Feldheeres

Operationsabteilung Ia
 Streng Geheim!

Lage am 19.7.1918 6 Uhr Vormittags

7.
 m. Gkdo. XVII.



Source: 36th Div. Sub Units.
 WD&A 1-27 July 1918
 German Files Box 188

The breaking of this shell of resistance which covers [the enemy's] retreating forces will offer an opportunity for exploitation of the most decisive character. Tomorrow morning, 23rd July, at 3:55 a.m., there will be executed on the entire front of the 6th Army, a number of powerful attacks of penetration, one for each division, each on about one regimental front....Each of the attacks of penetration must be driven home through the enemy's line of resistance, after which the attacking regiment will spread out to the right and left, taking the remaining portions of the enemy line in flank and reverse....It should be impressed upon all officers and soldiers that a wonderful opportunity for inflicting a crushing defeat on the enemy of four years standing, lies before us.

The 26th Division elected to send the 101st Infantry through the Bois de Trugny, first drawing back all troops east of the Epieds-Trugny line, to permit an artillery preparation.⁹⁶ In the rear of the 26th Division, 5000 French cavalry were coming up, to exploit any break made by Corps in the front.

After a thorough artillery preparation on Epieds, Trugny, and the Bois de Trugny, the 1st and 2nd Battalions, 101st Infantry, attacked at 6:00 a.m. on the 23rd, and before noon, after an advance of about two kilometers, gained the eastern edge of the Bois de Trugny, outflanking the two villages (Map 13).⁹⁷ There is no evidence whatever that the 26th Division fired gas into the Bois de Trugny or anywhere else previous to its assault, yet Thomas in

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FO 20, Corr Copy, 1st C, 1945, 22 Jul; FO 59, 26th Div, 2230, 22 Jul.

⁹⁷

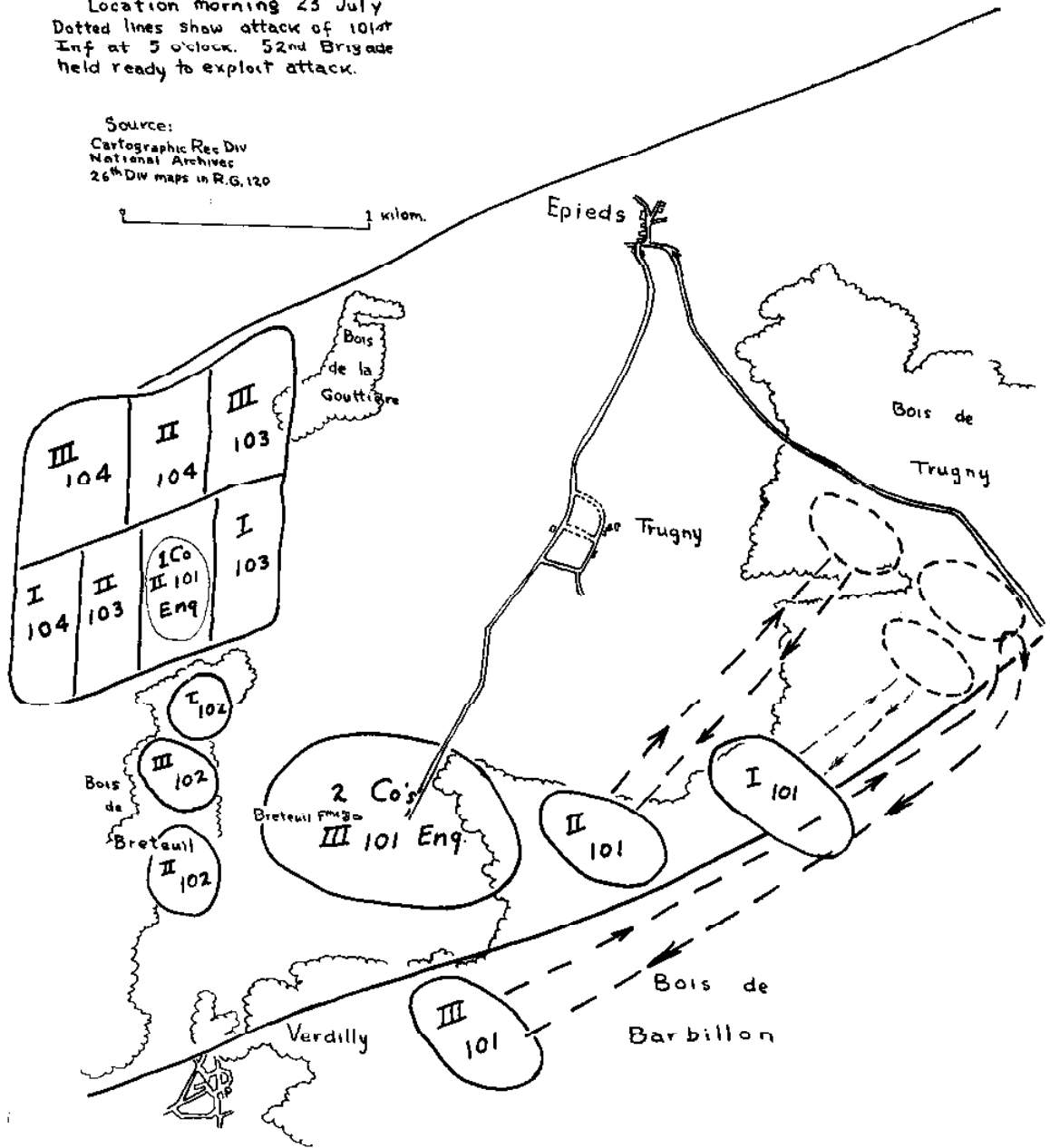
No record has been found for the number of shell fired in the preparation that morning. Lt Col Magruder (op cit), in a "Note on Bois de Trugny," Apr 1919, said: "There were signs of little artillery fire in the woods."

Numerous complaints in the after-action reports of friendly shorts during the bombardment are reflected in a field message at the time: "Early this morning there appears to have been a little stampede among the men and some of the officers on the left, not of 102nd, but we have no confirmation. Our men well in hand (FM Taylor [staff, 102nd Inf] to CG 51st, 0725, 23 Jul [26 Div Box 33, 32.16])."

Location morning 23 July
 Dotted lines show attack of 101st
 Inf at 5 o'clock. 52nd Brigade
 held ready to exploit attack.

Source:
 Cartographic Rec Div
 National Archives
 26th Div maps in R.G. 120

1 kilom.



MAP NO. 13

his History of the A.E.F. (p. 175) says: "The next morning (July 23) after a skillful battering of the German positions with gas and high explosive shells by the divisional artillery, the 101st Infantry assaulted the Bois de Trugny, and by noon had penetrated almost through to the other side of this piece of woods." Thomas may have accepted the logical strategy for the fact, or confused German gassing of the wood for American.

Two companies of the 101st Engineers moved through the 104th Infantry to exploit the attack of the 101st Infantry on the right. But by then the 101st Infantry had met withering machine gun fire from both sides of its position, as well as a prolonged gas bombardment, and after high losses it was forced to withdraw to its original position in the Bois de Barbillon to await further artillery support.⁹⁸

The withdrawal of the 101st seems to have been hastened both by the gas and by the retreat of the 104th Infantry forces on its flank. At 1:00 p.m., Livingston, commanding the 4th Platoon, Company I, signalled: "A number of units of 104 have retired. Bosche have advanced machine guns on our left flank. Position at present does not look good on left flank....Got through woods to forward position but was nearly cut off. Woods full of gas. One nest of 12 machine guns."⁹⁹ The commander of the 101st Infantry said later:

⁹⁸

It may have been at this time that "Some one [in the 101st Engineers] cried, 'The damned huns put another quarter in the meter; we're going to get gas.' Sure enough, it came." (Swan, My Company, p. 234).

⁹⁹

FM to Parker [Co 102nd Inf], forwarded for info of CG 51st Brig, 13 o'clock, n.d. All elements of the 104th Inf agree that on the 23rd it suffered "a heavy harassing fire of both high explosive and gas all day." See Rpt 1st Lt H. W. Robbins, CO 1st Bn 104th Inf, among others.

"While halted [on the Epieds-Le Chamois road in the Bois de Trugny] the regiment was subjected to an exceedingly heavy artillery and gas bombardment and at 15:45...the C.O. of the 1st Battalion ordered the withdrawal of his Battalion...subsequently retiring to the original position occupied...on the morning of July 23rd.¹⁰⁰ The Company D commander estimated "there was very near us at least 25 machine guns," and agreed with the Company B commander that "The movement to the rear was slow on account of the fire and a barrage of gas and high explosive shells which the enemy put down."¹⁰¹

On the afternoon of the 23rd, the Company F commander later reported:

...we received heavy fire of explosives and gas directly on our rear. Two covering platoons were very much broken up because of many casualties and volunteer stretcher bearers. The situation became serious. Then the artillery barrage in rear of us crept closer. The order then came from the Battalion Commander to retire....We moved southeasternly back through the woods. The company was then reorganized and moved back to the woods southeast of Epieds and bivouacked for the night.¹⁰²

Elements of Companies F, G, and H of the 101st Infantry spent that night close to the French positions on the right edge of the sector.¹⁰³ At the

100

Rpt Logan CO 101st Inf to CG 51st Brig, 2 Aug (26th Div Box 38, 33.6).

101

Rpt 1st Lt W. W. Corum, Co D; Rpt 1st Lt G. E. Irving, Co B. Rpt 2nd Lt W. J. Lacrosse, Co E, 101st Inf, 4 Aug (26th Div, Box 39, 33.6) said: "On the morning of the 24th I was in command of E Company, Capt O'Brien, Lt Werring and Lt Morley having been gassed during the action of the previous day."

102

Rpt 1st Lt A. A. Hansen, CO Co F 101st, 4 Aug (26th Div Box 39, 33.6). Rpt Sgt W. T. Minno, 1st Plat Co F 101st, 4 Aug, added: "Patrol reported large numbers of Germans advancing upon us....During our retirement....the German artillery opened up on us with gas shells and we had to pass through gassed area going back."

103

Rpt 1st Lt A. A. Hansen; Rpt 2nd Lt G. L. Goodridge, CO 2nd Plat Co G, 101st; Rpt 1st Lt R. E. Donnelly, CO 1st Plat Co H, 101st.

end of the action the line of the 26th Division was reported as west of La Gutterie-Epieds-Trugny-La Cense a Dieu. The penetration had failed everywhere on the Corps front; the enemy had again successfully "prevented us from gaining contact with his main body."¹⁰⁴

"It appears probable," said the Summary of Intelligence that day, "that the enemy has but a few guns and that they are well back where they can be withdrawn more easily." The division as a result found but four abandoned guns during its pursuit and no significantly large stores of equipment or supplies. Only small quantities of ammunition, pyrotechnics, surgical dressings, gas masks and other materiel had been found scattered over the enemy line of retreat.

Corps Orders

It was evident now that the exhausted 26th, with its two brigades badly mixed, could go no farther by itself. At noon on the 23rd, Corps reinstated its order of the 21st for the 26th Division to take over the narrowing corps front as soon as the Fare-Jaulgonne road was reached, putting a regiment of the 26th Division at the disposal of the 26th, as reserve, to enable General Edwards "to assemble one Infantry Brigade" for the relief of the 167th Division on the left. Two battalions of the 11th Infantry (56th Brigade, 26th Division) would be sent to assist the 52nd Brigade in the relief.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴

Opns Rpt, 1st C, 23-24 Jul (1st C Box 24, 33.1); SOI 100, 22-23 Jul.

¹⁰⁵

G-3 memo, 1st C, 23 Jul (26th Div Box 18, 32.11); FO 21, 1st C, 1230, 23 Jul, reinstated FO 19, 1st C; FO 80, 26th Div, 1800, 23 Jul.

But the Fere-Jaulgonne road was still some kilometers distant. That same evening, Corps suspended the order for regimental penetration and directed a general attack by the 26th and 167th Divisions at 4:05 a.m. on the 24th, using "their freshest troops."¹⁰⁶ At the same time, General Edwards also received a corps letter stating that the entire 56th Brigade of the 28th Division was at his disposal, and he was to put this in the line at once in order to comply with orders of the Sixth Army commander to drive the line forward.¹⁰⁷

General Edwards directed the 56th Brigade to relieve the now useless 52nd Brigade on the left, with the intention of reorganizing that brigade and utilizing its battalions and regiments as fast as they could be reconstructed.¹⁰⁸ This was to be done, said Corps, not later than the morning of the 24th, so the 52nd Brigade could relieve the 51st Brigade and carry the advance forward. Meanwhile, another letter from the corps commander said the 56th Brigade was not to be committed until it had had time to make a reconnaissance.¹⁰⁹ Corps was advised that preparations for the advance were

¹⁰⁶

I.e., the regiment of the 26th Div. FO 22, 1st C, 1900, 23 Jul; FO 61, 26th Div, 2000, 23 Jul.

¹⁰⁷

Ltr No. 130, Craig CofS for Liggett CG 1st C to CG 26th Div, 23 Jul, sub: Relief (26th Div Box 16, 32.11).

¹⁰⁸

On the morning of the 23rd, the 1st Bn 104th Inf reported it had 10 officers and 205 men, the 2nd Bn had 4 officers and 103 men, and the 3rd Bn had 11 officers and 345 men. One company was down to 1 officer and 16 men (Jnl O, 104th Inf, 2205 hr, 22 Jul [26th Div Box 52, 33.5]).

¹⁰⁹

Ltr CG 1st C to CG 26 Div, 23 Jul, sub: Measures taken upon relief of 52nd Brig (26th Div Box 16, 32.11). The 52nd Brig, being reorganized near La Sacerie Farm, made plans to advance again on the morning of the 24th, but remained in place until relieved (Rpt Capt S Bisbee, RI&OO, 103rd Inf [26th Div Box 25, 33.6]).

already in progress, and the 56th Brigade was ordered committed, since Arm orders prevailed over Corps directives.¹¹⁰

At 4:05 a.m. on 24 July, two battalions of the 111th Infantry, 56th Brigade, were to attack Epieds and Trugny, while a battalion of the 112th Infantry moved through the 101st and assaulted the Bois de Trugny on the flank.¹¹¹ Upon receipt of this order, Brigadier General Weigel of the 56th said that his men had been marching for two days, had not eaten, and had no emergency rations. Moreover, the 112th Regiment was not with the brigade but was back in corps reserve. The 112th was nevertheless ordered into the breach. At daylight on the 24th, General Weigel reported that he had not been able to get his battalions up to the line and the attack would be delayed.¹¹²

But it didn't matter. Through liaison with the French 167th Division, it was learned that the enemy forces had again withdrawn during the night. The 167th had moved out and was in advance of General Weigel's left. At 8:30 a.m., his battalions up, Weigel was ordered to push forward "without any caution" and make contact with the enemy. The motorized machine gun battalion of the 26th Division was given the right of way, to advance and reach the immediate objective, the Fare en Tardenois-Jaulgonne road. The line went forward.

110

Benwell, p. 126.

111

FO 62, 26th Div, 2230, 23 Jul; Rpt of CO 101st Inf to CG 51st Brig, 2 Aug (26th Div Box 39, 33,6).

112

Benwell, pp. 126-127.

That afternoon, the 26th Division received the order for its relief. A brigade of the 42nd Division would take up the pursuit of the enemy on passing through the front lines of the 51st and 56th Brigades at dawn on the 25th. At 3:15 p.m., the division Chief of Staff directed the 51st Brigade to continue the pursuit until dark and then wait for the relief.¹¹³ General Edwards, learning this, signalled at once: "I am aghast at Bowen's [G-3] interpretation of the Corps order. Certainly you keep on in pursuit until 42 Div relieves or passes thru' you. Am stopped at Trugny." The subsequent division order said the 51st and 56th Brigades would continue to press after the enemy until relieved.¹¹⁴

At 6:30 that evening, abreast of the French, advance elements of the 26th met determined resistance 500 meters west of the Jaulgonne road and came to a halt. There a corps letter caught up with the division. Sixth Army said all corps elements were to push forward without pause. Without reference to the relief that had been ordered, the 26th and 167th Divisions were directed to make "a supreme effort" to take Sergy by 2:00 a.m. on the 25th and push on to the plateau beyond, to permit the French Cavalry Corps to pass through and break up the retreating enemy, thus "completing the victory which is at hand." An unsigned pencilled note on this letter reads:

113

FO 23, 1st C, n.h., 24 Jul; FM No. 5, CofS to CG 51st Brig, 3:15 p.m., 24 Jul.

114

FM Edwards to Shelton [CG 51st Brig], 3:55 p.m., 24 Jul (26th Div Box 19, 52.16), FO 63, 26th Div, 1845, 24 Jul. This order also said the disorganized 52nd Brig, moving back, was to be west of the Chateau Thierry-Soissons road before 6:00 p.m. that day, to keep the roads near the front clear.

"Sergy - $5\frac{1}{2}$ km. beyond the Fere-Jaulgonne road. Rec'd 18:50 o'clock." 115

The division order said the 51st and 56th Brigades and a brigade of the 42nd Division, aided by the 167th and other French divisions to the north, were to make this effort. "A complete victory is at hand." 116 But instead the 26th Division was to spend the night in the Forêt de Fere. The troops could go no farther (Map No. 14).

At 12:35 a.m. on the 25th, the 51st Brigade was ordered to resume the attack at dawn. A directive at 3:00 a.m. said that since all elements of the division were under orders to continue to Sergy, the time and place of relief could not be defined. The advance must continue, and an officer was designated to meet the leading element of the 42nd Division at 5:30 a.m. and make arrangements for the relief. 117

The 26th Division, scattered in the Forêt de Fere, did not advance on the morning of the 25th, principally as a result of "Considerable harassing fire of H.E. and gas on front line and as far back as Brigade P.C.'s." During the night of 24-25th all positions of the [51st] Brigade were

115

SOI 101, 23-24 Jul; ltr CG 1st C to CG 26th Div, 24 Jul, sub: Continuation of attack (26th Div Box 16, 32.11).

116

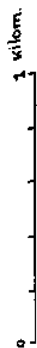
FO 24, 1st C, n.h.o., 24 Jul; FO 64, 26th Div, 2030, 24 Jul.

117

FM CofS to CG 51st Brig, 0035 o'clock, 25 Jul; FM No. 3, CofS to CGs 51st, 56th, and 51st FA Brigs, 3:00 o'clock, 25 Jul (26th Div Box 20, 32.16).

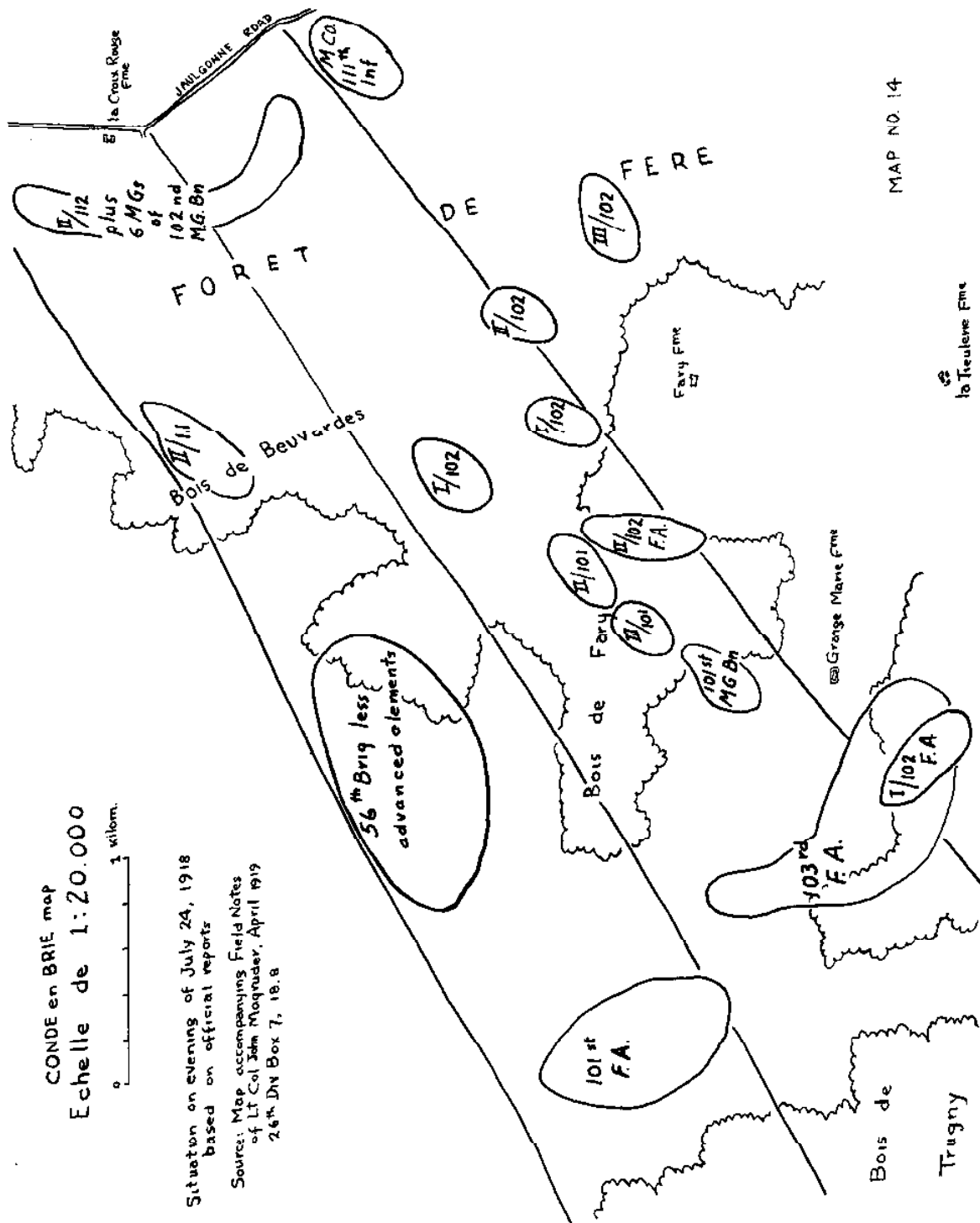
A penned note on this last message reads: "8:30-9:30 Searched main road for one hour without being able to locate incoming Colonel or General. Advised advanced battalions of 168th [42nd Div] to get off the road and lie in woods. Sent battalion scout officer to La Grange [Marie] Farm for advice as to our location. Left look-out posted...to tell incoming officers where to find General Shelton.../s/ Lt P H English."

CONDE en BRIE map
Echelle de 1:20.000



Situation on evening of July 24, 1918
based on official reports

Sources: Map accompanying Field Notes
of Lt. Col. John Magruder, April 1919
26th Div Box 7, 18.8



subjected to hostile shelling by high explosive and shrapnel mixed with gas.¹¹⁸ In the early morning, the 102nd Infantry reported: "Gas cloud has drifted off the road. It is very dense. The woods are full of it. We stick...it is only retaliation for our C.P.O." (FM Parker 102nd to CG 51st Brig, 4:35 a.m., 25 Jul [26th Div Box 42, 32.16]).

It was 10:00 a.m. before the advance elements of the 42nd Division located the forward units they were to replace. At 7:30 that evening, the command of the zone passed to the 42nd Division and the next day the 26th Division began to move back to the Strepilly area to await orders.¹¹⁹ The 42nd Division, relieving the French 167th Division on 26 July, took over the corps front and went on to Oureq as the enemy continued to retreat.

The 101st Field Hospital, at Besu le Query, received 94 gas patients between 2200-1430 hours on 24-25 July, while the 104th Field Hospital, at Luzancy, did not close until 29 July, two days late, "having become immobilized by the large number of casualties of exhaustion and suspected gas poisoning who were subjected to careful observation by a special board before being evacuated or returned to duty."¹²⁰ Altogether, as the Division

¹¹⁸

SOI 102, 24-25 Jul; Opns Rpt, Brig Gen Shelton, CO 51st Brig, 6 Aug (26th Div Box 35, 33.6); Cf. Rpt Col J. H. Parker, CO 102nd Inf, 4 Aug (26th Div Box 39, 33.6).

¹¹⁹

FM No. 5, CofS to CGs 51st, 56th, 84th, 51st FA Brigs, 1000, 25 Jul; FO 65, 26th Div, 1500, 26 Jul. FO 66, 26th Div, 1730, 29 Jul, said the division would move to the La Perte sous Jouarre area [near 1st C HQ] for reorganization and retraining.

¹²⁰

Memo 101st FH for Dir FH, n.d. (Med Dept Box 3586, fol 22); rpt CO 101st San Tr to CG 26th Div, 2 Aug (ibid., fol 10).

Surgeon reported later, there were 133 gas casualties recorded between 25-27 July.

In the sixteen days between 10-25 July, the 26th Division had suffered 2132 wound casualties, principally by machine gun fire, and 1930 gas casualties, including 24 gas deaths. It had come into a highly active, "unfinished" sector with less than a week's rest and at three-quarter strength. It had advanced by bounds almost 18 kilometers against a desperate and stubborn foe in retreat, few in numbers but aided by well-disposed machine guns and large quantities of gas.

ANALYSIS

"The Wonderful Inefficiency of Shell Fire"

The operations and intelligence records of the 26th Division for the period 9-14 July are singularly complete in their estimates of the number of artillery shells fired into the divisional sector and the casualties produced by them. In that period, approximately 21,750 HE shells fell in the sector occupied by the four regiments of the division, causing 27 deaths and 172 wounded (narrative, pp 7-8). On the basis of these figures, it required 126 high explosive shells to produce a casualty.

In the same period, it is estimated that approximately 270 gas shells fell in the sector, producing 3 casualties according to division headquarters, 57 according to Medical Department records (narrative, pp. 8-9). Taking the latter and probably more accurate figure, it required between 4 and 5 gas shells to produce a gas casualty.

Pertinent to this comparison of effectiveness is the remark of the Boston Globe correspondent with the 26th Division in France, on "that wonder which never ceased while the war lasted, -- how men could pass alive through a sone of shell fire thickly falling. Over and over again the wonderful inefficiency of shell fire has amazed observers; over and over again we have seen men walk right into the hell of flying metal and go through unscathed."¹²¹ He referred to enemy shelling of 26th Division raiding parties in the Chemin des Dames sector in February, but the statement was even more apt in July, when the men were more or less bunched

¹²¹

Sibley, With the Yankee Division in France, p. 73.

and immobilized, and the terrain was still almost as unorganized as No Man's Land.

Data for the gas attacks immediately prior to and following the fight at Vaux on the 15th are more difficult to assess. The Division Gas Officer reported a total of 9400 gas shells during the night of 14-15 July and a like amount the next night (narrative, pp. 12-13, 14-15). Both divisional unit records and German records disagree on the number of gas shells the second night. Hanslian's estimate of 8000 yellow cross shells on the 15th and 750 the following morning is probably more correct. The attack on the morning of the 17th involved at least 100 yellow cross shells. It may then be assumed that a maximum of between 9,000 and 10,000 gas shells of all kinds were fired into the 26th Division sector during the three-day attack.

The DGO reported 518 gas casualties and 2 deaths as a result of this gassing, but did not distinguish the attack on the morning of the 17th. The division reported 176 gas casualties following the attack on the 15th, 256 following that on the 16th, and 54 for the 17th (narrative, pp. 14-16, 17-18), for a total of 449. The 102nd Field Hospital said that 418 gas casualties, mostly mustard cases, were evacuated during the 24-hour period ending the morning of 16 July (narrative, pp. 15-16). In the chart from the Division Surgeon's office (see page 53), this figure of 418 appears on 17 July, with 171 gas cases and 4 gas deaths recorded for 14-16 July and 139 cases on the 18th, many of the latter probably delayed casualties. The final total in Division Surgeon records is thus 728 gassed and 4 gas deaths, as a result of the "Strassenbau" gas attacks, or approximately one casualty for every 14 gas shells fired.

No satisfactory accounting can be made for the 120 men killed or wounded by high explosive and rifle fire during the period 15-17 July, since there is no way to separate those casualties resulting from the HE shelling and those suffered in the fire fight at Vaux. The records indicate, however, that at least 13,000 rounds of HE were fired into the sector in those three days and nights (narrative, pp. 14-15, 16-17, 17-18), suggesting a ratio of shells to casualties similar to that for the period 9-14 July, i.e., 126 to 1.

The Casualty Records

As is evident from the narrative and from the chart below, the 26th Division was under gas attack or encountered gassed terrain every single day while in the Aisne-Marne campaign.¹²²

<u>Period ending 6 a.m.</u>	<u>Wounded</u>	<u>Gassed</u>	<u>Injured</u>	<u>Sick</u>
9 July	-	[17]	-	-
10 July	11	17	13	81
11 July	26	5	5	72
12 July	30	5	5	67
13 July	17	2	3	81
14 July	5	[152]	7	52
15 July	44	7 (2)	8	89
16 July	22	12 (2)	3	89
17 July	52	418	5	93
18 July	31	139	1	85
19 July	4	32 (19)	3	46
20 July	292	84	3	126
21 July	140	214	16	197
22 July	623	85	4	122
23 July	566	368 (1)	0	293
24 July	169	216	0	121
25 July	36	80	1	62
26 July	64	38	8	52
27 July	-	[15]	-	-
	<u>2132</u>	<u>1906 (24)</u>	<u>85</u>	<u>1728 = 5875</u>

¹²²

This DS chart, dated 19 Jan 19, is from Med Dept (26th Div) Box 3593, 704-Casualties; also in 26th Div Box 248.

Bracketed figures represent corrections to DS chart as reproduced in ltr DGO to C CWS, 20 Jan 19, sub: Rpt on Gas Activities (26th Div Box 248), where source is given as DS records.

Figures in parentheses are gas deaths.

The following tabulation represents an actual count of the gas casualties reported by name in the hospital admission lists maintained by the 101st and 104th Field Hospitals (Med Dept Box 3616). Six pages of these lists are missing.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>101</u> <u>Inf</u>	<u>102</u> <u>Inf</u>	<u>102</u> <u>MG</u>	<u>103</u> <u>Inf</u>	<u>104</u> <u>Inf</u>	<u>103</u> <u>MG</u>	<u>101</u> <u>FA</u>	<u>103</u> <u>FA</u>	<u>101</u> <u>Eng</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
10 July	11	10	-	-	2	-	18	-	5	46
11 July	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
12 July	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
13 July	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	5
14 July	3	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	6
15 July	88	192	24	8	1	6	18	18	55 (3)**	411
16 July	69	102	9	14	2	12	17	17	54 (3)	299
17 July	-	8	2	13	24	5	1	2	2	57
18 July	3	20	-	7	1	-	2	-	3	36
19 July	-	-	1	4	1	16	5	-	1	26
20 July	-	2	-	108	49	4	1	-	4 (2)	170
21 July	6	7	-	18	12	7	1	-	1 (11)	63
22 July	-	-	-	6	6	-	-	-	-	12
23 July	14	41	4	38	30	2	-	-	3	132
24 July	230	111	11	104	78	17	7	3*	2	563
25 July	18	5	2	-	4	3	-	-	1	33
26 July	2	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	5
27 July	7	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
	<u>451</u>	<u>500</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>323</u>	<u>217</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>68</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>131 (19)</u>	<u>1872</u>

* These 3 gas cases were in the 102nd FA.

** Figures in parentheses represent gas cases in other units of the division than those in the columns.

A note on the sheet for 28 July says that of the total of patients then in the division gas hospital under observation for gas symptoms, 200 were returned to duty that date. ¹²³

123

Memo Div Surg for all medical officers, 18 Aug (GAF-268), says that of 341 officers and men at the 104th FH, 245 EM were returned to duty, dates not specified.

Another chart, undated, in Medical Department records breaks down the division casualties by units, but covers only the period of combat, 18-25 July, omitting all casualty figures between 9-17 July. The killed and missing figures are said to be based on Statistical Section records.¹²⁴ The figures in parentheses (from memo, DS, 31 Jul, sub: Casualty list to 26 July, same source) appear to represent a slightly earlier tabulation than that of the chart.

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Wounded</u>	<u>Gassed</u>	<u>Missing</u>
101st Inf	31	121 (119)	273 (361)	26
102nd Inf	82	319 (316)	321 (399)	51
102nd MG Bn	16	20 (41)	33 (45)	9
103rd Inf	187	540 (539)	304 (326)	14
104th Inf	39	531 (539)	250 (262)	0
103rd MG Bn	30	30 (36)	23 (34)	10
101st MG Bn	8	27 (28)	5 (6)	0
101st FA	4	20 (42)	13 (48)	0
102nd FA	16	24 (22)	12 (16)	0
103rd FA	1	13 (38)	43 (72)	0
101st Eng	-	- (92)	- (116)	-
	<u>374</u>	<u>1665 (2032)</u>	<u>1257 (1687)</u>	<u>110</u>
	TOTAL: 3406 (4203)			

The magnitude and the effect on the operation of the gas casualties incurred during the Aisne-Marne campaign are in only a few instances, and then indirectly, reflected in the after-action reports of the units of the 26th Division. The relatively few field messages for the period contribute little or nothing to what must have been the situation on the battlefield. Neither

¹²⁴

Chart, Casualties for Period 18-25 July, prepared in reply to memo Actg Cofs for DS, 31 Jul (Med Dept 5593, 704 Casus).

the machine gunning nor the almost continuous gas shelling of the division in the fields and woods before Espieds and Trugny are credited for the panic or series of panics that unquestionably occurred on 22 and 23 July.¹²⁵

In memoranda and messages during the operation and in the after-action reports it was the difficult wheeling maneuvers made by the division; the cautious and slow advance of the French forces on the left; the repeatedly delayed, complicated, and contrary orders of Corps, and the unrealistic estimate of the enemy situation by intelligence that were said to have contributed to the disorganization and difficulties of the division. It is only in the light of the Division Surgeon's figures that an immediate and compelling cause for confusion and panic emerges.

Although German gas invariably claimed far more casualties in proportion to its weight of shell than high explosive, and in the case of the 26th Division produced almost as many casualties as German artillery, machine guns, and rifles combined produced wounded, in the reports and histories the gas experience of the division is confined to passing sentences. It is quite apparent, in the four narrative histories of the 26th Division consulted for this report, that gas lacked the immediate spectacular effect of the sniper's bullet, the machine gun's chatter, the earth-moving artillery shell.

¹²⁵

The final operations reports of the 51st Brigade, and of the 102nd, 103rd, and 104th Infantry all give summaries of casualties for 18-25 July. None distinguishes any gas casualties. The 103rd Inf report notes however: "Many of the casualties were caused by gas which was used on several occasions by the enemy."

Despite the high incidence of sickness which swelled the total of casualties in its two subsequent campaigns, the 26th Division suffered its greatest number of battle casualties in the Aisne-Marne (Chateau Thierry) operation, as the following chart (in memo, DS, 24 Dec 1918, Med Dept Box 3593) indicates:

<u>Sector</u>	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Wounded</u>	<u>Gassed</u>	<u>Sick</u>	<u>Missing</u>		
Chemin des Dames	18	52	283	?	11	=	364
Toul (Boucq)	304	914	1351	?	222	=	2791
Chateau Thierry	728	3046	1722	1728	118	=	7342
St. Mihiel	186	844	275	3010	33	=	4348
Verdun	530	1853	1942	4150	265	=	8740
	<u>1766</u>	<u>6709</u>	<u>5573</u>	<u>8888</u>	<u>649</u>	=	<u>23585</u>

Variants on the total casualties of the 26th Division in France are offered for comparison:

1785	6763	4150	-	645	=	13,343*
2168	13000	-	-	-	=	15,168**

* Ltr Div Pers Adj to TAG AEF, 8 Mar 19, sub: Hist of Stat Sec, 26th Div (26th Div Box 5, 11.1).

** Ayres, The War with Germany: a Statistical Summary, p. 117, and Thomas, History of the A.E.F., p. 459.

The 26th Division in the Attack

The high casualties taken by American troops in their first months of combat seem to have caused concern to the American command. "The war is at present a contest of endurance and the rapid reconstitution of our divisions, when withdrawn from the line, is of primary importance." ¹²⁶ High casualties aggravated the problem of reconstitution.

Despite corps orders to the 26th Division to attack in depth, the troops went forward en masse in frontal attacks, and fell in waves before the enemy machine guns. "The First Corps went into battle cautioned against foolhardy risks, and warned particularly against overmanning the front lines, where the shells and gas were thickest, and against taking machine gun positions by frontal attack; but in the face of these orders they and the rest of the American Army endlessly took chances that no French soldier in his right mind would have chanced; nor would our men had they been fighting since 1914."¹²⁷ Repeatedly, the after-action reports complained that the German machine guns and minenwerfers almost alone stopped the pursuit, enabling the enemy to withdraw practically unmolested. Impatiently, the troops simply overran the guns or made costly flanking attacks on them, or waited for lone heroes to take the guns single-handed. The French, on the other hand, withdrew at once when they met heavy machine gun fire and waited for their artillery to deal with

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Ltr CG 1st C to CG 4th Div, n.d., published in Instru No. 84, 26th Div, 2 Aug (26th Div Box 15, 32.11).

¹²⁷

Hunter Liggett, AEF: Ten Years Ago in France (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1928), p. 130.

it. Again and again troop commanders said that an effective method must be found for destroying these nests, and variously suggested that the 37mm gun, small tanks, or even 75mm field piece accompanying the infantry might quickly knock them out.¹²⁸

A letter from First Army, shortly after the 26th Division was relieved, reported comments of French Sixth Army prisoners of war:

The Americans sacrifice their troops needlessly by close formation, by needless headlong rushes at machine-gun nests, and by insufficient attention of soldiers to their shelter from German fire....One prisoner declared: 'I am sure that my company without casualties on one occasion mowed down three American companies'....An enemy officer declared: 'The Americans advance in close formation. They attack slowly without paying attention to bullets instead of going forward by jumps and seeking occasional cover.'¹²⁹

Corps training directives hammered away at defense against the deadly German machine gun. "The use of phosphorus rifle grenades for dealing with machine gun nests and especially for masking them by their smoke, will be thoroughly worked out....These smoke devices should be fully utilized." The same directive reprinted a memo from Degoutte on the use of artillery to neutralize machine guns in the attack. Furthermore, said Degoutte, in "attacks by night or day, there is a great advantage in forcing the enemy to put on his mask by shelling him with gas shells for a few minutes before H hour."¹³⁰ Corps

¹²⁸

Cf. Rpt Capt M. G. Bulkeley Jr., CO 101st MG Bn, 11 Aug (26th Div Box 25, 33.61).

¹²⁹

Mimeo ltr CofS 1st A to CG 1st C, with copies to 26th Div brigs, regts, and cos, 7 Aug, subs Methods of Attack (with SOIs, 26th Div Box 8, 20.1).

¹³⁰

Reproduced in 26th Div Instru No. 84, 2 Aug (26th Div Box 15, 32.11).

Artillery, in a memo repeating the passage, amended it to read: "There is every advantage in forcing the enemy to mask."¹³¹

But the 26th Division in July had no phosphorus grenades. (The thermite grenade, designed for use against machine gun nests, did not reach the field until September, for the St. Mihiel operation.) And gas grenades were brought up, apparently for the first time, on 25 July.¹³² Nor was the division able at any time to obtain an adequate supply of gas shell. Although the French forces on either side of the division apparently used large quantities of gas shell before and during the advance, the 26th Division fired but three brief missions, all with phosgene, on 13-14, 15, and 20 July (narrative, pp. 7-8, 11-12, 22-23).

Of interest is a note, dated 7:10 p.m., 18 July, in a field journal apparently kept by G-3, 51st Brigade, written while the troops in Torcy and Belleau were being gassed: "General Edwards telephoned... [and] asked regarding the possibility of a projector gas attack from my front. I told him I understood from Major Watson it would not be possible in such limited time."¹³³ General Edwards had in mind the projector gas shoot that had been planned since 9 July by Maj. George Watson of the 1st Battalion, 50th Engineers (later, the 1st Gas Regiment), whose unit, originally assigned to the

¹³¹

1st CA memo, 1 Aug (26th Div Box 16, 32.11).

¹³²

"...25 Jul, from Montreuil to Epieds, 1250 gas grenades." (Activity of 101st Ammo Tr, 26th Div Box 65, 33.6).

¹³³

Jnl, Allied Attack of July 18th-July 20th, 1918 (26th Div Box 25, 33.6 Rpts of Opns).

2nd Division, was transferred to Corps with the formation of 1st Corps on 14 June. Operation Order 5, 17 Jul, approved by Corps, indicates that 50 drums of NC (chlorpicrin) and 100 drums of phosgene were to be fired on each of five targets opposite the 101st Infantry sector on the night of the 17th (see Map No. 15).¹³⁴

"Owing to receipt of order for a general attack, this operation was cancelled by Corps." The historian of the 1st Gas Regiment was also to say later that there had been many "splendid targets" in the sector and plans had been prepared for missions, but no clearance could be obtained until just before the attack. "The reasons for not taking advantage of this weapon were ...largely...lack of knowledge of its possibilities, and changes in command of the American troops preparatory to the advance."¹³⁵ The 1st Gas Regiment unit did not advance with the 26th Division.

French yperite shell had been introduced on the battlefield the previous month, in June, and the 2nd Division fired at least one lot before it left the sector. But the 26th Division was later to observe: "We received our first consignment of French Mustard Gas October 4th 1918 consisting of 1000 Special #20 77 caliber shells."¹³⁶ Since it was leaving the sector, the division artillery fired them at an impromptu target the next day. The

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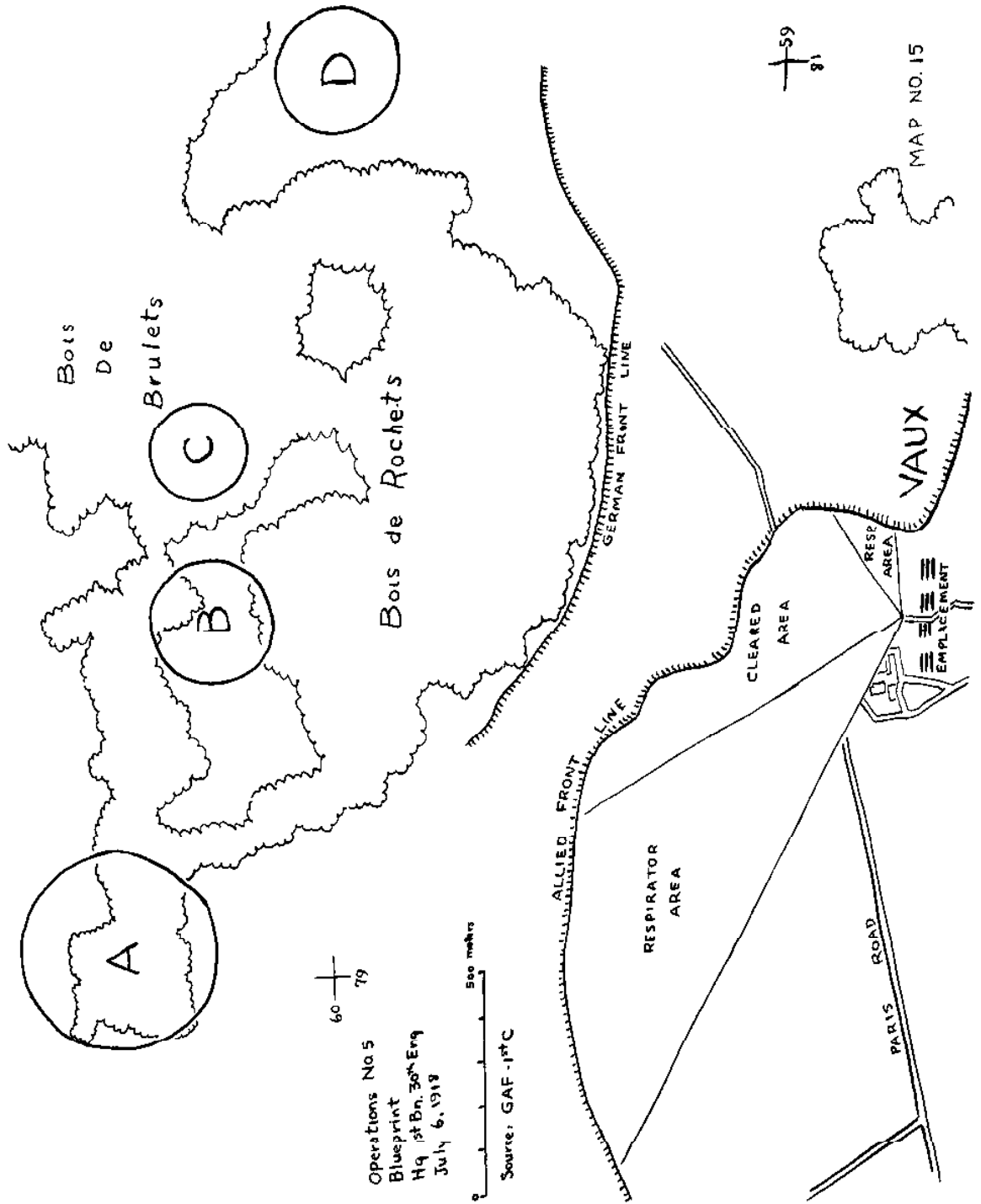
Ltr CG 1st C to CO 1st Bn 30th Eng, 15 Jul, sub: Supplementary project rpt (GAF-1st C).

135

Hist of 1st GR, part III, sec 3, pp. 1, 5.

136

Ltr DGO to C CWS, 21 Nov, sub: Rpt of Offensive Opns with Use of Arty Gas Shells (26th Div Box 25, 33.6 Spec Rpts-Misc).



experience was typical, according to the Division Gas Officer:

Our gas shoots are designed to make the best use of the gas shells which can be obtained and not previously arranged projects for which gas is ordered, as we would prefer. We have been under French Corps a large part of the time. Our Munitions Officer keeps in a constant requisition for all the #5, #7, and #20 which he can get. As soon as he is informed that certain amounts of gas shells have been allotted to us, the Division Gas Officer and the Chief of Operations of the Artillery Brigade plan shoots....¹³⁷

General Edwards was to say after the Aisne-Marne operation:

The artillery did its work excellently. They had too few gas shells. The proportion should be much greater hereafter, even in open warfare. They can be effectively used against machine-gun nests where the proper interval elapses between the preparation and the assault. I also recommend a much greater allowance of gas shells for all calibers for counter battery work of the corps artillery as one of the best agents in the neutralization of opposing batteries.¹³⁸

The 26th Division apparently had one weapon against machine gun nests, which, so far as can be determined, was not used during the campaign. On 18 July, the artillery regiments were advised that "3000 smoke shells are available for issue to such batteries as may require them."¹³⁹ That is the only reference to these shells or to the use of smoke shells in all the records examined.

¹³⁷

Ltr DGO to C GWS, 24 Oct, sub: Use of Arty Gas Against the Enemy (26th Div Box 249, fol. 3).

¹³⁸

Quoted in Benwell, p. 134.

One solution to the German machine gun, and discovered again in World War II, seems to have appeared in what was considered only as an "interesting memorandum" of the 42nd Div, dated 31 July, "in which it was directed that within spheres of enemy artillery and machine gun resistance the normal attack formation in waves should not be adopted. Small patrols of ten to fifteen men were to move forward in scout fashion, crawling and utilizing all depressions in the terrain, while the main body, halting under cover, was to assist their advance by the fire of Stokes mortars and 53mm. guns. Batteries of 75mm. guns were to be run up to the line when direct fire against enemy nests was practicable." Jennings C. Wise, The Turn of the Tide (New York: Henry Holt, 1920), pp. 231-232.

¹³⁹

Opns O 117, East Gpg [i.e., 102nd FA], 18 Jul (Box 61, 33.13).

French and American Casualties

Available casualty figures for the French divisions on either side of the 26th Division during the month of July make a comparison of casualties possible. It should be noted that at full muster, a French division had about half the strength of an American division.

On the basis of French and German records, it may be presumed that the gas and HE experience of the French 167th Division, which fired far more gas ammunition than the 26th Division and was therefore more subject to gas retaliation, was probably at least the equivalent of that of the 26th Division. During the period 13-20 July, daily casualty summaries reported by 1st Corps or by the French division show the following comparative figures:¹⁴⁰

		<u>Killed</u>	<u>Wounded</u>	<u>Gassed</u>
13-14 July	167th Div	1	5	0
	26th Div	11	53	3
14-15 July	167th Div		81	15
	26th Div			176
15-16 July	167th Div			1
	26th Div	no rpt		258
16-17 July	167th Div	3	8	0
	26th Div	3	25	64
17-18 July	167th Div	21	88	0
	26th Div	7	262	40
18-19 July	167th Div	10	57	28
	26th Div	5	678	
19-20 July	167th Div	27	62	3
	26th Div	8	161	168

¹⁴⁰

Opns Rpts, 1st C (1st C Box 24, 33.1); Sum of Opns Rpts, 1st C (ibid., 33.2); Opns Rpts, 167th Div (French Files Box 141).

The 167th Division was subjected to a heavy gas bombardment on the morning of the 15th, followed by a raid in force on Bussieres that was repulsed in a fire fight, and a follow-up gas bombardment on the 15th and 16th -- virtually the same experience as the 26th Division. Even allowing for low estimates in these Corps figures (the 26th Division, as we have seen suffered between 700-800 gas casualties between 13-18 July), no explanation can be offered for the relatively few casualties in the French division except its hard-won talent for conserving its fighting strength.

Summaries of casualties for the period 18-28 July are available for both the French 167th Division and the French 39th Division, to the right of the 26th, and support General Liggett's statement, previously quoted, the reckless Americans. The figures are offered without further comment.

	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Wounded</u>	<u>Gassed</u>	<u>Total</u>
	<u>Off</u> <u>Men</u>	<u>Off</u> <u>Men</u>	<u>Off</u> <u>Men</u>	
167th Division*	7 212	41 896	- -	1158
26th Division **	374	2032	1687	4093
39th Division ***	3 170	28 754	4 410	1367

* Transl of Rpt on Opns of 167th Div 18-27 Jul, 19 Aug (French Files Box 141, 30.4).

** From narrative pp. 55-56.

*** 39th Div, Historique des Journees du 18 au 28 Juillet, p. 5 (French Files Box 123, 30.9).

The Reputation of the 26th Division

The 26th Division seems to have been held in small esteem by Headquarters, AEF, and to have endured, as a result of its July operation, something like the official ignominy that the 35th Division was to undergo two months later. (It is only coincidence that General Peter Traub left the 51st Brigade, 26th Division, to take command of the 35th Division on 16 July, two days before the attack.)

Like the 35th Division after its bad show, the command of the 26th down to platoon corporals and sergeants was apparently ordered to explain in detail its actions for the period 18-25 July. Such blanket reporting does not occur for any other operation of the 26th Division, nor does it appear in any other division examined except the 35th. (The records of the 2nd Division have not yet been examined to see whether its "lost command" on 18 July, and relief on the 19th resulted in a similar reply-by-indorsement.)

The three popular histories of the 26th Division present a long series of incidents that tend "to show that the 26th and General Edwards did not stand well with the American higher command."¹⁴¹ Sibley's volume, indeed, is not a history so much as it is a journalist's defense of the division and an encomium of its individual men and officers.

¹⁴¹

Sibley, With the Yankee Division in France, passim; Benwell, History of the Yankee Division (a "souvenir" history), pp. 195-198; Taylor, New England in France 1917-1919, pp. 1-11, 169-170, 250.

There had been earlier conflicts, but the ill-will became overt when the 26th Division came out of the line on the 25 July and

Corps openly charged that for two days during the Chateau-Thierry drive, the Division did not know where General Cole [52nd Brigade] was, and that General Cole didn't know at all where his troops were. In vain [proof was offered]...but Corps insisted that the general and his brigade had been lost. The inquiry as to Colonel Logan centered around the check that his [101st] regiment endured in the woods of Trugny, when it had to fall back, leaving its own wounded out in front, and the artillery could not fire because of the danger of hitting those wounded men.¹⁴²

Ten years later, Maj. General Hunter Liggett was to say of Cole's brigade during that action:

But the greater part of that brigade had lost direction, gone astray and failed to hold together as an organization after the night of July 21-22. Fortunately, General Schmidt, who...commanded the 167th French, realized the situation and had the good judgment to go ahead without orders until July 25, or we should have had a dangerous gap in the line of the First Army Corps. As soon as the situation was appreciated General Weigel's 56th Brigade of the Keystone Division was called in to fill the place.¹⁴³

At the time, according to Sibley, a demand was made that General Edwards relieve these two National Guard commanders (Cole and Logan) and General Edwards refused.

The incidents appear to have culminated in the relief of General Edwards on 25 October, when Brig. General Frank E. Bamford, of the 1st Division, Regular Army, assumed command. That same day, Colonel Logan was relieved of his command of the 101st Infantry. On 6 November, Colonel Hume

¹⁴²

Sibley, p. 250

¹⁴³

Liggett, A.R.F.: Ten Years Ago in France (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1928), pp. 125-126. Compare his extenuating comments on the retreat of the 36th Div, pp. 180-181, that theirs was "an action that would have tried the souls of the best troops in the world."

was relieved of the 103rd Infantry, and on 9 November, General Cole was relieved of his brigade command. General Bamford appears to have made it clear to Sibley that the reason for their relief went back to July. All three after their ordeal at Blois, however, were restored to their commands.¹⁴⁴

General Bamford arrived with a poor opinion of his new command. He charged the 26th Division with "inertia." Sibley quotes the General as saying (p.323):

The quality of a division is determined by its leaders, by its commander and by its colonels. What is needed in a division like this is colonels who are drivers. Drivers will make a division do things.

Look at the First Division. That Division has had 33,000 men pass through it; it has had 33,000 losses. That shows accomplishment. It is too bad that this division...is not one of the elite divisions of the army....I don't like to apply the word mediocre to the performance of the division, but let us say 'average.'

An historian with the General Staff, AEF, reflects the low esteem in which the 26th Division was held in his account of the Aisne-Marne operation and by his comments on the divisional losses: "The casualties were at first reported as 4108, but it is certain that the permanent losses did not exceed 3000. Only 595 killed, and 1245 seriously wounded, or a total of 1840 were subsequently reported."¹⁴⁵ In a word, the 26th Division, as a result of its training in France, had acquired "highly developed French characteristics," unlike the 1st and 2nd Divisions which had "purely American characteristics,"

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Sibley, pp. 311, 322 ff.

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Jemings C. Wise, The Turn of the Tide (New York: Henry Holt, 1920), pp. 200-201.

or later divisions that acquired British characteristics.¹⁴⁶ The 26th Division was guilty of caution.

It is not certain that this charge of inertia or caution is justified. In February, observing the conduct of the 26th in raids, "the French were amazed [by the spirit of the men] at first;" "then they began to be a little alarmed. A little later on, they found our soldiers following up their own barrage within thirty yards....The French cautioned our officers; they quoted aphorisms to the effect that the braver a division is the fewer men it loses, and they begged their own high command to make some rule which would save American lives." (Sibley, p. 75). In July, the division seems to have covered those 18 kilometers between the Aisne and Marne in much the same spirit, and well in advance of the French divisions on their flanks most of the way.

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Ibid., pp. 240-241.