

1-24

THE INFANTRY SCHOOL ✓  
FOURTH SECTION  
COMMITTEE "H"  
FORT BENNING, GEORGIA ✓

ADVANCED COURSE ✓  
1927-28 ✓

OPERATIONS OF THE MACHINE GUN UNITS ✓  
OF THE SIXTH BRIGADE  
NEAR

CHATEAU THIERRY ✓  
JULY 1-21, 1918 ✓

MAJOR ZIBA L. DROLLINGER, INFANTRY ✓

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MARGINAL ABBREVIATIONS USED

Dickman

"The Great Crusade", by Major General Joseph T. Dickman

Marne

"The German Offensive of July 15, 1918 (Marne Source Book), published in March 1923, by the General Service Schools.

3rd Division History

"The History of the Third Division; published in 1919 at Andernach, Germany.

Operation Report  
9th M. G. Bn.

"The Operation Report of the Ninth Machine Gun Battalion" on July 19, 1918. Prepared by author of this monograph.

Operation Report,  
M. G. Co.,  
38th Inf.

"The Operation Report of the Machine Gun Company, 38th Infantry, on July 17, 1918. Prepared by Captain Sidney H. Young, 38th Infantry.

## INTRODUCTION

On the 30th of May, 1918, orders were issued by the General Headquarters, American Expeditionary Forces, placing the 3rd Division, less the 6th Engineers and the 3rd Field Artillery Brigade, at the disposal of the French general commanding the Group of Armies of the North, by whom the division was assigned to the 38th French Army Corps, operating in the region about Chateau Thierry. The 3rd Division hastily moved northward by train and by motor from its training area around Chateau Villain to the crossings of the Marne River where the French Colonial troops were vainly attempting to check the German advance from the Aisne. (1)

(1) Dickman,  
pp 47 and  
54

As the units of the division reached the vicinity of the Marne they were promiscuously thrown into the gaps then existing in the allied lines. The 7th Machine Gun Battalion, a motorized organization, moving northward ahead of the other units of the division to Conde-en-Brie, went into action in the town of Chateau Thierry and at the crossings over the Marne farther east. Though extremely worn by the long ride and loss of sleep this battalion successfully assisted the French Colonials in beating back the German attacks and in preventing their crossing to the south bank of the Marne until on June 3rd the bridges were destroyed. (2) (3) Upon the arrival of the remainder of the 3rd Division during the 2nd, 3rd and 4th of

(2) Dickman,  
pp 49-51,  
inclusive

(3) Marne  
pp 677 and 795



June the battalion was relieved and placed in Corps Reserve.

By the latter part of June conditions had stabilized along this portion of the front. The scattered units of the division had been almost completely reassembled and disposed in a deep, defensive position along the south side of the Marne, a short distance east of Chateau Thierry. (4) (5) Preparations were now made by the 3rd Division for the organization and defense of the sector assigned to it by the 38th French Army Corps. (6)

(4) Dickman,  
pp 54-58,  
inclusive

(5) Marne  
p 796

(6) Dickman  
pp 447-451,  
inclusive

#### DEFENSIVE PLANS

Accordingly, Field Orders No. 7 were issued by Division Headquarters at 6:00 PM, July 2nd, as follows:

3D DIVISION U. S.  
FRANCE, 2 July, 1918, 18 h.

FIELD ORDER )  
No. 7 )

MAP: CONDE-en-Brie

SCALE: 1:20,000.

1. The enemy holds the north bank of the MARNE RIVER. The 125th Division (French) occupies the sector on our right; the 39th Division (French) occupies the sector on our left.
2. Our mission is to prevent the enemy from crossing the MARNE RIVER. The Division will reorganize its position south of the MARNE, during and after the night of July 2-3 as per Division sectors shown in paragraph 3.
3. (a) Artillery.



Instructions for the Artillery will be prescribed  
in Annex 1.

Artillery Commander will establish his P. C.  
with that of the Division Commander.

(b) Boundaries of the division sector.

Eastern boundary: MARNE RIVER at point 929.  
611--MIN RUINE (Signal)--Point 940.585--  
MONTHUREL (exclusive)--MONTBAZIN (inclusive)  
PERTIBOUT FME. (inclusive).

Western boundary: Junction of main road  
CHATEAU THIERRY--CHIERRY and the railroad,  
about 700 meters north of ETAMPES--ETAMPES  
(exclusive)--road from ETAMPES to PETIT BAL-  
LOIS as far as southern edge of the woods, 600  
meters southeast of NESLES--LE LUMERON (in-  
clusive)--CABANE DE CANTONNIER--LA GILLET-  
TERIE (exclusive)--ST JEAN (inclusive)--LA  
CHAPELLE-SUR-CHEZY.

(c) The Division sector will be divided into four  
subsectors known as follows:

West subsector, "BRASLES"

West center subsector, "GLAND"

East center subsector, "MONT ST. PERE"

East subsector, "CHARTEVES"

Boundary between west and west center sub-  
sectors:

Point 875.582 on MARNE RIVER north of BLESME--  
Point 880-573--LES AULNES BOUILLANTS FARM--  
LA MOTTE--ESSISES (all inclusive to west sub-  
sector).

Boundary between west center and east center subsectors:

MARNE RIVER at mouth of small stream northwest of FOSSOY--north edge of FOSSOY--crossing of aqueduct and main road 300 meters east of FOSSOY CHATEAU--west edge of BOIS D'AIGREMONT to point 0070--TILVOT FARM--VIFFORT (the last two points inclusive to west center subsector).

Boundary between east center and east subsector:

MARNE RIVER at east end of CHARTEVES ISLAND--crossing of railroad with CREZANCY and PAROY ROAD--LE CHANET--LE DONJON FARM--MONTALVART--LA FOSSE GAUDIER FARM (all inclusive to east center subsector).

(d) Lines of defense.

There will be two general lines of defense constituting the first position.

General location of first line: Crossroads 400 meters southeast of ETAMPES--Hill 186--FOSSOY--northern edge of woods northwest of CREZANCY--MOULINS--MIN RUINE--(To be known as The Aqueduct Line.)

This general line will be held in case of attack.

In front of this line those isolated strong points which can be garrisoned by platoons or sections under proper command will be held in the event that the enemy succeeds in effecting a crossing. (To be known as The Railroad Line.)

Not more than one-fourth of the Infantry strength in each subsector will be stationed in advance of the first line.

Observation posts will be established along the first line along the river, and patrolling along the river will be active at night.

The rear limit of the zone of resistance of the first line is generally as follows: LA-CHARMOIS--FONTAINE AUX CHARMES--LE ROCQ CHATEAU--LE SOUVRIEN FARM--JANVIER FARM. (To be known as the Woods Line.)

Liaison will be established on both flanks of the division on the front line and at the rear limit of the zone of resistance shown.

General location of second position is as follows: LA GILETTERIE--BOCHAGE FARM--CONDE-EN-BRIE. (To be known as The Army Line).

This line will be organized by the 6th Army.

(e) The assignment of troops.

To the east subsector: 38th Infantry (less one battalion).

To the east center subsector: 30th Infantry (less one battalion).

To the west center subsector: 7th Infantry (less one battalion)

To the west subsector: 4th Infantry (less one battalion).

The Commanding General 5th Brigade will be in command of the west and west center subsectors; The Commanding General of the 6th Brigade will be in command of the east center



and the east subsectors.

(f) Reserves.

The division reserve will consist of one battalion of the 38th Infantry, south of ST.

EUGENE.

The corps reserve will consist of one battalion 4th Infantry at ESSISES, one battalion of the 7th Infantry at VIFFORT, and one battalion of the 30th Infantry south of COURBOIN.

(g) Machine Guns.

The 7th Machine Gun Battalion is assigned to the Army Corps Reserve.

All platoons of the regimental machine gun companies will be at the disposal of the regimental commanders.

The 9th Machine Gun Battalion will be at the disposal of the Commanding General, 6th Brigade, less one company in Division reserve at PAILLARDISE FARM.

The 8th Machine Gun Battalion will be at the disposal of the Commanding General, 5th Brigade, less two platoons in Corps Reserve at ESSISES and VIFFORT and one platoon in Corps Reserve south of COURBOIN.

Each of these platoons is assigned to the Battalion of Infantry stationed at the same place.

The divisional machine gun officer will coordinate the action of all machine gun units and submit plans for their use. See Annex No. 2

(h) Engineers.

(In case of attack the 6th Engineer Regiment will be at the disposal of the Division Commander).

The Commanding Officer of the 6th Engineers will exercise the supervision of technical work as prescribed in plan of works. He will detail one officer to act as Engineer Officer at the P. C. of each subsector commander.

Two companies of the 6th Engineers are at the disposal of the 6th Army for the organization of the second line positions. See Annex No. 3

Headquarters of the 6th Engineers will be at PERTIBOUT FME.

- (i) The necessary movement of troops to effect this reorganization will be made the subject of separate orders.
- (j) Plans of supply, evacuation and location of trains will be issued by G1. See Annex No. 4.

Regimental commanders will designate the location of combat trains belonging to their units.

5. COMBAT LIAISON GROUPS WILL BE ESTABLISHED AND MAINTAINED AS FOLLOWS:

By the Commanding Officer of the east subsector:

Group A: On main road VARENNES MOULINS at a point 600 meters west of VARENNES.

Group B: At MIN. RUINE.

Group C: On PAROY MON ROUGE road at point 940.585.

By the Commanding Officer of the west subsector:

Group D: At crossing of CHATEAU THIERRY road and the railroad.

Group E: At eastern exit of ETAMPES.

Group F: At road fork 858.561 in woods 600 meters N.E. of NESLES.

Each group will consist of one-half platoon American Infantry and one section of French Infantry.

An American liaison officer will be attached to each group in command of the American troops belonging to it.

Groups A, D, and F will be under French Command, and Group B, C and E, under American Command.

For Plan of Liaison, see Annex 5.

#### 6. POSTS OF COMMAND.

Division, CHATEAU LA DOULTRE.

5th Brigade, LES GRANDS BORDEAUX.

6th Brigade, MONTBAZIN.

East subsector, COURTELIN.

East center subsector--BOIS D'AIGREMONT, point 1274.

West subsector, GRAND BALLOIS.

West center subsector, LE ROCQ CHATEAU.

J. T. DICKMAN,

Major General.

(7) Marne  
pp 447-451,  
inclusive.

(7)



Five separate annexes were issued with the field order:

Annex No. 1 -- Plan for Employment of Artillery.

Annex No. 2 -- Plan of Employment of Machine Guns.

Annex No. 3 -- Plan for Use of Engineers.

Annex No. 4 -- Plan of Evacuation and Supply.

Annex No. 5 -- Plan of Liaison (Communications).

Annex No. 6 -- Plan of Defense. (8)

Of these only the Plan of Employment of Machine Guns and portions of the Plan of Defense pertain to the machine gun defense of the sector and are quoted here-with:

ANNEX NO. 2 TO F. O. NO. 7

PLAN OF EMPLOYMENT OF MACHINE GUNS

3d Div.,

France, 3 July, 1918, 9h.

1. ASSIGNMENT OF MACHINE GUN UNITS.

(a) The 8th Machine Gun Battalion (less one Company) is placed at the disposal of the Commanding General 5th Brigade, and will operate in the west and west-center subsectors.

(b) The 9th Machine Gun Battalion (less one Company) is placed at the disposal of the Commanding General 6th Brigade, and will operate in the east and east-center subsectors.

(c) One Company of the 8th Machine Gun Battalion is at the disposal of the Division Commander, and for the present will take station, as follows:

1 Platoon with the Battalion of the 4th Infantry, at LES CAQUERETS.

(8) Marne  
pp 451-473,  
inclusive

1 Platoon with the Battalion of the 7th Infantry, at VIFFORT.

1 Platoon with the Battalion of the 30th Infantry, south of COURBOIN.

These platoons will be under the command of the respective Battalion Commanders, and will operate with the Battalions to which attached at all times.

(d) One Company of the 9th Machine Gun Battalion will constitute the Division Machine Gun Reserve at PAILLARDISE FARM.

(e) The entire Machine Gun Company of each regiment will be at the disposal of its Regimental Commander.

(f) Movements of troops to effect this reorganization will be directed in further orders from these Headquarters.

## 2. RELIEFS.

(a) Reliefs of Machine Gun Units within the Brigade Sectors will be provided for by Brigade Commanders.

(b) The two companies of the 7th Machine Gun Battalion now at the disposal of the Army Corps, the one Company of the 8th Machine Gun Battalion, and the one Company of the 9th Machine Gun Battalion at the disposal of the Division Commander, will be available for reliefs. Requests for the use of these troops will be made to the Division Commander, 48 hours before the time at which it is desired to use them.

## 3. COMMAND.

(a) In the absence of instructions from Brigade Commanders, the Regimental Machine Gun Companies will

operate directly under the orders of the Regimental Commanders of such Battalion Commanders as they may designate.

(b) The Brigade Machine Gun Battalions will operate directly under the orders of their respective Brigade Commanders.

(c) Platoons attached to separate Battalions will act directly under the orders of the respective Battalion Commanders.

(d) Division Machine Gun Reserve Company will act under the orders of the Division Commander, or such other Commanding Officer as he may designate.

(e) The functions of the Divisional Machine Gun Officer are those of an advisor: He will consult with Sector and Subsector Commanders, and with Machine Gun Battalion and Company Commanders as to the proper siting and use of Machine Guns, in order to realize a combined defensive or offensive action for the entire Division Sector, and in addition, to afford support to the Division Sectors on our right and left.

#### 4. MACHINE GUN EMBLACEMENTS.

(a) The two Sections of Machine Guns now occupying emplacements near points 5471, 5273, and 4976, will remain in their present positions, their mission being to afford flank protection to the units of the 39th Division immediately on our left.

(b) Attention is called to the Machine Gun Emplacements now existing and to the sites heretofore chosen which are known to afford excellent fields of fire.

(c) The object to be attained in the siting of the guns is to bring to bear cross-fire on all critical



~~points, and flanking fire along the front and sides~~  
of all systems of defense.

(d) A maximum of four guns in each subsector may be placed in advance of the aqueduct line. In case it is deemed necessary to place more than this number of guns in advance of this line, authority will first be obtained from Division Commander.

✓ (e) At least two emplacements will be at once prepared for each gun, and at a later date additional emplacements will be provided. At least one of these emplacements will be retained as a battle position from which fire will be delivered only in case of attack.

(f) Particular attention is called to the necessity for sweeping all ravines and valleys with machine-gun fire and for enfilading the Barrage ECLUSE, the Bridge CHARTEVES--MEZY, and for flanking all portions of the river bank.

(g) The Division Engineer Officer or the Subsector Engineer Officer will in all cases be consulted before the construction of any new emplacement is begun.

5. Each Gun Commander will calculate the necessary firing data, will provide limiting stakes and flash arresters, will post in or near the emplacements such regulations as the Machine Gun Officer may direct, and will familiarize himself with the routes of approach to all emplacements, front or rear, which it may become necessary for his crew to occupy, and the exact locations (by coordinates) and the fields of fire of his own and neighboring guns. Sentinels on duty at emplacements must at all times be thoroughly familiar with this data. All Gun Commanders are charged with

the responsibility of turning over to relieving units all the available data which will be necessary for the proper functioning of the crew.

6. Brigade Commanders will immediately provide for a thorough reconnaissance of their sectors, with a view to choosing definite locations for all machine guns. A sketch (scale 1--20,000) will be submitted to these Headquarters, showing all the emplacements. Changes will be made in these locations at the discretion of the Brigade Commander, report being made to these Headquarters in each instance.

7. Divisional Machine Gun Officer will prescribe such regulations as he may deem necessary concerning reports, firing data, and camouflage.

ROBERT H. C. KELTON,  
Colonel, General Staff,  
Chief of Staff.

F--h.

Distribution: (Omitted.)

(9)

(9) Marne  
pp 455-458,  
inclusive

3d Div.

France, 6 July, 1918.

ANNEX NO. 6 TO FIELD ORDERS NO. 7--G-3

PLAN OF DEFENSE

1. MISSIONS.

(a) The general mission of the Division remains as prescribed in Field Orders No. 7.

(b) In addition to the general missions, the special missions of the units holding the various sub-sectors are as follows:

CHARTEVES SUBSECTOR: The defense of the SURMELIN Valley and resistance to enemy pressure from the East, in the event of the withdrawal of the troops on our right.

MONT ST. PERE SUBSECTOR: The repulse of enemy attempts at crossing, especially in the vicinity of MONT ST. PERE, CHARTEVES, and Barrage ECLUSE, and the destruction of the enemy elements who may gain a footing on the low ground about MEZY.

GLAND SUBSECTOR: To unite by means of fire action the MONT ST. PERE and BRASLES subsectors and to assist in their defense by means of flanking fire along the front of each.

BRASLES SUBSECTOR: The defense of the ravine of les EVAUX, the maintenance of intimate liaison with, and protection of the right flank of, the division on our left, and resistance to pressure from the West in case of enemy penetration on our left.

## 2. CRITICAL POINTS.

(a) The vicinity of MONT ST. PERE--MEZY appears to be the most favorable point for an enemy attempt at crossing the MARNE. At these points he has cover for his working parties, abundant cover in the rear for reserves, and good channels of communication, and by attacking the salient he may deliver flanking fire on our defenses coincidentally with his assault.

(b) Under cover of fog or of darkness, a general attack along the whole line of the river may be launched, but due to the necessity for bridging or the launching of boats, the enemy's forces will concentrate on one or more points. The importance of prompt report con-



cerning these points of crossing cannot be too greatly emphasized, as the prompt and proper use of reserves and the concentration fire of the artillery depend absolutely upon this information.

3. (a) In advance of the Aqueduct Line the line of observation will be established on the south bank of the MARNE, the islands in the river being occupied by small posts. This line of observation will be formed of double sentinels and small groups, the mission of the garrison being to keep every point of the river under constant surveillance, and to give the alarm immediately in case of enemy attempts at crossing. Small parties, however, may be allowed to land with the object of cutting off their escape and taking prisoners.

(b) The line of strong points garrisoned by organized groups will be established in coincidence with the first line of fire which, in general, lies just south of the railroad. The mission of the groups at the strong points is primarily to hold their position in spite of all enemy pressure, even after being completely surrounded. This will break up the enemy's attack formations, force him to concentrate his forces for the reduction of strong points, and permit of counterattacks being launched supported by the fire of these garrisons directed upon the flanks and rear of the enemy.

(c) The mission of the garrison of the line of resistance or Aqueduct Line is the absolute checking of the advance of the enemy. Provision will be made to cover by fire all portions of the terrain to prevent

the attempts of the enemy to establish a strong advanced line, through the method of infiltration. A sufficient force will be kept at hand on this line to enable the Battalion Commander to launch counter attacks and destroy bodies of the enemy who may gain a footing on the slopes. Not more than two companies in each subsector will be stationed in advance of this line, except by authority of the Division Commander.

(d) The Woods Line in each subsector will provide a line, in rear of which advanced elements may effect their reorganization in case their withdrawal is directed. Subsector Commanders will organize and launch their counter attacks from favorable points in this line.

(e) The Second Position of Army Line will be garrisoned in case of emergency under Army orders. In the event that withdrawal to this position is ordered, subsector commanders will provide for the movement of their units by previously-selected routes, for the selection of points of concentration in the rear of the Army Position and for the rapid reorganization of their troops.

#### 4. RESERVES.

The Infantry Battalions now assigned as Army Reserves will provide for a occupation of the second position as prescribed by the VIth Army. In case of need, the Division Reserve will be placed at the disposition of the Brigade Commanders, at the following points:

(a) For the 6th Brigade:

LE SOUVRIEN FME. for counter attack to be delivered from the high ground of BOIS D'AIGREMONT; or

LE HOUY FME. for counter attack to be delivered in an easterly direction from LE ROCQ.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### 5. MACHINE GUNS.

The two companies of machine guns now held in Division Reserve will, in case of attack, be placed at the disposition of their respective Brigade Commanders. Emplacements will be immediately selected, ranges determined, and all steps taken to insure the effective use of these units. These companies will retain their present stations except for purposes of reliefs, but the necessary details will be provided by the units for the accomplishment of the above-described work.

The Machine Gun defense of the sector will be such as will insure cross-fire on all critical points, flanking fire throughout the length of the river, and along all obstacles. A deep echelonment must be insisted upon, and the action of all guns in the Division Sector must be coordinated with one another and with the machine gun units on our flanks.

#### 6. ARTILLERY.

The employment of artillery will be that prescribed in the Plan for its use attached to Field Orders No. 7 (to be issued later).

\* \* \* \* \*

The Artillery will deliver heavy fire of concentration upon points of crossing, immediately after receiving report of same. To provide for efficient use of



artillery without destroying our own advanced groups which hold their ground, a complete system of observation will be arranged by the Artillery Commander covering the terrain between the MARNE and the Army Position.

#### 7. LIAISON.

(a) All Commanding Officers will at once install and maintain liaison by every method with all adjacent units. Frequent tests will be made of all liaisons and all telephone wires will be constantly patrolled. Battalion Commanders will be held personally responsible that the material for the prescribed fireworks signals is at all times available for their respective sub-sectors.

A system for the transmission of gas and fog alarms from the front line to the rear will be installed at once by Brigade Commanders.

(b) It is essential that immediate report be made to this P. C. as to the exact points at which attempts at crossing will be made. As soon as such an attempt is detected, report will be made by all available means, stating the locality by reference to some well-known nearby point and also by exact coordinates. This report is of the utmost importance, as the information contained therein must absolutely determine the use of reserves and the action of the artillery.

#### 8. ACTION IN CASE OF FOG OR GAS ATTACK.

(a) In case of attack covered by a smoke-screen or fog, sentinels along the river must be on the alert to detect the first indications of an attempt at crossing. In such a case, the fire of lines or groups will be held until a definite enemy target presents itself,

all indiscriminate firing being absolutely prohibited. However, the traverse and elevation of machine guns in position may be so limited by stakes and bars as to permit of their delivering an accurate fire upon previously selected critical points or of sweeping certain portions of the river. Upon report being made as to the exact point of crossing, fire will be immediately opened by these weapons, provided that the points reported coincide with those for which efficient fire action has been previously arranged.

In case of attack covered by fog or smoke screens, special vigilance will be maintained along the flanks of all units to prevent infiltration of the enemy.

(b) The enemy may prepare his attack by means of projector or gas shell bombardment. In either case, the action of all isolated groups and sentinels forward of the line of Woods will be the same--to apply the prescribed defensive measures and await in their present positions the advance of the enemy.

In case of gas bombardment of the Woods, the units therein will evacuate their positions and take up such positions in the open on the flanks as will permit them to readily engage the enemy.

It must be borne in mind that woods and valleys constitute gas traps, and that all preparations must be made for evacuating these points promptly in case of intensive shelling or projector attack. The positions to be occupied in such an event will be those so placed as to deny the enemy's advance on the flanks of the above mentioned points and prevent its infiltration by small groups, as he will be unable to advance through the gas-poisoned areas.

Brigade Commanders will provide for rapid transmission of gas alarms to the rear and for the necessary sentinels with each group, however small, in order to give the alarm before casualties result.

9. Brigade and subordinate commanders will provide Plans of Defense for their sectors in conformity with the provisions of this Annex.

CWF-red

Distribution:

Attached to F. O. No. 7

60 copies.

(10)

(10) Marne,  
pp 463-468,  
inclusive.

#### DESCRIPTION OF DIVISION SECTOR

The northern boundary of the sector assigned to the 3rd Division was formed by the river Marne which flows westward from Epernay, bends sharply northward at Reully, and after travelling a distance of two miles swings westward and southward again past Chateau Thierry and Meaux toward Paris, forming a double headed salient to the north between Reully, Jaulgonne, Mont St. Pere and Gland about two miles deep and four miles across at the base. In the vicinity of the Jaulgonne bend the river is about fifty to seventy-five yards wide and quite deep. Therefore, it presents a serious obstacle to advancing troops. The hills on the north side of the deep valley of the Marne rise abruptly from the river to a height of 450 feet or more and are generally wooded. They afford excellent cover for the concealment of large bodies of troops, guns, and supplies. South of the river the high ground lies much farther back and the slope is



more open and gradual. The plateau is somewhat higher, attaining the altitude of about 600 feet above the valley floor at Le Rocq Farm and at Hill 231 east of Connigis. In the bends are level areas of approximately a mile square each, south of Charteves and Jaulgonne. During June and July waving wheat fields and meadows cover the level areas near the river and on the plateau farther back. Vineyards, orchards and small clumps of woods are scattered generally about on the hillsides, the largest wooded areas being the Bois d'Aigremont, Bois de la Jutte and the Bois de Conde. In the eastern part of the sector the deep valley of the Surmelin Brook, flowing north from Conde-en-Brie to Mezy, bisects the salient and separates the wooded heights south of Varennes from the plateau of Le Rocq. (11)

(11) Dickman,  
pp 61-62

The Paris--Nancy railroad parallels the Marne on the southern bank. A branch of this railroad runs southward up the Surmelin valley from Mezy to Montmirail. Good highways on either side of the river lead up and down the river toward Epernay and Meaux, furnishing excellent avenues of approach for troops. Two good highways lead southward along the Surmelin to Conde en Brie. These were the only good avenues for German troop movements to the south in the entire area between Chateau Thierry and Dormans. Consequently, great strategical importance was attached to this gateway by German invading forces who ultimately hoped to reach Paris. The railroad embankment also furnished a rendezvous point which troops could not miss in the night after crossing the river. A careful survey of

a map of the territory bordering the salient will show that the south bank of the river and other defensive positions farther back can be subjected to enfilade and even reverse fire from artillery batteries and machine gun positions on high ground in the Bois de Barbillon and the Foret de Ris. (12) (See attached map)

(12) Dickman,  
pp 62-63

These conditions generally favored hostile offensive operations. Two main obstacles, however, presented themselves: one, the river; and the other, the open field of fire on the rising ground to the south. The Germans were confident no defending force could remain on the river banks under a concentrated fire of artillery, machine guns and minenwerfers. (13) By 11:00 A. M., on the day of their attack they expected to be on their objectives on the Le Rocq plateau and counted on meeting very slight resistance in getting there.

(13) Dickman,  
p. 63

(14) Third Division History,  
p. 138

(14) Little thought did they give to the high spirit and tenacity of American troops nor of their ability to thoroughly organize for defense the favorable features in the area.

#### ORGANIZATION OF MACHINE GUN DEFENSE

##### Preliminary Conferences and Reconnaissance

In compliance with Field Orders No. 7, 3rd Division, and the various annexes attached, and preparatory to organizing the machine gun defense of the sector assigned to the 6th Brigade a thorough preliminary reconnaissance of the subsectors of the 30th and 38th Infantry regiments was made during the first week of July by the Brigade Machine Gun Officer 6th Brigade. This officer was also the Commanding Officer of the



9th Machine Gun Battalion. Under orders from American Expeditionary Headquarters he had joined the 3rd Division on June 30th and was assigned to the organization and duties shown above on that date. The reconnaissance made at this time was intended to acquaint him with the sector and to determine the state of machine gun defense existing in the area at that time. Official calls were made on each of the regimental commanders at their respective command posts. (15)

(15) Personal  
experience

Arrangements were agreed upon for the siting and distribution of machine guns in each regimental sector and the placing of machine gun fire beyond the Marne, on probable river crossings, and across the fronts and flanks of each defensive line specified in Field Orders No. 7. The technical details connected with the siting of these guns, the assignment of fire missions within the requirements of Field Orders No. 7 and Annex No. 2--Plan for the Employment of Machine Guns, and the organization of the ground for defense (specified in Annex No. 6--Plan of Defense) were left to the Brigade Machine Gun Officer to work out. The Regimental Commander in each regimental sector made certain, however, that it was generally understood that regimental commanders were personally responsible to higher authority for the tactical defense of their sectors and that the Brigade Machine Gun Officer was merely acting as their representative in effecting all technical details connected with the proper organization of the machine gun defense in their respective sectors. (16)

(16) Personal  
experience

Prior to the 6th of July when Annex No. 2--Plan for the Employment of Machine Guns--was issued,



two or three conferences were held with the Division Machine Gun Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Fred L. Davidson, and the Brigade Machine Gun Officer 5th Brigade, Major William G. Weaver. Owing to the threat of an early German attack these conferences proved especially valuable. They assisted materially in promptly coordinating the machine gun defense of the entire 3rd Division sector and in eliminating misunderstandings for which time might not have been available to apply corrective measures. (17)

(17) Personal experience

#### SELECTION OF GUN POSITIONS

During the preliminary reconnaissance it was discovered that very little work had been done toward the construction of permanent machine gun emplacements.

(18) Personal experience

(18) This was partly due to the frequent changes of regimental, brigade and division boundaries that were ordered by higher headquarters in June and early July with a consequent necessity of shifting organizations to new positions. (19) In some cases machine guns were placed in the edges of woods with no artificial protection from hostile fire. These positions had been hastily selected when the machine gun companies came into the sector. These positions were also faulty in that they did not always cover the most effective fields of fire. Nor were they in suitable locations to avoid gas attacks or hostile artillery concentrations that usually fell on wooded areas, particularly the edges. Consequently, machine gun company commanders were directed to select suitable gun positions 50 to 200 yards in front of the woods. This was especially true along the northern edge of the Bois d'Aigrement in the

✓(19) Dickman, p 59

reserve position of the 30th Infantry sector and along the western slopes of Hill 231, east of Baroy and Launay, in the 38th Infantry sector. In all cases it was provided that wherever possible guns would be echeloned in depth, sited in pairs, and suitable camouflage provided. Coordination of the machine gun defense with that of the rifle companies and howitzer platoons had not been worked out nor was it well understood; but now it was required. The responsibility for securing this coordination was placed on machine gun company commanders. Coordination of the machine gun defense of the brigade sector with that of adjoining brigades and the coordination of machine SOS barrages with artillery barrages was provided by the Brigade Machine Gun Officer. In this he was very materially assisted by the Division Machine Gun Officer. (20)

(20) Personal  
experience

As soon as the officers of any machine gun company had selected its machine gun positions the sites were inspected by the Brigade Machine Gun Officer and approved or changed in such particulars as in any case was necessary. With one exception this procedure was followed throughout the brigade sector. The excepted case was that of the Machine Gun Company of the 38th Infantry. Owing to the delay in getting this organization into the regimental sector from its position in reserve (it had only recently come out of the sector previously occupied by the 38th Infantry south of Gland) the selection of gun positions was made by the Brigade Machine Gun Officer and his liaison officer, Lieutenant Willy S. Heinemann of the French Foreign Legion. The locations of these positions were marked



on the ground and their sector limits defined.

Lieutenant ~~Heinemann~~ assisted ~~Captain Butler~~ in moving his company to the selected positions when it came into line about the 10th or 11th of July. (21)

(21) Personal  
experience

About the 3rd or 4th of July the right boundary of the 3rd Division was moved eastward across the Surmelin Brook to the heights of Hill 231. The French troops occupying this area were relieved by the 38th Infantry. (22) The gun positions of the French machine gun company in the vicinity of Moulins and Paroy were taken over by Company "A", 9th Machine Gun Battalion. The French machine gun company had only eight guns, while Company "A" had twelve. Moreover, the locations of the French gun positions were wholly unsuited to a proper machine gun defense of the sector. So, a complete rearrangement of the defensive scheme of this area was begun the next morning under the supervision of the company commander, Captain Carswell.

(22) Dickman,  
p. 59

#### FINAL DISPOSITIONS

As rapidly as approval of the sites selected for the battle emplacements of any machine gun company had been given, the accurate location of these positions and of their sector limits was plotted on the 1/20,000 Conde-en-Brie map. The positions of all guns and their sectors of fire were then consolidated on a map of the brigade sector by the Brigade Machine Gun Officer. (23)

(23) Personal  
experience

Preparations were then made by the Brigade Machine Gun Officer, as previously arranged with the Division Machine Gun Officer, to place SOS machine gun barrages on probable hostile assembly areas on



the northern bank of the Marne and to coordinate these barrages with the normal barrages of the supporting artillery. Arrangements were made for the placing of SOS barrages across the fronts of regiments adjoining the 6th Brigade. These units reciprocated by agreeing to place SOS barrages on probable assembly areas in front of our lines. These dispositions, as plotted on the Conde-en-Brie map and approved by the Brigade Commander, were forwarded to the Commanding General, 3d Division, for final approval. This phase of the work had been accomplished about July 10th or 11th. Actual construction work at most gun positions had already been in progress for more than a week. When approval of these dispositions was granted by the Division Commander, the machine gun positions within the entire division sector were serially numbered by the Division Machine Gun Officer for purposes of rapid identification by telephone and for the coordination of SOS barrages on the northern bank of the Marne. (See attached overlay) showing Organization of Machine Gun Defense in sector of the 6th Brigade). (24)

*What No. 7*

(24) Personal  
experience

#### CONCEALMENT AND COVER

In the selection of the sites for the battle emplacements of these guns the most meticulous care was exercised in the concealment of these positions from terrestrial and aerial observation. Positions under apple trees and brush heaps, behind stone walls, and in the shadows of deep vegetation were utilized when these provided sufficiently good sectors of fire for the occasion. Generally, the location of guns in the edges of woods and in villages was avoided. Movement

in the vicinity of gun positions during daylight hours was forbidden. This rule was particularly hard to enforce on the slopes just northeast of the Bois d'Aigremont where an orchard of cherry trees laden with ripe fruit proved a terrible temptation. Where emplacements had to be dug in the open, chicken wire screens covered with freshly cut clover camouflaged the excavations in such a way as to prevent detection even a few feet away. Early in July it had been discovered that certain kinds of vegetation could not be used to screen open emplacements. In one or two instances wheat had been cut and placed over the chicken wire screen covering emplacements. The wheat dried out in the sun and quickly changed color. German airplanes discovered this promptly, and shelling on these areas forced their abandonment. During the operations in early June machine gun emplacements had not been carefully camouflaged nor their locations kept secret. An inspection of these emplacements early in July showed that they were occasionally subjected to a few rounds of one pounder or 77 millimeter shell fire. (25)

(25) Personal  
experience

Consequently, in addition to all the precautionary measures to avoid hostile discovery of new positions, construction of emplacements was carried on only during darkness. Earth removed from emplacements was carried in sand bags to the woods and dumped under cover of the trees. Trails made by working parties were avoided by unrolling strips of gunny sacking for the men to walk on. This was taken up before daybreak. So effective were our secrecy measures that captured German intelli-



gence maps, showing our dispositions about July 13th, contained information of approximately five or six machine gun emplacements in the entire brigade sector. In nearly all cases these were emplacements occupied between the Paris--Metz railroad and the Marne River.

(26) Personal  
experience

(26)

#### CONSTRUCTION WORK

Construction of necessary field fortifications by machine gun personnel in the brigade sector was prescribed in the following order of importance: (a) Camouflage; (b) Emplacements; (c) Crew Trenches near Emplacements; (d) Obstacles; (e) Section Dugouts; and (f) Trenches, connecting Dugouts and Emplacements. Company commanders were responsible for the progress of construction and the supply of ammunition, food, materials and tools needed. The commissioned and the non-commissioned personnel of the 6th Engineers were consulted for tools, heavy timbers, permits to cut timber on the premises and professional advice on field engineering problems. Their advice was especially helpful in the construction of dugouts. Platoon commanders were responsible for the secrecy measures and all the details connected with construction work in their respective platoon areas; such as organization of working parties for digging emplacements, trenches and dugouts, cutting timber for dugouts, reliefs, sentry duty at gun positions and bringing up supplies. None of the personnel of machine gun companies were detailed to dig trenches within the brigade area. This work was done by daily or weekly details from rifle companies of the 30th and 38th Infantry regiments. (27)

(27) Personal  
experience



## DEFENSIVE ARRANGEMENTS

For the defense of the sector it was provided

that:

- Spelling* ←
- (a) A range card and a set of special orders for each gun position be posted in the emplacement along side the sentry at the gun.
  - (b) The sentry at each gun be familiar with the range card and his special orders.
  - (c) Each gun position have the gun set up ready to fire at all times on hostile targets appearing in its sector,
  - (d) A sentry be on watch at each gun, both day and night, and that he be relieved at regular intervals.
  - (e) Each sentry knew where friendly troops were in his sector of fire.
  - (f) Each emplacement have a supply of spare parts and 8,000 rounds of ammunition in belts and boxes ready for use. (Division orders prescribed only 2500 rounds at each gun position).
  - (g) Each company headquarters establish a reserve dump of at least 100,000 rounds of machine gun ammunition in belts and boxes.
  - (h) Each platoon commander calculate and check with the company commander all data for indirect firing and safety clearances.
  - (i) Each platoon commander supervise the setting up of all aiming stakes and the placing of safety stops on either side of the muzzles of the guns.

(28) Personal  
experience

(j) The signal for SOS barrages be known. (28)

TACTICAL AND TECHNICAL INSPECTIONS

Inspections by machine gun company commanders and the Brigade Machine Gun Officer was made at frequent and irregular intervals both by day and by night. These inspections embraced every machine gun position in the brigade sector. Consequently an accurate idea was gotten regarding the supplies needed, the progress of construction work and the degree of familiarity of all machine gun personnel with their orders and duties in case of a German attack. Usually it was found that supply arrangements in the companies of machine gun battalions were more satisfactory than in regimental machine gun companies. They were oftentimes short of equipment and supplies of ammunition with which the companies of the Machine Gun Battalion had already been furnished. This was easy to understand as the regimental supply officers of infantry regiments had twelve rifle companies to provide for and only one machine gun company. These supply officers were not familiar with the needs of these newly organized machine gun companies nor with all the new materiel, particularly fire control equipment, that formed their allowances after our entry into the war. To overcome these deficiencies necessary equipment, ammunition, etc., was furnished through the Supply Officer, 9th Machine Gun Battalion. Under present conditions and with our latest tables of organization these deficiencies probably would never arise. Battalion commanders in whose organizations shortages occurred and regimental machine gun officers (of whom we had none during the



World War) would bring about the necessary corrective measures at a very early date. For practically the same reasons, differences in the state of training which existed during our defensive operations on the Marne would not exist in any future emergency. (29)

(29) Personal experience

#### SIGNS OF THE APPROACHING STRUGGLE

The necessity for early completion of all defensive arrangements was patent to the personnel of the four machine gun companies that were in position at that time. The ominous lack of artillery firing from German battery positions except for registration purposes (and this usually on fleeting targets with single guns), the sounds of trucks and wagons within the German lines at night, and the frequent destruction of large German ammunition dumps in areas unusually close to the front lines by our artillery without invoking any retaliation from the German guns made its significance conclusive. (30) (31) Confirmatory instructions and orders kept coming down from higher headquarters and stressing early completion of the most necessary measures for defense.

*Spelling*

(30) Monographs  
Class 1923  
p 376

(31) Personal experience

#### FINAL STAGES OF PREPARATION

These days and nights in early July were filled with the work of preparation. The greatest tasks were the construction of shelter and supplying machine gun emplacements with ammunition. Battle emplacements had been completed by the 12th of July in all areas except that of the Machine Gun Company, 38th Infantry. Its emplacements were ready for use by the night of July 14th--15th, when the German bombardment started. Companies "A" and "D", 9th Machine Gun Battalion, had



8,000 rounds of ammunition at each gun position and 100,000 rounds in reserve at each company dump. The Machine Gun Company, 30th Infantry is believed to have nearly completed its supply to these figures. No report was ever received from the Commanding Officer, Machine Gun Company, 38th Infantry, regarding ammunition; so no statement of ammunition on hand can be made. Deep, narrow trenches had been constructed near the emplacements for the gun crews. At the time the German bombardment started deep dugouts for each section were in process of construction in the woods near the gun positions. Some had been nearly completed and the rest were under way. Very little had been done toward the construction of obstacles, as the French had failed repeatedly to supply our divisions with the wire which they had promised us. (32)

(32) Personal experience

#### THE FINAL GERMAN OFFENSIVE

##### Preliminary bombardment

Such, then, was the condition of the machine gun defense of the 6th Brigade on that fateful night of July 14th-15th, when shortly before midnight the allied artillery on the entire front from Chateau Thierry to Verdun, forewarned by the French Fourth Army Headquarters of the approach of one of the heaviest German bombardments of the war, let fall a counter preparation which very quickly destroyed all German telephone communications and created terrible confusion and destruction within their lines. (33) Shortly after midnight, as had been predicted, the preliminary bombardment by German artillery of all calibers began to fall over the entire 3rd Division sector to a depth

(33) Dickman, p 81 and Marne, pp 685 and 803

of several kilometers. Wire communications went out almost immediately and information from front line units was not received at 6th Brigade Headquarters for several hours. Communication was carried on by messengers and by wireless. Messenger service was made very difficult due to the heavy shelling, the necessity of wearing gas masks in the woods, and the blocking of paths by falling trees. (34)

(34) Operations  
Report, 9th  
M.G. Bn.

While the hostile bombardment was in progress counterbattery and counter preparation fire by our artillery was being directed onto the German positions. Those machine guns sited in positions 800 to 1800 meters from the river obeyed the S.O.S. signals of the rifle companies promptly and fired on their designated areas beyond the Marne throughout the night or until forced to cease firing due to shell fire. The guns being air cooled (Hotchkiss), it was necessary to cease firing frequently and let the red hot gun barrels cool. A number of gun squads used up their 8000 rounds of ammunition and returned to their company dump for more. (35)

(35) Personal  
experience

#### THE CROSSING OF THE MARNE

Under cover of the hostile bombardment the infantry regiments of the 10th and 36th German Divisions assembled in the woods on the northern slopes of the Marne opposite the positions held by the 30th Infantry and the 38th Infantry regiments. About 3:20 A. M., July 15th, the Germans began crossing the Marne by means of boats and ponton bridges.



## GERMAN SCHEME OF MANEUVER

The 398th Infantry, supported on its left by the 47th Infantry in division reserve, was to cross the river opposite the Ru Chailly Farm, wheel to the right through and to the east of Fossoy, capture the high ground in the vicinity of La Rocq Farm and establish a defensive position running southeast from Gland. The 6th Grenadiers, crossing at the bridge north of Mezy, was ordered to push southward through Crezancy and along the ridge leading to the Bois d'Aigremont. Capturing the key of our defenses, Bois d'Aigremont and the Bois de la Jutte, it was to establish a defensive position in continuation of the line of the 398th Infantry, to the southeast from the vicinity of Greves Farm to Longeurds. An outpost line was to be pushed forward beyond the line: Blesmes--Courboin by 11:00 A. M. The 47th Infantry would remain in the Surmelin Valley in division reserve. The 175th Infantry and the 5th Grenadier Guard regiments, composing the leading elements of the 36th Division, had orders to cross the Marne at Jaulgonne and to the southwest on the front of the 38th Infantry (American) and the 125th French Division. These two regiments were to advance abreast to the southward in liaison with the 10th Division along the slopes of Hill 231 and prolong the general line of the 10th Division through Coufremaux to the southeast. The 178th Infantry in division reserve would cross southwest of Jaulgonne and follow the 5th Grenadiers. Thus the Marne would be crossed, the Reims salient removed and a jump-off



position for a new offensive toward Paris would be established. (See attached <sup>over-</sup>lay containing German Scheme of Maneuver). (36)

(36) Dickman,  
pp 82-86,  
inclusive

#### EARLY SUCCESSES

Until the opening of the allied counter preparation German spirits were high and the task was considered a comparatively easy one. The 398th Infantry, which was caught by our artillery fire in the Bois de Barbillon, suffered heavy casualties and was thrown into disorder and indescribable confusion. Practically all of the regiment crossed the Marne in boats at the Barrage Ecluse and opposite the Ru Chailly Farm before daybreak. They were favored by the darkness of the night, the general confusion produced by the German bombardment of our front line positions and the fog and smoke cloud which hung over the valley near the river. (37) (38) By daylight about two battalions and the headquarters of the 6th Grenadier regiment had crossed over the bridges and by boats north of Mezy with comparatively slight losses.

(37) Dickman,  
p 88

(38) Third Division History,  
p 137

#### LATER DIFFICULTIES

After reaching the south side of the river the regimental headquarters of the 6th Grenadiers was subjected to American machine gun fire from the southeast at close range. The 47th Infantry did not attempt the crossing until just about daylight, when they were subjected to very heavy artillery, rifle and machine gun fire. The regiment, after getting three companies across and having suffered heavy losses, shortly with-

drew all its elements to the north bank of the river.

Later in the day two battalions of the 47th again crossed the river and manned the railroad embankment

(39) Dickman,  
p. 92 to  
94, inclusive

west of Mezy. (39) Farther to the east beyond Mezy

on the front of the 38th Infantry the 6th Grenadiers

and the 175th Infantry were unable to get more than

a few men across to the south bank of the Marne.

Rifle groups posted along the river and machine guns

on the slopes to the south created terrific losses

among those who attempted the crossing and even sank

the boats containing them. The 5th Grenadiers, on the

left of the 175th Infantry, crossed at Jaulgonne in

front of the 125th Division with little opposition, as

the 125th French Division had withdrawn during the

night after the bombardment started. (40)

(40) Dickman,  
p 97 and  
98

#### OPERATIONS, NORTH OF FOSSOY

At daybreak the two German battalions of the 398th Infantry that had crossed near La Ru Chailly Farm were trying with every means available to gain contact with the 6th Grenadiers on their left. In this they were unsuccessful. The rifle platoons of Company "B", 30th Infantry, assisted by the two machine guns in the section commanded by Lieutenant McElligott, Machine Gun Company, 30th Infantry, opposed the crossing at this point with heavy fire on the river and later sold their lives dearly until they were surrounded and overpowered by superior numbers. (41) (42) Two spare

(41) Marne,  
p 509

(42) Dickman,  
p 91

guns emplaced immediately south of Mont St. Pere between Companies "B" and "C", 30th Infantry, and com-

manded by a sergeant whose name is unknown, fired during the night on the river crossings in these



(43) Marne,  
p 509

sectors. (43) By the first faint glimpse of dawn the sergeant saw masses of German troops coming up toward the railroad embankment and digging fox holes into the side toward the river. Swinging the gun at which he happened to be to this target he created great confusion and very heavy losses. His gun was rushed and the personnel of the gun squad killed or wounded, he being struck over the head with the butt of a gun and left on the ground as dead some distance away. Later in the forenoon he and an uninjured private of his section, suffering from the shock of their experience and needing medical attention, finally made their way back to brigade headquarters and gave the first report by any participant in this theater of the morning's engagement. (44) To the east of La Ru Chailly Farm and la Bretonnerie Farm the machine gun section (guns 22 and 23) kept the Germans at La Ru Chailly Farm under fire till forced to withdraw beyond the Fossoy--Crezancy road. (45) Elements of the leading battalion on the right of the 7th Infantry sector, though greatly disorganized during a relief by the German bombardment, prevented the southward advance of the 398th Infantry into their sector. As a result those German troops that had crossed into the 30th Infantry sector north of Fossoy were hemmed in, thrown into great confusion and unable to follow their barrage up the slopes to the south or to carry out their mission. (46) As a result of their confusion, dismay and inability to reorganize under fire, great numbers ceased their resistance about 6:00 to 7:30 A. M., threw down their arms and surrendered. (47)

(44) Personal  
experience

(45) Marne,  
p 850

(46) Marne,  
pp 844-  
845-846

(47) Marne,  
p 850



## THE STRUGGLE AROUND MEZY

As soon as daylight appeared and the artillery barrage had lifted to the south side of the railroad embankment, those troops of Company "C" and the machine gun units of the 30th Infantry garrisoning the village of Mezy found themselves surrounded by great numbers of Germans. Lieutenant Marsh, with a platoon of Company "C", eventually cut his way out to the south by house to house fighting. Only 17 of his 60 men were in the platoon when he and Lieutenant Winant, with a howitzer platoon, joined Company "G", 38th Infantry, Captain Woolridge commanding, farther east along the railway embankment and assisted in the counter attacks

(48) Third Division History, p 139

in which Captain Woolridge's company engaged. (48) The machine gun section (guns 14 and 15) that were emplaced in the northern edge of Mezy commanded the river in both directions, and effectively stopped further troop movements to the south bank until their ammunition

(49) 3rd Division History p 138

was exhausted. (49) This fire was partly responsible for the failure of the 47th Infantry to get more than three companies across until later in the day. At about this time the regimental staff of the 6th Grenadiers were crossing to the south side and were subjected to very heavy fire at close range by the guns of this section. After landing and passing by these machine gunners the staff discovered them and sent a patrol composed of orderlies to drive them off with hand grenades. (50)

(50) Marne, p 660

Prior to their being overrun by German troops to the south the section of spare guns 400 or 500 yards

west of Mezy (marked "s") and others in clumps of trees on higher ground to the south (guns 16 to 21, inclusive) caught the Germans in Mezy in dense formations and literally mowed them down as they tried to advance.

(51) Personal  
investi-  
gation

(51) Time after time the 6th Grenadiers and three companies of the 47th Infantry, penned up in Mezy and unable to gain contact with the regiments on the right or left, were counter attacked and driven back by Company G, 38th Infantry, near the southern exits of Mezy and on the south side of the railway embankment.

(52) Dickman,  
p 97

(52)

Intermittently throughout the day small groups of the 30th Infantry became engaged with parties of Germans that had managed to slip through too far to the south and were attempting to withdraw; but most of the fighting was over by 7:00 A. M. A few German troops reached the woods just north of the Fossoy--Crezancy road. Only one group of three machine gunners was observed by the 30th Infantry observation post south of the Fossoy--Crezancy road. This group came up the hill from the direction of La Bretonnerie Farm and

(53) 3rd Division  
History  
p 139

were quickly disposed of. (53) From this time until the night of the 18th--19th the operations on the front of the 30th Infantry consisted mainly in sending reserve units forward through the area to bring in isolated groups of Germans and to reestablish the lines along the river. (54) On the left near Fossoy this was done by troops of the 7th Infantry. In the vicinity of Mezy it was carried out by the 30th Infantry and certain elements of the 111th Infantry, which later relieved the 30th Infantry on the night of July

(54) Marne  
p 850-852,  
inclusive

(55) Marne  
pp 870-  
871

18th--19th and took over the sector. (55)

#### THE FIGHTING EAST OF MEZY

The Germans, estimated by Captain Wooldridge, 38th Infantry, at two battalions, attempted to advance southeastward early on the morning of the 15th through a field of uncut wheat toward the railroad from Mezy and from the river where they had landed in small boats. Statements of prisoners later corroborated Captain Wooldridge's estimate. Company "G", holding the railroad embankment at this point, and a section of machine guns (guns 7 and 8) under Sergeant Lemieux of Company "A", 9th Machine Gun Battalion, opened fire on these German troops and produced extremely heavy casualties in their ranks. In a short time so great became the confidence of the Americans that riflemen would stand on top of the embankment in full view of the Germans and shoot at them as they crawled along or advanced bent over in the wheat. Every movement in the wheat and every German's head immediately became a target for this group of shouting Americans.

Sergeant Lemieux's guns had originally been located just north of the railroad bridge over the Surmelin. During the artillery bombardment the guns had to stop firing frequently to be cleaned, on account of the dirt thrown into the mechanism by bursting shells. When the Germans started advancing through the wheat, visibility over the wheat was poor due to insufficient elevation, so Sergeant Lemieux took both guns out of action and mounted them on top of the railway embankment where the visibility was better. About 15,000



(56) Operations  
Report 9th  
M.G. Bn

rounds of ammunition were fired by this section during the day and great execution was done. (56) East of Mezy very few Germans from the 5th and 6th Grenadiers succeeded in crossing the Marne. They were surprised and captured or beaten off by the men of Company "H", 38th Infantry. (57)

(57) Marne,  
p 856

#### MACHINE GUN ACTIVITIES EAST OF THE SURMELIN

During the night all of the guns of Company "A", 9th Machine Gun Battalion, were in position and ready to fire when the bombardment started. The S.O.S. signal of the rifle companies was obeyed promptly and these guns fired their indirect S.O.S. barrages on the areas assigned along the hostile assembly positions beyond the Marne. All guns kept up the fire until shells began to land just outside the emplacements. Some guns were able to fire only fifteen minutes and others, for over an hour. No guns were directly knocked out by shell fire though two belonging to Lieutenant Blakeman's platoon were injured and rendered useless. Some guns used up all their ammunition and had to return to the company dump for more. The other <sup>two</sup> guns of Lieutenant Blackman's platoon were on the road in rear of Paroy (guns Nos. 53 and 54). These guns fired intermittently on S.O.S. for nearly four hours. Finally, being forced out of position by shell fire these two guns were moved east on top of Hill 231 to cover Reully and to sweep the road from Paroy to Crezancy, in case of necessity. About 8:00 A. M., reports came in to Captain Carswell, commanding Company "A", 9th Machine Gun Battalion, to the effect that the French had fallen back on their

right and that the Germans were coming up on Hill 231 above them. Straggling riflemen were formed into a company by Captain Carswell, and sent up to protect Lieutenant Blakeman's guns and the right of Company "A"'s position. (58)

(58) Operations  
Report 9th  
M. G. Bn

Lieutenant McDill's guns (Nos. 55-58) in Crezancy fired intermittently on their S. O. S. barrages for about forty minutes--approximately 8000 rounds in all. The shelling was very intense in the town of Crezancy and all the gun crews withdrew to their dugouts, leaving sentries in observation. No further firing was done by this platoon while in Crezancy. (59)

(59) Operations  
Report 9th  
M. G. Bn

At the time of the opening of the artillery bombardment one section of Lieutenant Barber's guns (Nos. 1 and 2) was working on its dugout in the vicinity of its gun positions. The work was hastily completed by Lieutenant Barber and his men under intense shell fire. Lieutenant Barber then ordered the men below and completed camouflaging the dugout, with boughs when he, in turn, went below. Shells were falling all around and partly blocked the dugout entrance after he had gone in. At early dawn when the German creeping barrage moved on to positions in rear Lieutenant Barber's guns were mounted and manned. From this very favorable position these two guns swept the river toward Mezy and toward Jaulgonne wherever boats were seen to be attempting a crossing. Germans were seen on the far side of the Marne about 1000 to 1200 meters to the north, preparing to come across in boats to this shore. These troops later proved to be the 175th Infantry and parts of the



(60) Marne,  
pp 68-69

5th Grenadier regiment which was supposed to cross at that point. (60) The artillery and machine gun barrage on the woods in this sector had punctured many of the engineer's boats intended for the crossing and had thrown the troops into indescribable confusion and disorder. Consequently, their crossing had been delayed until day-break. A hot fire was opened on them by Lieutenant Barber's guns with telling effect. The Germans tried to send several boat loads across but none succeeded. A boat and dead Germans were seen on the far bank of the river from the gun positions. The Germans abandoned the crossing and retreated at a run one platoon at a time northwest up the hill back of Charteves. (61) Later in the day, according to the statements of German prisoners, these German troops passed through the woods back of Jaulgonne and crossed on the front of the French 125th Division near the chateau at Barzy-sur-Marne. Lieutenant Barber's guns had to move frequently to avoid our own infantry and artillery fire as well as that of German snipers and machine guns that had filtered in on the right flank. While firing on the 5th Grenadiers who were attempting a crossing to the north, he succeeded in finding a place on the road where he was defiladed from our own fire, but increasing pressure on the right flank caused him to believe that he would be unable to shift both guns to other positions. So the feed block of one gun was removed and thrown into the brush to disable it and the other gun with all the men of the section was moved up the hill east of Moulins to cover a gap between Company "F", 38th Infantry and Company "E" on its left.

(61) Operations  
Report  
9th M. G.  
Bn.



(62) Operations  
Report 9th  
M. G. Bn.

In all, this section fired about 5000 rounds. (62)

The other section of Lieutenant Barber's platoon under Lieutenant Howard (Nos. 5 and 6) fired intermittently on their S. O. S. barrage throughout the night. By nine o'clock the following morning these guns had moved farther up on Hill 231 toward Moulin Ruine to cover the right flank with fire. Scattering groups of Germans armed with light and heavy machine guns were encountered and driven to cover by these guns. (63) (64)

(63) Marne,  
p. 659

(64) Operations  
Report, 9th  
M. G. Bn.

About 4:00 P. M., July 15th, orders were received by Captain Carswell from the Commanding Officer, 38th Infantry, for Company "A" to fall back across the Surmelin Brook and to take positions for the purpose of defending the stream and firing on Hill 231. Lieutenant Blakeman's platoon had already moved to Connigis to support the 3rd Battalion, 38th Infantry. The other two platoons took up positions to the west of the Surmelin and remained there supporting the rifle companies on the Aqueduct Line until they were relieved on the evening of July 18th. (65)

(65) Operations  
Report 9th  
M. G. Bn

#### MACHINE GUN ACTIVITIES ON HILL 231

On the night of July 14-15 the Machine Gun Company, 38th Infantry, had all twelve guns and four spare guns in position. The 1st Platoon's guns (Nos. 3, 4, 9 and 10) were under the command of Lieutenant Carney, who was taken to the hospital during the engagement suffering from shell shock. Command of the platoon was then taken over by Sergeant Cherry. The 1st Section's guns (Nos. 3 and 4) were disabled by shell fire. After a stand with the enemy the men

withdrew to Moulins and there joined Company "A", 9th Machine Gun Battalion. The 2nd Section (Nos. 9 and 10) in position east of Moulins fired on their S.O.S. barrage during the bombardment. At daybreak, firing over the town of Moulins, they swept the Marne east of Mezy with their fire. (66)

(66) Operations  
Report  
M.G. Co.,  
38th Inf.

Lieutenant Lugton had the four guns of the 2nd Platoon emplaced east of Paroy (Nos. 11, 12, 51 and 52). All of these guns fired on their S. O. S. barrages beyond the Marne during the bombardment. The forward section (Nos. 11 and 12) was surrounded by the enemy at daybreak and one gun squad was captured. Corporal Dahms escaped from his captors and found Lieutenant Lugton. The latter, with a patrol from his platoon, immediately started after the Germans and recaptured his men. This section later joined Lieutenant Barfield's platoon of spare guns that were defending Connigis. The 2nd Section under Lieutenant Lugton joined forces with the 2nd Section, 1st Platoon, in the late afternoon and during the general withdrawal moved to the west bank of the Surmelin, east of Crezancy. (67)

(67) Operations  
Report, M.G.  
Co, 38th Inf.

The four guns of Lieutenant Johnston's platoon (Nos. 59, 60, 61 and 62) were in position east of Launay. These guns were too far south of the river to be safely employed in firing S.O.S. barrages on enemy forming up areas during the bombardment. These guns remained silent until daybreak when the gun crews took their positions and engaged groups of Germans coming from the right flank. A patrol from this platoon captured seven prisoners. At noon, July 15th, this platoon moved east over the crest of Hill 231 with Major Keeley's



two companies to defend the right flank. These troops were withdrawn late in the afternoon by order of Colonel

(68) Operations Report,  
M. G. Co  
38th Inf

McAlexander. (68)

Lieutenant Barfield, commanding a provisional platoon of four spare guns, was in position just north of the Chateau of Connigis. The position was held until the withdrawal of the Germans from the vicinity of Les

(69) Operations Report,  
M. G. Co  
38th Inf.

Etangs Farm and Janvier Farm. (69)

The command post of the company was at Paroy but during the late afternoon of July 15th, it was moved to Crezancy. That night the Machine Gun Company was withdrawn by Colonel McAlexander's orders from Crezancy to the woods southwest of St. Eugene. The spirit of the men was fine throughout and many acts of bravery were performed. (70)

(70) Operations Report,  
M.G. Co  
38th Inf.

MACHINE GUN OPERATIONS IN THE RESERVE POSITION AT  
BOIS D'AIGREMONT

On the evening of July 14th, Company "B" (Captain Duson commanding) had gone forward from its reserve position at La Ville Farm to relieve Company "D", 9th Machine Gun Battalion, which was occupying positions on the Woods Line or regimental reserve line. The bombardment began just as the relief started. Upon the order of Colonel Butts, commanding the 30th Infantry, the relief was not made and both organizations remained in the sector through the preliminary bombardment and the subsequent operations. Company "B" took up positions alongside those of Company "D" north and east of the Bois d'Aigremont. Those positions were held until the night of July 18-19, when company "B" was relieved. (71)

(71) Operations Report 9th  
M. G. Bn.



During the intense artillery preparation the personnel of both companies took shelter in the trenches and uncompleted dugouts in rear of Company D's positions. These shelters were too crowded to accommodate two organizations. In most cases shelter was not reached by the officers and men of Company B until later in the night, owing to the darkness and the suddenness with which the bombardment came down. Many had to lie behind trees in the open until morning. Shortly after the bombardment started the gas alarm was sounded, and the men wore their masks the remainder of the night. The shells were all calibers--high explosive and gas shells mixed. (72) Some points in the woods evidently had been marked for special treatment. In such places the trees were a tangled mass of brush and the soil churned up beyond comprehension. One such spot was that of the Regimental Command Post in the Bois d'Aigremont. Only one redeeming feature favored the commander--either the German artillery officers had calculated their deflection wrong or their intelligence personnel had plotted the command post seventy-five yards too far to the east on their maps. (73)

(72) Operation Report, 9th M.G. Bn.

(73) Personal observation

Captain Lattin, commanding Company D, 9th Machine Gun Battalion, had his command post a short distance from that of the Commanding Officer, 30th Infantry; and fortunately on the west side, instead of the east. He had again been particularly favored by fortune a short time prior to the opening of the concentration on the regimental command post. While the relief was under way he and Lieutenant Holden, the train commander of his company, were discussing details

connected with the relief. The bombardment suddenly began to fall throughout the position. Lieutenant Holden's mules became very difficult to control. So the conference ceased and Lieutenant Holden went back toward his train. Captain Lattin hurried back to his dugout (which was little more than a deep excavation covered with canvas) and found that his bedding had been destroyed by shell fire during his short absence. Thinking of something he wanted to tell Lieutenant Holden he started out in search of him. No answer was made by Lieutenant Holden to Captain Lattin's calls and a further search showed that Lieutenant Holden had been killed near the spot where they had been talking. A few second's absence from each place probably saved Captain Lattin's life, though he was injured by shell fire on the hand and arm while on the way to the 30th Infantry command post very shortly thereafter. (74) Captain Lattin<sup>was</sup> evacuated the following morning and Captain Shelton was placed in command of Company "D".

(74) Personal investigation

As soon as the creeping barrage had passed the northern part of the Bois d'Aigremont, Company D's guns were mounted in their battle emplacements beyond the woods and the enemy awaited. Neither machine gun company took part in the action during the morning, as the German troops that crossed the Marne never got close enough to their positions for those guns to fire. Uncertainty existed also concerning the locations of our own troops.

(75) Operations Report, 9th M.G. Bn

(75)

Shortly after daybreak a smoke cloud 1500 meters down the slope north of the Bois d'Aigremont was observed

by Lieutenant Moore whose guns were on the northern slope of this wood. Only one German was seen near the woods during the entire morning and he was soon killed by automatic riflemen of the 30th Infantry. About daylight and after the barrage had lifted, Lieutenant Crockett of Company "D", from the position of his platoon (guns No. 72 to 75, inclusive) in the northwest corner of the Bois d'Aigremont, saw about 200 Germans on the north side of the Marne, moving westward up the hill toward the Bois de Barbillon between Gland and Mont St. Pere. Late that afternoon a party of twelve Germans were sighted across the valley near Paroy. Fire was opened on them by Lieutenant Stanley's guns (Nos. 64 to 67, inclusive) and Lieutenant Brady's two spare guns near Le Chanet. Four were seen to fall. The rest scattered in the brush. About 11:00 PM, the following night, Lieutenant Stanley's guns got into action for about five minutes with German machine guns which had been harassing him from their positions near Paroy. The firing from that direction soon ceased.

(76) Operations  
Report, 9th  
M.G. Bn.

(76)

On the night of July 18th--19th Companies "B" and "D" were relieved from their positions in the Bois d'Aigremont by the Machine Gun Company, 111th Infantry (28th Division) and moved back in reserve to Les Biez Farm. Here they were cleaned up, rested, reequipped, and reorganized. (77)

(77) Operations  
Report, 9th  
M. G. Bn.

OPERATIONS OF COMPANY "C", NINTH MACHINE GUN

#### BATTALION

On the afternoon of July 14th Captain Bossi, who was in command of Company "C", 9th Machine Gun Battalion, had gone forward to Paroy to reconnoiter



the positions of the Machine Gun Company of the 38th Infantry, which his company was scheduled to relieve on the night of July 15--16. Near the town of Paroy he was struck by a shell during the bombardment and fatally wounded. Several of his non-commissioned officers, who were with him, carried him to shelter under heavy shell fire at great risk of their lives. The relief never took place. (78)

(78) Operations  
Report, 9th  
M. G. Bn.

The remainder of Company "C" was in reserve at La Ville Farm at the time of the bombardment and did not suffer from shell fire. The company was ordered to the vicinity of the Bois de Jutte by the Brigade Commander (General Crawford) on the forenoon of July 15th and there came under the orders of the Commanding Officer, 38th Infantry. Upon arrival two platoons took up positions on the hillside west of St. Eugene. The other platoon relieved Lieutenant Blakeman's platoon

(79) Operations  
Report,  
9th M. G.  
Bn.

of Company A at Connigis. (79) Enemy activity on Hill 231 and along the front southeast to St. Agnan was very intense by day and by night. The units of the 38th Infantry and the 9th Machine Gun Battalion were in a particularly poor position with the Germans harassing from the higher ground. Supplying the units in this area was done only at night with extreme difficulty. Nevertheless, Company C, in conjunction with the units that it was supporting, maintained these positions under severe machine gun and artillery fire.

#### CLOSE OF GERMAN OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

Violent bombardment of the hostile positions on Hill 231 and near St. Agnan, followed by belated counter attacks of the 73d French Division, greatly

(80) Personal  
investigation

relieved the threat imposed by the Germans on this part of the line. (80) The secretly prepared and highly successful offensive by the 10th French Army on the western face of the Marne salient from Soissons south to Chateau Thierry on July 18th and thereafter soon forced the withdrawal of all German units to the north bank of the Marne. Old positions were immediately taken up, and on the 21st of July was initiated the crossing of the Marne by the 3rd Division and the pursuit of the enemy toward the Vesle. (81)

(81) Dickman,  
p 116

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

##### General Effects

The effect of defeating so decisively the German invading forces on the front of the 3rd Division was immediate and far reaching. In the first place it furnished that favorable opportunity which enabled the allied high command to launch the long contemplated secret counter offensive on the flanks of the Chateau Thierry--Dormans salient, which proved particularly disastrous to German plans, hopes, and morale. Secondly, it gave to the somewhat skeptical views of French and British commanders another added proof of the high morale, fighting ability, and marksmanship of the American soldier. It also showed that the American officers had the necessary qualities of leadership, <sup>in</sup> spite of their limited training and meager war experiences.

By making possible the allied counter offensive of July 18th this operation, contributed greatly toward the buoyant morale which now began to pervade the French and British armies. Once more a very real

assurance of final victory appeared after the many long and weary years of fighting. Then came that moment for which General Pershing so long had been contending--the time when we should have a separate American army. It was, in reality, the final turning point of the war.

(82) Dickman,  
p 113

(82)

Nor can it be said that entire credit for the success of the 3rd Division during these fateful days on the Marne can be claimed by any particular arm or regiment. To all must be given great credit for the wonderful part that they played. Some stood out more than others, but theirs was the greater opportunity.

#### IMPORTANCE OF THE MACHINE GUN DEFENSE

Much has already been written about the glorious part played in this operation by individual regiments and by the 3rd Division as a unit. As to that particular phase which pertains to the machine gun defense, particularly of the right brigade sector (6th Brigade) where the major part of the fighting occurred, nothing is known to have been previously recorded. Few other occasions were ever presented for so complete a test of the defensive employment of machine guns during American participation in the World War as in this operation.

The Plan of Employment of Machine Guns, though differing in form from those prescribed for use at the present time, had been very ably prepared by the Division Machine Gun Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Fred L. Davidson. He had been given professional assistance by two excellent French officers, Colonel de Poumayrac and Major Bruant. (83) The Plan embodied the latest

(83) Dickman,  
p 68



tactical principles then known concerning the defensive employment of machine guns and allowed a good deal of latitude to lower unit commanders, as the situation at this time demanded. Conferences between the Machine Gun Officers and Unit Commanders concerned, as specified in paragraph 3, Annex No. 2--Plan of Employment for Machine Guns, made possible the rapid and satisfactory organization of the machine gun defense in both regimental sectors which was deemed urgent in view of the probability of an early German offensive. The Plan and the subsequent arrangements on the terrain involved were later adopted as a model by the General Staff School at Langres. (84)

✓ (84) Dickman,  
p 68

The tremendous amount of preparation, such as location and construction of machine gun emplacements and shelter, camouflage, ammunition supply, liaison with adjoining units, and the constant supervision and inspection of dispositions, required about all the available time of every officer and enlisted man. The success attained in the effective concealment of machine gun positions can be attested by an examination of the latest German intelligence maps discovered on captured German officers on July 15th. Of the fifty or more machine guns located in this brigade sector only six or eight near the river were discovered. Curiously enough these guns survived the bombardment and later wreaked heavy losses on those German troops which crossed the Marne. (85)

✓ (85) Personal  
experience

The effect of our machine gun fire on the enemy can best be described in his own words:

(Extracts)

"4:50 AM: \* \* \* Strong enemy machine gun resistance  
\* \* \* Americans said to be opposite us. Crossing  
goes on by means of ferries".

"5:10 AM: \* \* \* About an hour ago 2nd Battalion  
398th Infantry, and 1st Battalion, 398th Infantry were  
crossing. Enemy machine gun nests, trench mortar and  
artillery barrage."

"6:05 AM: 398th Infantry reports: Part of regiment  
have reached railway station (Ru Chailly Farm). At  
this moment very heavy enemy machine gun fire from left.  
No contact with 6th Grenadiers."

6:24 AM: 20th Brigade reports: Orderly officer of 1st  
Battalion, 47th Infantry, reports that south of bridge  
L.1 the battalion is under machine gun fire from small  
wooded sectors."

"6:35 AM: Machine gun nests at railway embankment be-  
fore Mezy stormed."

"8:30 AM: Lamp signal message from 6th Grenadiers re-  
ceived: enemy has already reached railway again. Cross-  
ing points under heavy machine gun and artillery fire.  
Also ridge north of Marne. Assistance urgently required.

"9:10 AM: 6th Grenadiers completely outflanked on left,  
is driven back across Marne. Parts have been captured.  
\* \* \* \*".

"10:55 AM: 398th Infantry is unable to advance beyond  
height east of Bretonnerie Farm, which had been reported  
as reached, because enemy lies in construction defenses  
arranged like points of support; also has a large  
number of machine guns and two field guns. \* \* \*

No contact with 47th Infantry. (86)

EXTRACTS FROM WAR DIARY--6th GRENADIERS--JULY 15, 1918

"4:30 AM: The railway embankment east of Mezy is reached. The connecting regiment to the left (5th Grenadiers, 36th Division) remains far to the rear, and thereby leaves the left flank of the regiment exposed. Neither is it possible to establish connection to the right with the neighboring 398th Infantry."

"5:15 AM: An enemy counter attack with greatly superior forces begins and rolls up the regiment from the left, which suffers heavy losses through enemy machine gun and artillery fire. \* \* \* \*." (87)

(87) Marne  
p 516

EXTRACTS FROM TACTICAL REPORT--6TH GRENADIERS, JULY  
17, 1918

" \* \* \* Machine gun fire was heard only now and then in the valley of the Marne (2:00 A. M.) \* \* \* But at the same time (3:40 A. M.) the patrol had observed that the Fifth Grenadiers in the zone next to our regiments was hampered in its crossing by nests of machine guns on the other side of the Marne. \* \* \* (88)

(88) Marne  
p 659

" \* \* \* On its way to the Marne the regimental staff met several companies of the 5th Grenadiers, at the south edge of the woods, northeast of Le Psautier, who in spite of repeated orders of the regimental commander and the staff officers, could not be induced to go down to the Marne. They stated that several direct hits (artillery) had already struck the companies and that it was impossible to cross the river. On leaving the woods the regimental staff (6th Grenadiers) met several individuals of the engineers retreating to the woods, who, in reply to inquiries, stated that their pontoons had been damaged by machine gun fire to such an extent as



(89) Marne  
p 659

to render them unfit for use. \* \* \* \* (89)

"While crossing, the regimental staff had been already subjected to enemy machine gun fire at very close range from the left (north of Mezy). After the regimental staff had landed on the opposite bank, a patrol made up of orderlies raided with hand grenades an enemy machine gun nest of eighteen Americans, who, though only about 100 meters distant from the regimental staff, had been passed by and had remained unnoticed." (Note.- Their ammunition was exhausted.)

(90)

(90) Marne  
p 660

"When the regimental staff landed on the south bank of the Marne at about 5:10 A. M. (Note.- 4:10 A. M., French time) it was still so dark and foggy that the foreground could not be surveyed. However, heavy enemy machine gun and infantry fire was heard at this time from the direction of Mezy and Moulins. According to the sound of the firing the distinct impression was gained that our battalion was facing a greatly superior enemy. \* \* \* \* (91)

(91) Marne  
p 660

"The rolling barrage (German) went on steadily. Not a single shell fell on the hotly contested railroad embankment or on the advancing enemy companies. The trench mortars (minenwerfers) could not be brought into action as the regiment had only two pontons fit for use and no row boat ferries had been arranged at any points. On the other hand, it could be observed that our battalions were being thrust back from the railway embankment by greatly superior forces. The enemy immediately, everywhere, brought his machine guns into position and fired over the railway embank-

ment at our men north of it. He soon gained the upper hand in fire by means of his numerical superiority in machine guns and rifles, and held down our battalions to such an extent that the Americans could stand upright on the railway embankment and shoot down our men individually. In the meantime more and more Americans gathered under the railway bridge crossing the Surmelin brook and brought machine guns into positions on the left flank, so that the regiment was encircled more and more. From the heights east of Moulins, too, heavy machine gun fire constantly struck the Marne, the space between the Marne and the railway embankment, and the slopes north of the Marne. The ferry positions on the Marne were soon taken under such severe enfilade machine gun fire from the direction of the mouth of the Surmelin (Lieutenant Barber's guns) that a crossing now seemed scarcely possible."

(92) Marne,  
p 661

(92)

"As individual men now could be seen running back and crossing the Marne, the regimental commander transferred his battle headquarters to the height 300 meters north of the Marne, in order to stop them by his personal influence. The machine gun officer, 2nd Lieutenant Hairies, was wounded shortly after the crossing. Battle headquarters on the north slope were also under such heavy machine gun fire that several runners were very soon wounded. The retreating men were brought into position during the heavy machine gun fire, but many had swum across the Marne, and being without arms, were unnecessarily shot down in the heavy artillery and machine gun fire. \* \* \*"



"All efforts to reorganize the units on the northern bank proved impossible on account of the heavy machine gun fire, which swept down every one who showed himself. The staff of the regiment, therefore, withdrew to the woods. From the woods it could be observed still how everyone in the valley was being shot down by the enemy. German machine guns were yet to be heard, but they were gradually silenced.

\* \* \*". (93)

(93) Marne,  
p 662

THE DRAMA ON THE MARNE, BY LIEUTENANT KURT HESS,  
5TH GRENADIERS

" \* \* \* As to the crossing of the river there was not yet a word, and the regimental staff sent out reconnoitering patrols. Finally after several hours we received more exact information. \* \* \* The engineers had quit; the boats had been abandoned in place several hundred meters from the Marne. The river crossing at this point was impossible, as hostile infantry and numerous machine guns were energetically defending the farther bank. On the left the advance appeared more favorable. (Near Varennes)" \* \* \* (94)

(94) Marne  
p 668

"During the afternoon of July 15 we succeeded in slightly improving our line. The enemy fearing a double envelopment withdrew a short distance to the rear, but this did not change the general results of the day, which had been the most severe defeat of the war." (95)

(95) Marne,  
p 671

"Nothing remained but to go back to the north side of the Marne. I have never seen so many dead, never such frightful battle scenes. On the other bank



the Americans, in close combat, had completely annihilated two of our companies. \* \* \* "The Americans kill every one", was the cry of fear on July 15, and which for a long time caused our men to tremble." (96)

(96) Marne  
p 672

"In our home country people joked about the deficient instruction of this enemy, about "American bluff" and other things. Their's is the principal responsibility for the fact that of the troops led into action on July 15, more than 60 per cent were left dead or wounded lying on the field of battle. " (97)

(97) Dickman,  
p 112

#### CAUSES OF GERMAN FAILURE

On the front of the 3rd Division the repulse of the German forces opposing us may be ascribed to the following causes:

a. "Before the attack:

- (1) Noises along the banks of the Marne; sounds of trucks and wagons at night behind the front line platoons; statements of German prisoners.
- (2) Exploding of ammunition dumps at points and in zones where no German artillery had been in action.

b. On the day of the attack:

- (1) To the effective counter preparation by our artillery on the edges of woods north of <sup>the</sup> Marne, especially the Bois de Barbillon and the Bois de Fere.
- (2) To the sinking of pontoons by our barrage fire on the Marne.
- (3) To the energetic resistance of the American troops and the judicious use

of machine guns, which held the enemy in the line of outposts and forced him to intrench himself.

(98) Statements  
of Prisoners  
Reported by  
38th Infantry

- (4) To an immediate counter attack launched on the morning of the 15th, which almost entirely cleared the bend of Mezy, and prevented any development of the success at daybreak." (98)
- (5) To the high morale of the American troops and the German weariness of the war.
- (6) To the close cooperation of all elements and weapons in the division.
- (7) To a generous supply of ammunition.
- (8) To the superior marksmanship of our riflemen and machine gunners. (99)

(99) Personal ob-  
servation

#### DIFFICULTIES AND DEFICIENCIES

In any operation, no matter how successful, certain difficulties will arise and deficiencies will be noted.

One of the chief difficulties was that of having to operate with the French. They failed to supply barbed wire for the construction of obstacles as previously agreed upon, but were able to furnish considerable quantities to the 125th (French) Division on our right. Then the French 125th Division withdrew on the night of the German bombardment. They informed no one, even leaving elements of the 28th Division (American) operating with them in their sector, totally ignorant of their movements. (100) The cross-grained French Chief of Staff of the 38th Army Corps, to which the 3rd Division was assigned, caused frequent changes of position of troops in the division sector and in

(100) Personal  
investi-  
gation

various other ways annoyed them, thereby making reliefs difficult, tiring the men needlessly, and slowing up the organization of the sector. (101) (102)

(101) Dickman,  
p 117

Within the division matters usually progressed very smoothly. There were some shortages in the equipment of machine gun companies, notably the regimental companies, as previously explained. These were overcome by having the Supply Officer, 9th Machine Gun Battalion, draw the needed articles at Montmirail and issue them to the regimental machine gun companies. Due to an old French Army Corps order it had been specified in division orders that not more than 2500 rounds of ammunition would be placed at any machine gun emplacement. Early in July this was deemed to be an insufficient quantity and, with the approval of the Assistant Chief of Staff (G-1) 8000 rounds were requisitioned for each emplacement and another 100,000 rounds for each of the four company dumps. The wisdom of this measure was amply proven in many instances during the fighting on the 15th of July. A consignment of maps, which had been forwarded by the Assistant Chief of Staff (G-2) to the Brigade Machine Gun Officer for distribution to machine gun units inadvertently found their way to brigade headquarters where they were opened by one of the general's aides and the Brigade Adjutant and claimed as brigade property, much to the annoyance and ill feeling of the Brigade Machine Gun Officer. A small number of these maps were later gotten back. (103)

(102) Marne  
pp 842-  
843

(103) Personal  
experience

In this operation Brigade Headquarters was too far in rear of the front line. In fact, it was so far in rear that it did not come under the fire of German



artillery during the battle. Standing in a yard by the brigade command post during the night of July 14-15 and on the following day, the Germans' bombardment of the forward areas could be witnessed without any danger except occasional machine gunning by German airmen. Being so far to the rear, lines of communication were long and very difficult to maintain. During the period of preparation (July 1 to 14) a great deal of time was lost by the Brigade Machine Gun Officer in travelling back and forth every night and morning to and from the front. With all the activities that were in progress in the sector it is probable that a better selection farther forward would have been difficult.

(104) Personal  
experience

(104)

During the period of preparation there could have been provided a more thorough coordination between regimental commanders and the brigade machine gun battalion commander. The latter in his daily tours of inspection found out many of the plans of regimental commanders that should have been conveyed to him in the form of official communications or as informal notes. Likewise, reports of an essentially technical nature that concerned the machine gun defense of the sector were often very hard to obtain from regimental machine gun company commanders. Operation reports of these units never were received by the Brigade Machine Gun Officer following the German attack on July 15th. (104)

(104) Personal  
experience.  
See Marne  
pp 730-731

The task imposed on a Brigade Machine Gun Officer of supervising and directing the machine gun defense of a brigade sector and of commanding a war

strength machine gun battalion in addition thereto was one of no small proportions. Difficulties multiplied very rapidly when the available time was limited, as in this instance. Usually this task called for unusual physical effort for sixteen and eighteen hours per day if thoroughly and conscientiously performed. The duties of a Brigade Machine Gun Officer required that he be tactful and willing to cooperate. He had to carry with him a spirit of helpfulness and a high degree of technical skill and professional ability as a machine gunner. Otherwise his presence in a sector might be looked upon with suspicion and resentment by a regimental or battalion commander. Indeed, it was most difficult to act as a staff officer for a brigade commander and his two regimental commanders as well. With our present organization tables for war strength units these difficulties have disappeared, and it is probable that the work of a machine gun officer will be much simpler and easier. (105)

(105) Personal  
experience

#### BATTLE CASUALTIES

Reports of battle casualties in this operation conflict to a very great degree. No one report can be taken as accurate. Their only value is their use as a basis of comparison. The roster of killed, wounded and missing, as reported some time after the battle, is as follows:

Unit	Officers			Men			Total
	K	W	M	K	W	M	
30th Infantry	12	41	0	240	1140	22	1455
38th Infantry	13	41	1	228	813	53	1149
9th M.G. Bn	4	9	0	18	20	0	51

	Unit	Officers			Men			Total
		K	W	M	K	W	M	
	M.G. Co., 30th Inf	No record						
(106) 3d Div. History,	M.G. Co., 38th Infantry	0	3	0	11	42	2	58 (106)
	The total strength of organizations at the beginning of the battle were as follows:							
(107) Marne p 684	30th Infantry	-	-	-	-	-	-	127 officers, 3457 men (107)
	38th Infantry	-	-	-	-	-	-	Not known, but approximately the same.
(108) Marne pp 719 and 739	9th Machine Gun Bn.	-	-	-	-	-	-	41 officers, 518 men. (108)
	M. G. Cos., 30th and 38th Infantry regi- ments	-	-	-	-	-	-	Approximately 5 officers, 150 men.

It will be noted that battle losses in machine gun companies of the Ninth Machine Gun Battalion were very much less than in infantry regiments. This was due mainly to the two following reasons:

- a. When the German bombardment fell the machine gunners left one sentry on duty at each gun. The rest repaired to their section dugouts for shelter. Riflemen had no dugouts available, as they had had to construct trenches during the two or three weeks prior to the attack. They did have narrow trenches that afforded a measure of protection from shell fire.
- b. Machine gun units less often came into physical contact with the Germans. Their fighting was usually done at longer ranges and the probabilities of heavy casualties were lessened.



In the 9th Machine Gun Battalion considerable equipment, clothing and fifty-nine animals were lost during the action. Fifty of these animals were made up by the catching of loose animals in the area, the owners of which could not be ascertained. The remainder were supplied nu the French on requisition on the 18th of 19th of July. No reports of animal casualties among the machine gun companies of the two infantry regiments were received but it is believed that the number was not as large as in the case of the 9th Machine Gun Battalion. (109)

*Spelling*  
*Spelling*

(109) Personal  
investiga-  
tion

#### PHYSICAL CONDITION OF MEN DURING OPERATION

Prior to the German attack all available personnel that could be spared from the defense of the sector were utilized daily in the construction of field fortifications. Most of the construction of machine gun emplacements was done at night. Dugout construction was done in the woods by day. For about a week before the attack units were alerted every night. As a result the men were physically very tired and worn. The frequent shifting from one sector to another had contributed very materially to this condition. During the action the spirit of the men was excellent. During the artillery bombardment when many were caught away from adequate cover their devotion to duty and obedience to orders was very marked. Both officers and non-commissioned officers displayed great coolness in handling their men and guns. They had had an inadequate amount of sleep prior to the attack and practically none while the attack was in progress. They plainly showed the signs and symptoms of the extreme conditions

through which they had recently passed. Some were very nervous and could not sleep after they had been drawn back of the line one or two days following the engagement.

(110) Personal  
investigation

(110)

#### LESSONS

A number of very important lessons were taught by this operation. In fact some stood out so prominently that it is difficult to make a choice of the most conspicuous. Each can be very well illustrated by considering the principle of war which was either followed or violated by the two opposing forces.

In the beginning the Germans violated the Principle of Surprise to so great an extent that the allies were enabled to tell to the exact day and hour when the attack would fall. The allies made use of the principle by a very unexpected and heavy counter preparation fire on the German artillery during the night. The Americans followed it the next day with great resistance and the effective use of rifles and machine guns at the crossing points along the Marne.

The allies concentrated their forces opposite the point to be attacked, thus employing the Principle of Mass. This principle was further employed by the machine gunners and riflemen of the 3rd Division in their superiority of marksmanship and in the greater volume of their fire.

In all their movements the Americans were governed by the Principle of Simplicity. The German scheme of maneuver on the 3rd Division front was a departure from this Principle, probably induced by their own assurance that they were going to have an easy time in reaching their



objectives. The French on our right changed their plan at the last moment and violated this principle.

In building well camouflaged machine gun emplacements in the open, the Americans avoided the heaviest part of the German bombardment and the gas concentration in the woods. The construction of deep dugouts for extra members of the gun crews and the frequent shifting of gun positions also prevented heavier casualties. These illustrate the Principle of Security. The enlisted men who did the construction work in this operation fully appreciated the value of their efforts and no trouble was thereafter experienced in getting them to provide camouflage, concealment and cover for themselves.

The Principle of Movement is best illustrated by the prompt counter attacks by our small units near the river. These counterattacks completely immobilized the Germans, caused their creeping barrage to get ahead of them and caused the failure of their operation. In these counter attacks the machine gun units played an important part by the support they gave the assaulting rifle units.

The use of large numbers of machine guns in concealed positions and in great depth--from 300 to 3000 meters--illustrates very fittingly the Principle of the Economy of Force. Only a few rifle companies, supported by machine guns were enabled to hold over four kilometers of line on the right flank of the 38th Infantry for a whole day (July 15th) and a shorter line with a similarly sized force for a much longer period.



The Principle of Cooperation was illustrated in numerous instances in this operation; as for instance, the combination of the barrages of the artillery and machine guns; and the protection of rifle units by direct overhead fire on German troops attempting to cross the Marne and to flank elements of the 6th Brigade from positions near Fossoy, Mezy and Hill 231.

Finally, this operation showed that something was still desired in infantry organizations to make our rifle and machine gun units function more efficiently together under all conditions of campaign. The criticisms on this subject, mentioned earlier in this article, have probably been effectively met by our present war and peace strength tables of organization.

~~ROSTER OF OFFICERS~~

MACHINE GUN UNITS, 6TH BRIGADE

July 1 - 21, 1918

9TH MACHINE GUN BATTALION

Headquarters:

Major Ziba L. Drollinger, Commanding  
1st Lieutenant John S. Claussen, Supply Officer  
1st Lieutenant John L. Weeks, Adjutant  
2nd Lieutenant Gordon G. Anderson, Gas Officer  
2nd Lieutenant Willy S. Heinemann (French Foreign  
Legion), Liaison Officer

Company A:

\* Captain Stuart R. Carswell, Commanding  
Captain Arthur W. Hartman (July 1 to 14)  
1st Lieutenant Henry A. Barber  
\* 1st Lieutenant Chester B. Blakeman  
1st Lieutenant Bruce M. McDill  
1st Lieutenant H. Morris Adams  
\*\*\* 1st Lieutenant George McGillen  
\* 2nd Lieutenant Alonzo D. Russell (July 1 to 15)  
\* 2nd Lieutenant Norman M. Nelson  
\* 2nd Lieutenant Clarence Howard

Company B:

Captain Curley P. Duson, Commanding  
1st Lieutenant Craig P. Cochrane  
1st Lieutenant Francis M. Brady  
1st Lieutenant Thomas R. Taber  
\*1st Lieutenant James B. Koontz  
2nd Lieutenant Charles F. Williams  
2nd Lieutenant Hugh McMorrow  
2nd Lieutenant Robert F. Butler

Company C:

\*\*\* Captain John T. Bossi (July 1-14), Commanding  
1st Lieutenant Edmund H. Driggs, Jr., Commanding  
after July 14.

1st Lieutenant Joseph H. Rodenbough

1st Lieutenant Thomas J. Swanson

1st Lieutenant Jacob Eisenhardt

\* 2nd Lieutenant Roswell H. Bill

2nd Lieutenant David Miller

\*\*\* 2nd Lieutenant Louis J. Milliman (July 1 to 15)

Company D:

\* Captain Jay D. B. Lattin, (July 1-15) Commanding

\* Captain Claude W. Shelton, Commanding after July  
15

Captain Clarence W. Emerson

Captain Paul Hathaway (July 1 to 12)

1st Lieutenant Gilman K. Crockett

\*\*\* 1st Lieutenant Vernon A. Holden (July 1 to 15)

1st Lieutenant Arthur W. Stanley

2nd Lieutenant Richard E. Moore

Medical Detachment:

Captain French H. Craddock, M. C. Surgeon

1st Lieutenant Victor P. Klappocs, D. C.

1st Lieutenant George A. Rigg, D. C.

Machine Gun Company, 30th Infantry:

Captain Donovan Swanton, Commanding

1st Lieutenant Donald N. Swain

\* 1st Lieutenant Stephen Y. Mann

\*\*\* 1st Lieutenant Harry A. Holliday

\*\*\* 1st Lieutenant George H. MacElligott

\* 2nd Lieutenant Samuel W. Blakeslee



2nd Lieutenant H. B. Smith.

Machine Gun Company, 38th Infantry:

\* Captain George H. Butler, (July 1 to 15) Commanding  
Captain Sidney H. Young, Commanding after July 15.

1st Lieutenant T. D. Suiter

2nd Lieutenant H. M. Barfield

\* 2nd Lieutenant T. A. Carney (July 1 to 15)

2nd Lieutenant Hamilton Johnston

\* 2nd Lieutenant C. R. Lugton

2nd Lieutenant W. C. Thompson

NOTE. - \* Wounded

\*\* Missing

\*\*\* Killed in action

QUESTIONS ON THE OPERATIONS OF THE  
MACHINE GUN UNITS, 6TH BRIGADE,  
JULY 1 to 21, 1918

1. Q. Why were the units of the 3rd Division scattered out along the south side of the Marne and intermingled with the French during June 1918?
  - A. The units of the Division had been hastily thrown into the line in a great emergency early in June to block the passage of the Germans in their rapid and victorious drive from the Chem des Dame during the latter days of May and the first of June. When conditions stabilized somewhat the Division was drawn together east of Chateau Thierry in a sector by itself.
  
2. Q. How was the division sector divided and organized?
  - A. It was divided into two brigade sectors, the 5th Brigade on the left and the 6th Brigade on the right. Each brigade sector was subdivided into two subsectors with regiments abreast in the order: 4th Infantry, 7th Infantry, 30th Infantry, and 38th Infantry, from left to right.
  
3. Q. In Division orders, how were these subsectors sometimes designated?
  - A. The 4th Infantry subsector was called the Brasles Subsector; the 7th Infantry subsector, the Glad Subsector; the 30th Infantry subsector, the Mont St. Pere Subsector; and the 38th Infantry subsector, the Chartevès Subsector. These names were derived from the towns opposite these regiments on the northern (German) side of the river.

4. Q. How many defensive lines were designated in the Division order for the defense of the sector (Field Orders No. 7, 3d Division, 1918)?

A. Three--commonly known as the Railroad Line, the Aqueduct Line and the Woods Line. In addition, a line of outposts were placed in observation along the river.

5. Q. How was the machine gun defense to be organized?

A. Deeply echeloned in depth in a checkerboard formation, mutually supporting each other and sited to place overhead and flanking fires to bear across the fronts and flanks of all positions and possible crossing points on the Marne.

6. Q. How was this carried out in the sector of the 6th Brigade?

A. After a thorough preliminary reconnaissance and a conference with the Division Machine Gun Officer, the Brigade Machine Gun Officer, 6th Brigade, issued such instructions to the machine gun company commanders as were necessary to insure a correct disposition of machine guns in depth and to enable these units to carry out the missions prescribed for them in the Plan of Employment of Machine Guns. After positions had been selected and approved emplacements and other necessary field fortifications were camouflaged and constructed. The personnel were acquainted with their various duties in case of attack. Frequent inspections were made by the Brigade Machine Gun Officer and by Company Commanders to note the progress of the work and to see



that the area was put in a state of complete defense at the earliest possible date.

7. Q. Was the rapid organization of the area hindered?

A. Yes, by the frequent shifting of troops by the French Corps Chief of Staff.

8. Q. How did the machine gun units of the 6th Brigade assist the rifle companies that they supported?

A. (1) By pinning the Germans to the regions of Fossoy and Mezy after they had crossed the Marne during the night; (2) By preventing further units from crossing after daylight; (3) By strengthening the lines held by troops of the 38th Infantry on their right flank.

9. Q. Does this action show the most effective use of machine guns in defensive operations; and if so, how?

A. Yes. The most effective use of machine guns is obtained when direct fire can be used. This was done on innumerable targets after daybreak with most telling effect. The fire of the guns at night was not nearly as effective as it was the next morning. About all the proof we have that the night firing did any damage is when it was reported by the German engineers that their boats southwest of Jauglonne had been riddled with machine gun bullets and were totally unserviceable.

10. Q. Why are the present tables of organization considered more satisfactory from a machine gun officer's point of view than they were during the World War?

A. Machine Gun Companies are now an integral part of an infantry regiment and consequently teamwork and control is closer during maneuver or in campaign. The machine gun officer is not worked to death as there is one in each regiment. He is responsible to his regimental commander only instead of three commanders as was the case during the war. In peace training the machine gun companies can be organized as a provisional battalion under the regimental machine gun officer and in this way can get all the benefits of training that machine gun battalions formerly had. Being the commander of a unit in which a machine gun company is an integral part the present day battalion commander takes more interest in and will better know how to use machine guns in the next war.



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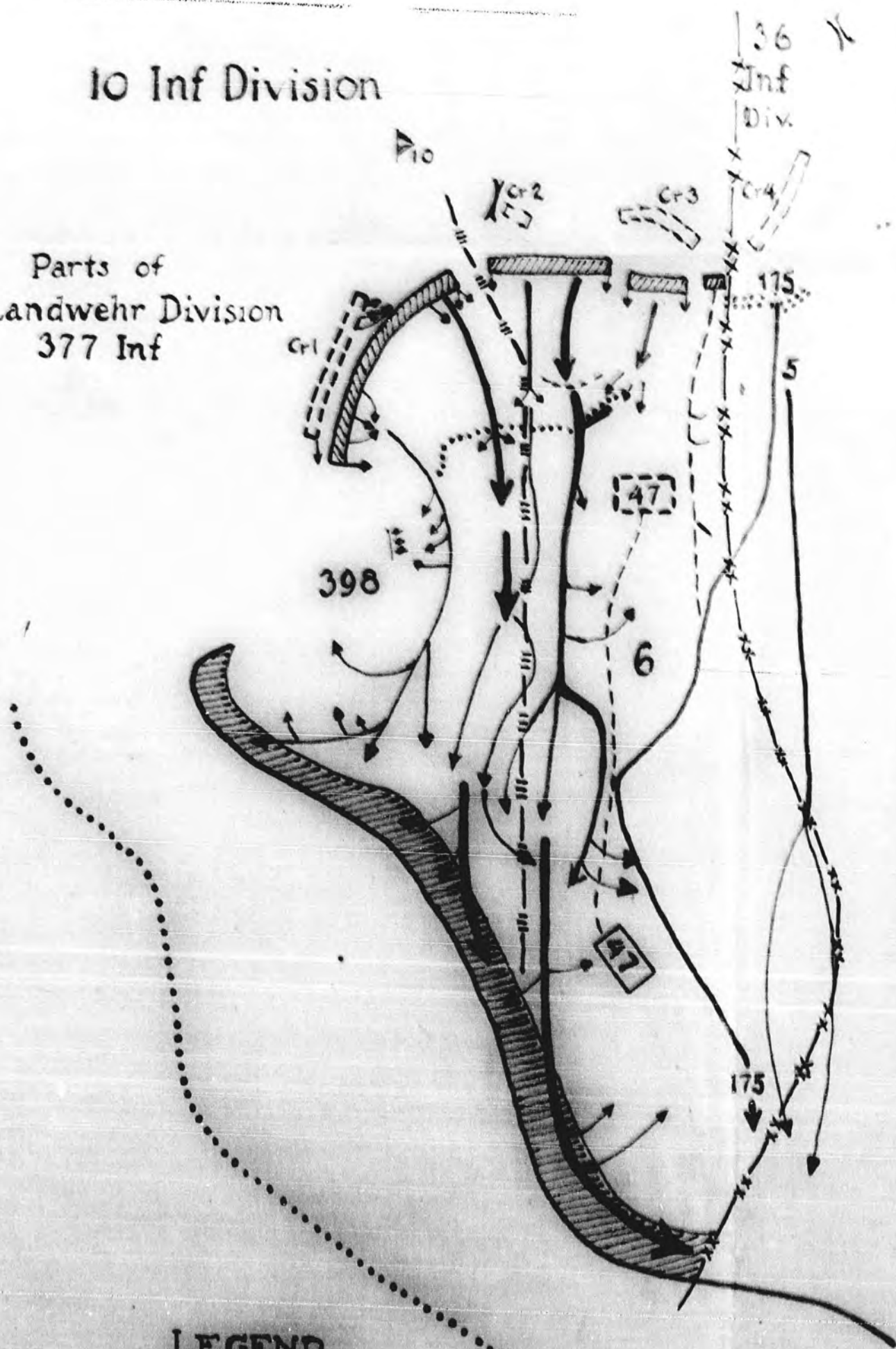


Overlay Map  
 German Scheme of Maneuver.

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10 Inf Division

Parts of  
 10 Landwehr Division  
 377 Inf



LEGEND

1-24

Final Objective

Main Zone of Resistance

Cr Crossing Places

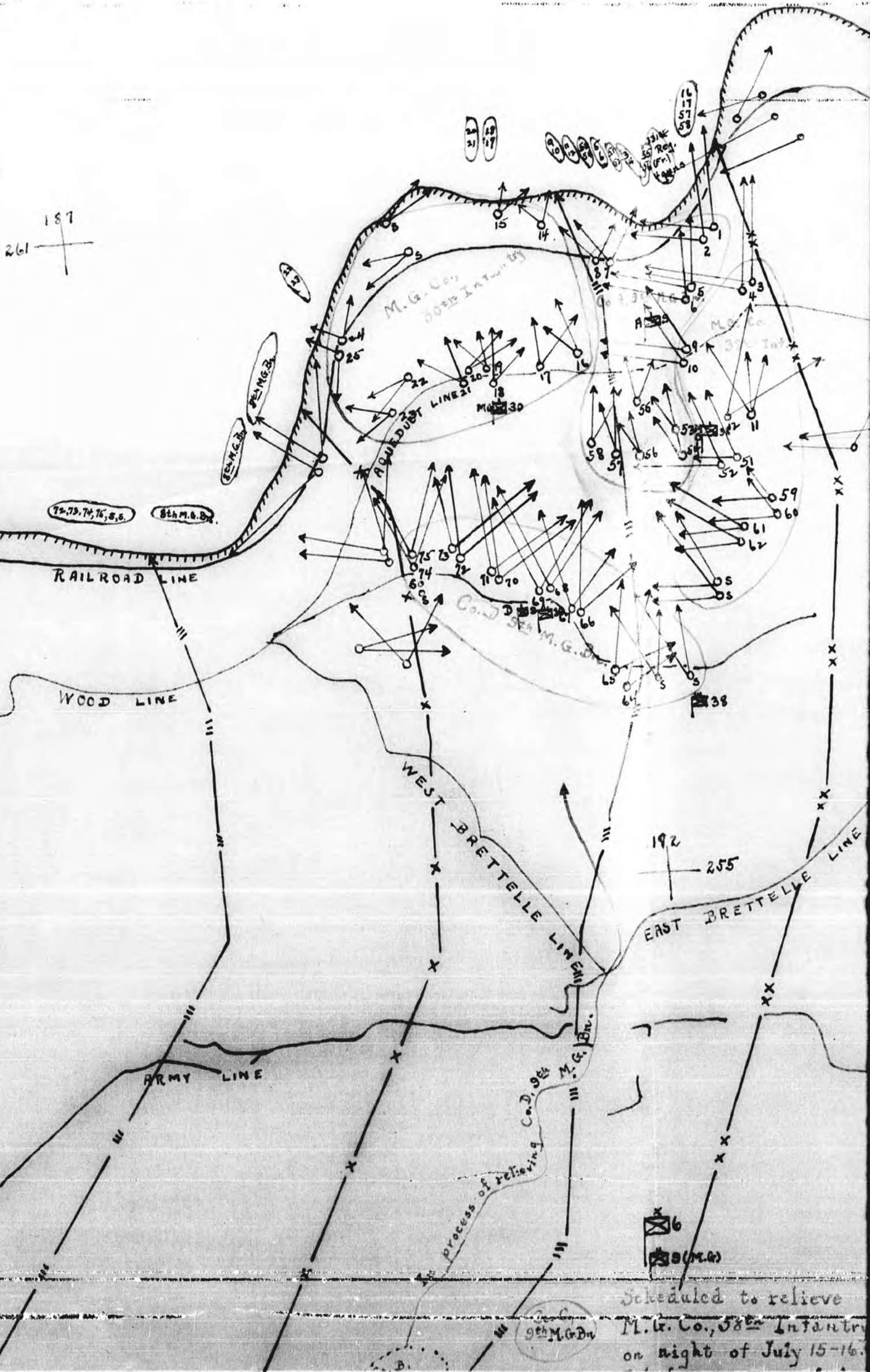
Attack Position

Main Direction of Attack

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# Machine Gun Dispositions Sixth Brigade

July 14, 1918.





Overlay No. 3.

Infantry Dispositions  
Sixth Brigade  
July 14, 1918.

