

FIRST TO FIGHT, SECOND TO NONE: AN
EXAMINATION OF THE DOCTRINAL AND
TACTICAL APPROACHES OF THE AMERICAN
EXPEDITIONARY FORCE IN WORLD WAR ONE

By

JOHN A. JEFFRIES

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Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, Oklahoma

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Thesis Approved:

Dr. Jennifer Murray

Thesis Adviser

Dr. John Kinder

Dr. Justin Prince

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Name: JOHN JEFFRIES

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Abstract: When the U.S. entered World War One it was faced with major dilemmas. The U.S. Military had no modern army, its doctrine was antiquated by European standards, and it was technologically behind their European counterparts. This thesis addressed the doctrinal and tactical approaches that the American Expeditionary Force took to combat the German Army in 1918. The focus of this study is on the 2d Division of the Regular Army which was comprised of both U.S. Army soldiers and U.S. Marines. Their service spanned from the opening days of hostility with Germany to occupation in the post-war period. The journey of this work is focused on how and when the American forces began to modernize for the industrial Western front which teemed with the most devastating weapons. Chapter 1 is focused on the training that the soldiers and marines of the 2d Division endured prior to their tour of combat in France from basic training to trenches in the Verdun Sector. Chapter 2 addresses the early battles including the engagements at Belleau Wood and Soissons. These early battles clearly show the major drawbacks in training and preparation directly affected by the adopted doctrine of the American Expeditionary Force. Chapter 3 examines the restructuring of the division after the disastrous early battles. Under the guidance of Major General John A. Lejeune, the division developed a synthesis of set-piece battle ideology and open-warfare. Chapter 4 concentrates on arguably the most underrated battle of the 2d Division's history, Blanc Mont. The Battle of Blanc Mont provides an ideal case study of how the American Military evolved in warfighting in the twentieth century.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
The U.S. Enters the War.....	3
Square Division Model.....	4
Historiography.....	5
Definition of Doctrine and Tactics.....	11
II. TRAINING FOR AMERICAN WARFARE IN EUROPE.....	14
Pershing’s Adoption of Open-Warfare.....	15
Close Order Drill: Troop and Stomp.....	19
Physical Conditioning: Standby for Swedish.....	22
Marksmanship: On the Range and in the Butts.....	26
Advanced, Ancillary, and Secondary Training.....	32
Final Training in France.....	41
III. INTO THE FIRE: EARLY BATTLES OF THE 2D DIVISION.....	49
Quiet Sectors in the Verdun Area.....	51
Belleau Wood: June 1-5 “The only time that the boys would stop pumping those old rifle bolts, would be to light a cigarette.”.....	57
Belleau Wood: June 6, 1918.....	63
Hill 142.....	66
Assaulting the Woods.....	69
Soissons.....	76
July 18, The First Day.....	78
July 19, The Second Day.....	82
IV. REBUILDING AND RETRAINING.....	88
Major General John A. Lejeune.....	89
Retraining to a Set-Piece Battle.....	91
St. Mihiel Salient.....	95

Chapter	Page
V. BLANC MONT	102
Target: Blanc Mont	103
October 3, the 4 th Brigade: “Despite this advantage, our casualties were quite hey.”	108
October 3, The 3d Brigade: “no auto. Rifle Ammunition- losses about 10%.”...115	115
October 4 “Maxims can make such a mess of charging men”	119
October 5-7	128
V. CONCLUSION.....	135
REFERENCES	142

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Lieutenant James Sellers of the 78th Company, 2d Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment woke early on the morning of October 3, 1918, and received distressing news. At 5:55 a.m. a runner informed Lieutenant Sellers that his company would be one of the first in an attack that the 2d Division would take part in beginning at 6:00 a.m.¹ The 2d Battalion would be at the front of an assault on Blanc Mont Ridge, a heavily fortified German position on the vaunted Hindenburg line.² Before Lieutenant Sellers could see the objective, "the Germans had set up their machine gun nests all over [Blanc Mont] so that the cross fire would cover the entire area."³

Almost from the moment the American troops began their advance they came under incessant machine gun fire from German positions. The fire was coming from the flank positions the French troops were supposed to attack along with the Americans

¹ James Gregory, *C'est La Guerre: The memoir of Captain James McBrayer Sellers, USMC* (North Adams, MA: Storied Publishing, 2020), 94.

² Gerald Clark, *Devil Dogs: Fighting Marines of World War I* (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute, 2013), 295-296.

³ Gregory, *C'est La Guerre*, 94.

which had not yet been silenced.¹ The German defenders on the American front, however, had been suppressed by the "very precise barrage, our men would be on top of the machine gun emplacements before the Germans could come up for air."² Two men from the 78th Company rushed forward and single-handedly killed several German machine gunners and captured several more. Private John J. Kelly "kill[ed] the gunner with a grenade and ...reappeared through the barrage with eight prisoners."³ Corporal John Pruitt "killed two boches with his rifle ... and then later he and a pal took 42 prisoners including 3 officers" only an hour after Private Kelly.⁴ Both men would receive the Medal of Honor, the only two given to the Marines at Blanc Mont.⁵ Private Kelly has the distinction of receiving two Medals of Honor for the same action, one from the Navy and the other from the Army.⁶

Lieutenant Sellers would survive the attack on Blanc Mont Ridge, though in the 78th Company alone he left that battle with only 83 of the 250 men that had made up his company.⁷ Even still, Lieutenant Sellers pointed out that the Battle of Blanc Mont was the 2d Division's crowning achievement: it "was the most skilled operation in which we participated...we received a great many glowing tributes." He continued by alluding to the praise the American troops garnered in taking this centerpiece of the German defensive line.⁸ This was quite an accomplishment because just eighteen months prior the United States entered the First World War after the Western Allies had been battling

¹ Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 296.

² Gregory, *C'est La Guerre*, 94.

³ Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 299.

⁴ Boche is a derogatory term from the period referring to German soldiers. Gregory, *C'est La Guerre*, 95.

⁵ Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 299.

⁶ Gregory, *C'est La Guerre*, 95.

⁷ Gregory, *C'est La Guerre*, 102.

⁸ Gregory, *C'est La Guerre*, 103.

German forces for three brutal years. Those years had wrought unprecedented horrors that previous wars had not with the use of advanced weapons brought on by the industrial revolution such as breach-loaded artillery, machine guns, poison gas, tanks, and airplanes.

The United States entered World War One on April 6, 1917, after President Woodrow Wilson spoke to congress in a thirty-six-minute speech that was received with “wild cheering and flag waiving.” The U.S. Military could only muster “127,588 men in the Regular Army and 66,594 Guardsmen in federal service.”⁹ By comparison, in a single year of fighting between the German and French Armies at Verdun in 1916, France had lost 340,000 casualties.¹⁰ However, by the end of hostilities on November 11, 1918 the United States had contributed two million soldiers all having been “raised, trained, and transported” to fight the German army and its allies.¹¹ The United States had not wasted any time; the first American troops began to arrive in France in June 1917 with the American 1st Division and the 5th Marine Regiment.¹² More American troops slowly poured into France in the following months which resulted in “American troops increased from 60,000 in May 1917 to 250,000 a month a year later” as the United States mobilized and neutralized German U-boats.¹³

⁹ David Woodward, *The American Army, and the First World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 45-46.

¹⁰ Geoffrey Wawro, *Sons of Freedom: The Forgotten American Soldiers Who Defeated Germany in World War I* (New York: Basic Books, 2018), 3.

¹¹ Jennifer D. Keene, *World War I: The American Soldier Experience* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 24.

¹² Wawro, *Sons of Freedom*, 83.

¹³ Wawro, *Sons of Freedom*, 89.

The deployment of American troops, christened the American Expeditionary Force, marked the first time in US history that a major American army would be sent overseas and also be commanded by the highly respected and political choice of General John J. Pershing.¹⁴ Pershing had directed that the new American Expeditionary Force be composed of "square divisions" which comprised two brigades of infantry which were made of two Regiments each brigade for a total of four, hence being square as opposed to a pre-war standard of a triangular division with three regiments.¹⁵ This redesign of the American fighting units meant that the typical United States Division numbered "more than 28,000 officers and men" broken into just the two infantry brigades of over 8,500 each and supporting units such as artillery, machine gun battalions, and engineers that were integrated into the division.¹⁶ When one factored in the additional supporting elements an American Division could populate the battlespace with nearly 40,000 personnel.¹⁷ These massive American divisions were unlike anything on the Western Front or in the First World War being nearly double the size of their allied counterparts or the opposing German divisions.¹⁸

However, these immense American divisions suffered similar fates to their European counterparts. While the United States only actively fought in 1918 from about June to November, it suffered casualties unlike it had in any of the previous wars.

Scholar Jennifer Keene produced a staggering look at American casualties that showed

¹⁴ Mark Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War I* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 25.

¹⁵ George Clark, *The Second Infantry Division in World War I: A History of the American Expeditionary Force Regulars, 1917-1919* (Pike, NH: McFarland & Company, 2007), 12.

¹⁶ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 27.

¹⁷ Keene, *World War I*, 129.

¹⁸ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 27.

the American Expeditionary Force had been anything but “barely bloodied by the war” having lost an “averaged 820 [men] a day” compared to The French who were losing 900 and The British 457.¹⁹ Keene noted that the casualties were even more severe during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive during the last 47 days where “casualty rates averaged 2,550 a day and 6,000 Americans died each week.”²⁰

This calls into question not only the contribution of American forces but the quality of the fighting men that made up these square divisions of the American Expeditionary Force that had the honor of being the first American Army in Europe. Did American soldiers make a difference in fighting the Germans or did soldiers and marines simply wear out the German war machine by sacrificing men and materials? Did the American involvement beat the Central Powers because there had simply been more US forces who had been plentiful and not drained from four years of brutal industrialized slaughter?

The question of combat effectiveness or quality of the American Expeditionary Force has been addressed by several historians and writers who have sought to record or examine the events of the American soldier in the First World War. Some of these have been by academic professionals, others by those very men that took part in the fighting, and more has been written by individuals with varying degrees of professionalism. The scholarly works that have focused primarily on the doctrinal approaches has been fledgling at most. Early historians, many of those who fought in the First World War, hailed the American fighting men as saviors of the Allies that hurled the Kaiser's forces

¹⁹ Keene, *World War I*, 25.

²⁰ Keene, *World War I*, 25.

back from Paris and broke the stalemate of the trenches, which resulted in the inevitable collapse on November 11.

Major General James Harbord's work *The American Army in France, 1917-1919* is a voluminous text that focused primarily with a top-down view of the American involvement. While Harbord never directly analyzed the doctrinal American approach to fighting this modern conflict, he alluded to it, particularly concerning the Western Allies. Harbord offered that the "Operations Staff, under the supervision of General Pershing" approached the coming combat in a very fluctuating "organization...for his coming Divisions."²¹ Harbord pointed out early in his work that because United States military had "never conceived participation in a war of any importance outside our continental limits...military preparations have never looked beyond national defense."²²

Other military leaders produced more surgical histories that examined specific units like Colonels' Oliver Spaulding and John Wright with *The Second Division Expeditionary Force in France, 1917-1919* which presented a unit history and selected diary entries of the 2d Division. Their assessment of American warfighting was one built from observations made "objectively, at leisure, and in a detached frame of mind" being able to build the America doctrine from the experiences of the Western Allies who had been forced into static operations surrounded by trench warfare.²³ Their argument was the American military had been proactive from lessons their allies had learned as opposed to the British and French who were forced to be reactive. Major Edwin McClellan focused

²¹ James G. Harbord, *The American Army in France, 1917-1919* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1936), 100.

²² Harbord, *The American Army in France*, 21.

²³ Colonel Oliver Spaulding and Colonel John Wright, *The Second Division American Expeditionary Force in France, 1917-1919* (Nashville, TN: The Battery Press, reprinted 1989), 9.

on the United States Marine Corps as Officer in Charge of the Marine Corps History Division who answered directly to the Commandant and pointed out that the Marine Corps record in the war provided ample evidence that the training and tactics adopted by the American Expeditionary Force denoted that American doctrinal and tactical approaches had provided the catalyst for Germany's eventual capitulation in the Great War.²⁴

Still, no real inspection of doctrinal approaches or the tactical advancement of American forces would be attempted for some time. The next half-century would be predominantly focused on specific battle studies such as Robert Asprey's *At Belleau Wood* or unit histories such as Colonel Wright and Spaulding's work on the 2d Division. Many did not seek to challenge the American involvement, some might call a crusade, in the First World War until the 1960s and 1970s during the Vietnam conflict which may have influenced many historians to reexamine American involvement in foreign conflicts. During the 1980s, World War One scholarship seemed to have gone through a renaissance of sorts where historians began to question the narrative that had dominated literature around the American Expeditionary Force in World War One.

Arguably the first real examination of the American military performance from a doctrinal or tactical standpoint came from the military itself. James Rainey's article "Ambivalent Warfare: The Tactical Doctrine of the AEF in World War I" directly pointed out that Pershing stumbled continuously to go beyond defining a modern military

²⁴ Edwin N. McClellan, *The United States Marine Corps in the World War* (Nashville, TN: The Battery Press, 1997), 28.

doctrine for the United States forces beyond demanding the adoption of open warfare.²⁵ In Rainey's conclusion, "the AEF, groped for a solution to the very fundamental problem created by the ambivalence in American tactical doctrine" which had not addressed "the nature of the war."²⁶ Timothy Nenninger published "Tactical Dysfunction in the AEF, 1917-1918" not long after Rainey and concluded that not only were Pershing and the General Headquarters of the American Expeditionary Forces responsible for poor tactical performance but that two primary factors were to blame. According to Nenninger, "troops had to be committed on a large scale...nearly a year earlier than originally planned."²⁷ Nenninger's argument postulated that American forces had not planned on being utilized until 1919 on a major scale. Second, Nenninger postulated that "the short period of American participation" in actual combat operations did not produce leaders who had experience in warfare, which suggested that the most practical and useful lessons of the American Forces came only after its first major operations.²⁸

Following these two publications more historians would become hypercritical of the American military in the First World War. Works would be published in the first decade of the new century focused primarily on topics that Nenninger and Rainey spotlighted in the 1980s. Historians like Mark Grotelueschen and Richard Faulkner with their works *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War I* and *The School of Hard Knocks: Combat Leadership in the American Expeditionary Forces*,

²⁵ James W. Rainey, "Ambivalent Warfare: The Tactical Doctrine of the AEF in World War I," *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters* 13 (July 1983):44-45.

²⁶ Rainey, "Ambivalent Warfare," 45.

²⁷ Timothy Nenninger, "Tactical Dysfunction in the AEF, 1917-1918," *Military Affairs* 51 (October 1987), 181.

²⁸ Nenninger, "Tactical Dysfunction in the AEF," 181.

respectively focused on the doctrinal and tactical approaches of the American military. Grotelueschen focused purely on the doctrine that governed the American Expeditionary Force and utilized four divisions as case studies, the 1st, 2d, 26th, and 77th fared in the war. Grotelueschen concluded that from the study of these four divisions, many divisional and lower commands did not adhere to Pershing's open warfare doctrine and began adopting more modern weapons and tactics to address problems as they presented themselves to the commanders, even if it went against higher headquarters guidance.²⁹

While Grotelueschen focused on the practical application, Faulkner explored how the young men who would be leaders were taught. Faulkner noted that prior historians had not given a focused study on "the competency of junior leadership" in the American Expeditionary Force.³⁰ Faulkner noted that to truly understand the combat effectiveness an examination needed to be made, built upon earlier works like Nenner, Rainey, and Grotelueschen, at a tactical level to understand the "factors that undercut their ability to build cohesive units capable of accomplishing their missions without prohibitive casualties."³¹

It should also be noted that Historian Mark Grotelueschen wrote a second work that shared a similar vein as this thesis. Grotelueschen's *Doctrine Under Trial: American Artillery Employment in World War I* examined a specific branch of the American military and its performance in the war. To accomplish this task, he focused on the 2d Brigade of the 2d Division in the American Expeditionary Force. Grotelueschen argued

²⁹ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 9.

³⁰ Richard S. Faulkner, *The School of Hard Knocks: Combat Leadership in the American Expeditionary Force* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2012), 6.

³¹ Faulkner, *The School of Hard Knocks*, 6.

this was necessary as “larger studies have approached the whole of the AEF, enabling authors to pick and choose.”³² Grotelueschen feared that this allowed historians to either “accentuate the successes...or focus on the numerous instances of failures.”³³ In his opinion this was why the historiography of the American contribution in the First World War was polarized between pro-Pershing works that lauded the U.S. Military or Revisionists who derided it.³⁴

Since then, many other historians have dissected the American military in the First World War with a more critical lens. These historians have cast aside the traditional views of many infallible American soldiers and marines for an opinion that lends one to think the United States military bashed itself against the German army instead of defeating it with superior fighting prowess. Historians like Edward Lengel lauded Faulkner and Grotelueschen as having created unique histories that tackled the difficult questions about American shortfalls. Instead of focusing on later American campaigns like the Meuse-Argonne, Lengel argued that earlier campaigns needed attention because they harbored valuable answers to how Americans learned to fight in a modern war.³⁵ More modern historians like Jeffrey LaMonica noted that ultimately the American military adapted more readily based on combat experience as opposed to “formal training [that had] failed to prepare the AEF for modern industrialized warfare.”³⁶

³² Mark Grotelueschen, *Doctrine Under Trial: American Artillery Employment in World War I* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), xx.

³³ Grotelueschen, *Doctrine Under Trial*, xx.

³⁴ Grotelueschen, *Doctrine Under Trial*, xx.

³⁵ Edward Lengel, *Thunder, and Flames: Americans in the Crucible of Combat, 1917-1918* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2015), 5.6.

³⁶ Jeffery LaMonica, *American Tactical Advancement in World War I: The New Lessons of Combined Arms and Open Warfare* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, INC, 2017), 3.

To better understand the focus of these historians it is required to understand what the definition of doctrine and tactics really mean. Doctrine is defined on The U.S. Military Academy's website as "fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives."³⁷ Tactics are defined as "the employment and ordered arrangement of forces in relation to each other."³⁸ Doctrine is considered general principles for a military as a large organization. Tactics are conducted at much smaller levels in specific events or battles. In the case of the American Expeditionary Force, the U.S. doctrine was centered on the rifle and its presence on the battlefield. The tactics focused primarily on the infantry who wielded those rifles, with the combat support elements such as machine guns given only cursory guidance.

This thesis is intended to address a question about the First World War, aiming to better help identify how (or if) the American military evolved properly for the rigors of the First World War. Was the doctrine adopted by the United States suited for fighting its first modern war? Was the training and preparation the primary driving factor for American combat effectiveness on the Western Front? Had the preparation and training been focused around observations made on lessons the Europeans had learned in three years of war? Or, were the direct consequences the American Forces endured on the Western Front what truly invoked change? By analyzing the doctrinal approaches and

³⁷ "What is Army Doctrine?" *Modern War Institute*, John Spencer, 3/21/16, [What is Army Doctrine? - Modern War Institute \(usma.edu\)](http://www.usma.edu/What-is-Army-Doctrine/)

³⁸ "What is Army Doctrine?" John Spencer.

tactics employed by the American Expeditionary Force historians may gain a better understanding of future conflicts that the United States found itself entwined in.

The focus of this examination will be conducted by utilizing the American 2d Division which was an amalgamated unit composed of both regular army units and the elements of the United States Marine Corps that were sent to France. The 2d Division served in nearly every major campaign having fought longer in combat, inflicting higher casualties, while also having absorbed some of the highest.³⁹ By using this division it offers the ability to examine two separate branches of the United States military and their approach to doctrine and training preparation. Furthermore, with the 2d Division's longer service in the war, a study on this unit allows for a wider scope to examine combat efficiency early in the war with men who initially joined the division, compared to the replacements sent to fill the ranks as the division fought in subsequent campaigns.

This thesis will be broken into four chapters. The first chapter will examine the United States' military training plan for the newly developed American Expeditionary Force and how the adopted doctrine effected it. The second chapter will compare early battles of the 2d Division such as the campaigns of Belleau Wood and Soissons in June and July of 1918. Chapter three will follow with an examination that will focus on August 1918 when the 2d Division reformed, refitted, and retrained; something not many units were allowed to conduct. The final chapter will offer a case study focusing on the Battle of Blanc Mont in October 1918. This engagement is one of the most overlooked battles in the First World War and yet called “the single greatest achievement of the 1918

³⁹ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 200.

campaign” by Marshal Petain.⁴⁰ This presentation is similar how Grotelueschen presented the 2d Field Artillery Brigade in *Doctrine Under Trial* by tracing the genesis of the division through its major engagements. Ideally this would mean the goal would be the same to highlight critical shortfalls and distinct capabilities of the American Expeditionary Force.⁴¹

A careful analysis will yield a better understanding of the state of the American Expeditionary Force that went to war with Germany and fought in its first industrialized war. By using the 2d Division certain trends should appear that highlight whether the American military had been able to adapt and adopt modern weapons into its inventory. Or, if the American military had presented itself as an inflexible organization capable of improving on the field of battle in the First World War. By the closing days of the war, was the American Expeditionary Force a suitable force that had become tactically proficient with a sound military doctrine? Or, had The American Expeditionary Force simply overpowered the German war machine by jamming the cogs with American casualties?

⁴⁰ Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 288.

⁴¹ Grotelueschen, *Doctrine Under Trial*, xxii.

CHAPTER II

TRAINING FOR AMERICAN WARFARE IN EUROPE

When the United States went to war with Germany in 1917 it had not been in a conventional war since the Spanish-American War of 1898. Prior to that, the last major conflict the United States was embroiled in was its own Civil War from 1861 to 1865. Dispersed in between these wars were numerous irregular wars fighting unconventionally against Native Americans, insurrectionists, rebels, and other para-military organizations. These conflicts had merited limited American military involvement of small garrisons, not massive armies. General John Pershing was tasked with taking what would become the largest American military force, to that point in history, overseas in to fight in a modern industrial war. Consequently, the United States Military force that existed was minuscule in size and without sound military doctrine for conventional warfare.

Major General John J. Pershing was arguably an ideal candidate to lead this new American Expeditionary Force in France. According to historian Geoffrey Wawro Pershing was “young and energetic” having recently served south of the United States border in the Punitive Expedition to Mexico.¹ Pershing also had experience in the Spanish-American War, fought Moro

¹ Geoffrey Wawro, *Sons of Freedom: The Forgotten American Soldiers who defeated Germany in World War I* (New York: Basic Books, 2018), 55.

insurrectionists in the Philippines, and combated Native Americans on the American Plains during the 1880s.¹ In Major General James Harbord's opinion these credentials had made Pershing the ideal candidate as he had predominantly held several more combat commands than the general officer's senior to him had.² Wawro noted that Pershing's experiences included observing the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 where he saw modern war first hand.³ Historian James Rainey noted that Pershing's experiences in Manchuria had formulated many early impressions that the American General had regarding modern weapons on the battlefield.⁴ Pershing set about the task of preparing his army to face a similar situation.

In Pershing's own words "the most important question that confronted us...was training."⁵ In order to accurately train and prepare this body of men, the United States Military needed to decide upon the kind of doctrine they would go to war with. Pershing feared any adoption of European doctrine or tactics, especially the French. Pershing believed under French guidance "our instruction would have been limited to a brief period of training for trench fighting."⁶ Pershing held that the French had lost their aggressive offensive spirit in favor of attrition warfare. If the American troops were to succeed, they would need "to adopt sound doctrines of training and make them

¹ Wawro, *Sons of Freedom*, 55.

² Major General James G. Harbord, *The American Army in France, 1917-1919* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1936), 33.

³ Wawro, *Sons of Freedom*, 55-56.

⁴ James W. Rainey, "Ambivalent Warfare: The Tactical Doctrine of the AEF in World War I," *The US Army War College Quarterly*, Volume 13, 1983, 36-37, "[AMBIVALENT WARFARE: THE TACTICAL DOCTRINE OF THE AEF IN WORLD WAR I](https://www.armywarcollege.edu/ambivalent-warfare-the-tactical-doctrine-of-the-aeef-in-world-war-i/)" by James W. Rainey ([armywarcollege.edu](https://www.armywarcollege.edu)).

⁵ General John J. Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1931), 150, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.b4028142>, accessed 03/27/2023.

⁶ Pershing, *My Experiences*, 152.

essentially our own.”⁷ Pershing’s approach would become what historians like James Rainey or Timothy Nenninger argued was one of the greatest handicaps to the American Expeditionary Force. Rainey postulated that Pershing held the belief only American riflemen, trained in superior marksmanship, aggressive spirit, and mobility could break the current position warfare of the trenches without relying on weapons that dominated position warfare.⁸

Pershing would adopt an open-warfare doctrine focused heavily on the rifle and infantry. The reliance on the rifle for firepower was the definition of American warfighting which had been codified during the conflicts in the American West.⁹ Pershing postulated “the rifle and bayonet still remained the essential weapons of the infantry...the basic principles of warfare had not changed.”¹⁰ The *Infantry Drill Regulations* that governed military conduct of troops stated “success depends on gaining and maintaining fire superiority.”¹¹ Historians like James Rainey argued that Pershing believed the rifle was the tool which would gain the upper hand in fire superiority over German machine guns by concentrated accurate fire.¹² Deeper reading into Pershing’s words however reveals that he wanted the infantryman to be the primary focus to harbor an aggressive and offensive spirit. Pershing argued “machine guns, grenades, stokes

⁷ Pershing, *My Experiences*, 151.

⁸ Rainey, “Ambivalent Warfare,” 34.

⁹ Perry D. Jamieson, *Crossing the Deadly Ground: United States Army Tactics, 1865-1899* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1994), 55.

¹⁰ Pershing, *My Experiences*, 154.

¹¹ U.S. Army, *Infantry Drill Regulations 1911, With Text Corrections to February 12, 1917. Changes No. 18* (New York: Military Publishing Co., 1917), 100.

¹² Rainey, “Ambivalent Warfare,” 35-36.

mortars, and one-pounders had become the main reliance of the average soldier...but they could not replace the combination of an efficient soldier and his rifle.”¹³

Pershing’s argument was backed by the *Infantry Drill Regulations* which gave little instruction to the use or coordination of artillery and machine guns. In the case of machine guns the *Infantry Drill regulations* specifically state that “machine guns must be considered as weapons of emergency” offering good support to infantry for short periods of time.¹⁴ Supplemental material also limited the scope of weapons like machine guns to condemn them to “no independent role” and “greater vulnerability...compared to infantry.”¹⁵ Pershing commented in his memoir “not only were we without sufficient machine guns, but our organization tables did not anticipate their use in...numbers employed by the enemy.”¹⁶ This greatly lends to the often held belief today that little thought was given to infantry weapons, their training, or use by the American forces in France. General James Harbord in his memoir would associate Allied and Germany power in terms of sheer numbers of rifles that by “November 11, 1918 it was six hundred and twenty-seven thousand” more in favor of the Allies.¹⁷

Pershing wanted to foster a doctrine of aggressive and offensive nature, though many commanders seemed to have taken his cult of the rifle doctrine to heart. Pershing believed he could not trust European Allies’ doctrine and training as “the French...had

¹³A One pounder is another name given to the 37mm light cannon that were issued to infantry. These will play a significant role later when the 2d Division enters combat. Pershing, *My Experiences*, 154.

¹⁴ U.S. Army, *Infantry Drill Regulations*, 123.

¹⁵ United States Army, *Drill Regulations for machine-gun platoons, infantry, 1909* (Washington D.C.: United States War Department, 1909), 65.

¹⁶ Pershing, *My Experiences*, 131.

¹⁷ Major General James G. Harbord, *The American Army in France, 1917-1919* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1936), 464.

been on the defensive, at least in thought, during the previous half century.”¹⁸ Pershing believed “that the victory could not be won by the costly process of attrition, but...by driving the enemy out into the open.”¹⁹ American doctrinal theoreticians of the period were theorizing along the same lines. Major John H. Russell of the U.S. Marine Corps commented that American doctrine should mirror the relationship that Germany’s command and their army shared. Primarily that “flexibility of command spells initiative...the introduction of doctrine means *Reliable Initiative*.”²⁰ Colonel John A. Lejeune of the U.S. Marines argued in favor of his branch adopting a doctrine around the Advanced Base Force concept where “The Marine Corps would be the first to set foot on hostile soil in order to seize, fortify, and hold a port from which, as a base, the Army would prosecute its campaign.”²¹

It stands to reason that the American military sought an offensive and aggressive doctrine. One that would drive the German Army from its trenches on the Western Front. In Russell’s mind it would require commanders who “can boldly take the offensive” with all parts of the army working in tandem.²² Pershing foresaw one major issue with applying his offensive doctrine of open-warfare. Pershing noted “it was one thing to call one or two million men to the colors, and quite another thing to transform them into an organized, instructed army” capable of meeting the German Army who had three years of combat experience.²³ Russell agreed that “no matter how well organized and equipped, an

¹⁸ Pershing, *My Experiences*, 131.

¹⁹ Pershing, *My Experiences*, 152.

²⁰ Major John H. Russell, “A Plea for Mission and Doctrine,” *The Marine Corps Gazette*, originally published June 1916, Vol. 100, March 2016, 19.

²¹ Colonel John A. Lejeune, “The Mobile Defense of Advanced Bases by the Marine Corps,” *The Marine Corps Gazette*, Col. 1, March 1916, 2.

²² Russell, “A Plea for Mission,” 19.

²³ Pershing, *My Experiences*, 150.

organization will...deteriorate” without well trained personnel in the doctrinal principles of the military.²⁴

Close Order Drill: Troop and Stomp

From the first days that the young men arrived in training camps one of the first official military instruction that they were introduced to was learning how to march with their rifles. Private Don Paradis mentioned the introduction to drill aided the instructors in being able to move the large formations of men around, in his case “marching back and forth to the supply depot” where the recruits were issued their bedding, field equipment, and rifles.²⁵ Drill instilled the initial catalyst of discipline that would be required of these raw recruits to no longer act as individuals but as members of a fighting organization. Private Brannen noted it was a formidable tool in tearing down the recruit’s ego and instilling “what little we knew of military affairs.”²⁶ Private Jackson recounted in his memoir that “drilling about five hours...in the broiling sun...did not cause me to meditate on serving out the full thirty years in the Marine Corps.”²⁷ Private Rendinell wrote home that those early days were “drill, drill, drill, early morning to late at night.”²⁸ Private Victor Sparks related in his memoir that within days of arriving at Parris Island

²⁴ Russell, “A Plea for Mission,” 17.

²⁵ Don V. Paradis, *The World War I Memoirs of Don V. Paradis, Gunnery Sergeant, USMC* (Coppell, TX: 2010), 20.

²⁶ Carl Brannen, *Over There: A Marine in the Great War* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 5.

²⁷ Warren R. Jackson and George Clark, *His Time in Hell: A Texas Marine in France, The World War I Memoir of Warren R. Jackson* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 2002), 8.

²⁸ George B. Clark, *Devil Dogs: Fighting Marines of World War I* (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute, 2013), 30-31.

they “almost immediately had close order drill and were initiated into the realm of guard duty.”²⁹

While close-order drill served and still does, to instill discipline and obedience to orders, it also created a considerable issue among the junior fighting men. Faulkner noted that an exorbitant amount of time was given to drill. Drill took up a considerable amount of training time because it was easy to learn and teach with minimum need for equipment. However, it stunted creativity among the men and leaders who relied too heavily on close-order marching formations instead of open-rank formations better suited to the Western Front.³⁰

The emphasis on drill would continue to dominate a large portion of time during training exercises both in the United States and in France. A major reason that drill was focused on seems to be the lack of experience in the officers leading the units who were at many times required to help train recruits in the camps. Faulkner proposed that the sudden existence of training camps and the lack of a solid cadre of instructors led to a variance in training standards which forced many young officers to fall back on “marching and bayonet practice.”³¹ This was an issue suffered in both the army camps as well as at Marine Corps bases. Writer James Nelson’s biography of Clifton Cates noted that the officer training that was supposed to take three months was cut short after only a

²⁹ Memoir, 1917-1919, Record COLL/206, Home A/14/C/2/4, Victor D. Spark Collection, United States Marine Corps Historical Division, Quantico, VA.

³⁰ Richard S. Faulkner, *Pershing’s Crusaders: The American Soldier in World War I* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2017), 85.

³¹ Richard S. Faulkner, *The School of Hard Knocks: Combat Leadership in the American Expeditionary Forces* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2012), 41.

matter of weeks when they received their platoons for training in Quantico fresh from Parris Island.³²

The true failure of commanders relying too heavily on drill lay in the simplest purpose of why the drill was taught and used in the military. As noted, its primary purposes were to “move as a mass in the most rapid...means possible” and “welding individuals into a collective whole” through discipline.³³ Peter Owen agreed that drill was simply intended “as rudimentary tactical doctrines” aimed at creating a cohesive unit.³⁴ Even the current *Infantry Drill Regulations* of the period noted in the opening lines of its introductory chapter on drill that “drill regulations are furnished as a guide...provid[ing] the principles for training” which would assist in a greater chance of success in battle, but not the sole skill for success.³⁵ While the United State military had a semi-solid foundation of operational doctrine for combat operations and the tactics to be used, the rapid expansion of the military greatly hindered proficient training. The heavy reliance on replacing field maneuvers with parade-ground drill exercises created a staunch discipline among the American military men however, could not protect the troops from German machine guns and artillery.

While the open warfare doctrine of the United States Military may have held flaws, it cannot be understated that the men leading those men, had little professional experience to rely on beyond the parade ground in how to command and deploy their

³² James D. Nelson, *I Will Hold: The Story of USMC Legend Clifton B. Cates, From Belleau Wood to Victory in the Great War* (New York: Caliber, 2016), 31-32.

³³ Faulkner, *Pershing's Crusaders*, 85.

³⁴ Peter F. Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance: A Battalion of Marines in the Great War* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2014), 7.

³⁵ U.S. Army, *Infantry Drill Regulations*, 9.

troops. The doctrine Pershing himself had openly promoted had been open warfare by fire and maneuver which relied on the rifle. However, the United States military had not been afforded the time to hone the skills for commanders to effectively learn how to control their troops in combat. A major pillar in the faults of American doctrine was the over-reliance on drill.

Physical Conditioning: Standby for Swedish

A second aspect that began in basic training was one of the most advantageous perspectives of the American Expeditionary Force and one major flaw in its application. American troops in France were noted for their stature and build as well as their eagerness to fight as it often reminded French soldiers of themselves in 1914, fit and ready.³⁶ The United States military had taken a keen sense of interest in its' military's physical performance since the 1890s. Having published the *Manual of Physical Training* the United States armed forces were set in better conditions than their European counterparts to have the most physically fit bodies of men in uniform during the First World War.³⁷ Physical training and physical conditioning were one of the most often used pastimes in the American Expeditionary Force for filling periods where no training was scheduled. During basic training, this could be in the form of rifle calisthenics, long-distance road marches, or simple runs to build up the recruits. Often, however, it was also used as a form of punishment for infractions during classroom instructions or drills.

³⁶ Jennifer D. Keene, *World War I: The American Soldier Experience* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 123.

³⁷ Faulkner, *Pershing's Crusaders*, 85.

Regardless, several recruits realized that early in their initial training their bodies were being molded and formed into fit fighting machines.

One of the most prodigious physical conditioning events that recruits and full-blown soldiers or Marines experienced were the road marches and long-distance hikes. The *Infantry Drill Regulations* specifically stated not only the necessity of a military body to be able to carry out such maneuvers but why it was impertinent to the body of both the individual and group. The regulations pointed out that marching over distances helped “develop the general physique” to “accustom men to the fatigue of bearing arms and equipment.”³⁸ These road marches would usually be conducted with full gear, packs weighing some sixty pounds, and a rifle which was all born on the shoulders by either the packs’ thin khaki shoulder straps or the rifles’ leather sling. Paradis recalled their training company’s first hike was either “ten or twelve miles” on “one hot morning” where many only finished through “sheer grit and determination.”³⁹

Often veterans of the First World War would remember when their formations were commanded to “standby for Swedish” which was a comparative descriptive title given to the rifle calisthenics claimed to have been adopted from the Swedish form of physical conditioning involving one rifle.⁴⁰ These rifle calisthenics involved the nearly ten-pound service rifle to be used as a free weight that incurred “gasps, wheezes, coughs, grunts, and occasional farts” from recruits and soldiers alike.⁴¹ These exercises included,

³⁸ U. S. Army, *Infantry Drill Regulations*, 141.

³⁹ Paradis, *The World War I Memoirs*, 21.

⁴⁰ George B. Clark, *Devil Dogs Chronicle: Voices of the 4th marine Brigade in World War I* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2013), 32.

⁴¹ Clark, *Devil Dogs Chronicle*, 32.

but were not limited to, lifts, lunges, curls, and a myriad of other exercises intended to “make either a man or a lunatic out of you.”⁴² Swedish drill was also referred to as “butts and muzzles” where it was described as being “forced...through unnatural contortions” with their rifles.⁴³ Brannen recalled that the drill sergeants “made [you] feel that he was no earthly good...the sooner he got cut down...the better off the country would be.”⁴⁴ For many, those rifle calisthenics were some of the harshest periods in their training. However, there was another form of physical conditioning that rivaled even the dreaded Swedish and would prove to potentially cause more harm to the training regime than all other physical conditioning.

If there was one activity that embodied not only physical conditioning, punishment, and military training, it was bayonet drill. The bayonet had long held a fascination for commanders of the military, arguing that the bayonet would be where the war would be decided. However, in the American military, it had been argued as far back as the American Civil War that the bayonets day had come and gone. Historian Perry Jamieson noted that the bayonet use had fallen out of favor among many in a post-Civil War time including notable figures such as General Phil Sheridan and General William T. Sherman.⁴⁵ This sentiment can be seen in the *Infantry Drill Regulations* which notes that “infantry soldier[s] relies mainly on fire action to disable the enemy” yet pointed out the value of such training that “personal combat is often necessary to obtain success.”⁴⁶ Bayonet drill and “fencing at will” as the *Infantry Drill Regulations* call the sparring

⁴² Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, 6.

⁴³ Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, 6.

⁴⁴ Brannen, *Over There*, 6.

⁴⁵ Jamieson, *Crossing the Deadly Ground*, 11.

⁴⁶ U. S. Army, *Infantry Drill Regulations*, 219.

which aimed to “stimulate the zeal of the men and arouse pleasure in their work.”⁴⁷

Historian Jennifer Keene took that into account when she argued that the goal of the bayonet drill was to foster confidence and aggressiveness making one comfortable being able to see the eyes of a man you just drove a long blade into.⁴⁸

Many young men echoed this sentiment about bayonet practice. Private Stewart recalled being issued his M1905 bayonet for the M1903 Springfield rifle which appeared to him like “wicked old steak knives and sharp. I’ll be scared of my own rifle with it on.”⁴⁹ Peter Owen noted that Private Kruelewitch found the training tortuous as “you had to squat down in a peculiar position” and the techniques were questionable as “the crazy things they taught you: parry, bayonet thrust, parry saber thrust, parry calvary attack.”⁵⁰ Paradis recalled a particular lesson learned “to always twist your rifle as you pulled [the bayonet] out of a body, otherwise, it might stick and you would have a hard time withdrawing it out and probably too late by that time.”⁵¹

Bayonet training and drills undoubtedly instilled several ideals in young men's minds. First, it instilled immediate obedience to orders to kill or be killed. As noted by Keene, it made the war very apparent that it would be a personal affair. Second, it built the essential discipline to be able and charge an enemy with the intent of killing them, spurred by inspiration garnered by senior leadership that had taught these young men.

⁴⁷ U. S. Army, *Infantry Drill Regulations*, 245.

⁴⁸ Keene, *World War I*, 52.

⁴⁹ Thomas L. Stewart, *the story of One Marine: The World War I Letters and Photos of Pvt. Thomas L. Stewart* (Ashland, OR: Hellgate Press, 2017), 33.

⁵⁰ Kruelewitch interview, Oral History Collection, Historical Reference Branch, U.S. Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA, 19. Cited in Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, 6.

⁵¹ Memoir, 1918-1974, Record COLL/3039 Home A/14/1/3/1, Don V. Paradis Collection, United States Marine Corps Historical Division, Quantico, VA.

Last, the use of the bayonet made these young men somewhat comfortable with the notion of war being a killing sport. All of these helped mold these men with the aggressive spirit of Pershing's doctrine. However, the fascination of the bayonet would permeate, and as we later see was emphasized by allies who had long realized its time on the battlefield had passed as the point where the war would be decided.

Marksmanship: On the Range and in the Butts

The American Expeditionary Force knew where it was going to fight and whom it was going to fight. However, the First World War proved a dilemma for the American military machine as this would be its first modern industrial war with a battlefield ruled by the artillery and the machine gun. To General Pershing the path forward was to lead the charge out of the trenches and force the German 'Hun' into open warfare.⁵² This means the divisions were expected to fight a war of maneuver and speed with firepower. For the American Expeditionary Force, the firepower was the American rifle and the marksman that wielded the rifle. Of the three tenants that were focused on in the basic training of the American soldier in the First World War, marksmanship training was the most prevalent and serious training that doughboy and Marine experienced. Significant blocks of training time were sectioned off for marksmanship training. Whether it was in basic training, advanced training afterward, or during the period American units were in France that they had to be trained by their allied counterparts. No one was more a

⁵² Mark E. Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War I* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 25.

proponent than General Pershing who issued his October 1917 directive that outlined the rifle and its bayonet being the primary arm of the fighting infantry.⁵³

The training for both the United States Army and Marines was methodical and lengthy. Several Marine veterans often wrote a large bulk of their memoirs or letters home regarding their time and training on the range. For many, the range was the culminating exercise of basic training. For others, it was a major point in the military service to prove one's validity in the ranks. Private Stewart wrote home about the in-depth school of marksmanship he received at Parris Island in 1917 about the different sights, holds, how to use them, when to use them, and how to read the environment that would affect the accuracy of the shooter.⁵⁴ Private Jackson called his time on the range "indeed a novel experience" as the coaches and trainers that taught the men were "skilled riflemen, several of whom held...world's records."⁵⁵ Private Bullis noted the severity of shooting well as your pay would increase the higher you were ranked as either a Marksman, Sharpshooter, or Rifle Expert. So much, that "the day [Private Bullis] shot for the record, I was nervous...and I had to be content with a Marksman's pay."⁵⁶ Private Grube noted that "we fired 60 rounds" with "the highest possible score was 300. To make an expert a man must make 252, a sharpshooter 237, and a marksman 202."⁵⁷

⁵³ Faulkner, *Pershing's Crusaders*, 87.

⁵⁴ Stewart, *The Story of One Marine*, 21.

⁵⁵ Jackson, *His Time in Hell*, 10.

⁵⁶ Bullis noted that a Marksman would receive \$2.00 more per month, a sharpshooter received \$3.00 and an Expert would get \$5.00 more per month. Everard J. Bullis, *Doing my Bit Over There: A U.S. Marine's Memoir of the Western Front in World War I* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland Press, 2018), 7.

⁵⁷ Diary, 1918-1919, COLL306, A/29/C/4/3, Vincent B. Grube Collection, United States Marine Corps Historical Division, Quantico, VA.

Faulkner appraised the Army course of fire that was used to train young recruits as being extensive and in-depth, culminating in over “forty hours of musketry and the fundamentals of the rifle followed by eighty hours of the individual, squad, and platoon firing.”⁵⁸ Assuming that the training day could be roughly ten hours a day that would equate to some two weeks’ worth of marksmanship training for the regular army. Peter F. Owen noted that the Marine Corps would “astound both allies and adversaries” with basic training giving “three weeks of tedious instruction and practice” which “The Corps...refused to cut corners.”⁵⁹ Private Brannen briefly noted that the instructors on Marine Corps ranges were all “expert rifle and pistol shots” that coached the recruits.⁶⁰ Private Victor Spark recalled in his memoir that “the coach one had was interested in having you, as a pupil qualify.”⁶¹

Learning the deadly trade of rifle marksmanship was no small feat. Many of the veterans recalled the distances that they would shoot at. Private Stewart recalled “we shoot rapid fire...at 200, 300, and 500 yards; and slow fire at 300, 500, and 600 yards” at bull’s eyes that were either “a 20 inch...or an 8 inch” depending on the range.⁶² Private Jackson noted that the course of fire was a time in a way where “if the fellow got excited or was unnecessarily fast...his marksmanship was lowered...if he fired too slowly there would not be enough time...and this ran his score down.”⁶³ Don Paradis gave a detailed account of his day of qualification with his boot camp buddy, O’Kelly, and the

⁵⁸ Faulkner, *Pershing’s Crusaders*, 87-88.

⁵⁹ Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, 6.

⁶⁰ Brannen, *Over There*, 5.

⁶¹ Memoir, 1917-1919, Victor D. Spark Collection.

⁶² Stewart, *The Story of One Marine*, 21.

⁶³ Jackson, *His Time in Hell*, 10.

competition that transpired between recruits about “to get one of the medals” for either marksman, sharpshooter, or expert including the meticulous checking for the cleanliness of the rifle, proper placement of their slings, and the physical exertion such as going “from the standing position to prone position” or reloading the rifle during the short period one had to shoot.⁶⁴

This is not to say that the Army’s course of fire or training was less strenuous than the Marine Corps. The Army’s *Small Arms Firing Manual* outlined the courses of fire into separate tables with the first two being for “slow fire” on two separate target styles and the third course being the rapid-fire segment during an instructional period and a final table for recording scores.⁶⁵ Faulkner noted that the Army felt that the prescribed training simulated firing in combat conditions including a rapid-fire table that mirrored the Marine Corps of ten rounds in one minute from multiple positions.⁶⁶ However, one noticeable difference is the slow fire periods in the Marine and Army course of fire where the Marine recruits had a time limit whereas the army course of fire was untimed. This lack of a time limit alleviated the tension of taking too long and losing points for the record.

One major attribute that helped prepare the young recruits for armed conflict was working in the “butt” or the long linear pit behind a safety berm where the targets were kept, raised, lowered, and scored. While the system of having people downrange where bullets are impacting seems foolhardy, it served a specific purpose. Primarily, it made

⁶⁴ Memoir, 1918-1974, Don V. Paradis Collection.

⁶⁵ War Department, *Small Arms Firing Manual, 1913: Corrected to April 13, 1917* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1917), 79.

⁶⁶ Faulkner, *Pershing’s Crusaders*, 88.

these young recruits understand what a bullet passing by felt like, the sound it made, and to become comfortable while it happened feet above their heads. Private Jackson recalled the fusillade of rifle fire like “a terrific din...it was very exciting for a beginner to be down in the ditch...while steel balls from one of the highest-powered rifles in the world sped bullets overhead.”⁶⁷ Private Stewart pointed out in a letter to his family how important working down in the butts was considered as fights broke out about “miss marking targets” which resulted in “several fellows got summary court-martial” and “two men ...got the brig” for the affair.⁶⁸

Private Carl Snair may have avoided duty in the rifle butts as he noted the first time he had bullets pass over his head was in France during the attack at St. Mihiel.⁶⁹ Private Stewart also commented on rumors that “the French fire on the Sammies in trenches to get them used to fire” which could mean the concept never occurred to young Marine recruits that the butts were to prepare them for rifle fire where the training in France specifically was organized to make it as realistic as possible.⁷⁰ If this is to be believed then perhaps training on the range was not as inclusive or intensive as others purported.

The United States Army seemed to suffer from one notable restriction on marksmanship training. This issue lay in the lack of appropriate firearms with which to train its recruits. At the onset of the war, the United States only had approximately

⁶⁷ Jackson, *His Time in Hell*, 11.

⁶⁸ Stewart, *The Story of One Marine*, 11-13.

⁶⁹ Memoir, 1918-1919, Collection COLL/70 A5/H/2/4, Carl L. Snair Collection, United States Marine Corps Historical Division, Quantico, VA.

⁷⁰ Sammies is a term that Allied troops gave Americans. Stewart, *The Story of One Marine*, 30.

“285,000 Springfield rifles on hand.”⁷¹ Faulkner was a bit more optimistic as he claimed the records show that “in April 1917 the army had less than six hundred thousand of the” 1903 Springfield rifle.⁷² Regardless, there were not enough rifles to support the American military that was going to go from hundreds of thousands to millions of troops within a year. Faulkner noted that the Army went into panic mode and began issuing second-line rifles such as the 1898 Krag-Jorgenson from the Spanish-American war, Springfield Trapdoor rifles from the Indian War days, and even supposed American Civil War rifles. Some of these are from over a half-century ago and grossly outdated by the weapons on the Western Front to equip recruits in basic training.⁷³

Private Stewart noted that “the allies use the Enfield rifle” and that the American troops would probably be issued those once in France predominantly because “the ammunition is easier to get.”⁷⁴ This statement probably is in reference to the British Lee-Enfield rifle that the British Expeditionary Force would be issued and potentially refer to the idea that once over there, American troops would be equipped with Allied weapons. However, it could potentially refer to the second American rifle, the M1917, often referred to as an Eddystone or Enfield rifle. The M1917 would be issued on a larger scale than the 1903 but even still several young soldiers would arrive in France without ever firing a shot or completing the qualification course of fire.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Laurence Stallings, *The Doughboys: The Story of the AEF, 1917-1918* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 25.

⁷² Faulkner, *Pershing's Crusaders*, 213.

⁷³ Faulkner, *Pershing Crusaders*, 88-90.

⁷⁴ Stewart, *The Story of One Marine*, 21.

⁷⁵ The United States was forced to issue both the M1903 Springfield and M1917 Enfield due to the massive shortage of weapons that the United States suffered in the First World War. The 2d Division would be issued the M1903 however many American replacements that joined the unit later were trained on the M1917. Stallings, *The Doughboys*, 25.

While the American idea of open warfare hinged heavily on the American Rifleman being the backbone of the firepower the American Expeditionary Force would wield on the Western Front there were several issues with the ability of the training to have created effective fighters. First, the marksmanship courses themselves suffered from several setbacks including a lack of rifles, proficient coaches, and sufficient ranges for young men to qualify on. Second, a smaller issue is that the United States military suffered a shortage of ammunition prevented soldiers and marines from completing their training. Private Stewart pointed out that they only received “half what they used to get” to qualify for Marine basic training.⁷⁶

Advanced, Ancillary, and Secondary Training

After weeks of basic training, young men across the country graduated as newly minted soldiers or marines. Molded by a forge that gave these young men discipline from drill, physical strength from long days of physical training, and honed weapons capable of hitting small targets at nearly a half-mile distance they now faced a new daunting task. These young men would have to go to secondary training or ancillary camps that would be designed to simulate war on the Western Front as accurately as possible. While this proved an ideal opportunity to shift focus from introducing young fighting men to the introductory training that was basic boot camp, it would prove to be disorganized and ill-focused training. Predominantly the training would not focus on Pershing’s ideologue of open warfare, instead focusing primarily on trench warfare, or worse; skills learned and mastered in basic training.

⁷⁶ Stewart, *The Story of One Marine*, 28.

Training centers like Quantico, Virginia were designed to introduce the newly inculcated marines to the rigors of the Western front. The intention was where basic training was to create marines, Quantico was intended to teach them how to fight as marines in the Twentieth century.⁷⁷ Peter Owen noted that the facility at Quantico suffered similarly to the training camps across the country as they built and expanded as fast as men arrived to fill the barracks being built.⁷⁸ This was the first time the actual companies and battalions would be formed, especially the 6th Regiment. For many of these units, it would be “the blind leading the blind” as many of these officers had, at best, three months of training to prepare them as leaders on the modern battlefield.⁷⁹

As noted earlier, Nelson pointed out that Lieutenant Cates did not receive the three-month prescribed to his class of officers before being sent to the advanced training in Quantico. Lieutenant James Sellers assigned to the 78th Company noted that his training had been cut short because he had prior military training at Wentworth Military Academy even though that “one month of actual training...consisted of digging trenches and drilling daily.”⁸⁰ Nelson noted that Cates, assigned to the 96th Company, felt the training officers received for leading Marines had consisted of drilling and digging trenches with some emphasis on the use of grenades by throwing dummy grenades, but “a lot of it wasn’t worth much...at least half wasn’t worth a hoorah.”⁸¹ Training of officers appears to have been a shortfall on several levels. Faulkner noted that a

⁷⁷ Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 16.

⁷⁸ Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, 12-13.

⁷⁹ Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 16.

⁸⁰ Interview Transcript, 1917-1990, Collection COLL/2028 Home A/14/I/3/1, James M. Sellers Collection, United States Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

⁸¹ Nelson, *I Will Hold*, 31.

significant number of new officers did not even complete the basic marksmanship course or only the Army's bare minimum which did not bode well when these officers would be expected to perform as leaders.⁸² In many of these cases, the United States Army had officers who had just graduated from these officers' schools training the next cycle of classes being just one step ahead of their students.⁸³ Quite a bit of the time spent, however, was misused in teaching archaic skills designed for the nineteenth-century battlefield instead Western Front. A good example was the time spent on semaphore, "how to send and receive messages using visual signals" with special flags.⁸⁴

While the Marine Corps seems to have held back a cadre of older Marines to teach the young officers at Winthrop and Quantico, they were faced with their own setbacks. Cates documented the wasted time he spent on semaphore training which he found useless to a second lieutenant and took up "at least half of [his] time."⁸⁵ Sellers recalled begrudgingly that his preparation as an officer was underwhelming in hindsight when he claimed "we had no real training in map reading or anything of that sort. We didn't have time for it."⁸⁶ An explanation for the lack of time may be the Marine Corps was forced to adopt Army drills and regulations in lieu of their Naval ones. Sellers pointed out that "we were told we would change the Marine method of drill to Army drill. Our Lieutenant Colonel ...didn't know anything about Army drills so we did nothing but shoot."⁸⁷ Cates concurred as he also noted that the time that was not spent in

⁸² Faulkner, *The School of Hard Knocks*, 41.

⁸³ Keene, *World War I*, 48.

⁸⁴ Faulkner, *The School of Hard Knocks*, 41-42.

⁸⁵ Nelson, *I Will Hold*, 31.

⁸⁶ Interview Transcript, 1917-1990, James M. Sellers Collection.

⁸⁷ Interview Transcript, 1917-1990, James M. Sellers Collection.

the classroom “consisted of time on the rifle range.”⁸⁸ Private Jackson, and presumably other Marines and soldiers, noticed the setback also, “we were to be part of the army and under army regulations...the changes seemed very hard, and like starting all over again.”⁸⁹

Life for the enlisted men such as, now, Corporal Paradis of the 78th Company seemed to mirror training at Parris Island. Paradis recorded that “at Quantico we settled down to rigid drills, learning the use of all our weapons, [and] bayonet drills.”⁹⁰ Private Gulberg concurred that the pace and intensity at least had picked up, and was perhaps more geared towards actual combat as “they taught us to use the bayonet as it was used in France...This war business began to grow more and more serious...we could handle machine guns like baby carriages.”⁹¹ Private Jackson seemed to have a similar experience as Corporal Paradis where a typical daily regimen included "close order drill, skirmishing, bayonet exercises, bomb-throwing (without bombs!), and instruction in various other things.”⁹²

Some of the time the training took place paralleled the reality of warfare in France. For one, several members of the 6th Regiment noted that they received training on machine guns, hand grenades, and various other instruments of war. However, the training was not geared to open warfare doctrine as Pershing had espoused. Instead, much of the training being focused on trench warfare. Corporal Paradis remembered spending

⁸⁸ Nelson, *I Will Hold*, 30.

⁸⁹ Jackson, *His Time in Hell*, 16.

⁹⁰ Memoir, 1918-1974, Don V. Paradis Collection.

⁹¹ Clark, *Devil Dog Chronicles*, 57.

⁹² Jackson, *His Time in Hell*, 16.

“many weary hours building, digging, and building trenches.”⁹³ Private Grube of the 23d machine Gun Company noted that the first week “was spent in the hardest kind of work...digging trenches.”⁹⁴ Sellers was a bit franker claiming “practically all we did at Quantico was drill and dig trenches.”⁹⁵ Private Clark of the 119th Company, 1st Replacement Battalion U.S.M.C. lamented that even in January of 1918 when much of the 2d Division would be gathering in France, training in Quantico would still consist of having “dug in the frozen ground all day” in training trenches.⁹⁶

Private Stewart recalled that the 96th Company conducted “a little warfare” where mock trenches were attacked with “bayonet and bombs” to see if the unit could simulate casualties that were expected in France.⁹⁷ Peter F. Owen noted that while there were exercises that simulated attacks where young men “bayoneted straw dummies, threw dummy grenades, and drilled hour after hour” the tactics were heavily influenced by trench warfare that had been observed and not the open warfare concept.⁹⁸ Even Private Stewart noted these exercises “was one sided in favor of the attacks.”⁹⁹

Private Grube arguably had better things to be doing. After his basic training in Parris Island, Private Grube noted he was selected with twenty-nine others to attend courses on the Lewis light machine guns that the Marine Corps had adopted.¹⁰⁰ Sellers

⁹³ Memoir, 1918-1974, Don V. Paradis Collection.

⁹⁴ Memoir, 1918-1974, Don V. Paradis Collection.

⁹⁵ James Gregory, *C'est La Guerre: The memoir of Captain James McBrayer Sellers, USMC* (North Adams, MA: Storied Publishing, 2020), 22.

⁹⁶ Letter Quantico, VA Jan 23, 1918, 1917-1919, Record COLL/743 Home A/11/H/2/4, Edward Clark Collection United States Marine Corps Historical Division, Quantico, VA.

⁹⁷ Stewart, *The Story of One Marine*, 42.

⁹⁸ Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, 19.

⁹⁹ Stewart, *The Story of One Marine*, 42.

¹⁰⁰ Memoir, 1918-1919, Vincent B. Grube Memoir.

and Paradis would also receive training on these weapons as Paradis noted they “learned to assemble machine guns blindfolded.”¹⁰¹ One job of Marines like Private Grube was to be specialists on these guns and to train others as proficiently as possible. Lieutenant Sellers was not very impressed with some of these instructors as he noted one who had a “fondness for using big words wrongly” remonstrating by yelling “Name those parts proper and chronological, and don’t be ambiguous.”¹⁰² While machine gunners were exposed to the weapons it would seem they spent more time learning the mechanics apart from actually using the weapons in the field. Lieutenant Sellers recalled in his memoir that machine gunners would maneuver against “fancied Germans” by “creeping up behind cover, placing the gun and directing their aim.”¹⁰³

The predominant guns that were in American armories were either delicate M1909 Benet-Mercie guns or antiquated Colts and Gatling guns. Only very few American Maxims or Vickers guns were available in April 1917. The Marine Corps had an unknown number of Lewis guns which appear to have been purchased following the declaration of war with Germany. Several sources note that the Marines were forced to give up their beloved Lewis guns for M1914 Hotchkiss guns which were a completely different. The Lewis being a lighter and more portable machine gun and the Hotchkiss being a true heavy machine gun. Corporal Paradis lamented that the training they did receive “was a lot of wasted effort.”¹⁰⁴ Machine gunners themselves may have received training on heavy machine guns in preparation for their deployment to France.

¹⁰¹ Paradis, *The World War I Memoirs*, 28.

¹⁰² Gregory, *C'est La Guerre*, 26-27.

¹⁰³ Gregory, *C'est La Guerre*, 27.

¹⁰⁴ Paradis, *The World War I Memoirs*, 28.

After Private Grube's grueling first week in Quantico, his training soon shifted to "the Browning Machine Gun School" which was taught by Major Perkins and an unnamed Canadian officer who had spent time on the Western Front.¹⁰⁵ The Browning M1917 was a gun that would see very little service on the front line, only some 1,200 "were used in battle" according to the historian George T. Raach, even though 30,582 Browning guns were sent to Europe of the total 43,000 built by the end of the war.¹⁰⁶ Nowhere it is mentioned that the 2d Division ever received these Browning machine guns or any other gun than the M1914 Hotchkiss. Private Grube would be promoted to corporal following the course and be responsible for training other Marines in his company which would be a part of a machine gun battalion on this very gun by his admission.¹⁰⁷

The amount of exposure to modern weapons at other training centers seems sparse also. Faulkner pointed out that the 82nd Division's chief of staff recalled that the division school had the only Chauchat automatic rifles with none being available at the Regimental level and obsolete Colt Machine Guns.¹⁰⁸ The 36th Division had "a handful of obsolete Colt and Benet-Mercier" guns to train their troops with.¹⁰⁹ French advisors in February 1918 were concerned at the lack of Chauchat automatic rifles, The military chosen weapon to replace the army's Benet-Mercie and the Marine's Lewis guns for

¹⁰⁵ Memoir, 1918-1919, Vincent B. Grube Memoir.

¹⁰⁶ Lt. Col George T. Raach, *A Withering Fire: American machine Gun battalions in World War I* (Bradenton, Florida: BookLocker.com,2015), 106.

¹⁰⁷ Memoir, 1918-1919, Vincent B. Grube Memoir.

¹⁰⁸ Faulkner, *Pershing's Crusaders*, 92.

¹⁰⁹ Faulkner, *Pershing's Crusaders*, 93.

work as a light machine gun, where seventeen of eighteen divisions had only thirty-two or less when they were supposed to have 768 per division.¹¹⁰

This is not to say that time was wasted in secondary training camps. In many of these like Quantico, the Marines learned other skills including the use of the hand grenade which had proved invaluable in the First World War. Private Bailey recalled that the French preferred the use of hand grenades over any other weapon to assault or pursue German forces.¹¹¹ Corporal Paradis had written notes carefully about the anatomy of the grenades showing the nomenclature and inner workings of the weapon.¹¹² Corporal Paradis noted that the training was structured to accomplish three principles such as gain “practical knowledge...of the grenades in use... teach him how to throw,” and “make him acquainted with the general principle” of using grenades in the attack.¹¹³ Private Grube noted that they were exposed to more advanced bayonet techniques, the use and care of gas masks, and grenade training.¹¹⁴ Private Southern noted the intensity of the gas drills as they had six seconds to don a mask in gas chambers, presumably with non-lethal gas.¹¹⁵

Advanced training exposed some soldiers and marines to the tools of the Western Front. However, there are three major components extrapolated regarding how this training was affected by and influenced doctrine and tactics. First, the massive influx of young recruits to the enlisted ranks was paralleled by the officers who became a system

¹¹⁰ Faulkner, *Pershing's Crusaders*, 93.

¹¹¹ Stallings, *The Doughboys*, 27.

¹¹² Notebook, 1918-1974, Record COLL/3039 Home A/14/I/3/1, Don V. Paradis Collection, United States Marine Corps Historical Division, Quantico, VA.

¹¹³ Notebook, 1918-1974, Don V. Paradis Collection.

¹¹⁴ Memoir, 1918-1919, Vincent B. Grube Memoir.

¹¹⁵ Clark, *Devil Dog Chronicles*, 66.

of the blind leading the blind. Many of these young officers, though experienced like Lieutenant Sellers who had training at a military academy, or Lieutenant Cates who went to school at Virginia Military Institute had not much more of a grasp of military duties than the young men coming from basic training. Even veteran instructors were finding themselves in uncomfortable situations where instead of having innovated they chose comfort in what they knew.

Second, much of the secondary training that had taken place in Quantico had exposed young men to the weapons of World War One, however, it was rushed, ununiformed, and misfocused. Take for instance the constant focus on preparing trenches which very much helped the young units understand the type of static warfare that they would expect in France. Training was not in line with the mobile warfare that General Pershing or his commanders had hoped to achieve. Even when mobile attacks took place, training that possibly could have represented the type of attack that General Pershing hoped would break the stalemate of France, they seemed to have been not much more than rabble charges against mock enemies that posed little to no threat.

Third, the availability of the equipment and proper training greatly affected the American forces' capabilities. The lack of appropriate weapons to train young men on was bad enough. However, the fact that young men spent so much time learning one system, like the marines and their Lewis guns, only to have to learn another system that was vastly different. In this case, the M1914 Hotchkiss or the French M1915 Chauchat which were weapons unlike any other that the United States had fielded in the past. This meant that a great amount of valuable training time was spent relearning the basics of different weapons. Couple this with the lack of experience among leaders and vague or

archaic doctrine there is a greater chance that field exercises were either simple or almost staged in the attacker's favor.

Final Training in France

Once companies were formed, next were battalions, and finally the regiments. Regiments that would make up the two brigades of infantry, were nearly 12,000 men. These infantry units were accompanied by their machine gun battalions and field artillery. Marines and Soldiers boarded ships in the United States and began the next phase of their great adventure. The United States would transport the newly assembled units to France. The largest deployment of American men and material in the country's history to that date. However, the Western allies were not convinced the Americans were ready for the front lines. The final test before combat would be final training in France under the supervision of French and British instructors.

General Harbord recounted that Pershing felt "the activities of his Training Section as of the highest and most immediate importance."¹¹⁶ Pershing may have known the situation of the army better than many give him credit. Harbord seems to affirm this supposition as he wrote that effective training must take place "as soon as troops began to arrive" in France.¹¹⁷ Pershing admitted that training in the United States had shortfalls and "plans contemplated an additional period of training...of about three months after reaching France."¹¹⁸ Historian Edward Lengel wrote that Pershing had an unyielding

¹¹⁶ Harbord, *The American Army in France*, 95.

¹¹⁷ Harbord, *The American Army in France*, 95.

¹¹⁸ Pershing, *My Experiences*, 154.

belief in American superiority over their war-wizened European cobelligerents and only American troops could win the war single-handed.¹¹⁹

The 2d Division's history noted that this bull-headed contention for one's allies was mirrored by the French and British. America's "constant neglect of her army" had not gone unnoticed by the Western Allies with "reason to believe that the Allies never seriously contemplated an American army fighting in the front lines."¹²⁰ Harbord outright claimed that the Allies sought not to train American men at all, instead having suggested to Pershing that American units be integrated into British and French units. "This was not for instruction in quiet sectors but for whatever service might fall" on the units that had been incorporated.¹²¹ Harbord accused incorporation was "not in the general allied interest" and would lead to the "doctrine of the trench defensive" to corrupt the minds of American troops.¹²² Although, the last six months of 1917 may have begun to sway French minds as Field Marshal Petain of the French military sent out a memorandum. In the memorandum, it was encouraged "operations on stabilized lines, but also advancing over open ground" like Pershing's concept of open warfare.¹²³

The ability to train posed an even greater debacle for the American Expeditionary Force. In terms of the 2d Division, it turned out to be a logistical nightmare to form the division in France. The 5th Marine Regiment was the first of the 2d Division to arrive in

¹¹⁹ Edward Lengel, *Thunder and Flames: Americans in the Crucible of Combat, 1917-1918* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2008), 19.

¹²⁰ Colonel Oliver Spaulding and Colonel John Wright, *The Second Division American Expeditionary Force in France, 1917-1919* (Nashville, TN: The Battery Press, reprinted 1989), 6.

¹²¹ Harbord, *The American Army in France*, 187.

¹²² Harbord, *The American Army in France*, 187. Spaulding and Wright, *The Second Division*, 10.

¹²³ George Clark, *The Second Infantry Division in World War I: A History of the American Expeditionary Force Regulars, 1917-1919* (Pike, NH: McFarland & Company, 2007), 16.

France in June 1917. The 9th and 23rd Regiments were to follow in September 1917. The 6th Marine Regiment trickled in from September 1917 to January 1918 which completed the division.¹²⁴ This meant for a sixth-month period the division's personnel were training either in France or in the United States separated from one another. In the case of the 5th Regiment, there was almost no training at all once in France as they were "pretty much ignored" as they "were assigned various laboring duties."¹²⁵ Private Jackson recalled, "a good many days we were sent to the docks and warehouses instead of drilling."¹²⁶

When training did take place, it was more intensive and engaging than any that the soldiers or marines of the 2d Division had experienced yet. Marine Corps Major Robert Denig, who would command both an Army and Marine battalion, commented that "the day begins at 6.30 A.M. and ends at 9.00 P.M." for the men of the 2d Division.¹²⁷ Much of their time was taken up with instruction that permeated prior training and was similar to basic training. Much of the personal accounts are filled with a lament for long grueling hikes, time on rifle ranges, and close-order drill. Historian Robert Asprey noted that one marine recalled "it was this period that made us tough...we got tough, we stayed tough."¹²⁸ Corporal Paradis received a promotion to sergeant but lamented "we hiked and drilled all day in half rain and snow."¹²⁹ Private Jackson wrote that "for eight or ten miles we hiked through the coldest rain," his memoir left a note that "two of the boys

¹²⁴ Spaulding and Wright, *The Second Division*, 6.

¹²⁵ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 14.

¹²⁶ Jackson, *His Time in Hell*, 23.

¹²⁷ Clark, *Devil Dog Chronicles*, 109

¹²⁸ Robert B. Asprey, *At Belleau Wood* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 1996), 23.

¹²⁹ Paradis, *The World War I Memoir*, 31.

died...[which] resulted in the doctor issuing orders that the marches...should be discontinued.”¹³⁰

Several of the training events and maneuvers seemed to be a double-edged sword. Mock battles were carried out, usually a force-on-force style where rival companies, battalions, or regiments would engage one another. Corporal Rendinell noted one was on February 11, 1918 “between 1st and 3rd battalions. Next day sham battle, 5th and 6th Regiment.”¹³¹ Major Denig noted that officers watched “some attack maneuvers by the Second Division on some trenches” as early as December 8, 1917.¹³² Many of these mock engagements were focused more on taking an enemy trench or dislodging an enemy from a fortified position. While General Pershing had continued his rhetoric for open warfare, many commanders had realized (or perhaps were persuaded by French instructors) that the Germans would not oblige Americans by simply leaving their trenches. These attacks were similar to the set-piece type battles that accompanied position warfare and Pershing hoped to avoid.

Training many had received in the United States became more a reality than a simple exercise. Private Jackson commented on how terrifying the prospect of poison gas became in training. “stories were told ...sometimes hundreds if not whole regiments would fall before the deadly gas as though they had been one man.”¹³³ Sergeant Paradis noted that the grenade training became more intense as marines got to throw live grenades “two offensive and one defensive” after learning how to arm the grenades from

¹³⁰ Jackson, *His Time in Hell*, 40-41.

¹³¹ Clark, *Devil Dog Chronicle*, 101.

¹³² Clark, *Devil Dog Chronicle*, 111.

¹³³ Jackson, *His Time in Hell*, 39.

their transport cases.¹³⁴ Training on grenades took a consternated turn as men received training from French instructors who discouraged the American “baseball” technique of throwing a grenade in favor of “a stiff-armed movement to gain the desired trajectory.”¹³⁵ Private Jackson recalled that the training they received also corrected the proper way to hold the grenades so that a person could still pull the safety pin and the arming lever would not disengage, meaning a steady well-trained hand could prepare the grenade and not have to throw it immediately.¹³⁶

The men of the 2d Division would gain two very important pieces of equipment in France, both with vastly different results. The first was the *tromblon* which was a grenade launcher attachment designed to be affixed to the muzzle of the American M1903 and could launch a high explosive grenade several hundred yards.¹³⁷ The *Vivien-Bessiers* or VB grenade could produce fragmentation over seventy-five yards and the high arc trajectory made it ideal for firing over advancing friendly troops.¹³⁸ This gave amazing flexibility for American firepower which could accurately fire the VB grenade, which weighed over a pound, onto a fixed position.¹³⁹

The second, was the M1915 Chauchat automatic rifle. A weapon that has been considered one of the worst military small-arms in modern history. The French had designed it as a light automatic weapon that could advance with infantry and be able to place intense fire on German strong points. The Chauchat was heavy, unwieldy, and

¹³⁴ Paradis, *The World War I Memoir*, 33.

¹³⁵ Asprey, *At Belleau Wood*, 19.

¹³⁶ Jackson, *His Time in Hell*, 39.

¹³⁷ Asprey, *At Belleau Wood*, 19.

¹³⁸ Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, 29.

¹³⁹ Asprey, *At Belleau Wood*, 19.

prone to failure. Lieutenant Sellers lamented that they were “cheaply manufactured” and “looked as if they were made out of cigar boxes and tin cans.”¹⁴⁰ Corporal Rendinell noted that “each squad has two automatic rifles & 4 ammunition bags of 25,000 rounds to carry” which was a bit exaggerated but not completely untrue.¹⁴¹ Peter Owen quoted Lieutenant Cates who annotated that “my platoon had 19 clip bags...those bags weighed 50-60 pounds.”¹⁴²

Both weapons were intended to increase the lethality of infantry on the attack. Both were provided by the French. However, the Chauchat had a reputation that it would live up to. Lieutenant Sellers commented that “a man shooting one almost was in as much danger as anyone out in front being shot at” regarding how bulky they were to use and unreliable.¹⁴³ Combine this with the knowledge that American machine gunners were having to relearn new systems which were hampered and not as effective as their German counterparts. Asprey commented that at least one officer found that the Chauchat, you “could lay it down for a day or two, then pick it up and fire it, rust and all.”¹⁴⁴ As for the *tromblon* rifle grenade launcher further chapters will note the absence of this weapon in many early battles.

While the training began in January of 1918 and seemed to be barely making a difference from the training in the United States. The exposure to life in France and the proximity to the front may have persuaded many to adopt more local doctrine.

¹⁴⁰ Gregory, *C'est La Guerre*, 62.

¹⁴¹ Clark, *Devil Dog Chronicle*, 100.

¹⁴² Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, 30.

¹⁴³ Gregory, *C'est La Guerre*, 62.

¹⁴⁴ Asprey, *At Belleau Wood*, 19.

Specifically, as scholar Peter Owen noted, battalion commanders like Major Holcomb of 2d Battalion, 6th Marines “had his officers studying two French manuals” which “offered an innovative doctrine for trench combat.”¹⁴⁵ This action promoted the importance of attacking infantry utilizing their weapons like the Stokes mortar, the 37mm field gun, Chauchat automatic rifles, and the rifle grenade launchers in specific waves or “Skirmish lines” spread out and controlled by the officer and the company gunnery sergeant.¹⁴⁶ This concept of decentralized leadership in the field is relevant to earlier commanders Like Major General Upton who acknowledged the dangers modern weapons posed on dense formations, instead calling for loose formations acting as an organized chaotic wave that approached the enemy.

Captain Reynolds of the 23rd Regiment retained a memo dated April 28, 1918, for officers and non-commissioned officers of the 2nd Division to attend specific courses. These courses included an infantry course, machine gun course, musketry and bayonet course, automatic rifle, grenade course, 37mm field gun, and stokes mortar course.¹⁴⁷ Among the rosters are marine and soldier alike equally distributed from the units of both the 3rd and 4th brigades. This leads one to believe that as training progressed the men of the division began to build working relationships that would benefit the division as a whole in terms of efficiency. Lengel noted in his work that General Pershing had provided guidance that all American units attend and conduct a grueling three-month

¹⁴⁵ Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, 38.

¹⁴⁶ Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, 38.

¹⁴⁷ Ledger, 1917-1919, Catalog number 2018.46.22, From the service of Captain William Graham Reynolds, 2nd Division, A.E.F., D.S.C. Recipient, National World War One Museum and Memorial, Kansas City, MO.

training cycle before being available for combat and the 2d Division was one of the few that came close to completing that.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 19.

CHAPTER III

INTO THE FIRE: EARLY BATTLE OF THE 2D DIVISION

The first six months of the 2d Division's time in France were extremely taxing on the division units. First, it took from June 1917 to January 1918 for the division to fully form. Second, many of the units were scattered, undermanned, and under-equipped. Last, the division was subjected to misguided training that was unfocused and poorly led. This disorganization is somewhat expected for raising a body of men in such vast numbers though it may have not been apparent at the time to commanders. The 2d Division would officially be mustered in one place on January 1918 when the last battalion of the 6th Marines arrived along with the 12th Field Artillery and the Division's trains.¹ The 2d Division conducted field training and classroom-type periods of instruction as noted in the previous chapter from late January through February 1918.² However, time was working against the American Expeditionary Force and its allies. Before long the American forces would be expected to take to the field of battle.

In March 1918, The German Army began one of its last gambles to break

¹ Colonel Oliver Spaulding and Colonel John Wright, *The Second Division American Expeditionary Force in France, 1917-1919* (Nashville, TN: The Battery Press, reprinted 1989), 6.

² George Clark, *The Second Infantry Division in World War I: A History of the American Expeditionary Force Regulars, 1917-1919* (Pike, NH: McFarland & Company, 2007), 18.

the allied forces in the West. The German army had gained enormous strength with troops from the Eastern Front with the capitulation of Russia and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Additionally, operations against Italy had decimated the Italian army and the country was "as good as dead" which meant the Germans and Austrians had 1.4 million troops that were freed up from those theaters to focus on the West.¹ Many historians conclude that General Erich Ludendorff firmly believed the time was not on the side of Germany and their allies as each passing day, more American troops were arriving.² When Ludendorff committed to the first of five offensives to take place in the spring of 1918, he hoped to drive a wedge between the French and British. By isolating them the German army could then drive the British from continental Europe and "destroy the remaining French forces at leisure."³

From the German perspective, optimism was high in early 1918. The unit history of the 169th Regiment noted that the German High Command had made available 50 German Divisions which increased the German Army by 30% including *Stosstruppen*, stormtroopers, battalions trained in small-unit shock tactics and pioneered decentralized leadership.⁴ From the outset of Operation Michael, the first of the five offensives, the German army achieved unprecedented success driving 1,200 square miles while also capturing 90,000 prisoners and 1,300 guns.⁵ British troops alone broke and ran as the

¹ Geoffrey Wawro, *Sons of Freedom: The Forgotten American Soldiers Who Defeated Germany in World War I* (New York: Basic Books, 2018), 77.

² Wawro, *Sons of Freedom*, 78.

³ Edward Lengel, *Thunder and Flames: Americans in the Crucible of Combat, 1917-1918* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2015), 35.

⁴ John K. Rieth, *Imperial Germany's "Iron Regiment" of the First World War: War Memories of Service with Infantry Regiment 169 1914-1918 2nd Edition* (Coppell, TX: Badgley Publishing Company, 2020), 260-274.

⁵ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 35.

German divisions “advanced an incredible forty miles behind the Somme.”⁶ The amount of artillery alone that the German army amassed equaled “one gun for every ten yards of front” in the operating area unleashed in a *trommelfuer*, drum fire, which was a short but intense and concentrated strike intended to shock and destroy defensive positions.⁷

The American Expeditionary Force took almost no part in the early offensives of what would be known as the *Kaiserschlacht* or Kaiser's Battle. For the 2d Division's troops, they were tucked away in the Verdun region, a once desolate and dangerous battlefield that had now become a quiet sector.⁸ During this period the 2d Division was to serve in front-line trenches as a part of their training package that had been a requirement under General John Pershing “where the Americans would be exposed to German fire.”⁹ Training may have been sacrificed however, as the German’s offensive in the Somme drew experienced French troops away from this sector leaving the 2d Division to hold the line with some French chaperons.¹⁰

Unit histories of the marine battalions note that the training that took place in this sector focused heavily on trench warfare. The 1st Battalion 5th Marines noted that in “the six weeks that followed, the battalion gained valuable experience in trench warfare.”¹¹ The official history of the 3d Battalion 6th Marines noted that the unit arrived in the Toulon sector on March 18 to the front positions and began “working on defenses,

⁶ David Woodward, *The American Army and the First World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 199.

⁷ Wawro, *Sons of Freedom*, 114.

⁸ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 35.

⁹ Clark, *The Second Division*, 22.

¹⁰ Spaulding and Wright, *The Second Division*, 20.

¹¹ George Clark, *The Fourth Marine Brigade in World War I: Battalion Histories Based on Official Documents* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2015), 29.

building entanglements and digging trenches until April 7th.¹² Scholars Spaulding and Wright noted in the 2d Division history that the Verdun area that encompassed the Toulon sector to which the division was sent was occupied by "tired troops from both armies...to rest and refit."¹³ Neither the Germans nor the French troops were interested in agitating the other side. The introduction of American troops, eager to fight, upset this unofficial truce.

Within days of arriving in the area, soldiers and marines began to agitate the front lines. Within days of arriving at the division's posts, two members of A Company 1st Battalion 23d Regiment took it upon themselves to hunt down a German sniper that had been harassing the units. This resulted in a small arms exchange between "twenty or thirty of the enemy coming out to cut them off" and the Americans who were covered by automatic weapons fire as both sides ordered artillery barrages.¹⁴ The division suffered its first casualty with Private Stanley Dobiez who refused to take cover and was killed manning his Chauchat automatic rifle.¹⁵

For Lieutenant James Sellers and his platoon in the 78th company of the 6th Marines, their time in Toulon was spent in misery. In an interview, Sellers mentioned that "we got a lot of bad food and had no uniform replacements or anything" for the fifty-five days they were on the front lines.¹⁶ David Bellamy, who served as an officer in the

¹² David Bellamy, *History of the Third Battalion Sixth Regiment, U.S. Marines* (Hillsdale, MI: Akers, Mac Ritchie & Hurlbut, 1919), 9.

¹³ Spaulding and Wright, *The Second Division*, 18.

¹⁴ Spaulding and Wright, *The Second Division*, 19.

¹⁵ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 23.

¹⁶ Interview Transcript, 1917-1990, Collection COLL/2028 Home A/14/1/3/1, James M. Sellers Collection, United States Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

marines, attested that even a French general had inspected the American positions and had been concerned with the living situation and the food that the Americans were receiving in this quiet sector.¹⁷ Ultimately, the time the division spent up front meant very little combat for the men of the 2d Division in the month of March. The following month would prove a rude wake-up for members of the 2d Division as well as important lessons.

The first real incident that affected the marines and soldiers of the 2d Division came on April 13. The 74th Company of 1st Battalion 6th Marines had successfully repulsed a German raid and had “went into reserve at Camp Fontaine about a mile behind the lines” when the German artillery struck.¹⁸ Private Warren Jackson of the 9th Company, 1st Battalion 6th Marines recollected that “so many gas shells had fallen, many men fell dead in their tracks.”¹⁹ Poor preparation for gas warfare only emboldened troops to be prepared for chemical weapons in the front-line trenches. There is evidence that many men had not become familiar with their gas masks or signs of chemical weapons being presently used. Official documents note that many were caught “most of the men and officers in quarters without their masks.”²⁰ In one swift attack, the German forces inadvertently or purposefully caused an entire company of roughly 250 Marines to suffer casualties "all the officers were evacuated in serious condition as were at least two hundred twenty" of the enlisted according to Clark.²¹ Of those men "forty of those died later as a result" of the German artillery attack.²² Joseph Duermit who was in the 74th

¹⁷ Diary, 1917-1919, Collection COLL/924 Home A/11/1/2/3, David Bellamy Diary, United States Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

¹⁸ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 31.

¹⁹ Warren R. Jackson and George Clark, *His Time in Hell: A Texas Marine in France, The World War I Memoir of Warren R. Jackson* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 2002), 68.

²⁰ Clark, *The Fourth Marine Brigade in World War I*, 151.

²¹ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 31.

²² Clark, *The Fourth Marine Brigade in World War I*, 151.

company noted that within two days the company went from “about forty of us” to “only 18 of us left.”²³ This would prove a disastrous event and an expensive lesson that the Americans would learn.

A second major event that occurred during this period involved the 3rd Brigade, specifically the 9th Regiment. German units mounted a large assault of more than four hundred enemy soldiers intended to raid American positions, test their capabilities, and demoralize the 2d Division forces.²⁴ This came on April 14th spearheaded by *Stosstruppen* who infiltrated into American trenches, wearing French uniforms, and caused disorder by warning of a gas attack.²⁵ Scholar Edward Lengel doubts the use of infiltrators in French uniforms as 9th Regiment history noted that the assault was preceded by an intense box barrage, meaning a short but intense artillery strike on a specific area.²⁶ However, the 9th Regiment's history also noted that German troops infiltrated only a specific place between two battalions of the 9th "by means of deception many were dressed as French or Americans and called Gas!"²⁷

The German attack was well rehearsed and fierce, regardless of how it might have begun. All sources concurred that the attack was in force “of one hundred storm troops, forty pioneers, picked men from three rifle companies, and several machines guns a force of over five hundred men.”²⁸ Soldiers of the 2d Division witnessed first-hand the type of

²³ Diary, 1917-1919, Collection COLL/3114, Home A/11/I/2/3, Joseph E. Duermit Collection, United States Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

²⁴ Mark Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War I* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 204-205.

²⁵ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 32.

²⁶ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 78.

²⁷ Book, 1999.80.12, *The Ninth U.S. Infantry in the World War*, The National World War I Museum and Memorial, Kansas City, MO.

²⁸ Book, *The Ninth U.S. Infantry in the World War*.

shock tactics the Germans had been perfecting. Small unit leadership with combined arms sent elements of the 2d and 3d Battalions into disarray. Isolated American units were able to inflict numerous casualties among the German raiders including Captain Henry Worthington of the Headquarters Co of the 3d Battalion who organized a counter-assault in the unit's trenches.²⁹ While the Germans enjoyed early success, however, the American forces soon rallied, trapped numerous Germans by a blocking barrage, and were "caught with bayonets at their backs" as American soldiers inflicted "fifty-nine dead...and eleven prisoners" compared to the 9th's losses of "seven killed, thirty-nine wounded, and twenty-six captured."³⁰

April and May would see the 2d Division return to a training status in safer sectors. Scholar Edward Lengel pointed out that German forces were not overly impressed with the coordination of the 2d Division as a fighting unit. Though they were impressed with the tenacity of the individual or smaller units within the American armed forces.³¹ These early engagements help point out that there was no real direction in training or intended use of American Forces. This is regardless of how General Pershing had purported that the Americans would fight. The 2d Division especially would spend a great deal of its time preparing to fight similarly to how the Western allies had fought since the fall of 1914.

In May 1918 the 2D Division began a series of training evolutions that would focus instead on open warfare that General Pershing hoped to take part in. Grotelueschen

²⁹ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 32.

³⁰ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 78.

³¹ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 78-79.

noted that a division-level training exercise appeared to have been completed satisfactorily complete with "artillery preparations, infantry assaults, and preparations to meet an expected counter-attack."³² Lieutenant Sellers purported that this late focus on open warfare training and even mismanaged training curriculum due to Pershing showing possible favoritism to "his pet division...the first division and the first division was to have the honor of making the first attack."³³ The divisional training according to the 3rd Battalion 6th Marines only lasted from roughly "May 21st...until May 31."³⁴

By the end of May, the 2d Division had been in France longer than most American forces. The 5th Regiment had been in France nearly a year to the day. However, the training had been poorly focused on a mixed concentration of trench warfare and skeptical open warfare. Additionally, the early combat that the division experienced denoted that while the individual soldiers and marines were of the exceptional stock of fighting men, the organization and training were not conducive to the desired doctrine that Pershing and the American Expeditionary Force had postulated with praise. Lengel noted that the Germans admired the American fighting spirit, but chastised the uncoordinated defense and repulse of the German attackers which indicated the "division was not ready for important combat."³⁵ The apparent lack of consideration of the 2d Division as an attacking division is even more evident, as Grotelueschen pointed out, that the division-level exercises were carried out by the division without accounting for the use of rolling barrages to screen the advancing infantry.³⁶ Should the 2d Division be

³² Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 205.

³³ Interview Transcript, James M. Sellers Collection.

³⁴ Bellamy, *History of the Third Battalion Sixth Regiment*, 11.

³⁵ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 78-79.

³⁶ Grotelueschen *The AEF Way of War*, 205.

committed to a major engagement it could be extrapolated that the division's pedigree of training would most likely not withhold on its own.

**Belleau Wood: “Never did men advance more gallantly in
the face of certain death.”**

By the end of May, the German High Command had already conducted two major offensives in the West-- Operation Michael in March 1918 and Operation Georgette in April 1918.³⁷ This later attack had not gained as much ground as Michael had but the subsequent offensives had greatly threatened the stability of the Western Front for the allies. Field Marshal Haig of the British Expeditionary Forces was so concerned with the foothold his troops had on continental Europe he demanded his troops must fight to the end with their "backs to the wall" in a bulletin published on April 11.³⁸ American forces had not yet been the target of one of these attacks and the American Expeditionary Forces had evaded major confrontation.

The third German offensive would change that fact entirely. Frustrated by the lack of success Ludendorff had hoped for in his first offensives, he shifted his focus to another region hoping to catch the allies off guard. Operation Blücher began on May 27, not aimed at the British but the French who had committed considerable reserves to bolster the battered British in Flanders where Michael and Georgette took place.³⁹ Catlin noted the emotion of the latest German drive “the German struck hard and suddenly...it was

³⁷ Wawro, *Sons of Freedom*, 133.

³⁸ Wawro, *Sons of Freedom*, 141.

³⁹ Lengel, *thunder and Flames*, 63.

with consternation that we watched the ease with which the enemy carried the Chemin des Dames and The Aisne...both natural and human barriers seemed to crumble before them.”⁴⁰

The German drive broke through defenses and placed the fate of France in balance. General Harbord noted that the German advance "by evening was across the Vesle. In seventy-two hours, they had advanced thirty miles.”⁴¹ These were objectives the Germans had only previously hoped to attain and distances that few armies under the best circumstances in the First World War could do. It is not hard to see why so many believed the war was over as Paris seemed about to fall. American military units were poised and ready to repel the Germans but how would they fare against battle-hardened “forty divisions, including some 400,000 of [Germany’s] best troops.”⁴² German troops seemed to have cracked the enigma of mobile warfare in an age that had become defined by trenches.

The 2d Division had been poised to support the 1st Division after their successful attack on Cantigny, the first official action of the American Expeditionary Force. This is in understanding with the focused training that the marines and soldiers of the 2d Division had been conducting. When the Germans struck with Operation Blücher that was canceled and the 2d Division was instructed to help defend Paris in the east in the Chateau Thierry region near the town of Lucy-le-Bocage. It would soon be June and the 2d Division would face its true crucible of combat in a small hunting preserve that lay

⁴⁰ Brigadier General Albertus W. Catlin, *With the Help of God and a Few Marines: The Battles of Chateau Thierry and Belleau Wood* (London: printed Curtis Brown, 1919), 50.

⁴¹ Major General James Harbord, *The American Army in France: 1917-1919* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1936), 269.

⁴² Catlin, *With the Help of God*, 51.

between the town of Bouresches and Belleau. The forested hunting preserve was named Bois de Belleau, in English, Belleau Wood.

Belleau Wood June 1-5: “The only time that the boys would stop pumping those old rifle bolts, would be to light a cigarette.”⁴³

The Battle of Belleau Wood has been considered one of the most praised and criticized battles in that the American Expeditionary Force participated in during the First World War. Early historians like Richard Asprey denote the importance of Belleau Wood as having been a keynote battle that turned the tide of the war like two major forces clashed and contested for supremacy.⁴⁴ Other historians like Edward Lengel would consider Belleau Wood more akin to a glorified event that took place after Corps Conta, the leading element of the German offensive, had reached its peak advance and ground to a halt. Lengel further purports that "the haze of self-serving braggadocio and propaganda surrounding these events, combined with the paucity of official sources, exponentially increases the difficulty of teasing out the truth."⁴⁵ A middle ground can be found among historians. Belleau Wood would prove to be small in terms of men and material. However, the lessons learned would prove invaluable, especially to the senior leadership. George Clark noted the battle was small in comparison, "hardly noticeable in the overall scheme" yet it set a precedent for the Germans regarding their newfound foe that "not only would the Americans fight but they would fight like hell."⁴⁶

⁴³ Letter France, June 18, 1918, 1896-1954, COLL/122, A/12/C/7/1, Gerald B. Clark Collection, United States Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

⁴⁴ Robert B. Asprey, *At Belleau Wood* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 1996), 5.

⁴⁵ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 93.

⁴⁶ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 37.

Belleau Wood can be seen as having taken two specific parts. The first part lasted from roughly June 1 to June 5 when elements of the 2d Division were emplaced and fought a defensive engagement against the advancing German forces. During this period American doctrine would prove somewhat effective and preferable to how other military organizations had conducted themselves. The second, phase would be from June 6 to June 26 when the American division went on the offensive and attacked the German-held woods proper. These first few days would seem to prove that the American rifle could carry the battle.

Things looked very bleak for France and the Western allies by June 2. French forces were struggling against a rapidly expanding fighting retreat across their front around Chateau Thierry. Marine and army forces of the 2d Division arrived piecemeal on May 31 and June 1 and had begun to establish a line of resistance facing northeast against the oncoming elements of Corps Conta of the German army.⁴⁷ It was evident that infantry commanders intended to deploy their troops in accordance with the *Infantry Drill Regulations* in a linear manner that would optimize concerted and concentrated rifle fire into advancing enemy troops. The division would integrate its combat arms elements along the line. Elements such as the Machine Guns Battalions however would not break up their units into smaller companies to attach to their respective infantry units.⁴⁸

On the morning of June 2, German troops engaged 2d Battalion 6th Marines under Major Thomas Holcomb. While this was not a major attack it was still the first real engagement that the 2d Division line would see. Appearing some 1200 yards out,

⁴⁷ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 84.

⁴⁸ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 46.

German forces of the 10th Division became raked by machine guns and artillery fire well before the riflemen had an opportunity to fire.⁴⁹ Major Littleton Waller's history of the 6th Machine Gun Battalion noted that the advancing German attacks throughout this early part of the battle "particularly did terrific execution" with the battalion forming two groups that covered a left and right sector.⁵⁰ It is a wonder that American commanders believed their doctrine and tactics could produce different results from those of their German counterparts.

Between June 3 and 5, the men saw multiple other attacks all along the 2d Division line. One such attack occurred near the 6th Marine Regiment and an outpost set up by Lieutenant Lem Shepherd of 2d Battalion 5th Marines on June 3 which was once again repulsed by accurate machine gun fire and concentrated rifle fire at ranges of three hundred yards. Private Gerald Clark wrote in a letter home to his mother that the rifle fire had been intense. In the letter he stated, "the only time the boys would stop pumping those old rifle bolts, would be to light a cigarette."⁵¹ Historian George Clark recounted a similar attack that First Lieutenant Cooke of 2d Battalion 5th Marines repulsed in a similar vein, the men finding enjoyment in finally putting their skills to work.⁵² The 23d Regiment was busy on the right side of the line holding against numerous German attacks, supported by the 5th Machine Gun Battalion which checked any German advance.⁵³

⁴⁹ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 85.

⁵⁰ Machine Guns of the 4th Brigade, 1900-1924, COLL/1380, Location A/5/H/7/3, Littleton W.T. Waller Jr. Collection, United States Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

⁵¹ Letter France, June 18, 1918, Gerald B. Clark Collection.

⁵² George B. Clark, *Devil Dogs: Fighting Marines of World War I* (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute, 2013), 89.

⁵³ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 48.

In each instance, the German advance was halted with dug-in and emplaced machine gun positions. This codified the conception that Pershing and senior leadership in the American Expeditionary Force believed machine guns would play in combat. The irony was lost on the commanders that infantry support weapons would only benefit an army on the defense. The ideology that mobile infantry supported primarily by rifle fire could overcome a defender armed with such support weapons was contradictory to what the Americans were witnessing. The German Army had proven in the Spring of 1918 that they may have possessed some of the finest troops for mobile open warfare, yet they succumbed to automatic weapons of emplaced infantry. The same outcome came not far from Belleau Wood at Chateau Thierry where machine guns of the 3d Division halted a strong German advance before they could establish a bridgehead on the Marne.⁵⁴

Even American units were subject to supporting weapons as they advanced. First Lieutenant Cooke noted the condensed method that the Marines advanced towards their positions sometime around June 2 or 3 and was amazed that “Heinie didn’t blast us off the landscape.”⁵⁵ Lieutenant Cooke was referring to the closed order formation of march reminiscent of the drill field that had taken up so much of their time in training which had traditionally been a reliant form of movement in the nineteenth century. Perhaps astonished at the brazen move at first, lieutenant Cooke noted that as they “halted to execute right by file” the German artillery struck “quick, sudden, destructive, and eleven of our men went down.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 72.

⁵⁵ Gerald Clark, *Devil Dog Chronicles: Voices of the 4th Marine Brigade in World War I* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2013), 149.

⁵⁶ Clark, *Devil Dog Chronicles*, 149.

Lengel argued that any hopes the Germans had for pushing beyond Belleau Wood were stopped on June 3.⁵⁷ Particularly at Les Mares farm not far from Belleau Wood to the west where Marine officers were able to see German formations in the open. German troops were stunned by the rapid and accurate rifle fire according to Lengel who cited Shepard who claimed they could hear the Germans complaining about it.⁵⁸ The mantra of fire superiority based on accurate massed rifle fire prescribed by the American doctrine of musketry was paying off. In the defensive at least, for American troops. Commanders were also cognizant of the fact their enemy was a living thinking foe. While German troops massed for frontal attacks Colonel Malone of the 23d Regiment issued warning orders regarding "the Germans were using ravines and woods and other obstacles to vision to get small elements behind the lines."⁵⁹ The men and leaders of the 2d Division were being proactive it would seem, for those first few days in Belleau Wood, that the training had paid off for those men. Private Asa Smith of the 74th Company 6th Marines noted that through the days of June 2-4 patrols were used to make the Germans believe American numbers were greater than they were. Smith recorded "4 of us kept up a continual patrol all night."⁶⁰

June 6, 1918

The German advance had been checked and firmly stopped in the Chateau Thierry region. The 2d Division had anchored their position around Les Mares and the Triangle

⁵⁷ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 94.

⁵⁸ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 90.

⁵⁹ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 48.

⁶⁰ Memoir, 1917-1918, COLL/289, A/29/C/4/3, Asa J. Smith Collection, United States Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

Farms facing northeast toward Belleau Wood and the town of Bouresches. From left to right were the marines of the 5th Regiment, the 6th Regiment, the 3d Brigade's 23d Regiment, and finally, the 9th Regiment on the extreme right. Now the daunting task came to General Omar Bundy, commander of the 2d Division to counter-attack the German forces who now occupied the French hunting preserve. Colonel Albertus Catlin noted that first, "Belleau Wood now formed a dangerous salient" which threatened future operations to drive the Germans from the Chateau Thierry region. Second, "Belleau Wood was too strong a natural fortress" facing the American division.⁶¹

General Harbord had been tasked to send in the 4th Marine brigade as the primary assault on Belleau Wood. Harbord had only recently taken command of the Brigade in May 1918 and this was to be his first combat command, a Regular army officer in charge of the largest body of U.S. Marines in history to that point.⁶² General Harbord planned the attack to be in two phases. First, "the First Battalion, Fifth Marines under Major Julius S. Turrill, attacked from Hill 142 north."⁶³ The second phase "was made about 5 P.M. by three companies of the Third Battalion, Fifth Marines, under Major Benjamin S. Berry; and the Third Battalion, Sixth Marines, under Major Berton W. Sibley, with a portion of [Major] Holcomb's Second Battalion, Sixth Marines."⁶⁴ Major Berry would attack the western end of the wood while Sibley and Holcomb would assault the southern end and the town of Bouresches.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Catlin, *With the Help of God*, 72-73.

⁶² James Gregory, *C'est La Guerre: The memoir of Captain James McBrayer Sellers, USMC* (North Adams, MA: Storied Publishing, 2020), 71.

⁶³ Harbord, *The American Army in France*, 289.

⁶⁴ Harbord, *The American Army in France*, 289.

⁶⁵ Harbord, *The American Army in France*, 289.

Tactically the American forces committed several mistakes which would prove too costly on June 6. Lieutenant Sellers noted that there was a severe lack of adequate maps for any of the infantry commanders where he noted that the only map his battalion had available measured "about six inches square."⁶⁶ Harbord noted in his work as well that not only were maps scarce, but their detail and size "gave no real information."⁶⁷ George Clark noted that the attack on Hill 142 where "platoon leaders had a brief look" at the company commander's poor map with many having only a vague notion of which way to advance let alone locations of objectives.⁶⁸ Questions can be raised regarding if thorough intelligence or reconnaissance had been conducted on the enemy positions prior to the attacks on June 6.

Historian Edward Lengel chastised primarily General Harbord, for not having conducted any real reconnaissance of the woods, even to the extent to understand the size of the German forces that resided within Belleau Wood.⁶⁹ Colonel Catlin pointed out that the 6th Regiment intelligence officer Lieutenant Eddy "with two men stole through the German lines and penetrated enemy country almost as far as Torcy" east of Belleau Wood and "brought back valuable information."⁷⁰ General Harbord placed blame on the inaccurate reports of the French who claimed: "Belleau Wood was not occupied except by a very short line across the northeast corner."⁷¹ Additionally, Harbord seemed to lay

⁶⁶ Gregory, *C'est La Guerre*, 74.

⁶⁷ Harbord, *The American Army in France*, 290.

⁶⁸ Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 102.

⁶⁹ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 107.

⁷⁰ Catlin, *With the Help of God*, 72.

⁷¹ Harbord, *The American Army in France*, 289.

some of the blame on the company commanders where “little or no reconnaissance or scouting appears to have been done by the companies in front of their positions.”⁷²

Hill 142

The first phase of General Harbord’s plan for taking Belleau Wood was to take the heights of Hill 142 which was located just north and west of the woods proper. This attack was to coincide with the French 167th Division set to assault terrain north of Belleau Wood and the taking of Hill 142 would ensure the French could not be observed or fall under fire from the entrenched Germans.⁷³ The two companies who were chosen were of the 5th Regiment, many of these men had been the old-breed Marines that Major General Barnett had cobbled together in June 1917 as some of the first Americans in France. These men were living up to *first to fight* as the Marine Corps recruiting slogan went. These two companies were tasked with assaulting a heightened natural formation that was wooded and flanked on each side by ravines which formed a natural alley that the Americans would have to advance through and up.⁷⁴

If Harbord was right about the poor reconnaissance or planning, it was due to the poor timeline that was afforded to the Marine companies. General Degoutte of the French military had informed Generals Bundy and Harbord of the French advance on June 6 which began at 0345 and that an American assault should accompany the French attack intended to take Hill 142. Harbord would only be notified of this on June 5 and at

⁷² Harbord, *The American Army in France*, 289.

⁷³ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 53.

⁷⁴ Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 102.

“2225...Harbord set his brigade’s objectives for the following day.”⁷⁵ George Clark noted that it wasn’t until 2300 on June 5 that Major Turrill was tasked to form his companies to assault Hill 142 within three hours of the attack at 0345.⁷⁶

This rushed timeline may have also been the consequence of one of the more impactful mistakes made by Turrill's companies. Harbord claimed he had issued orders to attack through infiltration with only a light artillery barrage to obtain surprise on the enemy.⁷⁷ The historian Lengel noted that there is no evidence that Harbord ever issued such an order which stipulated infiltration over open assaults.⁷⁸ This lack of guidance or instruction led to the platoons of the companies forming a linear assault four ranks deep with the 49th Company on the right and the 67th on the left with Captain Hamilton and 1st Lieutenant Crowther leading them respectfully.⁷⁹ These four deep linear wave attacks had been the preferred method the French had used and taught the Americans. However, this assault technique was intended to be shielded by a rolling artillery barrage to screen the advancing infantry from enemy observation and machine gun fire. The *Infantry Drill Regulations* recommended artillery accompany the infantry to gain fire superiority as “the principal aid to the infantry.”⁸⁰

The assault on Hill 142 received little if any support from the advancing infantry. Lengel noted that “there was no rolling barrage” when the marines stepped off towards

⁷⁵ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 100.

⁷⁶ Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 102.

⁷⁷ Harbord, *The American Army in France*, 289.

⁷⁸ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 101.

⁷⁹ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 54.

⁸⁰ United States Army, *Infantry Drill Regulations 1911: With Text Corrections to February 12, 1917, Changes no. 18* (New York: Military Publishing Co., 1917), 104.

Hill 142 nor did any of the machine gun companies support the attack initially.⁸¹ Major Waller gave a possible explanation why there was no initial machine gun support as although the machine gun battalions companies had been assigned to respective infantry companies, they had not attached to the line as they were assigned.⁸² This lack of combined arms and infantry weapons support meant that the infantry was exposed and vulnerable. The marines did not advance far before German maxims began firing upon the ranks. George Clark observed that “twelve well-situated Maxims caused many casualties.”⁸³ Private Onnie Cordes recalled in his memoir “heinie had a large number of machine guns sweeping...nine out of ten fell either killed or mortally wounded.”⁸⁴

The marines would take the hill by 0900 on the morning of June 6. However, the result would be over fifty percent casualties, most of which were the officers and non-commissioned officers leading the attack.⁸⁵ Wright and Spaulding glossed over the loss of Turrill’s men by just stating “whose battalion had suffered heavily earlier in the day” did not do the 5th Regiment justice.⁸⁶ Clark blatantly laid out the losses as “numbered 8 officers and 325 men.”⁸⁷ In mere percentages, this was roughly ninety percent of the officers and roughly fifty percent of the enlisted men in the two companies.⁸⁸ Captain Hamilton attacked beyond the objective of Hill 142 and into the open wheat fields towards the town of Torcy exposed to German machine guns, possibly due to the lack of

⁸¹ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 103.

⁸² Machine Guns of the 4th Brigade, Littleton W.T. Waller Jr. Collection.

⁸³ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 54.

⁸⁴ Manuscript, COLL/2307, A/11/L/7/4, Onnie and Janice Cordes Collection, United States Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

⁸⁵ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 106.

⁸⁶ Wright and Spaulding, *The Second Division in France*, 52.

⁸⁷ Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 108.

⁸⁸ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 106.

maps. This blunder quite possibly cost his company half of the casualties incurred that day.⁸⁹ Onnie Cordes of the 17th Company who would arrive to bolster the 49th and 67th later recalled “we were now in a terrible machine gun barrage...I stooped as low as possible and started through an open field that was being continually swept with machine gun bullets.⁹⁰ American rifles had not stemmed or stopped German maxims.

Regardless, General Harbord and Bundy considered the first phase a success. Harbord must have considered the tactics sound as he again ordered the second phase attack with the same care and precaution as the 5th Regiment's assault on Hill 142. This time however, the remainder of the 5th Regiment under Major Berry and elements of the 2nd and 3^d Battalions of the 6th Marine Regiments were to assault the wood properly.⁹¹ Lengel and other historians have noted that no lessons seemed to have been learned as the assault into Belleau Wood played out in a very similar endgame as the early morning attack. Marines and soldiers present themselves as being well trained and very capable individually. However, these units were not familiar with working together or in tandem of one another. There was little to no liaison between the units which lead to disastrous results.

Once again Harbord was delayed in issuing orders. Catlin recalled that the orders to attack at 5 P.M. were not received by Lieutenant Williams until 3:45 P.M, which had only been drafted at 2 P.M. that same day, June 6.⁹² Lengel postulated that very little was taken from the early morning attack and applied to the late afternoon attack scheduled for

⁸⁹ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 54.

⁹⁰ Manuscript, Onnie and Janice Cordes Collection.

⁹¹ Harbord, *The American Army in France*, 290.

⁹² Catlin, *With the Help of God*, 73.

5 P.M. by limiting any type of preliminary bombardment or “made no effort to correct the parade-ground tactics” which had defined the attack of the morning.⁹³ Catlin pointed out that the poor planning and rushed timetable had robbed the marine units of coordinating liaison so that the units would attack as one, instead they “were virtually independent actions.”⁹⁴ Even Major Waller’s history of the 6th Machine Gun Battalion recounted that the liaison was poor between the units even though the Machine Gun Companies were assigned to specific units “the infantry frequently not knowing where the machine gun units were.”⁹⁵

The lack of infantry supporting arms, such as artillery or machine gun fire to suppress or screen, denoted multiple failures within the adopted doctrine and tactics being employed. Namely, while Harbord wished to capitalize on speed and surprise, he sacrificed any planning or coordination between the units in the division. This resistance or ignorance to utilize the division's powerful assets suggests three possibilities. First, General Harbord and other senior men did not consider it necessary to utilize the division's support weapons. If so, then this implies that the past months of training, including the division-level event in May as a total waste. Several training courses were carried out for infantry officers to expose the infantry to these weapons and their usefulness which seems to have been ignored.⁹⁶ Major Waller noted even commanders in the machine gun units desired “to make a separate arm out of their weapon.”⁹⁷ Second,

⁹³ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 108.

⁹⁴ Catlin, *With the Help of God*, 76.

⁹⁵ *Machine Guns of the 4th Brigade*, Littleton W.T. Waller Jr. Collection.

⁹⁶ Ledger, *Signal Orders No. 109*, 1917-1919, 2018.46.22, Captain William Graham Reynolds Collection, The National World War One Museum and Memorial, Kansas City, MO.

⁹⁷ *Machine Guns of the 4th Brigade*, Littleton W.T. Waller Jr. Collection.

the possibility is that the commanders were not convinced these weapons would have been of any use. Again, this implication that pre-war doctrinal rot still was retained in senior leaders even after reports of German *Stosstruppen* had prevailed of success due to utilizing weapons such as artillery or mobile machine guns impregnated within infantry units. The third and final possibility is that the training leading up to the initial combat of the division was so haphazard and poorly conducted that inexperienced commanders fell back on basic parade ground ideals without even considering the codependency of the units to work together.

At 4:30 P.M. elements of the 12th Field Artillery began a bombardment of the woods in front of the marines. Catlin described this bombardment as “random in a sort of hit-or-miss fire.” He added the artillery “had no definite locations” plotted to shell.⁹⁸ Lengel noted that the high-caliber guns did cause severe casualties on German forces who had deployed their men to the edge of the woods instead of in-depth where more concentrated shelling could have been catastrophic.⁹⁹ Grotelueschen noted that the attack on hill 142 had only involved some six batteries of 75mm guns, two batteries of 155mm howitzers, and two machine gun companies. Harbord allocated even less artillery for the 5 P.M. attack later in the day.¹⁰⁰ Even more egregious was the lack of any rolling barrage once again which would not screen the advancing infantry over hundreds of yards of open wheat fields.

⁹⁸ Catlin, *With the Help of God*, 75.

⁹⁹ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 109.

¹⁰⁰ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 211-212.

Marines of Berry's 3d Battalion 5th Marines, Sibley's 3d Battalion, and Holcomb's 2d battalion, both of the 6th Marines, emerged from the tree lines facing Belleau Wood and advanced. Catlin stated "the battalion pivoted on its right, the left sweeping across the open ground in four waves, as steadily and correctly as though on parade...deployed in four skirmish lines, the men place five yards apart and the waves fifteen to twenty yards behind each other."¹⁰¹ What Catlin described was the epitome of Pershing's idyllic open warfare doctrine of riflemen assaulting entrenched defenders. This also is the depiction of a machine gunner's dream come true. Deployed as such, the units created formations with straight lines which meant that German machine guns deployed on the flanks would have enfilade on the formations. This being the long axis of the beaten zone, where the burst of bullets fired would fall, would coincide with the long axis of the body formation. This meant that German machine guns would have greater chances of hitting and causing casualties to the American attackers. Catlin would describe the assault "never did men advance more gallantly in the face of certain death."¹⁰²

Corporal Joseph Rendinell with the 6th Regiment wrote that "I looked across the wheat field & there were our buddies still coming along through the machine-gun bullets."¹⁰³ Private Scarborough recorded "I felt the shockwave of a string of bullets run right down my neck...at least three rounds ripped right through the pack."¹⁰⁴ Captain David Bellamy of the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines noted that the Regiment's companies met much the same; "the left companies were held up by machine guns nests...the right

¹⁰¹ Catlin, *With the Help of God*, 77.

¹⁰² Catlin, *With the Help of God*, 124.

¹⁰³ Clark, *Devil Dog Chronicles*, 164.

¹⁰⁴ Clark, *Devil Dog Chronicles*, 164.

couldn't advance...and lay in open fields 'till after dark."¹⁰⁵ Lieutenant Sellers of the 78th Company observed that the 23d Infantry Regiment who were to the east of the Marine brigade suffered similar consequences. Sellers recalled, "it was the ghastliest thing to watch as soldiers were just falling...advancing in extended order drill, they were sitting ducks."¹⁰⁶ Asa Smith noted that German artillery had wreaked havoc on the 74th company where they "lost about ½ our co[mpany] from German big shells."¹⁰⁷

Pershing's prescribed method of doctrinal warfare would cost the 2d Division on June 6, 1918. Poor planning, indifferent precautions, and a lack of utilizing the weapons that were integrated into the division meant that marines and soldiers advanced with little support or warning of the dangers they were facing. The rushed orders, unfamiliarity with the terrain, and lack of maps meant that the commanders were blind and crawling forward by feel. Finally, the doctrine had inherently failed. Pershing's open warfare ideology of massed well-trained riflemen would prove to be lethal in the defense when supported by machine guns and artillery. However, that same infantry on the attack was all but naked against the German defenders.

This is not to say that the time between June 1917 to June 1918 had been wasted. Training had failed to prepare commanders and men for carrying out the American doctrine of open warfare, especially against a well dug-in enemy. These marines and soldiers were well-disciplined and determined. American ingenuity made up for the lack of infantry weapons as several veterans of the battle noted that German maxims were

¹⁰⁵ Diary, 1917-1919, David Bellamy Collection.

¹⁰⁶ Gregory, *C'est La Guerre*, 76.

¹⁰⁷ Memoir, Asa J. Smith Collection.

pressed into American service to bolster the battered American line. Catlin noted marines “took those machine gun nests...and in some cases were able to turn them on the Germans.”¹⁰⁸ Bellamy recorded in the 3d battalions’ history that “one platoon of the 83rd company captured...two machine guns and a quantity of ammunition. These guns were set up by them and used with good effect upon the enemy.”¹⁰⁹ Thomas Boyd’s novel regarding his experiences in World War One included one of his characters ‘Hicks’ employing a German Maxim” so that he could swing it back and forth...and cover the maximum of ground.”¹¹⁰ Cordes quoted that his company utilized “about thirty-five machine guns...and put them in working order” which was preferred as “we had no machine guns of our own, except the Chauchat...after each clip, it would jam.”¹¹¹

What is also evident is how the marines and soldiers of the division adapted to the austere conditions. The longer that the 2d Division spent in the woods the more decentralized the fighting became and soon small unit tactics began to take over. This is a major departure from Pershing’s hammer-blow open warfare where these massive American divisions would purportedly overwhelm the German defenders. Elton Mackin of the 17th Company noted that the Marine's "method of attack was a departure from orthodox warfare" which resulted in "aggravation to the enemy in that they were always unexpected."¹¹² Carl Brannen described the battle as “Belleau Wood was captured a piece

¹⁰⁸ Catlin, *With the Help of God*, 91.

¹⁰⁹ Bellamy, *History of the Third Battalion*, 19.

¹¹⁰ While Thomas Boyd’s book *Through the Wheat* is considered a novel it is often regarded as a memoir in the guise of a novel. Thomas Boyd, *Through the Wheat: A Novel of the World War I Marines* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 113.

¹¹¹ Manuscript, Onnie and Janice Cordes Collection.

¹¹² Elton Mackin, *Suddenly We Didn’t Want to Die: Memoirs of a World War I Marine* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1993), 50.

at a time.”¹¹³ Catlin recorded that this was necessary as “these German guns in the wood were well placed to cover all zones with both lateral and plunging fire.”¹¹⁴

By the end of that day in June 1918 the Marine Corps had more casualties than in its previous history combined.¹¹⁵ Casualty numbers for June 6 amount to roughly 1,087 marine casualties not accounting for the 3d Brigade.¹¹⁶ The 2d Division would continue to fight until June 26 when 3d battalion 5th Marines communicated to their higher headquarters “BELLEAU WOODS NOW U.S. MARINE CORPS ENTIRELY” after German forces capitulated in the area.¹¹⁷ The division itself suffered heavily with final casualties of 7,876 where the division began the battle with 26,063 men. This meant that nearly one in every three men was killed, wounded, or missing.¹¹⁸ The first day of the 2d Division’s advance encompassed the poor coordination and focus that the United States military had devoted to modern warfare. Units of the 2d Division had been in France for up to a year yet the senior leaders conducted the opening of the battle as if on parade. Evidence of such is in the four-wave formation that permeates the letters, diaries, and memoirs of those that survived.

Edward Lengel relied heavily on German accounts to ascertain the capability of the American Division. The lack of preparatory artillery and the parade ground tactics on the initial assaults “were stunned by the clumsiness of the American tactics” particularly that it was not accompanied by supporting machine guns or artillery fire in any great

¹¹³ Carl Brannen, *Over There: A Marine in the Great War* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 25.

¹¹⁴ Catlin, *With the Help of God*, 82.

¹¹⁵ Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 101

¹¹⁶ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 214.

¹¹⁷ Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 202.

¹¹⁸ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 94.

amount.¹¹⁹ General Ludendorff who had been the primary architect of the Spring Offensives, was shocked regarding the poor planning or ignorant leadership having been quoted as saying the Americans were “unskillfully led, attacking in masses and failing.”¹²⁰ Later General Ludendorff would write about the 2d Division, particularly that it “must be considered as a very good [unit], perhaps even a shock unit...their morale is inexhaustible, and they are imbued with a spirit of implicit confidence.”¹²¹

Despite being victorious at Belleau Wood and the lauded praise from German sources the 2d Division would need to be reinforced and the casualties would be replaced with men that had only recently come to France. Of those, few had experienced any sort of training or preparation like that was conducted in Toulon or the Verdun sector. Regarding the number of casualties, the division's next fight would include a large body of roughly and relatively untrained men apart from basic training or stateside advanced schools which had only provided practical familiarization.

Soissons

After the failure of Operation Blücher to complete a drive on Paris or split the British and French forces as General Ludendorff had hoped, German forces were in a precarious position. A final offensive in the Aisne-Marne sector had proved disastrous for German forces who were too exhausted to break through French positions now bolstered with American troops. Operation Marneschutz-Reims had failed to break the allied line and a salient was formed which Marshal Foch hoped to capitalize on and “force the

¹¹⁹ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 110.

¹²⁰ Wawro, *Sons of Freedom*, 172-173.

¹²¹ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 6.

Germans to abandon the entire Marne salient” with a counter-offensive.¹²² For this action, the French Tenth Army was given both the American 1st and 2d Divisions as units to drive through the Soissons region.¹²³ In Soissons “forty German divisions within the Marne Salient were supplied by a single line of railroad.”¹²⁴

In early July 1918 General Bundy had been considered “ineffective as a division commander” and was promoted to command the US VI Corps. His replacement was Major General Harbord who had devastated the 4th Brigade at Belleau Wood.¹²⁵ The new division commander was disillusioned with this turn of events. The division itself had barely begun to heal from the ordeal at Belleau Wood and was now on orders which it had been told to pack up and move out “destination unknown to any of the authorities responsible either for its supply, its safety, or efficiency in the coming attack.”¹²⁶ The division not only found itself whisked away but were dropped miles from their jumping-off points. The 4th Brigade having the worst of it by being “fifteen miles further back” with the roads between there jammed with traffic.¹²⁷

Parallels can be drawn between the 2d Divisions operations in Belleau Wood and Soissons. Once again, the marines and soldiers of the 2d Division found themselves being hurriedly rushed to a front with very little information about the objectives or operation. George Clark noted that once again maps were not present or available for the platoon, company, or even battalion commanders.¹²⁸ Very little information was given to General

¹²² Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 242.

¹²³ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 96.

¹²⁴ Harbord, *The American Army in France*, 307.

¹²⁵ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 246.

¹²⁶ Harbord, *The American Army in France*, 317.

¹²⁷ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 97-98.

¹²⁸ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 98.

Harbord regarding the terrain his division was to advance over. A Major Berthier is recorded as having given Harbord and Colonel Brown “a short description of the terrain...the sole intelligence material furnished.”¹²⁹ Lengel discounted this as John Thomason, the 2d Division historian, found evidence that Harbord had been offered detailed orders that Harbord had either “rejected or ignored” including pace recommendations so the French and American units would advance in tandem.¹³⁰

Another major parallel was that the distance the men of the division would have to travel to get to their starting positions meant they would have to travel throughout the day of July 17 into the evening of July 18. Many of the American troops had not eaten since July 16 and the assaulting regiments either barely arrived in time before the operation began or were late. The 9th Regiment arrived just before the opening artillery, the 23d Regiment “had to run the final kilometers” to their prescribed positions, and the Marines of the 5th Regiment were behind schedule arriving after the opening barrage.¹³¹

July 18, The First Day

The attack was set to begin at 0435 on July 18 from the Forest of Retz to the east with the American 1st Division on the left, the 2d Division on the right, and the French 1st Moroccan Division in the center.¹³² The intended path of the attack was to head northeast until just south of the town of Chaudun where the division would turn southeast toward Vierzy and Tigny. This linear attack presented Harbord with an opportunity, he believed,

¹²⁹ Spaulding and Wright, *The Second Division*, 108.

¹³⁰ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 263.

¹³¹ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 229.

¹³² Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 96.

to conduct the open warfare properly that Pershing had been arguing for since the arrival of the Americans in France.¹³³ Ideally, the division would smash into the German defenders with the aid of surprise. Once that was accomplished continue to press the attack maintaining constant mobile contact that would create chaos and confusion among the German ranks.

The attacking regiments were the 5th Marines to the left, the 9th Regiment in the center, and the 23d on the far right with the Marines covering a front the size of the other two regiments combined. The 6th Marine Regiment was to be a Corps reserve only to be released by the French commanders.¹³⁴ The division had learned a harsh lesson at Belleau Wood and the orders given to the Division artillery assets included a rolling barrage that would screen the advancing infantry to begin at 0435 with “no increased artillery fire until the moment when the barrage should fall.”¹³⁵ Harbord issued pacing orders that the division would advance “following the barrage at the rate of one hundred meters to two minutes.”¹³⁶ Onnie Cordes commented, “we just followed the greatest barrage of the war...and were again successful in every way.”¹³⁷ To accompany the advancing infantry the French had assigned “forty-eight Schneider tanks” to the division during the attack.¹³⁸

One major problem that faced the division was the lack of infantry support weapons such as machine guns, stokes mortars, or the 37mm field guns sometimes called one-pounders. When the artillery broke loose and the infantry stepped off “the brigade

¹³³ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 227.

¹³⁴ Spaulding and Wright. *The Second Division*, 111-112.

¹³⁵ Harbord, *The American Army in France*, 322.

¹³⁶ Harbord, *The American Army in France*, 328.

¹³⁷ Manuscript, Onnie and Janice Cordes Collection.

¹³⁸ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 227.

machine gun battalions were still in the tangle of traffic somewhere in the rear.”¹³⁹

Colonel Malone of the 23d Regiment had ordered his regiment to advance with only rifles and grenades, not even bringing the cumbersome Chauchats along especially since they had to run to meet the deadline.¹⁴⁰ So the 2d Division, though screened by a rolling barrage would begin a major offensive against Germans deployed in layered defensive lines with no automatic weapons aside from a few of the machine gun companies that had kept pace with the infantry battalions. One major point was that Harbord's “only mention of machine guns was a note that a few were to be added to the special liaison teams working on the division flanks.”¹⁴¹

Amazingly enough, the infantry and barrage caught the Germans by surprise and the Americans were advancing rapidly through their area of operation. Major Waller recalled, “without machine guns, stokes mortars, one-pounders or grenades, armed only with rifle and bayonet, they swept through with an impetuosity and dash that was irresistible.”¹⁴² This impetuosity led to a disorganized advance, especially with the 5th Marine Regiment whose responsibility it was to keep a connecting file with the Moroccans and cover more ground than the 3d Brigade in as much time; all while being exposed to a German hard point in Chaudun.¹⁴³ It was south of Chaudun that the 5th Regiment was to turn at a right angle and proceed from advancing to the northeast to the southeast, however, elements of the 17th and 49th companies assaulted the town whose

¹³⁹ Spaulding and Wright, *The Second Division*, 113.

¹⁴⁰ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 102.

¹⁴¹ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 228.

¹⁴² *Brief Narrative History of the Second Division, 1900-1924*, COLL/1380, A/5/H/7/3, Littleton W.T. Waller Jr. Collection, United States Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

¹⁴³ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 266.

defenders had been firing into the Marines' flanks with accurate effect. This meant that the 2d Division had entered into the 1st Moroccan Division which had been outpaced by the Americans.¹⁴⁴

By 0930 the 23d Regiment was nearing its third objective and had low casualties compared to the other regiments. By noon the division had reached its main objective however "its scattered infantry units spent the next six hours consolidating."¹⁴⁵ Small unit tactics and initiative surprised and overwhelmed German machine guns positions such as Sergeants Louis Cukela and Matej Kocak both individually took German guns earning them the Medal of Honor or Captain Percy Cornell who "dashed forward with several men...and silenced a machine gun which had annihilated the advance wave."¹⁴⁶ Clyde A. Fritz of the 9th Regiment led a contingent of soldiers into a ravine occupied by German machine guns where only two of the ten men survived but allowed relief on 3d battalion 9th Regiment long enough to advance.¹⁴⁷

By the end of the day, the town of Vierzy had been taken but the three regiments were exhausted and had taken considerable casualties. Elton Mackin recorded the conversation between Major Turrill of the 5th Regiment to Brigadier General Ely of the 3d Brigade who berated the former for taking his time. Turrill had tried to explain to Ely that "these are runners, clerks, and orderlies...they're only armed with pistols" to which Ely supposedly proclaimed "they are *marines*, aren't they, Major?"¹⁴⁸ The 9th Regiment

¹⁴⁴ Clark, *the Fourth Marine Brigade*, 45.

¹⁴⁵ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 230.

¹⁴⁶ Clark, *the Fourth Marine Brigade*, 45.

¹⁴⁷ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 103.

¹⁴⁸ Mackin claims it was an army Colonel and not the General, however, other sources cite that it was Brigadier General Ely. Mackin, *Suddenly We Didn't Want to Die*, 109.

scrambled to consolidate by the evening and could only “account for just four hundred men from the three thousand that began the attack” and the other two regiments were surmising that fifty percent of their regiments were casualties.¹⁴⁹ However, the advance of the day merited an “advance totaled eight kilometers, Several thousand prisoners, hundreds of machine guns, and practically all of the artillery...of two German divisions.”¹⁵⁰ Now the 6th Regiment would be called upon to push the remainder of the way to Soissons-Chateau Thierry road which would jeopardize the German salient.

July 19, The Second Day

For all that the 2d Division did right on the first day of the battle, the second would be the opposite. General Harbord and his French compatriots believed a breakthrough was inevitable and urged a renewed attack for July 19. Harbord ascertained, and correctly, that his three regiments from the day before had been used up. The task of taking the Soissons-Chateau Thierry Road would fall on the 6th Marines and them alone. Harbord called upon the 6th Regiment without permission from the French army or corps commanders who owned the regiment at the time. However, the timeline would once again work against the marines. Orders to Harbord were not received until 0200, the commander of the 6th Regiment did not receive them until 0300, and the attack was scheduled to begin at 0400.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 232.

¹⁵⁰ *Brief Narrative History of the Second Division*, Littleton W.T. Waller Jr. Collection.

¹⁵¹ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 284.

General Harbord at least had some forethought and delayed the attack until 0700 so that the regiment would have more time to prepare and arrive at their jumping-off positions. Harbord also planned for an hour-long bombardment of the German positions prior to the 6th Regiment's assault, however, this was to soften up the Germans and not a rolling barrage that had preceded the marines and soldiers the previous day.¹⁵² During the evening of July 18-19 German reinforcements arrived to bolster the defenses around Tigny and the Soisson-Chateau Thierry Road which constituted “a powerful resistance” of “several fresh divisions” according to Major Waller.¹⁵³ The marines of the 6th Regiment were already under artillery fire as they advanced to their starting positions, the day was not starting well.

When the artillery bombardment began at 0630 the regiment was still not entirely in position. Several sources from 2d Battalion 6th Marines blamed the accompanying French tanks which had not arrived on time that was set to accompany the Americans as noted by Peter Owen, however, “ascribing the blame to the French tanks is only partly justifiable.”¹⁵⁴ The unit history of 3d Battalion 6th Marines recorded that the start time of the assault had been passed for 0800 and the battalion only arrived near its starting point by 0815.¹⁵⁵ Sergeant Paradis was less forthcoming about the battalion, “3rd Battalion was lost.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Grotelueschen, *THE AEF Way of War*, 232.

¹⁵³ *Brief Narrative History of the Second Division*, Littleton W.T. Waller Jr. Collection.

¹⁵⁴ Peter F. Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance: A Battalion of Marines in the Great War* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press,, 118.

¹⁵⁵ Bellamy, *History of the Third Battalion*, 33.

¹⁵⁶ Don V. Paradis, *The World War I Memoirs of Don V. Paradis, Gunnery Sergeant, USMC* (Coppell, TX: 2010), 72.

By the time the regiment began its assault the artillery support had stopped and would be mostly absent the rest of the day. German artillery and machine gun fire, which had begun as soon as battalions began to take the position, increased their rate of fire, and began taking a serious toll on the Marine regiment. Once again this is counter to the open warfare concepts of the *Infantry Drill Regulations* that preached fire superiority. Here once again Harbord failed to rely on the assets of his division by utilizing artillery or machine gun units to their fullest potential. This is not entirely Harbord's fault, however, as the rushed deployment of his division meant that many of these weapons were clogged on roads behind the front. When those units were involved, they were uncoordinated and had virtually no connection to the infantry on the attack. Another problem was the lack of using the division's infantry weapons. At Soissons particularly useful weapons like the Stokes mortars and 37mm field guns were left behind in the rear lost in the confusion as noted by the 3d Battalion 6th Regiments history.¹⁵⁷ Even the disliked Chauchat automatic rifles of the infantry had either been left behind or discarded usually because they "jammed after a few rounds so those that had them threw the ammunition away."¹⁵⁸

Corporal Victor Spark of the 78th Company, 6th Marines commented, "I could not believe anyone could live under such shelling."¹⁵⁹ Bellamy recorded "in 10 minutes we had ten men blown to pieces and twenty wounded within fifty yards of us."¹⁶⁰ Carl Brannen in the 80th Company recounted "the tanks were leading, with our lines right

¹⁵⁷ Bellamy, *History of the Third Battalion*, 34.

¹⁵⁸ Memoir, 1917-1919, COLL/206, A/14/C/2/4, Victor D. Spark Collection, United States Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

¹⁵⁹ Memoir, Victor D. Spark Collection.

¹⁶⁰ Diary, David Bellamy Diary.

behind them...the Germans turned loose everything they had.”¹⁶¹ Sergeant Paradis lamented “the concentration was so great that it seemed like a black curtain...men went down all around us from rifle fire and machine guns and cannon.”¹⁶²

The Regiment advance no more than two kilometers and was stopped, dead in its tracks. Having begun the assault sometime after 0800 the Regiment had been pinned into position no later than 1030 until that night according to the regimental diary.¹⁶³ Officers began to worry that the Germans would execute a counter-assault into the Regiment, a possibility that terrified the men as they had little hope of holding.¹⁶⁴ One major factor that contributed to the massive fire being poured on the American unit was that they were being fired on from at least two sides, their front, and their left. German defenders still held ground to the north of the Marines in the sector the Moroccan division was supposed to clear. However, “by 9:20 they had made it only as far as...the left rear of the 2nd division’s limit of advance of July 18.”¹⁶⁵

The marines held out and a counterattack never came. Possibly because the Germans themselves were exhausted from the fighting. The 2d Division, however, had been mauled in those two days of July. The 6th Regiment alone had begun the assault with 2,450 men and “in the battle, they lost 1,300” men.¹⁶⁶ The total casualties for the 2d Division amounted to “4,392 casualties during the period of Soissons, the division began

¹⁶¹ Brannen, *Over There*, 31.

¹⁶² Paradis, *The World War I Memoirs*, 73.

¹⁶³ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 110.

¹⁶⁴ James Nelson, *I Will Hold: The Story of USMC Legend Clifton B. Cates, Belleau Wood to Victory* (New York: Caliber Publishing, 2016), 181.

¹⁶⁵ Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, 121.

¹⁶⁶ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 110.

the battle with 24,042.”¹⁶⁷ Pershing’s grand idea of massive American divisions being able to stay in the fight had been tested and proven false. Especially in the case of the 2d Division at Soissons. In two days, the division had taken over 10 kilometers but was required to be pulled from the line by the end of July 19.

The primary culprit in the tactics and doctrine employed by the Americans at Soissons has generally been narrowed down to a few specific considerations. First, the coordination and liaison between assaulting units and the ancillary units that were supposed to support them. Grotelueschen argued that on both July 18 and 19 confusion had reigned and artillery had immense difficulty being able to maintain support with the regiments as they advanced.¹⁶⁸ Major Waller recorded after the battle that the machine gun units scrambled to make contact with command posts having to utilize runners primarily as telephone connections were non-existent, especially on July 19.¹⁶⁹ Lengel postulated that “faulty American tactics” had exhausted the division which had committed a straight ahead advance that took no account of terrain, fatigue, or the inevitably slower movements of the French and made no provisions for machine gun support.¹⁷⁰

The 2d Division needed to adapt and change. The American division could not afford any more Belleau Woods or Soissons. These battles had only been carried by the division because of the division's enormous size, however, mismanagement could spell disaster as was possibly almost the case at Soissons on July 19. The greater implication

¹⁶⁷ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 112.

¹⁶⁸ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 234-235.

¹⁶⁹ *Machine Guns of the 4th Brigade*, Littleton W.T. Waller Jr. Collection.

¹⁷⁰ Lengel, *Thunder and Flames*, 288.

for the American Expeditionary Forces was that if a division that had assets in France as far back as a year ago and was composed of some of the most veteran troops in the United States military, what hope would the American Expeditionary Force have in defeating the German war machine if untested and undertrained divisions fresh from the states took part in attacks like Soissons?

CHAPTER IV

REBUILDING AND RETRAINING

The 2d Division came off the line on the night of July 19, 1918 and was sorely in need of recovery. The division had survived devastating encounters with the hard German troops in Belleau Wood and Soissons, but only barely. The 2d Division had paid dearly for under-utilizing the weapons at its disposal. The situation in the 1st Division was similar as a major complaint was the total lack of mortars, 37mm guns, grenades, and Chauchat ammunition.¹ As a consolation, the German spirit had been shunted and the German army retreated from its positions around Chateau Thierry and Soissons which had gained earlier that spring and summer effectively ending any future German offensives.²

The 2d Division would entrain to Nanteuil for the remainder of July. There two of the most important things happened that changed the course of the division's capability and future performance. First, the 2d Division was allowed to go to a quiet sector where it began to receive some of the much-needed replacement troops. Second, Major General James Harbord was

¹ Geoffrey Wawro, *Sons of Freedom: The Forgotten American Soldiers Who Defeated Germany in World War I* (New York: Basic Books, 2018), 207.

² Colonel Oliver Spaulding and Colonel John Wright, *The Second Division American Expeditionary Force in France, 1917-1919* (Nashville, TN: The Battery Press, reprinted 1989), 132.

reassigned personally by General John J. Pershing to the Services of Supply and the division was taken over by Brigadier General John Lejeune on July 28 only after taking command of the 4th Marine Brigade on July 25.¹ General Lejeune had arrived in France on June 8, 1918 and would openly condemn the attacks at Belleau Wood as “little progress was made” amounting to “the reckless courage of the foot soldier with his rifle and bayonet could not overcome machine gun.”² When Lejeune arrived at the 2d Division in July 1918 he remembered “many of those I knew had made the supreme sacrifice, and the living showed the marks of physical exhaustion.”³

General Lejeune had been at the forefront of redesigning the Marine Corps under the guidance of Major General George Barnett, the current Commandant, who desired to make the Marine Corps more expeditionary. Lejeune had also not sat idly by while in France. Lejeune coveted a combat command, naturally he desired the 4th Marine Brigade and even courted General Pershing with the proposal of a Marine division serving in France.⁴ General Lejeune had done a brief tour with the 35th Division as an observer where he “was eager to learn all he could about German, French, and American strategy, tactics, and planning.”⁵ When Lejeune inherited the 2d Division from General Harbord he found himself short seven thousand officers and men and tasked with rebuilding a

¹ Mark Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War I* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 238.

² John A. Lejeune, “Summary of Battle of Chateau-Thierry, may 31st to July 10th, 1918,” *RSD*, vol. 6. Quoted in Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 214.

³ Major General John A. Lejeune, *The Reminiscences of a Marine* (Coppell, TX: Arcadia Press, 2023), 128.

⁴ Joseph Arthur Simon, *The Greatest of All Leathernecks: John Archer Lejeune and the Making of the Modern Marine Corps* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2019), 106-107.

⁵ Simon, *The Greatest of All Leathernecks*, 107.

division from the ground up.⁶ Lejeune recorded “nearly all this shortage existed in the two brigades of infantry...depleted in numbers by nearly one-half”⁷

What occurred through the month of August and into September was what Peter Owen called a “tactical renaissance” where the division discarded much of the pre-war doctrine espoused by Pershing as the American Expeditionary Forces dogma in war as well as the lessons the French had taught the division in Toulon and the Verdun sectors.⁸ Veterans first had to familiarize the replacements with weapons integral to the rifle platoons and companies. Sergeant Paradis of the 78th Company 6th Marines noted that the company spent a larger amount of time with the VB rifle grenades which had been introduced in February 1918 but had largely been absent in battlefield accounts of Belleau Wood and Soissons.⁹ Alternate training focused on “going through rifle range, hand grenade throwing” the latter having been an item that was non-existent or in short supply at the two battles as well.¹⁰

Private Carl Brannen of the 84th Company noted that training had focused on “keeping down so many casualties” by implementing a type of walking fire where riflemen and automatic riflemen would advance at a brisk pace firing their weapons from the hip. The ensuing fire was “hoped to shoot [the Germans] away from their guns before so much damage was done.”¹¹ Everard Bullis assigned to the 49th company 5th Marines

⁶ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 238.

⁷ Lejeune, *Reminiscences of a Marine*, 138.

⁸ Peter F. Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance: A Battalion of Marines in the Great War* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 137.

⁹ Don V. Paradis, *The World War I Memoirs of Don V. Paradis, Gunnery Sergeant, USMC* (Coppell, TX: 2010), 86.

¹⁰ Paradis, *The World War I Memoirs*, 86.

¹¹ Carl Brannen, *Over There: A Marine in the Great War* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 41.

noted that renewed attention was given to employing the Chauchat to be more effective, drilling into the automatic riflemen the function of the weapon, the failures it could incur, and become accustomed to the weight and balance of the gun in action.¹² Bullis noted there was a distinct morale boost as competitions were held between gun teams which they became very competitive which involved “about thirty gunners and their crews.”¹³ Joseph Duermit of the 74th company 6th Marines noted that near “TOUL” his company was broken out among the Chauchat gunners who were to “instruct the men in the parts of the gun” including disassembly and assembly.¹⁴ Lejeune wanted his division exposed to infantry weapons the division possessed which “nearly all of these Marines and Army men were, but in need of training in the use of.”¹⁵

Lejeune and other senior leaders of the division hoped that they could draw on the experiences of the veteran men and produce a more stable doctrine that the division could adopt in order to better fight the German army with bludgeoning themselves to death. Lejeune “stressed realism and flexibility” including not to adopt a normal deployment method but instead “dispose their troops in accordance with the situation” which sounds oddly familiar to the vague descriptors that the *Field Service Regulations* had recommended in prewar years.¹⁶ Lejeune commented “rehearsal of the approaching attack was held over ground similar to that to be traversed...it simulated actual battle as nearly as possible.”¹⁷ Early days of this retraining involved small units wargame and play

¹² Everard J. Bullis, *Doing my Bit Over There: A U.S. Marine's Memoir of the Western Front in World War I* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland Press, 2018), 118-119.

¹³ Bullis, *Doing my Bit*, 118.

¹⁴ Diary, 1917-1919, COLL/3114, A/11/I/2/3, Joseph E. Duermit Collection, United States Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

¹⁵ Lejeune, *Reminiscences of a Marine*, 139.

¹⁶ Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, 138

¹⁷ Lejeune, *Reminiscences of a Marine*, 139

out how they would assault emplacements or hard points such as “machine gun nests with fewest casualties.”¹⁸ These exercises started at the lowest levels, apparently in squads or sections and progressed from there to larger maneuvers.

The 2d Division began in mid-August to conduct these larger exercises with “infantry battalions practiced delivering assaults while maintaining communications with commanders in the rear.”¹⁹ The primary focus was set on liaison and coordinating with other units such as Colonel Bowley of the 2d Artillery brigade who sought to modernize the communication network including adopting the use of field phones and relying less on runners.²⁰ Finally, at the end of August the entire 2d Division took part in a large set-piece battle which included umpires to gauge the effective tactics of the infantry and their effective liaison with the ancillary units. This exercise included an advance over 10 kilometers with several objectives and numerous problems that the division commanders would have to solve.²¹ David Bellamy noted that the days of “August 30th and 31st, were occupied by divisional terrain exercise and manoevers[sic], the first with officers and liaison people only, the second with troops.”²²

This retraining period coincided with two publications that Pershing had circulated to the American forces. The first was “Combat Instructions for the Troops of First Army” which emphasized the value that close artillery bombardment and rolling barrages provided.²³ The other publication, as pointed out by James Rainey was “Combat

¹⁸ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 239.

¹⁹ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 240.

²⁰ Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, 139.

²¹ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 240.

²² Diary, 1917-1919, COLL924, A/11/1/2/3. David Bellamy Diary, United States Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

²³ Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, 138.

Instructions” which emphasized the use of infantry support weapons like the mortars and one-pounder guns, yet still not much of an argument for the use of machine guns.²⁴ The commanders of the 2d Division devised a plan to advance with the first wave composed of scouts who could locate and identify either hard points like machine guns nests or weak points such as gap in the enemy line that units could exploit.²⁵

Lejeune was also faced with a manpower shortage. Replacements in August 1918 were pouring in, a quarter of a million men per month, but American Expeditionary Forces command urged Lejeune to fill the vacant ranks of the 4th Marine Brigade with green American Army personnel instead of fresh Marines from Parris or Mare Island.²⁶ Lejeune believed that the battered Marine Regiments would take this as an affront to the Marine *esprit de corps*. Historian Peter Owen noted that poorly trained soldiers had already handicapped the American Expeditionary Force, many of whom had never fired a weapon in training.²⁷ Consider Laurence Stallings recollection of Private Bailey who arrived in September 1917 with the 9th Regiment along with “few who had ever discharged a firearm of any kind.”²⁸ Lejeune “deemed my highest duty to be welding of all [the divisions] units into a harmonious whole.”²⁹

This search for replacements meant general Lejeune had to scrimp and scrape together Marines from all over France and other duty stations. While many of these

²⁴ James W. Rainey, “Ambivalent Warfare: The Tactical Doctrine of the AEF in World War I,” *The US Army War College Quarterly*, Volume 13, 1983, 34, ["AMBIVALENT WARFARE: THE TACTICAL DOCTRINE OF THE AEF IN WORLD WAR I" by James W. Rainey \(armywarcollege.edu\)](https://www.armywarcollege.edu/ambivalent-warfare-the-tactical-doctrine-of-the-ae-in-world-war-i/).

²⁵ Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, 138-139.

²⁶ Wawro, *Sons of Freedom*, 242. Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 116.

²⁷ Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, 139.

²⁸ Laurence Stallings, *The Doughboys: The Story of the AEF, 1917-1918* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 25.

²⁹ Lejeune, *Reminiscences of a Marine*, 139.

marines were not trained in the open warfare, trench tactics, or had experience with infantry weapons that Lejeune not promoted as being imperative to future operations, this rest period near Colombey-les-Belles.³⁰ General Lejeune could only gather so many marines for the depleted 4th Brigade as the replacement battalions were used up, having “received 1,000 men , which made them still 2,500 short.”³¹ Lejeune “scoured for leathernecks assigned to provost duty, schools, and hospitals” throughout France though many arrived after final training exercises took place at the end of August 1918.³²

One interesting note is the inclusion of tanks in the training. Tanks had been present at the Soissons attack but the marines and soldiers were not impressed. Clifton Cates who had somehow survived the attack on Bouresches south and east of Belleau Wood and the second day of Soissons noted their presence drew fire and were too slow, lumbering across the battlefield they drew fire easily.³³ The light Schneider and Renault tanks offered up a distinct advantage. In the case of the Renault tank a two-man crew operated an armored box on treads that carried either a 1914 Hotchkiss machine gun or one of the small 37mm cannons. Owen recounted how Colonel Lee had gathered officers of the 6th Marines on September 11 how to integrate and liaison with tanks. Owen purported that this may have been at the behest of Major Thomas Holcomb who had found himself paired with them at Soissons. The idea Owen quoted was an analogy like a

³⁰ George Clark, *The Second Infantry Division in World War I: A History of the American Expeditionary Force Regulars, 1917-1919* (Pike, NH: McFarland & Company, 2007), 115.

³¹ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 116.

³² Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, 139-140.

³³ James D. Nelson, *I Will Hold: The Story of USMC Legend Clifton B. Cates, From Belleau Wood to Victory in the Great War* (New York: Caliber, 2016), 173.

hunter and his dog, the infantry played the part of the dog who would seek out the machine gun and hold it while the hunter (tank) would make the killing blow.³⁴

These familiarization and extensive training could not have been better timed. On August 27 the Division was ordered to join the newly formed 1st American Army under Major General Hunter Liggett.³⁵ Pershing had set his focus on the next phase of reducing the German army. Up until this point American and allied forces had been driving back Germans from ground they had recently obtained. Now General Pershing hoped to reduce the St. Mihiel salient near Verdun. This area had been in German hands since 1914 and was well prepared, organized, and defended.³⁶

The St. Mihiel Salient

Lejeune and his 2d Division had received marching orders north to Pont-a-Mousson and on to Limey in early September 1918.³⁷ Great care was taken as planning for the offensive began on September 7 and was not scheduled for five more days to begin September 12. Truth be told this was an objective of General Pershing's since arriving in France.³⁸ This attack was planned to involve several American divisions. A mixture of Regular army troops and national guard were to take part meaning that troops who had been in numerous battles like the 1st and 2d Division would fight alongside divisions like the 89th and 90th who were "inexperienced divisions with little combat or

³⁴ Owen, *to the Limit of Endurance*, 141.

³⁵ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 116.

³⁶ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 119.

³⁷ David Woodward, *The American Army and the First World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 312-313.

³⁸ Spaulding and Wright, *The Second Division*, 145-146.

sector only training.”³⁹ The St. Mihiel salient was shaped like a triangle with sides facing the west and south and Pershing intended to strike along those fronts, collapsing the salient and cutting off what Germans they could catch inside.

The division would be a part of a massive buildup that would incorporate “three American and one French corps, for a total of fifteen American divisions and four French.”⁴⁰ This meant that the German defenders who numbered some 100,000 men were facing an allied “force of 550,000 Americans and 110,000 Frenchmen.”⁴¹ The 2d Division was formed in a square formation with the 3d Brigade in front 9th and 23d Regiments side by side and the 4th Brigade behind them. Coordination and liaison with the units was much better than before and the Divisions Machine gun units were integrated into the infantry units as a nebulous whole. Additionally, the artillery brigade of the 2d Division received support from the French in terms of “three attached French artillery regiments” which were set to begin a four-hour preparatory bombardment at 0100 and commence with a rolling barrage at 0500. Because the division had time to coordinate and prep two important factors not before utilized in the 2d Division were available. First, the infantry weapons were to be dispersed evenly in the units “stokes mortars and 37-mm guns from the regimental headquarters would move with the lead battalion.”⁴² The second, were the availability of maps which were detailed and legible in quantities for the unit commanders that “knew the location of every P.C., dressing

³⁹ Woodward, *The American Army*. 313.

⁴⁰ Edwin H. Simmons and Joseph H. Alexander, *Through the Wheat: The U.S. Marines in World War I* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2011), 185.

⁴¹ Woodward, *The American Army*. 313.

⁴² Simmons and Alexander, *Through the Wheat*, 190.

station, tank trap, dump, machine gun position, artillery position” of the German defenses.⁴³

All the preparation made the operation look as though everything should go in the Allies favor. While the French would be attacking with the Americans, most of the divisions of the American Expeditionary Force were connected abreast from one another, hopefully to eliminate the issues of Soissons or Belleau Wood where French divisions failed to keep pace. At 0100 the artillery let off with one of the largest bombardments of the war according to several allied and German sources purportedly.⁴⁴ At 0500 the 23d Regiment on the left and the 9th Regiment on the right stepped off. Accompanying the attack, the 6th Machine Gun Battalion was set to provide covering fire beginning at 0500. The machine guns would fire “from 40 to 50 minutes depending on their positions...companies averaged about 15,000 rounds fired or about 30 rounds a minute.”⁴⁵

David Bellamy who followed the 23d Regiment noted “very little opposition, casualties slight...past defensive works four years in the building and given up without a real fight.”⁴⁶ The 3d Brigade surged ahead enveloping and knocking out German bunkers and machine gun nest with impunity. They were aided by forty-five French tanks who made short work of the German pillboxes and lumbered over the barbed wire entanglements.⁴⁷ Approved orders intended for the attack to be “divided into several

⁴³ Machine Guns of the 4th Brigade, 1900-1924, COLL/1380, A/5/H/7/3, Littleton W. T. Waller Jr. Collection, United States Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

⁴⁴ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 120.

⁴⁵ Machine Guns of the 4th Brigade, 1900-1924, Littleton W. T. Waller Jr. Collection.

⁴⁶ Diary, 1917-1919, David Bellamy Diary.

⁴⁷ Simmons and Alexander, *Through the Wheat*, 188.

phases...the first phase line was the Bois de Heiche, about at the divisional reserve line” with the second being the capture of Thiaucourt and Jaulny.⁴⁸ By 1330 on September 12 the 3d Brigade had advanced past their first objective, taken Thiaucourt, and stopped “a half mile from Jaulny.”⁴⁹

American units everywhere that first day seemed to be experiencing similar results. Enemy troops had been caught unaware in their dugouts and shelters when the bombardment commenced. These troops which were constituted of both German and Austrians soon found themselves either killed by overwhelming firepower or soon overrun by the American forces.⁵⁰ This is not to say that the first day went perfect. By midday the American divisions were experiencing sever logistical issues and confusion in abundance. The 2d Division itself lost two platoons in 1st battalion 23d Regiment who became lost and needed to be located. Later in the day 1st and 3d Battalion of the 23d was supposed to leap past 2d Battalion, however 3d battalion was severely behind and forced the 2d and 1st to continue the attack.⁵¹

September 13 and 14 was spent relieving the 3d Brigade and allowing the 4th to take up positions in front of the division. By this point the 1st and 26th US Divisions had been pulled from their lines and no one had fought or stayed in the line as long as the 2d Division.⁵² Casualties for the battle had been light, primarily due to the new tactics and training that the 2d Division had embarked on though mistakes were still made. Major Williams of 2d Battalion 6th Regiment had foolishly led his battalion in column in the

⁴⁸ Spaulding and Wright, *The Second Division*, 149.

⁴⁹ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 124.

⁵⁰ Wawro, *Sons of Freedom*, 278.

⁵¹ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 124-125.

⁵² Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 247.

Bois de la Montagne where his foolishness and arrogance had caught the battalion in an ambush that cost them dearly with German companies to the front and sides.⁵³ Sergeant Paradis claimed that only with the automatic weapons and light infantry weapons was his company able to hold off the Germans until “one of the other companies from our battalion had attacked them from the rear.”⁵⁴

Major Williams presents a problem that still lingered in the division. Williams actions arguably still encapsulated the pre-war thinking of America’s doctrine. Alone and unafraid Williams led his battalion into arguably the bloodiest engagement that the elements of the 2d Division took part in. This shows that senior men, Williams was a pre-war Marine officer who was a medal of honor recipient and known to drink, still held on to outdated ideas of warfare; either by choice or ignorance.⁵⁵

The cost for taking the Saint Mihiel salient had been light on the 2d Division with only a loss of 1,552 men many of whom were considered light casualties.⁵⁶ The division did have something to brag about as it had advanced farther and faster than any of the other divisions and had “captured well over three thousand prisoners and more than ninety guns” with much of the success being placed on the divisional exercises on August 30 and 31.⁵⁷ Still the reports from commanders lamented a lack of artillery still and even incidents of fratricide from allied artillery hitting adjacent units or their own.⁵⁸

Grotelueschen postulated that this presented another issue in the tactics adopted by the

⁵³ Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, 147-150.

⁵⁴ Paradis, *The World War I Memoirs*, 96.

⁵⁵ Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, 137.

⁵⁶ Spaulding and Wright, *The Second Division*, 158

⁵⁷ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 247-248.

⁵⁸ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 124-127.

divisions new doctrine of trench-war style artillery coupled with open-warfare maneuver. In his words he argued that “the whole attack, was executed well during the set piece portion” but once the objectives had been taken on the first day the communication and liaison broke down as the division had little guidance what came next.⁵⁹

One final note should be presented regarding the battle of Saint Mihiel and the American victory there. While this battle was a resounding success and deflated a massive salient that had been a physical thorn in the Allies side since 1914, it needs to be pointed out that the American and Allied forces were not the ones who began the deflation. German commanders noted the massive build-up of Allied troops and began a major withdrawal from the area prior to the attack. Geoffrey Wawro argued succinctly that the quality of German troops was “third or fourth-class German divisions...returned wounded, survivors of annihilated regiments, teenagers of the 1919 recruiting class, or old men of the Landwehr and Landsturm.”⁶⁰ Clark noted that the Germans had plans in place as far back as 1914 should the area become threatened only putting up a stout defense as American units approached the Hindenburg lines to the east.⁶¹ While the American 1st Army and the 2d Division had won a resounding victory and caused the German army to lose more territory it had bleed to keep, this was hardly a test of the new tactics and doctrine. This pre-test could be argued was a second major trial run, like the divisional exercise at the end of August, for future battles. The next battle would not only

⁵⁹ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 251.

⁶⁰ Landwehr and Landsturm units were usually rear echelon units or those task with defensive only duties. Usually made of national guardsmen who were under trained and equipped. Wawro, *Sons of Freedom*, 276.

⁶¹ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 122.

test the new tactics and doctrine adopted and applied by the 2d Division but every man in the units as well.

CHAPTER V

BLANC MONT: “THE SINGLE GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT OF THE 1918 CAMPAIGN.”

General John A. Lejeune was pleased with the performance of the 2d Division as were many other Allied commanders. The victory at Saint Mihiel had liberated territory that had not been under German control since 1914 and the Allied nations were just getting started. On September 26, 1918, ten days after the 2d Division was relieved around Saint Mihiel the first of multiple offensives struck with the American Expeditionary Force striking in the Meuse-Argonne. In the following days, both the British Expeditionary Force and the French armies would strike in Arras, Ypres, and the Champagne region.¹

The American offensive in the Meuse-Argonne would prove to be one of the deadliest engagements in American history. Scholar Jennifer Keene noted that the “Americans funneled approximately 600,000 men, 4,000 artillery...into the region” with extensive supply depots, hospitals, and railways to fuel the offensive.² The 2d Division would not be a part of this attack on September 26, however. General John Pershing

¹ Geoffrey Wawro, *Sons of Freedom: The Forgotten American Soldiers Who Defeated Germany in World War I* (New York: Basic Books, 2018), 303.

² Jennifer D. Keene, *World War I: The American Soldier Experience* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 19.

personally gave the reigns of Lejeune's division over to the French to aid them in the offensives in the Champagne region under French General Henri Gouraud.¹

Target: Blanc Mont

Gouraud had been tasked with advancing in the Champagne region where his forces had encountered a strong point in the German lines which had been there since 1914, like the Saint Mihiel salient, but one the Germans had no interest in abandoning.² This point was part of a chain of hilly terrain that gave a distinct advantage to the German defenders with heights that “camouflaged observation posts could direct artillery fire throughout the region.”³ The most dominant anchor point in these positions was Blanc Mont settled in between the French towns of Somme-Py and St. Etienne which was “an L-shaped east-west ridge rising gently to a summit more than three hundred feet.”⁴ This formidable position boasted numerous gun emplacements, deep concrete bunkers, and well-planned fields of fire that overlooked possible attackers' approach. Gouraud hoped that taking Blanc Mont would release the German hold on to the important town of Rheims and force the German invader to fall back some thirty kilometers, high aspirations for taking a position that was deemed so secure even the Kaiser himself had visited it.⁵

¹ Peter F. Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance: A Battalion of Marines in the Great War* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 160.

² Wawro, *Sons of Freedom*, 384

³ Owen. *To the Limit of Endurance*, 161.

⁴ Owen. *To the Limit of Endurance*, 161.

⁵ Mark Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War I* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 252.

General Lejeune was not initially concerned with the prospect of taking this position. When his division had been given to Marshal Foch and dispensed to General Gouraud's army, Lejeune had heard rumors that the two brigades of infantry were to be split up and dispersed among the French units. Fearing his division would be torn apart by the French allies, Lejeune sought to bargain with the French commander by offering his division as the spearpoint to take Blanc Mont which he was quoted as saying the 2d Division could take "Blanc Mont ridge, advance beyond it, and hold position there."⁶ General Lejeune was also aware that this would include supported from French units who had proven to be slow and allowed the American units to advance well beyond their allies only to be fired upon from their flanks by the Germans.⁷

General Lejeune approached the coming battle very methodically and as a set-piece battle that they had trained to do. Armed with the synthetic trench and open warfare conceptual doctrine, the marine general laid out a daring plan for assaulting one of the most menacing positions on the Western Front. Lejeune devised a plan to assault the L-shaped ridges with a converging attack with each infantry brigade assaulting independently, the 3d on the right and 4th on the left. The French 21st Division would be on the Marines' immediate left and the French 170th on the Army Regulars' right.⁸ The division would launch its two-pronged attack and converge on the summit of Blanc Mont across a three-mile front providing ample room for the division to maneuver.⁹

⁶ Major General John A. Lejeune, *The Reminiscences of a Marine* (Coppell, TX: Arcadia Press, 2023), 155.

⁷ Joseph A. Simon, *The Greatest of All Leathernecks: John Archer Lejeune and the Making of the Modern Marine Corps* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2019), 111.

⁸ George Clark, *The Second Infantry Division in World War I: A History of the American Expeditionary Force Regulars, 1917-1919* (Pike, NH: McFarland & Company, 2007), 137.

⁹ Simon, *The greatest of All Leathernecks*, 112.

The first order of business was to transport the 2d Division to the front lines, their orders were to relieve and replace the “exhausted” 61st French Division south of the ridge.¹⁰ Operation Memos #9 and #10 sent from Brigadier General Neville of the 4th Brigade stipulated “the exact sector to be occupied by the Brigade is, of course, unknown, An idea may be had from the map which shows the sector now occupied by the French Division in the lines.”¹¹ The 3d Brigade had issues moving to their positions as well as noted the country had been heavily devastated over four years of war and many units had difficulty finding their final points.¹² Orders that had been given told many of the commanders to prepare for an attack the next day October 2. Lejeune instead ordered a delay in the attack by a day to allow units to catch up and liaison with their attached or fellow units.¹³

The 2d Division now had an entire day to situate and organize its division for one of the greatest set-piece battles that it would be involved in during the First World War.¹⁴ Operations memo #10 by Neville ordered at 1600 for machine gun units to be dispersed into their parent companies to join the attack.¹⁵ Major Littleton Waller's account corroborates this narrative as he admitted the route up to the starting positions to relieve the French was crowded and confusing, however, the delay allowed the machine gun

¹⁰ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 136.

¹¹ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations, 1919*, 1985.229.1, Book, The National World War I Museum and Memorial, Kansas City, MO.

¹² Colonel Oliver Spaulding and Colonel John Wright, *The Second Division American Expeditionary Force in France, 1917-1919* (Nashville, TN: The Battery Press, reprinted 1989), 170.

¹³ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 253.

¹⁴ A set-piece battle is when a military unit has chosen to specifically engage the enemy at a location and time. In this case General Lejeune specifically intended to engage the German defenders upon Blanc Mont on October 4. From this Lejeune would build his plans for taking the ridge leaving little to chance with appropriate timetables and orders for his division on how the attack was to be conducted.

¹⁵ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations, 1919*.

units to establish "liaison...with the infantry ...companies were able to join battalions with a certainty that should they be employed they were properly placed."¹⁶ Victor Spark of the 78th Company, 6th Marines, recalled in his memoir going forward on foot, the machine gun crews had to carry everything by hand as now the infantry was "too close to the enemy to use the mules" that traditionally pulled the carts carrying the heavy M1914 Hotchkiss.¹⁷

For the advancing infantry, the division had been afforded more artillery than in previous engagements. Besides the divisional assets of light and heavy batteries the division was loaned out "artillery of the 28th and 61st Divisions...thirty light and eighteen heavy batteries" that would be brought to bear on Blanc Mont Ridge.¹⁸ Unlike at St. Mihiel which had sported a lengthy preparatory bombardment, General Lejeune had instructed artillery to strike specific points on the German defenses on October 2 slowly breaking off around midnight and not increasing the rate of fire. The intention of not increasing the intensity throughout the night and morning was to conserve ammunition and not give the Germans any indication of an attack. Then at 0550 on October 3, a furious artillery barrage would commence for five minutes with lighter batteries hitting closer area targets and the heavy artillery shelling the ridge and beyond; finally, commencing with a rolling barrage to screen the attackers.¹⁹ This shows that Lejeune and the 2d Division had completely neglected or ignored Pershing's belief in short or limited

¹⁶ Machine Guns of the 4th Brigade, 1900-1924, COLL/1380, A/5/H/7/3, Littleton W. T. Waller Jr. Collection, United States Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

¹⁷ Memoir, 1917-1919, COLL/206, A/14/C/2/4. Victor D. Spark Collection, United States Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

¹⁸ Spaulding and Wright. *The Second Division*, 171.

¹⁹ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 253.

artillery strikes. Lejeune intended to expend artillery shells instead of expending infantry lives by utilizing heavy artillery to pin the defenders in their dugouts while the lighter artillery rolled ahead of the infantry.

Another notable improvement came in the form of entrusting leaders who had senior combat experience over officers that were arriving as replacements that held higher ranks. Peter Owen noted in his monograph of the 2d Battalion 6th Marines that many of the company commands were handed over to senior lieutenants like Clifton Cates of the 96th Company, instead of Captains who had arrived before the battle.²⁰ Another such officer entrusted to a company was First Lieutenant Sellers of the 78th Company who had been wounded at Belleau Wood on June 6 and had missed the engagements of Soissons and Saint Mihiel the previous months. Lieutenant Sellers pointed out “becoming a company commander was quite a jolt...here I was, 23 years old and completely disengaged from my company for three and half months.”²¹ The coming days would prove if Sellers had the experience that Major Williams, who commanded the 2d Battalion 6th Marines, believed would better lead the 78th company.

General Lejeune and the 2d Division were poised to strike the German defenders as they had never done before. The 2d Division never had been as well equipped, led, coordinated, or prepared as it was at the base of Blanc Mont. Time had been taken to allow units to maneuver as close and correctly as possible. Infantry weapons were dispersed to the infantry units meaning they would advance with their machine guns,

²⁰ Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, 159.

²¹ James Gregory, *C'est La Guerre: The memoir of Captain James McBrayer Sellers, USMC* (North Adams, MA: Storied Publishing, 2020), 90.

stokes mortars, and one-pounder guns which had been absent at Belleau Wood and Soissons. Although these weapons had been present at Saint Mihiel, as noted, the Germans had begun an extensive retreat from the area, and those units and positions the division encountered fought holding actions or easily gave up without much of a struggle.

October 3, the 4th Brigade: “Despite this advantage, our casualties were quite heavy.”

At 0555 the artillery of the 2d Division erupted in a cacophony of death and destruction. The time the division had taken to coordinate the bombardment had paid off for the Americans. German forces reported that the violent barrage had severely hampered their ability to defend or resist the oncoming American forces. It "interrupted all telephone communication, knocked out half their machine guns," resulting in some 25 percent losses in multiple German units..²² While the larger howitzers pounded the ridge, the lighter 75mm guns began their rolling barrage at a pace of 100 yards every four minutes which had been so well executed the lead battalions could “keep as close to the detonations as possible” many of the German defenders to the 4th Brigade’s front were “still underground...until [the marines] were nearly on top of the enemy positions.”²³ Lieutenant Sellers recorded that the artillery was so accurate “that we could advance to within about fifty yards of the shell bursts.”²⁴

The 4th Brigade advanced on time and in their correct order of battle. The 6th Regiment was in the front lined up a battalion wide with the 2d Battalion in front,

²² Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 259.

²³ Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, 168.

²⁴ Gregory, *C'est la Guerre*, 94.

followed by the 1st Battalion in support, with the 3d in reserve. Behind the 6th Regiment was the 5th lined up similarly with the 2d Battalion, then the 3d Battalion, with the 1st Battalion last in line.²⁵ One primary point of concern was the French 21st Division to the brigades left which General Lejeune and many others believed would not keep pace with the division's advance. Special instructions were given, primarily to the 1st Battalion 5th Regiment to prepare and protect the left flank from German fire like the division had experienced at Soissons.²⁶ A known debacle in the advance would be a German-held position called the Essen Hook which the French had been tasked with taking but had yet to be successful in doing. This task would not be completed until October 3 and done so by the 17th Company of Marines.²⁷

The actions of the 17th Company are an interesting small case study itself. The Essen Hook was a curve in the German defenses that on its left faced south towards the French until halfway through where it took a ninety-degree turn and faced east directly in the flank of the advancing 4th Brigade. French troops of the 21st Division were tasked with assaulting the position to aid in covering the American flank though several sources claim the French never did leave their trenches.²⁸ Official communications noted that Captain Leroy Hunt of the 17th company messaged 1st battalion commander Major George Hamilton that machine gun fire was coming from the hook in the west and that marine one-pounder guns had knocked out two machine guns by 0735.²⁹ By 0915 Hunt

²⁵ Spaulding and Wright, *The Second Division*, 171-172.

²⁶ Spaulding and Wright, *The Second Division*, 171.

²⁷ Gerald Clark, *Devil Dogs: Fighting Marines of World War I* (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute, 2013), 295,303.

²⁸ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 142.

²⁹ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations*, 1919.

updated by commenting that a platoon had been tasked with clearing out the trench with the aid of French tanks. By 1030 Hunt reported, "hook and hill to left all cleaned out."³⁰

Earlier in the war and under General Pershing's guidance of open warfare doctrine the 4th Brigade would have suffered an even greater loss if the Hook had been left intact. Further, regular riflemen could never have ousted this position let alone a single company of 250 men. Combined arms and small unit tactics allowed the 17th company to surgically strike, under the cover of French tanks who supported them to close with and silence a reported, at least, four machine guns in the Essen Hook.³¹ This small unit tactic harkens back to Emory Upton's argument about eliminating linear formations and adopting a decentralized approach to closing with and destroying hard points in enemy lines.

The 4th Brigade had been well supplied with the weapons of war. Sergeant Don Paradis noted that before the assault supply units had been set up along the route to the starting positions and handed out "extra bandoliers of rifle ammunition...two offensive and one defensive grenade, rifle grenades for the rifle grenade squads, Chauchat machine gun clips for our light machine gun squads."³² Messages from commanders emphasized the need for stokes and 37mm ammo before the assault which it would seem was in short supply.³³ Even Colonel Lee who commanded the 6th Regiment recommended to his

³⁰ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations*, 1919.

³¹ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 142.

³² Don V. Paradis, *The World War I Memoirs of Don V. Paradis, Gunnery Sergeant, USMC* (Coppell, TX: 2010), 104.

³³ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations*, 1919.

commanders that if hand grenades are in short supply they should “search...in the sectors you now occupy.”³⁴

The day before the assault, Carl Brannen looked upon Blanc Mont and as he gazed upon the ridge, he was struck with the memory of the “Marine’s Hymn” which claimed that the streets of heaven are guarded by United States Marines. Private Brannen believed “that my next duty might be helping guard the heavenly streets.”³⁵ Most of the fire was not coming from the ridge on October 3 through with “the 4th Brigade [meeting] little opposition from the front.”³⁶ The brigade instead was having to deal with the German units to their left which should have been engaged with the French 21st Division instead. The French apparently “had been vainly attempting to take the German trenches” but had met very stiff resistance only moving ahead when the 17th Company took the Essen hook which was turned over to the French only to lose it in a counterattack.³⁷

The French were unable to advance. This turned into a serious point of contention for the 4th Brigade as reports were coming in that indicated the French were to the left and rear of the brigade as it was advancing.³⁸ Historian George Clark noted that as the 6th Regiment gained ground and approached the ridge the 5th Regiment was doing all it could to stimulate the enfilading fire from the brigade left; this included trying to connect with the French right which was never there.³⁹ One saving grace was that General Gouraud realized the lack of French support and ordered the French 170th

³⁴ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations*, 1919.

³⁵ Carl Brannen, *Over There: A Marine in the Great War* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 47.

³⁶ Spaulding and Wright, *The second Division*, 175.

³⁷ Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 302-303.

³⁸ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations*, 1919.

³⁹ Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 304.

Division which had just been relieved in the east to advance west and protect the 2d Division's left flank where most of the machine gun fire was coming from.⁴⁰ Carl Brannen experienced an odd occurrence when a bullet from the left, possibly from the Essen Hook, struck the front end of his bayonet “about an inch from the muzzle...leaving me only a stub.” When Brennan rushed three Germans who surrendered and gauged from their faces that the Germans looked at the broken bayonet as evidence the marine had left the blade buried in one of their comrades.⁴¹

Other examples of losing contact or liaison began to become prevalent in the 4th Brigade. Lieutenant Sellers noted that when the 2nd Battalion reached the road at the base of the Blanc Mont Ridge the 80th company seemed to have disappeared. One major factor in this was the current company commander, Captain Powers, had not been present with his company during the advance and was not directing his unit with adjacent companies. Major Williams was made aware of this sometime later and he relieved Powers of his command, albeit too little too late.⁴² Carl Snair was wounded while escorting an unnamed Army officer and found how fast the battlefield could change as he lost his unit and the first aid station moved on him with no ability to locate either without searching personally.⁴³

The 6th Machine Gun Battalions gun crews improved the capability of the 4th Brigade on the assault. Several field orders to Major Waller note the combined support

⁴⁰ Spaulding and Wright, *The Second Division*, 176.

⁴¹ Gerald Clark, *Devil Dog Chronicles: Voices of the 4th Marine Brigade in World War I* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2013), 299.

⁴² Gregory, *C'est La Guerre*, 96-98.

⁴³ Memoir, 1915-1928, COLL/70, A/5/H/2/4, Carl L. Snair Sr. Collection, United States Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

that the gun crews gave the platoons and companies with several noting not taking any casualties by the time the center of the ridge was reached at 0830.⁴⁴ Historian Peter Owen noted that several of the initial trenches the 4th Brigade encountered were suppressed, outflanked, and overrun with the help of directed fire from the companies of the machine gun battalion that advanced with the infantry. Examples such as the 81st Company machine guns that covered the assault the 79th Company who advanced forward with marching fire surrounded and took the German trenches.⁴⁵ This type of attack with the machine guns is completely counter to the ideals of Pershing's open-warfare doctrine, even as late as October 1918. At this point, many still believed the machine gun could act only as a defensive weapon or, worse still, a weapon of emergency.

The French tanks also lent a welcome improvement in firepower. Infantry relations between the foot soldier and the lumbering steel behemoths had vastly improved since Soissons and Saint Mihiel which had yielded mixed results. The use of tanks aided the American assault, as Warren Jackson noted: "I feared they would only draw enemy fire with a repetition of the unforgivable disaster at Soissons. But due to the smoke screen or fog...the advance of the tanks could not be seen...smashed wire ahead of us, and one stubborn enemy machine gun I saw silenced...was probably only one of many such instances."⁴⁶ The French tanks had aided the 76th Company to take the Medeah Farm-Blanc Mont crossroads which had reportedly been defended by German units "with 11

⁴⁴ Field Orders, Oct 3, 1918, COLL/1380, A/5/H/7/3, Littleton W. T. Waller Jr. Collection, United States Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

⁴⁵ Peter F. Owen, *A Hideous Price: The 4th Brigade at Blanc Mont, 2-10 October 1918* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps History Division, 2019), 20.

⁴⁶ Warren R. Jackson and George Clark, *His Time in Hell: A Texas Marine in France, The World War I Memoir of Warren R. Jackson* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 2002, 184.

machine guns, a field gun, two antitank rifles, and two trench mortars” by leading the assault and using their on-board weapons to suppress the defenders.⁴⁷ Marines like Lieutenant Sellers were not so impressed with the tank support. He recounted “a French tank appeared from nowhere...when the tank reached our flank...it came under fire immediately, and the Frenchmen conveniently ran out of fuel and abandoned their tank.”⁴⁸

Just before 0900 the 6th Regiment and the 9th Regiment of the 3d Brigade met and took the Medeah Ferme-Blanc Mont Road at the top of the ridge and began mopping up the areas they had taken and prepared for the next phase of the operation.⁴⁹ Elements of the German 2d Jäger Brigade were fighting from fortification to fortification making the 6th and 9th Regiments put their small unit tactics to the test including a half-hearted counterattack that attempted to exploit a gap in the 2nd Battalion 6th Regiments line.⁵⁰ During this period 2d Division artillery was moving up to place closer support for the regiments engaged on Blanc Mont, however, the German artillery began to shell the positions as well.⁵¹

The situation began to stabilize for the 4th Brigade atop Blanc Mont. Major Williams of the 2nd Battalion 6th Regiment was greatly worried about the brigade's left flank he messaged "French have not come up and our left is in the air. The enemy about 700 to 800 strong, are going around our left and threaten an encircling movement."⁵²

⁴⁷ Owen, *A Hideous Price*, 21.

⁴⁸ Gregory, *C'est La Guerre*, 98.

⁴⁹ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 143.

⁵⁰ Spaulding and Wright, *The Second Division*, 175.

⁵¹ Spaulding and Wright, *The Second Division*, 177.

⁵² *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations*, 1919.

These men were more than likely elements of the German 149th Regiment sent to evict the Marines from Blanc Mont. Instead, they ran into the 96th Company reinforced by four French tanks, “a regimental one-pounder, [and] Hotchkiss guns of the 81st Machine Gun Company” which quickly caused the counterattack to disperse.⁵³ By 1140 it was reported that machine gun units were digging in to support the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 6th Regiment atop Blanc Mont.⁵⁴ The first day of the battle was only half over and it would seem that the 2d Division was set to break the German line at the vaunted position that had vexed the French military so well the past four years.

October 3, The 3d Brigade, “no auto. Rifle Ammunition-losses about 10%”

The 3d brigade did not begin as well coordinated as the 4th Marine Brigade. This was no real fault to the brigade or its leadership. Brigadier General Hanson Ely noted that French scouts failed to lead his units and more than likely caused the confusion where both his regiments had trouble communicating and locating their jumping-off positions.⁵⁵ The 9th Regiment was to lead the assault with the 1st battalion to the front followed by the 2d, and then 3d. However, the 1st seemed to have located the wrong position and both the 1st and 2d began the assault online together. The 23d Regiment followed in trace to the 9th like how the Marine Brigade was assaulted.⁵⁶

⁵³ Owen, *A Hideous Price*, 25.

⁵⁴ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations*, 1919.

⁵⁵ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 143.

⁵⁶ Spaulding and Wright, *The Second Division*, 172.

Unlike the 4th brigade who had discovered the 21st French Division had made no advance at all; the 167th Division on the 3d Brigade's right seemed to keep pace with the Army Regulars. This had to have been a welcome reprieve from what the 4th Brigade was experiencing as it could be extrapolated that the 3d Brigade experienced very little fire and shelling coming from Blanc Mont just as the Marines reported.⁵⁷ By 0830 the 9th Regiment lead elements reported taking the crest of Blanc Mont and only being "held up slightly by barrage one half kilometer to the south of MEDEAH FERME."⁵⁸ The 9th Regiment was set to dig in and begin cleaning out the German defenses. One area of contention was the Medeah Farm which had been heavily occupied by German forces. Elements of the 1st Battalion sent patrols to investigate only to have discovered "that the French of the 167th DI occupied" the farm.⁵⁹

Part of the plan that Lejeune had laid out was for the two brigades to attack at bisecting angles, almost perpendicular to one another. The reason for this was twofold. First, if the 4th Brigade, who was assaulting the front of Blanc Mont met stiffer frontal resistance, the 3d Brigade could capitalize on striking the enemy flank and applying enfilading fire on the German positions. Second, it allowed the two brigades to avoid a wooded patch south of the ridge known as Bois de Vipere which contained elements "of the 2d Battalion, 235th Reserve Infantry...reinforced with a pioneer company and three machine gun companies."⁶⁰ These units had been involved over the last few days fighting the French and were now exhausted and undermanned and underequipped. They offered

⁵⁷ Spaulding and Wright, *The Second Division*, 172.

⁵⁸ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations*, 1919.

⁵⁹ DI stands for Division of Infantry. Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 143.

⁶⁰ Owen, *A Hideous Price*, 30.

“no serious trouble” to the 3d Brigade as it advanced.⁶¹ Many of these Germans would either surrender or attempt to infiltrate through American lines to rejoin fellow German units in the North and West of the Division.⁶²

Soldiers and Marines would report hostile German aircraft which had both strafed the infantry lines, spotting for German artillery, and shooting down allied observation balloons. Messages from the 9th Regiment Adjutant to Brigadier General Ely commented “hostile planes at low altitude directing artillery fire accurately.”⁶³ Vincent Grube of the 23d Machine Gun Company noted in his memoir: “I saw twice as many German planes as Allies...we would all get under cover so they would not see where we were located.”⁶⁴ This would account for the artillery fire that the Marines and soldiers began reporting falling on their positions as they began to consolidate on the center of the ridge.

Emboldened by the news that the 2d Division had advanced very well and taken the center of the ridge, French commanders put pressure on General Lejeune to press further attacks and continue to the town of St. Etienne to the north and west. French General Naulin proposed a French cavalry attack in the 2d Division's sector to complete a breakthrough that he believed would threaten the German's entire front.⁶⁵ While the French cavalry never materialized General Naulin encouraged Lejeune to press the attack

⁶¹ Spaulding and Wright, *The Second Division*, 173.

⁶² Owen, *A Hideous Price*, 30.

⁶³ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations*, 1919.

⁶⁴ The Diary of Vincent B. Grube, 1918-1919, COLL/306, A/29/C/4/3, Vincent B. Grube Memoir, United States Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

⁶⁵ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 260.

either disregarding or ignoring the fact that the French division's absence on the American's left meant the Division was exposed in a salient.⁶⁶

Pressure from higher command would eventually force General Lejeune's hand in the afternoon of October 3. Orders to the 9th Regiment notified the commanding officer that "attack resumed at 4:00 P.M. 23rd will pass thru you and lead."⁶⁷ Similar orders were given to the 6th Regiment that the attack would resume towards St. Etienne with the 5th Regiment passing through. The 6th Regiment was instructed to follow 1 kilometer behind with the 2nd Battalion protecting the 5th Regiment's flank.⁶⁸ These orders were issued with the understanding that the French were now advancing on the left and would soon occupy the attention of the Germans that had enfiladed the Marines all day. The 3d Brigade organized and prepared to continue the attack, the 23d Regiment would pass through at 1700 and advance far beyond the 9th Regiment on top of the ridge to within a half mile of the outskirts of St. Etienne making the furthest advance that day of the 2d Division.⁶⁹ Confusion abounded in the 5th Regiment and the battalion commanders struggled to locate and organize their companies which resulted in them missing the 1600 resumption time with the 5th Regiment remaining positioned to the left covering the 4th Brigade's flank.⁷⁰ This may have been by design as Lejeune had only informed his commanders at 1400 that the attack time would be announced later. This delay allowed Lejeune to ensure

⁶⁶ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 260.

⁶⁷ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations*, 1919.

⁶⁸ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations*, 1919.

⁶⁹ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 146.

⁷⁰ Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 307-308.

that the divisional artillery moved up and into position so it could support further attacks north and west.⁷¹

By the end of October 3, the 2d Division had been successful. The 6th and 9th Regiments had attained their goals after crossing a mile of ground following one of the most perfectly executed artillery barrages. Casualties were not like previous battles such as the 6th Regiment's assault at Soissons that ruined the entire unit. General Lejeune's synthesis of doctrine was paying off as reports were now coming in that the Germans were preparing a major withdrawal from the area just as General Gouraud had hoped would happen.⁷² The passing through of units was and the 23d pushing farther north and west which created a 90-degree angle in the line facing the town of St. Etienne.⁷³ What was most concerning was the fact that by the end of the day the French 21st Division had still not attempted to advance and the division's left flank was completely exposed.

October 4: "Maxims can make such a mess of charging men."

General Lejeune understood that he could not hold off on pressing the attack forever. General Naulin had incessantly pressured him through the previous day to press the attack onto St. Etienne all while both the 4th Brigades left and now the 23d Regiment was exposed without the support of the French allies. Some attempt had been made in the early morning hours of October 4 to relieve pressure on the 23d as the 5th Regiment repositioned to the front and connected with the 3d Brigade facing St. Etienne.⁷⁴ Larsen,

⁷¹ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 261.

⁷² Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 264.

⁷³ This also meant that the 23d Regiment was exposed on three sides as the French Division did not advance with them. Maps show that the lines at the end of October 3 have the 23d sticking up like a finger. Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 146.

⁷⁴ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 261.

Hamilton, and Messersmith of the 5th Regiment began moving their battalions at 0600 to link up with the 3d Brigade and orient to the front to continue the advance.⁷⁵ The advance of the 5th Regiment was to be the 3d Battalion in the front followed by the 2d and then the 1st to take a series of trenches roughly six-hundred yards from St. Etienne.⁷⁶

This advance was hastily ordered and no artillery preparation was given to the Marine regiment as it attacked. The reasoning for this is unclear. Peter Owen commented that years later General Neville lectured that it was impossible as the front was too fluid and a rolling barrage might incur more friendly casualties than the enemy.⁷⁷ Mark Grotelueschen noted that Lejeune made specific notes to commanders regarding the barrage that had been planned and ordered for the October 4 assault which never materialized.⁷⁸ The rapid advance of the division on the first day, meant that the artillery would be required to redeploy to positions farther forward leaving logistical and supply problems possibly where the artillery was unprepared to support the attack. This attack would prove to be almost a replay of early battles like the assault on Hill 142 or Belleau Wood itself by the 5th Regiment, especially in casualties.

“We had gone over into the densest barrage of shell and machine gun fire we had ever faced,” commented Onnie Cordes of the 17th Company 5th Marines.⁷⁹ The commanding officer of the 3d Battalion, Major Henry Larsen, messaged his command that the “Boche artillery shelling our front lines quite heavily. Have no report of

⁷⁵ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations*, 1919.

⁷⁶ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 149.

⁷⁷ Owen, *A Hideous Price*, footnotes, 34.

⁷⁸ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 262.

⁷⁹ Manuscript, COLL/2307, A/11/L/7/4, Onnie and Janice Cordes Collection, United States Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

casualties yet” at 0600.⁸⁰ Colonel Logan Feland, commanding officer of the 5th Regiment, replied fifteen minutes later to Larsen of the 3d to hold position and wait for the 6th Regiment to support.⁸¹ By this time the 5th Regiment was being fired on from nearly four sides. The small heights to their front, the Ludwig Rücken held most of the German artillery which could fire directly into the advancing marines. Additionally, the east and west still held German units who beat the Americans with machine guns. Finally, it was discovered that elements of the 149th German Infantry Regiment still held on to the summit on the northwestern part of Blanc Mont and were firing into the rear of the formation.⁸²

October 4, 1918 was a disaster in the making with the 5th Regiment fairly cut off from the 2d Division. Private Elton Mackin of the 67th Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Marines recorded the assault as having been trapped in “the box” where “the wily German had drawn his troops away to either side as the hunters ran down their quarry...it was a place for men to die.”⁸³ Onnie Cordes of the 17th Company described it as “our troops were just slaughtered.”⁸⁴ Major Waller recorded that the Germans were employing machine guns in defilade, or concealment, and firing at an arc into our troops from “a very cleverly concealed nest of guns which was so placed in the open and without cover...that its fire appeared to be coming from an entirely different locality.”⁸⁵ First

⁸⁰ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations*, 1919, 1985.229.1, Book, The National World War I Museum and Memorial, Kansas City, MO.

⁸¹ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations*, 1919, 1985.229.1, Book, The National World War I Museum and Memorial, Kansas City, MO.

⁸² Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 310.

⁸³ Mackin, *Suddenly We Didn't Want to Die*, 187.188.

⁸⁴ Manuscript, COLL/2307, A/11/L/7/4, Onnie and Janice Cordes Collection, United States Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

⁸⁵ *Machine Guns of the 4th Brigade, 1900-1924*, COLL/1380, A/5/H/7/3, Littleton W. T. Waller Jr. Collection, United States Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

Lieutenant John Thomason of the 49th Company in the 1st Battalion recounted the attack proceeded with “four companies abreast...shells whooped down into the platoon columns...machine guns on the left took a toll as they rose to follow.”⁸⁶ Elton Mackin of the 5th Regiment simply recalled in his memoir, “maxims can make such a mess of charging men.”⁸⁷

One positive note was that the ground leading to the base of Blanc Mont on the northern side was broken and uneven which provided avenues and ravines for the 5th Regiment to work their way forward.⁸⁸ Accounts from captured German officers noted that they were impressed by their observations of Americans throughout the attack who were making “excellent use of the terrain, outflanked, enveloped, and annihilated the German positions.”⁸⁹ Larsen did not stop to dig in as he was ordered, instead choosing to close the distance to make contact with the 23d Regiment on his right. He accomplished this around 1100 and began tying his men in with the Army Regulars which included the 77th Machine Gun Company setting in to provide counterfire.⁹⁰ This still did not protect the 3d Battalion as Major Waller reported in an October 4 message; “3rd Batt attempted advance...but were held up by artillery and M.G. fire-we were enfiladed on both flanks-casualties I believe will run over 50% for the 5 Regt.” Waller went on to report that 6th machine Gun Battalion casualties numbered 28 killed or wounded.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Clark, *Devil Dog Chronicles*, 306.

⁸⁷ Elton Mackin, *Suddenly We Did Not Want to Die: Memoirs of a World War I Marine* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1993), 190.

⁸⁸ Owen, *A Hideous Price*, 34.

⁸⁹ Grotelueschen, *the AEF Way of War*, 258.

⁹⁰ Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 310-311.

⁹¹ Machine Guns of the 4th Brigade, 1900-1924, Littleton W. T. Waller Jr. Collection.

Larsen had outrun Hamilton's 1st Battalion and Major Robert Messersmith's 2d Battalion and now the line extended roughly a mile with Larsen's left flank somewhat exposed.⁹² Field messages show that Larsen messaged the 1st and 2d battalions requesting that they link up to help hold the front line. By 1300 the situation seems to have become grim. Larsen wrote two identical messages addressed to Majors Hamilton and Messersmith, "I cannot hold front line longer. 1st or second must come up to take over or assist."⁹³ The Regiment that had begun the war full of old-breed marines that had seen service in the Philippines, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Vera Cruz was threatened to be wiped out by the German army. There is very little indication that any of the infantry weapons that had supported the attack on October 3 were being utilized on October 4.

Hamilton and Messersmith did arrive and were able to deploy to Larsen's left. The published history of the division by Spaulding and Wright produced a few sentences only regarding the 5th Regiment's fate claiming they "succeeded in occupying the ridge a mile southeast of St. Etienne" which was the Ludwig Rücken.⁹⁴ Going on to state "in the afternoon the attack was continued, but such gains as were made could not be held."⁹⁵ These words greatly downplay the serious situation that the regiment found itself in. On Larsen's left Messersmith brought up his 2d battalion, and on his left Hamilton brought the 1st Battalion. While the 1st battalion was maneuvering behind the 2d, that battalion

⁹² Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 311.

⁹³ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations*, 1919.

⁹⁴ Spaulding and Wright, *The Second Division*, 180.

⁹⁵ Spaulding and Wright, *The Second Division*, 180.

was taking significant fire and attempted an attack forward with resulted in the gain of a few yards but was forced to pull back taking severe casualties.⁹⁶

The 3d Battalion also attempted an attack forward along the Ludwig Rücken to drive off the remaining Germans which was successful but came under such intense machine gun and artillery the unit was essentially pinned and disorganized.⁹⁷ However, the most fanatical attack was yet to come. Beleaguered from the constant shelling and automatic weapons fire, Hamilton turned his battalion right and began heading west to maneuver up and beside the 2d Battalion. Around 1200 Hamilton's battalion discovered German forces preparing for a counterattack in the Marine's left flank and was routed by the assaulting marines.⁹⁸

The Germans had come from an elevated terrain feature to the west called Petersburg which is where a considerable amount of fire was coming from on Hamilton's battered battalion. Hamilton turned north and began assaulting towards St. Etienne. The fire was withering as the 1st Battalion turned to face the Ludwig Rücken where Hamilton could see the Germans gathering their forces and preparing another counterattack.⁹⁹ Hamilton "did what he was noted for: rapid advancement against those hurting him."¹⁰⁰ Hamilton's battalion routed the Germans on top of the Ludwig Rücken on the Regiments left and began descending the northern slope into fields in front of St. Etienne. Here "the remaining Germans" began retreating and Marines took good "prone positions and [got]

⁹⁶ Owen, *A Hideous Price*, 35.

⁹⁷ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations*, 1919.

⁹⁸ Owen, *A Hideous Price*, 36.

⁹⁹ Owen, *A Hideous Price*, 36.

¹⁰⁰ Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 315.

off aimed rounds” that even decimated a battery of German field guns that had been one of the culprits throughout the day.¹⁰¹

The sole survivor of the 66th Company's officers, Lieutenant Francis Kelly Jr. noticed Germans preparing another counterattack to the 1st Battalion's front and attacked, breaking up the Germans, but exposing his remaining company to the fury of the German war machine.¹⁰² Kelly would find himself a few hundred meters from the outskirts of St. Etienne in “a strip of long narrow woods” with “30 men...[who] found itself isolated and trapped by artillery fire. The Marines went to the ground until darkness offered some relief to movement.”¹⁰³

The 3d Battalion was fighting its way back to its jump-off point on the ridge of Blanc Mont by 1700 according to field messages. Larsen noted that elements of the 2d were already occupying those positions. At this same time, Hamilton sent up an estimate of what remained of his battalion. He claimed “17th reports 2 officers and 35 men present. Lieut. Kelly has an about same number from the 66th...Capt. Kieren has 12 men with him and Lieut. Beauchamp about 30.”¹⁰⁴ The elements of the 8th Machine Gun Company that accompanied them were “practically wiped out.”¹⁰⁵ Reports of counterattacks as the 5th regiment withdrew continued up until 2000 according to orders and field messages with components of the regiment coming in “intermingled in one position.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 316.

¹⁰² Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 316.

¹⁰³ Owen, *A Hideous Price*, 36-37.

¹⁰⁴ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations*, 1919.

¹⁰⁵ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations*, 1919.

¹⁰⁶ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations*, 1919.

The 5th Regiment was practically destroyed on October 4. Reports from all three battalions note over sixty percent casualties. One such report from Hamilton of how disastrous the attack had been was only “168 men were present...the battalion had numbered nearly 800 effectives 12 hours prior.”¹⁰⁷ Another undated message from Messersmith in the 2d Battalion accounted for 16 Officers and 369 men, though conserving the rest of the report it could be extrapolated this report came from when the 2 Battalion was on the 3d Battalion’s left earlier in the day.¹⁰⁸

The other elements of the Division's infantry had serious setbacks on October 4. The 3d brigade found itself attacked on its right flank in the early morning hours around when the 5th Regiment stepped off. The 1st Battalion of the 23d Regiment received a similar beating through the day as the 5th Regiment and was forced to pull back in the evening after a short advance with the marines.¹⁰⁹ Also, elements of the 6th Regiment were ordered to take the western portion of Blanc Mont, again without any real artillery support and those attacks were repulsed throughout the day with the 6th Regiment suffering horrible casualties. Attacks on the massif of Blanc Mont went through the morning into the afternoon where sufficient artillery was promised: “to tear up the woods on top of Blanc Mont.”¹¹⁰ The artillery was poor at best and the final assault coming at 1830 with “only light artillery support was no more successful” as the attention of the 6th Regiment was turned to support the withdrawal of the 5th Regiment.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Owen, *A Hideous Price*, 38.

¹⁰⁸ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations*, 1919.

¹⁰⁹ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 149-150.

¹¹⁰ Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 320-321.

¹¹¹ Owen *A Hideous Price*, 39.

If October 3 was one of the finest days in the 2d Division history or the American Expeditionary Force, then October 4 must be the antithetical date. For all that the previous day could be lauded for in Lejeune's newly applied doctrine, this day was a complete reversal. While the 5th Regiment advance with the machine gun elements very little mention is made of the infantry weapons such as the stoke mortars or one-pounder guns that had served the regiment so well the day before. The 17th company had shown great adept warfighting skills against the Essen Hook which was brought down by concentrated machine gun fire and the use of those 37mm guns. October 4 as the regiment advanced was as if it was the disastrous June 6 assault on Belleau Wood all over again.

Another point of contention was the lack of heavy weapon support. The division lost control or command of the French tanks that had accompanied the infantry to the ridge the day prior. It is doubtful that the clumsy and slow tanks would have made too much of a difference if the volume of artillery can be believed from the personal accounts. However, the lack of artillery support needs to be factored in to these events. Lejeune who had no issues relying on barrages to carry his men to the objective seemed to have decided it was unnecessary. Grotelueschen pointed out that Lejeune did provide instructions for artillery to accompany the 5th Regiment's advance yet none was to be had. One possibility not considered by many historians was the likelihood that the artillery had simply expended its munitions the day prior and had none to spare for the following day beside the light artillery that smattered the western slope of Blanc Mont for the 6th Regiment. A job that proper liaison could have prevented possibly between the infantry, artillery, and logistics units in the 2d Division.

October 5-7

The 2d Division had been battered the previous day, October 4. The brigades understood that they still had a mission to be accomplished and the enemy was still close at hand. Division commanders realized that the actions and consequences of the previous day could not be repeated. Doing so would undo the last two months of work that had reshaped the 2d Division into the unit that had taken Blanc Mont on October 3. However, Blanc Mont had not been entirely taken and elements of the German 149th Regiment still held out on Hill 213 on the western side of the ridge line. It would now come to the 3d Battalion 6th Regiment to take it.¹¹²

Concerned with the results of the previous day's attack by the 6th Regiment, orders were given for the 3d Battalion to once again attack this high point scheduled for 0615. The predominant difference from the previous day was the artillery support offered would be a mixture of light and heavy artillery that would bombard the position for one hour prior to the assault and immediately shift into a rolling barrage up the slope.¹¹³ Field messages mention Marine units needed to pull back about five hundred yards for the artillery barrage and some confusion about liaison with the adjacent companies of the 3d Battalion. A memorandum at 0100 noted that the planned artillery supporting the attack

¹¹² Owen, *A Hideous Price*, 39.

¹¹³ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 263.

came from the 12th Field Artillery and the 17th Field Artillery which were predisposed to fire 600 and 200 rounds respectively in that hour.¹¹⁴

The barrage must have been on target. As soon as the infantry stepped off, they followed the rolling barrage up the hill. The 97th, 82d, and 83d companies with the 84th in support captured German positions and contacted the French 22d DI who attacked the morning of the October 5 meeting very little opposition.¹¹⁵ The Marine Battalion and their French allies took the hill and secured the Blanc Mont Ridge entirely. The barrage was so successful it had driven the Germans into the deepest parts of their bunkers and fortifications only to emerge in the face of Marines.¹¹⁶ Messages to Captain Shuler who commanded the 3d battalion reported that at 0800 "captured 200 Boche. Turned them over to 80th Co. Almost 60 Machine Guns. 80th co. salvaged most of them."¹¹⁷ Final numbers put the victory atop Blanc Mont at "nearly 300 prisoners, with 80 machine guns and other war material." From one source, while recent publications are more precise, numbers are placed at "four officers and 209 men and an astonishing 75 machine guns."¹¹⁸ The American forces did not suffer a single casualty among the entire battalion.

Now with the ridge line taken and the area that had plagued the 5th Regiment gone, renewed attacks were ordered toward St. Etienne on October 5. General Lejeune issued orders for the 6th Regiment to pass through the 5th Regiment's slightly forward positions and assault the same ground that so many fell on the day before.¹¹⁹ Lejeune was

¹¹⁴ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations*, 1919.

¹¹⁵ The 22d French DI had replaced the 21st DI the day prior who had failed to advance alongside the 2d Division. Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 150.

¹¹⁶ Owen, *A Hideous Price*, 41.

¹¹⁷ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations*, 1919.

¹¹⁸ Spaulding and Wright, *The Second Division*, 181. Owen, *A Hideous Price*, 41.

¹¹⁹ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 150-151.

concerned and probably angry at the conduct of the French who only now had advanced on the left flank protecting that side of his division, two days late and the 4th Brigade in tatters. Lejeune ordered an advance but applied a “saving clause” that the time for the attack would be ordered later and only if or when the French advanced forward of the Blanc Mont Ridge.¹²⁰

The attack that had been planned for the afternoon of October 5 was set to begin at 1250. The 2d Battalion in the lead, the 3d battalion in support, and the 1st Battalion as the reserve. All of the 6th Regiment and was to only advance to St. Etienne while keeping liaison with the French on the left and the 3d brigade on the right. Field notes and orders heavily emphasized liaison as being key and that only coordinated movements could make the attack possible.¹²¹ For all the lessons that the Division should have learned it once again did not support the 6th Regiment's attack with any artillery preparation or rolling barrage, though evidence suggests that the division had planned for it.¹²² Much of the following battle played out very similar to the October 4 attacks by the 5th Regiment. When Lieutenant Sellers advanced over this ground he commented “this later advance was ridiculous... I know, I advanced there.”¹²³

October 5 again was a regression in the doctrinal approach the division had adopted to warfighting. While the early morning success had shown the importance of liaison with French troops and the artillery; the afternoon attack resulted in more needless casualties. This again suggests that the division did not have the munitions available to

¹²⁰ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 263.

¹²¹ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations*, 1919.

¹²² Owen, *A Hideous Price*, 43.

¹²³ Gregory, *C'est La Guerre*, 99.

support the attack, although evidence of the success the infantry had with the supporting artillery would suggest that commanders and General Lejeune would have called off such attacks had there not been sufficient munitions to support the attacks.

At this point, the Germans realized the position was lost and that the line was in peril. The 2d Division had taken one of the most prominent terrain features and the German army had begun a retreat the night of October 3 to withdraw its forces north of St. Etienne and consolidate.¹²⁴ French divisions advanced to little or no opposition to their fronts including the French 22d Division that arrived outside of St. Etienne on October 5 and had sent combat patrols into the town.¹²⁵ October 6 and 7 saw the 2d Division consolidating and conducting smaller set-piece actions. The division had possibly learned from the early morning attack of October 5 and set about conducting “well-prepared local attacks” carried out by both brigades.¹²⁶

The 6th Regiment again advanced toward a hill that had been a German strong point and had incurred severe casualties on the marines and soldiers on October 4 and 5. The spot was called Blodnitz Hill and Captain Cates of the 96th Company had called it one of the greatest concentrations of machine guns he had seen in the war when they assaulted it on October 5.¹²⁷ On October 6, however, the 3d battalion 6th Regiment would assault with an hour-long preparatory bombardment and then move forward with a rolling barrage.¹²⁸ Liaison between the artillery and the infantry seemed to have broken down or the artillery was not aware of the 5th Regiment's positions because at 0635 2d Battalion

¹²⁴ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 264.

¹²⁵ Owen, *A Hideous Price*, 46.

¹²⁶ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 264.

¹²⁷ Owen, *To the Limit of Endurance*, 177.

¹²⁸ Owen, *A Hideous Price*, 46.

5th Regiment signaled that artillery shells were hitting their positions.¹²⁹ The 3d battalion 6th Regiment and the 2d Battalion 23d Regiment pressed towards Blodnitz Hill supported by engineers to cut the wire.¹³⁰ Spaulding and Wright note that the “St. Etienne -Orfeuil road was reached...but not without hard fighting” and that “nearly all the 23d Infantry became engaged, and parts of the 9th.”¹³¹ Captain Bellamy more accurately reported “attacked northeast hill again at 6 A.M. Hot time of it with machine guns on our right front. Objectives reached but lost 35%.”¹³²

In two hours of fighting the marines and soldiers “found the flank of the German position and rolled it up.”¹³³ Captain Shuler reported at 0929 that “we have obtained our objective...we are in perfect liaison with the 23rd inf. On our right who have also obtained their objective.”¹³⁴ The Division only gained a few more kilometers and the Germans were pulling out of the area. French troops were now on the western side of St. Etienne and the French division to the right of the American 2d Division was advancing. By the end of October 6 General Lejeune believed his division was exhausted and in need of relief. The relief would come over the course of the next four days as the newly formed 36th Division, often referred to as the cowboy division, was constituted of National Guardsmen of Oklahoma and Texas.¹³⁵

¹²⁹ Clark, *Devil Dogs*, 328.

¹³⁰ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 152.

¹³¹ Spaulding and Wright, *The Second Division*, 185.

¹³² Diary, 1917-1919, COLL924, A/11/1/2/3. David Bellamy Diary, United States Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

¹³³ Edwin H. Simmons and Joseph H. Alexander, *Through the Wheat: The U.S. Marines in World War I* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2011), 214.

¹³⁴ *The Second Division: Syllabi of the Histories of Regiments and Separate Organizations*, 1919.

¹³⁵ Simmons and Alexander, *Through the Wheat*, 215.

Much can be inferred and extrapolated from the hard-fought battles and engagements that the marines and soldiers endured on and around that ridge in France. Several doctrinal and tactical factors can be seen that the division had adopted to correct the mistakes of earlier battles like Belleau Wood and Soissons. There were still factors outside the control of the division directly. A predominant factor was the lack of support from the French divisions. Casualties at Blanc Mont were made even worse as the division itself created “a salient a mile and a half deep, a mile wide at the base and only 500 yards wide for the last half mile” where it was exposed on both flanks and to the front, later their rear as the guns on top of Blanc Mont riddled the 5th Regiment on October 4.¹³⁶

All the blame cannot be placed on the French. At several points there appeared to have been not only a breakdown in liaison at battalion levels but between Lejeune and his division. Most discouraging is the lack of artillery presence on the battlefield on October 4 and 5 for the 4th Brigade's subsequent attacks toward St. Etienne, the Ludwig Rücken, and Blodnitz Hill. Those attacks must be compared to the relative success of the attack on October 3 and the morning attack on the summit of Blanc Mont. While casualties were significant on the first day of battle, they were not coming from the front but from the flanks, as earlier noted due to the inability of the French to catch up or advance at all. When the 17th Company eliminated the Essen Hook several sources indicated that fire from the west diminished, picking up only again when the Germans reoccupied the position from the French.

¹³⁶ Spaulding and Wright, *The Second Division*, 178.

Undoubtedly the success of the first day was the reorganization and redevelopment of the division's approach to American doctrine on the Western Front. The division emphasized the full use of firepower brought on by artillery, support troops like tanks, and infantry weapons like the machine gun companies and the regimental-provided 37mm guns. All that with improved liaison between the divisional units made the 2d Division a formidable shock or assault division. However, the problems still lingered such as follow-up missions and objectives. The division had prepared for the initial assault and had considered secondary and tertiary objectives. However, Lejeune and his division were pressured into pushing an attack without support on the flanks or possible logistical issues. Had the division been more cautious and treated each engagement as a set-piece attack it is likely that the German forces would have capitulated faster with a decreased loss of life to American Forces.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Just over a month after the last remaining troops of the 2d Division left Blanc Mont an armistice was signed between Germany and the Allied powers. Thus ended one of the most bitter and destructive conflicts in human history. The United States had been in the First World War only nineteen months but had “53,402 American soldiers lost their lives in combat, while 204,002 were wounded.”¹ The United States American Expeditionary Force only had been active in combat since late May 1918 with the 1st Division's attack at Cantigny meaning the Americans were only actually fighting one-third of the time it was at war with Germany. The 2d Division itself had fought in all five of the major actions the American Expeditionary Force took part in since June 1918 and finished its combat experience crossing the Meuse on the night before the Armistice took effect on November 11, 1918.²

From a doctrinal standpoint, The United States Military entered the war with a very well-defined doctrine based on the experiences gained fighting primarily within the same hemisphere

¹ Keene, *World War I*, 25.

² Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 200.

of the United States. Most of these actions throughout the later part of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century had been against insurrectionists, rebels, or of poorly equipped European armies whose empires were in decline. Attempts had been made in the years following the American Civil War for the United States Army to realize the potential threat that stagnant military doctrine against modern technology posed. Individuals like Emory Upton tried to at least present progressive tactics for a more modern doctrine that presumed the weapons of war were only going to become more deadly to the infantryman.

Years of fighting Native Americans on the plains and a severely reduced military force and budget meant that few officers had the time or capability to study more modern doctrinal approaches that were being presented in the military community. Further, when conflicts like the Spanish-American War or the First World War required a major increase in leadership, the institutions were hampered by the lack of men to instruct the newly commissioned officers. This was further exacerbated by the lack of equipment to train the men on. Much of the equipment that the American Expeditionary Force entered the First World War with, such as the machine guns in the U.S. inventory was antiquated or obsolete for the modern battlefield of 1917-1918. When the equipment did become available either in training or when units arrived in France too much time was spent familiarizing their men with the basic intricacies of the weapons and few senior officers saw any use for them.

Much of this latter was in part due to the stagnant doctrine outlined in the *Field Service Regulations* and *Infantry Drill Regulations* which offered more of an introduction into warfighting as opposed to how to conduct your men on the field of battle. Many of these manuals were written prior to hostilities in Europe and had only been mildly adjusted in 1917. Even when the United States entered into a more modern conflict like the Spanish-American War, the

experience "convince[d] all but the most reactionary American officers of the peril of crossing the deadly ground...yet the tactical theorists could not reach any proper conclusions" about how to counter "the increasing complexities of warfare."¹ Senior commanders like Generals Pershing, Bundy, and Harbord either lacked military combat experience or were so entrenched in their habits of warfighting that they found themselves unable to adapt and adopt the modern weapons of war into their doctrine. Leaders like General Lejeune fared better but this was a man who had specifically been assigned to help create a new doctrine for the Marine Corps and had spent quite some time in France before the American declaration of war. Even then, Lejeune himself seemed powerless when his division endured the extended operations on top of Blanc Mont.

There is evidence that perhaps historians have been too harsh on leaders like General Pershing. While Nenninger and Rainey called Pershing's open warfare doctrine into question they seemed to have forgotten that Pershing also had to play the part of a politician. Not to mention he would be responsible for amassing the largest American army in his country's history on foreign soil. Nenninger did acknowledge that "U.S. combat troops had to be committed...nearly a year earlier than originally planned." Historians like Grotelueschen and Lengel have offered more conservative views that the American military was a growing creature that was not allowed it's time to come into its own. Perhaps a more progressive view of Pershing and his American Expeditionary Force could be that they hoped time would be on their side to prepare for war in the twentieth century. Pershing may have hoped to have until the Spring of 1919 to commit his forces after nearly two years of preparation.

¹ Jamieson, *Crossing the Deadly Ground*, 154.

The training of the 2d Division seemed to lend itself to this possibility as well. Those that enlisted in 1917 constantly commented on how the training was dominated by similar exercises. Either formal drill, rifle training, or physical training including bayonet practice. Even when units received advanced training it seemed to be misguided, basic, taught by underqualified instructors, or not directed for use in Pershing's open warfare model. Once in France, the members of the 2d Division who were some of the first in France were being instructed in trench warfare. This suggests that if American troops were to be used in 1918, Pershing had intended to use them only in a defensive manner, not committing troops to offensive combat until he could gather a proper body of men. By doing so Pershing could accomplish his aim of keeping the American military in France as an autonomous fighting force preferably in an American-only sector of the Western Front. Evidence of this is in the aftermath of the attack on Saint Mihiel as presented by Geoffrey Wawro from General Tasker Bliss to Secretary of War Baker who claimed the Allies were using the Americans as a bridge which they would not need now that Germany was on the run, exemplified in the post-war peace talks.²

When considering the evolution of the American way of war and the doctrine being put into practice by the American military as late as 1918 one could also look at the 36th Division which replaced the 2d Division at Blanc Mont. The 36th Division suffered similar training shortfalls as the 2d Division where the Texas-Oklahoma division had only arrived in France on July 30, 1918, had barely completed any prescribed training for units in France, and had not served any time in front-line sectors.³ The 36th Division was somewhat better equipped as they

² Wawro, *Sons of Freedom*, 301.

³ Owen, *A Hideous Price*, 19. Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 265.

did have the better M1918 Browning Automatic Rifle which many marines and soldiers conned them out of for the battle-worn Chauchats.⁴

Warren Jackson recounted how inexperienced the 36th Division men were when “a lieutenant of that division became so excited that he committed the most unparalleled blunder” by having his men advance in closed ranks; their officer halted them in the open when one Marine tried to warn them.⁵ Lieutenant Sellers recalled that “battle-weary Marines scared [men of the 36th Division] to death with gory tales of our experience...their lieutenant colonel, a West Pointer, had a very difficult time trying to rout these inexperienced men out of their trenches.”⁶ Captain Bellamy blatantly called the men of the 36th “a mob...jumped into our trenches. Disorganized and their West Point Major, a youngster, did nothing to reorganize them.”⁷

These were the men that should have profited from the massive increase in equipment and weapons that were made available to them. Yes, they were issued better weapons like the M1918 Browning; however, when they arrived at Blanc Mont, they did not even have their infantry weapons like the Stokes mortars, and 37mm guns, and were deficient in machine guns. Additionally, the 36th Division “lacked much of its own artillery, engineer, and transportation units.”⁸ This is not to say that the United State military had not adapted or adopted a more fitting doctrine for fighting the German Army on the Western Front.

What this suggests is that units arriving in France were still suffering from the same setbacks that veteran units like the 2d Division had suffered. The situation of the 36th Division

⁴ Clark, *The Second Infantry Division*, 152.

⁵ Jackson, *His Time in Hell*, 188.

⁶ Sellers, *C'est La Guerre*, 99.

⁷ Diary, 1917-1919, COLL/924, A/11/I/2/3, David Bellamy Collection, United States Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

⁸ Grotelueschen, *the AEF Way of War*, 265.

was not much different from the 2d Division at Belleau Wood. Also, this division had only arrived in France just before Pershing had published his new instruction on combat around the time of the Saint Mihiel offensive. What this does suggest is that the doctrine had been challenged and changed at the divisional level on down in the American Expeditionary Force. Units like the 2d Division that had experienced strenuous combat and absorbed heavy casualties had taken steps to prevent future battles from being as costly. The question of doctrine should not be taken literally and be viewed as a pliable guideline. If the 2d Division had adapted the American doctrine of open warfare to be more synthetic with traits of trench-warfare it is probable that the other divisions of the American Expeditionary Force had done the same.

Lessons were being learned primarily through direct combat that American Forces were involved in. It would be hard pressed to believe that the American Expeditionary Force would have been ready by the Spring of 1919 if the American Expeditionary Force had not been included in combat operations. The primary question resides in liaison between commands in the division's units. While many units in the American Divisions received training, few had trained together where they could wield its full power succinctly and to their fullest potential. The 2d Division had learned to increase the communication within its ranks only after two very costly battles which had sapped the infantry by half their strength and the division by a quarter of its man power. The 2d Division, under Lejeune's guidance, realized that adaptations needed to be made to increase efficiency across units. What followed were two engagements that reduced a major enemy salient and seized a heavily defended position, both held since the start of the war.

Blanc Mont shows exactly this kind of adaptation with the initial attack on October 3 which resulted in the German lines in the Champagne region being broken and American fighting men standing atop what had been German ground for the last four years. Blanc Mont

also showed how precarious the American doctrine was with the next two days which had probably yielded the greatest loss of life the division experienced in that battle. By October 1918 Americans were learning how to fight and survive on the battlefield. American units like the 2d Division had paid for this lesson in blood, the highest casualties of any one unit in the war.⁹ As the division changed and adopted new tactics it created its unique doctrine. One that no doubt influenced American units in the remaining month of the war. Had the war continued into 1919 it is likely that many divisions would have adapted similar tactics and redefined doctrine to approach how to fight the German Army in the First World War.

⁹ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 200.

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VITA

John Andrew Jeffries

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Thesis: FIRST TO FIGHT, SECOND TO NONE: AN EXAMINATION OF THE
DOCTRINAL AND TACTICAL APPROACHES OF THE AMERICAN
EXPEDITIONARY FORCE IN WORLD WAR ONE

Major Field: History

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Master of Arts in History at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2023.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in American History at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2020.

Experience: Teaching Assistant for Oklahoma State University August 2020 to May 2022

Professional Memberships: Phi Alpha Theta