This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

https://books.google.com

355.8
Un33q
no.21

APRIL 1951 NUMBER 21

QMC HISTORICAL STUDIES

The Graves Registration Service in World War II

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA
3 0112 101586458

HISTORICAL SECTION
OFFICE OF THE QUARTERMASTER GENERAL

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE GRAVES REGISTRATION SERVICE IN WORLD WAR II

By

EDWARD STEERE

Q. M. C. Historical Studies

No. 21

HISTORICAL SECTION

OFFICE OF THE QUARTERMASTER GENERAL

1951

THE LIBRARY OF THE
FEB 25 1952

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE • WASHINGTON : 1951

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

All photographs reproduced in this work were furnished by the U. S. Army Signal Corps or by the Office of The Quartermaster General

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Preface

AN ATTEMPT has been made in this study to examine major policy measures and technical standards that were developed during World War II by The Quartermaster General in his extraordinary capacity as Chief, American Graves Registration Service. Then, having in mind the vital relationship between policy making and operating conditions, a summary account of graves registration activities in various overseas commands is interwoven with directional and administrative aspects.

Difficulties ordinarily encountered in examining the interacting influences of doctrine and practice are complicated by the fact that continuity of graves registration organization was broken during the peace, resulting in an arrest of the function and such a condition of atrophy that it could not be reinvigorated at will. Changes in tactical doctrine accompanying the shift from the square to the triangular division were paralleled only by revisions in the paper organization of the Quartermaster Graves Registration Company. Then, while some sixty technical manuals were prepared for the field forces during 1941 with a view to embodying lessons of the revolutionary form of mobile warfare that had destroyed the Polish and French armies in campaigns of a few weeks duration. the graves registration manual was written in reference to conditions of the war of position fought over two decades before in Western Europe.

In these circumstances, the establishment of a graves registration service for the field forces necessarily took the form of attempting to activate an obsolete paper scheme and then adapting it to situations alien to a doctrine that had consistently ignored existing conditions by looking fixedly to the past. The story of this service thus falls into two major parts. One is identified with a period during which measures in both the policy and operational spheres were largely improvised to meet pressing demands. The other witnesses considerable progress toward standardization in organizational forms, operating procedures, and technical practices, but never the attainment of the uniformity envisaged in major policy pronouncements. Although differences of climate and such marked variations in tactical conditions as were encountered on the continent of Europe and in the Southwest Pacific precluded an approach to absolute uniformity, the lag imposed by an almost studious neglect of graves registration until the eve of Pearl Harbor was never completely overcome during the course of hostilities.

In developing the study certain operational areas have been ignored, notably the China-Burma-India Theater and the Persian Gulf Command. The omission is deliberate. Primarily established with a view to maintaining communications with China and Russia, these areas did not become seats of extensive United States combat operations. While a small American ground force played an important part in the reconquest of Burma, and the XIV Army Air Force, flying from bases in southern and western China, was a source of considerable embarrassment to the Japanese invader, graves registration activities in these areas can best be described as a phase of the recovery and final disposition of World War II remains. For the rest, garrison forces in India and Persia developed methods of burying their dead along lines practiced in other large base commands throughout the world.

Source materials consulted in the treatment of policy aspects include pertinent War Department General Orders and Army Regulations; War Department and Army Service Forces circulars, memoranda, and other directives; policy letters and planning

Digitized by Google

documents emanating from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Headquarters, United States Army, the War Department General Staff, Headquarters, Army Service Forces, and the Office of The Quartermaster General, together with related correspondence. Materials pertaining to administrative activities of the Memorial Division, Office of The Quartermaster General, embrace a wide variety of miscellaneous working papers, intraoffice communications, special reports, and conference notes. Data for field operations have been derived principally from the G–1, G–4, and Quartermaster sections of operational plans and after action reports of the armies, corps, and divisions, from observers' reports and from unit histories.

Personal interviews have not been extensively used as a means of acquiring background information, largely for the reason that few participants were available for consultation. Occasion, however, was taken to interview Brig. Gen. Charles C. Drake, USA, Retired, who served as Chief Quartermaster, USAFFE, during the Bataan campaign, and in this capacity was responsible for organizing the first theater Graves Registration Service in World War II. Other persons consulted were Capt. S. J. Gladys, of the Bataan Graves Registration Service; Col. Thomas R. Howard, former Chief, Memorial Division, and Graves Registration Officer, North African Theater of Operations; Lt. Col. Earl F. Sechrest, who served as Chief, Graves Registration and Effects Division, Office of the Chief Quartermaster, European Theater of Operations, and subsequently prepared the basic plan for final disposition of the war dead; Maj. M. A. Beyers and Miss Elsie Stommel, policy advisors to the Chief, Memorial Division, in technical and procedural matters, respectively, during the war years.

The writer wishes to express his appreciation for many courtesies accorded by custodians of various file collections. Miss Elizabeth Dauber and Mrs. Violet Allman, of Mail and Records Branch, Office of The Quartermaster General, were always patient and helpful in search of materials. Mr. Ted Hodges, Chief, Intelligence Section, Military Planning Division, Office of The Quartermaster General, rendered similar assistance in connection with classified papers. Mr. Wilbur Nigh, Miss Margaret Emerson, Miss Lynn Faith, and Mrs. Lois Aldridge, all of the Historical Records Section, Office of The Adjutant General, performed an indispensable service in making available materials from the extensive documentary collections in their care. The author is particularly indebted to Mr. Heber N. Everett, General Service Branch, Administrative Division, Office of The Quartermaster General, who prepared the cartographic exhibits.

EDWARD STEERE

OFFICE OF THE QUARTERMASTER GENERAL,

Washington, D. C., 18 April 1951.

Digitized by Google

Table of Contents

Chapter		Page
I.	Origins of American Graves Registration	1
	The Civil War	3
	The Spanish-American War	10
	World War I	12
II.	Planning for the Activation of a Graves Registration Service in War	15
	Planning Between Wars	15
	Basic Regulations of 1924	15
	Organization of the QM GR Company	17
	Policy Fluctuations, 1939–1941	19
	Preparation of Technical Manual	21
	War—Establishment of Graves Registration Service	25
	Emergency Measures in ZI	25
	Authorization for Overseas Graves Registration	28
III.	Graves Registration Overseas: The Period of Improvisation	30
	The Philippine Campaign	30
	Australia and the Southwest Pacific Area	33
	Graves Registration in Australia	34
	Graves Registration in British New Guinea	40
	Guadalcanal to Rabaul	42
	The Southern Solomons	44
	The Road to Rabaul	46
	The North African Landings	49
	The Tunisian Campaign	54
IV.	Designation of The Quartermaster General as Chief American Graves Registration Service	61
	Problem of Policy Making	61
	ASF and Graves Registration	63
	Modification of Basic Directives	64
	Reassignment of Responsibilities	66
	Clarification of Procedures	68
	Dissemination of Burial Information	70
	Directive of 11 September 1943	71
V.	Graves Registration in the Mediterranean Area	73
	The Sicilian Campaign	73
	The Italian Campaign	80
VI.	Graves Registration in the European Theater	93
	Graves Registration Operations in the United Kingdom	93
	Planning for the Invasion of Europe	97
	The Campaign in Europe	102
	First Army Graves Registration Operations	102
	Ninth Army	114
	Third Army	117
	Seventh Army	125

Digitized by Google

Chapter | Page

VII. Graves Registration in the Later Pacific Campaigns 133
The Central Pacific 133
The Gilbert Islands 133
The Marshall Islands 135
Conquest of the Marianas 137
New Guinea Operations, 1944 143
The Admiralty Islands 145
Hollandia 149
Wakde to Morotai 151
Conquest of the Philippines 153
Leyte 153
Luzon 156
The Ryukyus Campaign 158

VIII. Reorganization of Memorial Division as Staff of the Chief, AGRS .. 165
Inadequacy of Branch Organization 165
Personnel Utilization Survey 167
Proposals for Restoration of Divisional Status 170
Decline of Operational Efficiency 174
Reestablishment of the Memorial Division 176

IX. Initial Planning for Disposition of Remains 179
Proposed AGRS Organization in Policy Study No. 34, 14 August 1943 179
Policy Requirements for Uniform Burial Practices 185
Proposals for Assignment of Responsibility to The Quartermaster General for Disposition of all American Dead 186
Interservice Planning for Concentration of Remains 191
Plans for Extension of the National Cemeterial System 193
Planning for Establishment of Quartermaster Graves Registration Area Commands (ZI) in Active Theaters 196
Influence of Wartime Planning on AGRS Organization 202

Conclusions 207

Digitized by Google

List of Illustrations

		Page
1.	U. S. Armed Forces Cemetery, Springvale, Melbourne, Australia	36
2.	U. S. Armed Forces Cemetery, Ipswich, Brisbane, Australia	39
3.	View of U. S. Armed Forces Cemetery, Buna Mission, New Guinea, taken on Memorial Day, 30 May 1943	41
4.	U. S. Army, Navy, Marine Cemetery, Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands	46
5.	A soldier from a nearby unit examines identification tag attached to an isolated grave on New Georgia Island	47
6.	El Alia Military Cemetery, near Algiers, North Africa. Originally established by a British graves registration unit, the layout does not conform to the American plan	53
7.	Primitive graves registration methods in Tunisia. Ceremonies attend the burial in crudely marked graves of U. S. soldiers killed at the battle of Sedjenane	56
8.	Evacuation of dead by pack animal from fighting in the hills of Tunisia	59
9.	U. S. Military Cemetery, Gela, Sicily	78
10.	U. S. Military Cemetery, Mt. Soprano, Paestum, Italy	83
11.	Protestant and Catholic rites attend the burial of American fliers whose bomber crashed on return to base in England from a mission over Germany	96
12.	U. S. Military Cemetery, St. Laurent, France. Wrecked shipping still litters the Normandy coastline	104
13.	*Evacuation and Burial—I.* Processing of remains begins at a First Army collecting point. Attached Medical Corpsman prepares Emergency Medical Tag while Graves Registration technicians initiate Report of Interment (QMC–GR No. 1) by listing identifying media and personal effects	108
14.	*Evacuation and Burial—II.* Clothing and personal effects of potential unknown dead are minutely examined at collecting point for possible identifying clues	108
15.	*Evacuation and Burial—III.* Potential unknowns are fingerprinted before evacuation by organic Graves Registration Company transportation to Army cemetery	109
16.	*Evacuation and Burial—IV.* Bodies from collecting point are delivered at prepared grave sites in First Army Cemetery near Fosse, Belgium	110
17.	*Evacuation and Burial—V.* Completed Plot A at Fosse, Belgium, containing 200 graves	110
18.	*Evacuation and Burial—VI.* U. S. Military Cemetery, Fosse, Belgium, at a later stage of development	110
19.	U. S. Military Cemetery, Henri-Chapelle, Belgium, served as an army group cemetery, to which dead of the First and Ninth Armies were evacuated simultaneously through their collecting point systems	111
20.	U. S. Military Cemetery, Epinal, France, established as an army cemetery to which all elements of the Seventh Army evacuated their dead	127
21.	U. S. Cemetery, 27th Division, Saipan, Mariana Islands	139

964114—52——2

Digitized by Google

Page

22. Transportation of remains by land and sea in the Southwest Pacific. Bodies evacuated from the battle zone in New Britain are loaded at Talasea for shipment to U. S. A. F. Cemetery at Cape Gloucester... 145
23. U. S. Armed Forces Cemetery, Los Negros No. 1, Admiralty Islands, established by the 1st Cavalry Division near Hyane Harbor..... 147
24. U. S. Armed Forces Cemetery, Toem No. 1, a typical New Guinea cemetery..... 151
25. U. S. Armed Forces Cemetery, Bosnek No. 1, Biak Island, off the north coast of New Guinea..... 152
26. Supporting the 1st Cavalry Division, men of the 1st Platoon, 48th Graves Registration Company, contend with evacuation difficulties during the Leyte campaign..... 154
27. U. S. Armed Forces Cemetery, Manila No. 2, Luzon, Philippine Islands. 157
28. U. S. Armed Forces Cemetery, Island Command, Okinawa, Ryukyu Islands..... 162

Maps

1. U. S. Military Cemeteries, Mediterranean Theater of Operations..... 91
2. U. S. Military Cemeteries, European Theater of Operations..... 130
3. U. S. Armed Forces Cemeteries, Okinawa..... 163

Tables

1. Status of cemeteries opened by First U. S. Army..... 112
2. Statistical comparison of plans for graves registration service, 1943–45. 205

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER I

Origins of American Graves Registration

SENTIMENTS pervading our present customs of military burial long antedate the founding of the Republic. They reach back into prehistoric times, when primitive man first sought in his funerary ritual to retain a measure of the supernatural power he assigned to the spirits of the departed.

These primordial customs have their first written record in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*. The elaborate ritual prescribed in this ancient document was concluded by a priest who chanted one of the chapters and laid a beautiful crown of victory upon the brow of the deceased.[1] St. Paul emphasized in his first Epistle to the Corinthians the age-old conception of death as a contest ending in victory.

> So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.
>
> O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? [2]

A rapid survey of funerary cults through the period of recorded history, particularly the ceremonial customs that have been prescribed from time to time by the state for purposes of immortalizing those who have died in its service, reveals a universal desire to confer special honors on the warrior dead. The tradition that a Spartan should either return from battle bearing his shield, or be carried home upon it, reveals some sort of a system for recovery and identification of the dead. The Athenian democracy achieved similar results with greater refinement of ceremony and deeper expression of feeling. Thucydides, the Athenian general and military historian, described the funeral ceremony of 436 B. C. in Athens, when the first dead of the Peloponnesian War were returned to their native city and laid to rest in the state sepulcher.

> In the same winter the Athenians gave a funeral at the public cost to those who had fallen in this war. It was a custom of their ancestors, and the manner of it is as follows. Three days before the ceremony, the bones of the dead are laid out in a tent which has been erected; and their friends bring to their relatives such offerings as they please. In the funeral procession cypress coffins are borne in cars, one for each tribe; the bones of the deceased being placed in the coffin of their tribe. Among these is carried an empty bier decked for the missing, that is, for those whose bodies could not be recovered. . . . The dead are laid in the public sepulchre in the most beautiful suburb of the city, in which those who fall in war are always buried; with the exception of those slain at Marathon, who for their singular and extraordinary valour were interred on the spot where they fell. After the bodies have been laid in the earth, a man chosen by the state . . . pronounces over them an appropriate panegyric. . . . Pericles, son of Xanthippus, was chosen to pronounce their eulogium.[3]

Similarity of sentiment and method of expression accorded the warrior dead in ancient Athens and in modern America becomes apparent in comparing the funeral oration of Pericles with the dedication address delivered by Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg on 19 November 1863. Separated by two millennia, these ringing appeals sound the same note—renewal of strength by the living through solemn dedication to the unfinished work for which the honored dead laid down their lives. Both orators invoked the spirit of their freedom-loving ancestors. Pericles proclaimed that the Athenians "dwelt in the country without break in succession from generation to generation and handed it down free to the present time by their valour." The Athenian constitution, he continued, "favors the many instead of the few," and for this reason "it is called a democracy." Lincoln appealed to the democratic tradition of his forebears, saying: "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

In exhorting the living of Athens to emulate their heroic dead, Pericles sounded a call to arms for renewal of the conflict against autocratic Sparta.

> So died these men as became Athenians . . . For this offering of their lives made in common by them all they each of

[1] A. M. Alocart, "Death Customs," *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, XXIII, 127.

[2] I Cor. 15: 54–55.

[3] R. Crawley, trans., *The Complete Writings of Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War* (New York: Random House, 1934), p. 102.

Digitized by Google

them individually received that renown which never grows old, and for a sepulchre, not so much that in which their bones have been deposited, but that noblest of shrines wherein their glory is laid up to be eternally remembered upon every occasion on which deed or story shall fall for its commemoration. For heroes have the whole earth for their tomb. . . . Take these as your model, and judging happiness to be the fruit of freedom and freedom of valour, never decline the dangers of war.[4]

After questioning, as Pericles had done before his Athenian audience, the propriety of the living consecrating the final resting place of citizen soldiers who fall in battle, Lincoln voiced the majestic appeal which will forever ring as the battle-cry of freedom.

It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

It is, of course, beyond the scope of these introductory remarks to trace the customs of military burial through the centuries between Pericles and Lincoln. Although many glorious memorials, including the state sepulcher of Athens, have been erected in ancient and modern times to commemorate the fame of great captains and anonymous groups of soldiers, it is a melancholy fact that only within the past hundred years has any government been willing or able to assume the obligation of identifying and burying in registered graves the remains of all who gave up their lives in war. The first step in creating a national cemeterial system for the realization of such a purpose was taken in 1862 by the Congress of the United States. The second great stride in this humanitarian endeavor came 36 years later, when a special appropriation of the Congress enabled next of kin to exercise the right of expressing a choice in the final resting place for servicemen who fell in the Spanish-American War.

In accordance with the policies established in 1862 and 1898, the American Graves Registration Service, under the direction of The Quartermaster General, is engaged in accomplishing the final burial of Americans who fell in the overseas theaters of World War II. Historically, this program presented no great dissimilarity to the one attending the dead of World War I. While there were marked differences in complexity of organization, employment of techniques, and magnitude of objectives, there was an all-important factor common to both programs—one which differentiates these two wars from all others in the national history with respect to the care of the dead. This is the existence of a theater graves registration service, the operating unit of which (the Quartermaster Graves Registration Company) was first authorized as an element of the military establishment by War Department General Orders No. 104, 1917. Assigned as a theater of operations unit, the Graves Registration Company performed six major functions: (1) identification of bodies; (2) supervision of burials; (3) registration of graves; (4) maintenance of temporary cemeteries; (5) recovery of remains in isolated places as early as practicable during the prosecution of hostilities; (6) initiation of records relating to all such operations.

The extent to which the theater Graves Registration Service of World War I accomplished its mission is reflected in the fact that only 3.5 percent of the dead remained unknown. While tentative estimates of the percentage of World War II unknowns (25.4) differ materially from that of World War I, the proportion of missing in action, or "nonrecoverables," together with the relative number of unidentifiable remains among those actually recovered differed widely during these two wars. A much larger ratio in both categories—nonrecoverables and unidetifiable—during the recent conflict is attributable to the unprecedented magnitude of amphibious operations and the employment of air and armored forces on a scale that revolutionized tactical practices prevailing in World War I. Since the percentages of unknowns in both wars have been computed by adding nonrecoverables and unidentified recovered remains and referring the sum to total fatalities, these calculations cannot be accepted as accurate measures of relative efficiency in the work of identification. Perhaps a more reliable indication of comparative performance may be obtained by referring the number of unidentified remains to total interments in cemeteries of the First United States Army at the time that these burial places were transferred to Communications Zone. As discussed in Chapters V and VI, recovery and burial of the types of widely scattered battle casualties that were comparatively insignificant in World War I was initiated at the time of such transfers and continued long after hostilities ceased. With passage of time there was a progressive diminution of the opportunity for identification that applied when Graves Registration Service units in close support of combat troops evacuated remains from the battle zone to army cemeteries. Given 728 unknown dead out of a total interment figures of 46,128 in First Army cemeteries at the time of transfer, the percentage of unknowns was approximately 1.6. Incomplete figures

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 107–108.

Digitized by Google

for the Third Army give a comparable percentage of 0.58. A computation of the Fifth Army Graves Registration officer established that 1.1 percent of total burials during the Italian campaign were unidentified.

Aside from the variable factor of nonrecoverables, and apart from the existence of a theater graves registration service, the ratio of unknowns to total fatalities has, as a general rule, been proportional to the time lag between death and burial in a registered grave. Estimates relating to theater dead of the three national conflicts antedating World War I give 13.6 percent for the Spanish-American War, 42 percent for the Civil War and somewhat over 90 percent for the Mexican War.

The War of 1846–47, nevertheless, marked an important advance in burial policy. In appropriating funds in 1850 for a cemetery at Mexico City to serve as the final resting place "for such officers and soldiers of the United States Army . . . as fell in battle or died in and around the said city," [5] the Congress created a precedent for the establishment of permanent military cemeteries abroad some 12 years before legislative provision was made for a national cemeterial system in the homeland. Yet the cemetery in Mexico serves as a historic reminder that burial practices were hopelessly inadequate. When the bones of 750 American dead were eventually exhumed from their battlefield graves on the road to Mexico City and reinterred at the foot of the monument that now commemorates their fame, not a single remains could be identified.[6] This, indeed, is a tomb of the unknown soldiers of the Mexican War.

The Civil War

The outbreak of hostilities in 1861 on the North American Continent was destined to see many revolutionary developments in the conduct of war, not the least significant of which were those pertaining to care of the dead. For the first time in history a productive system based on power machinery and financed by long-term credits made it possible to maintain the traditional standards of peacetime economy and, at the same time, expend sums equaling the annual national income on the prosecution of hostilities. The fact that neither the North nor the South had large military establishments patterned after those of Europe, with stores of equipment, trained reserves, and an officer corps that regarded the business of making war as the monopoly of a privileged class, did not deter either section from organizing its war potentials of manpower and raw materials on a scale of unprecedented magnitude. These adjustments introduced the essential elements of total war—a struggle in which victory depended not so much upon the soldiership displayed by professional armies of the pre-machine age as upon the extent to which an integrated social unit composed of democratic communities could sustain a collective will under the pressure of armed conflict geared to power machinery. Thus the problem of control over the state of mind of both troops with the colors and the masses of the civil population behind the lines—that is, the question of national morale—became a paramount consideration of the statesmanship of war. Just as democratic Athens, which carried the close-knit economy of the Greek city-state to its highest point of development, had paid signal honors to the remains of its citizen soldiers slain in battle, so now the Government of the United States felt the compulsion of policy in affording a decent burial to those who gave their lives in defense of the Republic. This purpose found official expression within two months after the first major clash of arms at Bull Run.

On 11 September 1861. the War Department directed in General Orders No. 75 that the Quartermaster General supply all general and post hospitals with blankbooks and forms for the preservation of accurate mortuary records, and that he provide materials for the registered headboards which would be placed over soldiers' graves. The following Special Order of the same date and number supplemented this directive:

> It is hereby ordered, that whenever any soldier or officer of the United States Army dies, it shall be the duty of the commanding officer of the military corps or department in which such person dies, to cause the regulations and forms provided in the foregoing directions to the Quartermaster General to be properly executed.

In other words, all departmental commanders and officers commanding military corps, together with the Quartermaster General of the Army, became jointly responsible for the accomplishment of burial regulations.

It was soon evident that these procedures were hardly adequate for an orderly disposition of the remains of military personnel who died in considerable numbers at temporary encampments and along the route of march to permanent concentration points. In the first place, the new regulations made no provision for the acquisition of burial sites. Furthermore, the facilities offered at many large troop concentration centers were

[5] *U. S. Statutes at Large*, IX, 206.

[6] Rpt, John Agers, Supt, U. S. National Cemetery, Mexico City, Mexico, Jan 1896, Sub: A complete list of all graves in the Mexico City National Cemetery, Mexico (other than those of United States Soldiers, Sailors and Marines). War Records Office, National Archives. The report states in part: "By records of this cemetery . . . *750 American Soldiers buried under the Monument*, erected by the United States Government, in memory of the American Soldiers who perished in the Valley of the City of Mexico, Mexico in the War of 1847, *their names unknown*."

Digitized by Google

hopelessly inadequate to meet the emergencies of an unplanned military mobilization. A shocking but unforeseen want of provision for proper burial of the dead aroused the nation to demands for immediate action.[7]

Public sentiment found expression through patriotic bodies before the National Government could shape a comprehensive policy. Cemetery associations throughout the North vied with one another in setting aside plots of ground for burial of the Army's dead, or in conveying such properties in outright deed to the Government.[8] On 17 July 1862, Congress took action, approving a bill which authorized the President "to purchase cemetery grounds, and cause them to be securely enclosed, to be used as a national cemetery for the soldiers who shall have died in the service of the country." [9] The patriotic program of cemetery associations was in no way curtailed by legislation empowering the President to purchase land. During the course of the war some three hundred soldiers' plots were put at the disposal of the Government in one way or another. After enactment of the law, the Government accepted title to many burial plots. Conveyance of the Allegheny Cemetery in Pennsylvania was typical of many such transactions, it being written into the deed that the land was given "for reasons of Patriotism." [10]

Pursuant to the enabling legislation of 17 July 1862, the War Department established fourteen national cemeteries during the remaining months of that year. The list included two post cemeteries of the prewar period—those at Fort Leavenworth and Fort Scott in Kansas. Several were located at troop concentration points. The burial ground of the Soldiers' Home in Washington, D. C., was designated as a national cemetery, while another was established at Alexandria, Virginia. A striking feature of this program was the decision to transform the burial sites of major battles into national cemeteries. One was established near Sharpsburg, Maryland, as a memorial to the dead who fell in the battle of Antietam. The pattern created in 1862 was extended during 1863. The battle of Gettysburg was memorialized in the dedication of a national cemetery on the site of that historic encounter. In May 1864, the Secretary of War directed that "a new site be selected on Lee's farm at Arlington, Virginia." [11]

Capt. James M. Moore, Assistant Quartermaster, noted in his annual report of 1864 relating to national cemeteries that "The improvement of the National Cemeteries has been a source of great gratification to all who visit them, and entirely dissipated the prevailing opinion of those living remote from Washington, that soldiers were irreverently or carelessly buried." [12]

General Orders No. 75, 1861, it will be noted, were framed without regard to the fact that they presupposed a system of national cemeteries. While the deficiency was speedily repaired by the patriotic generosity of cemetery associations and effective action on the part of the National Government, no corresponding developments facilitated an extension of the program to active theaters of hostilities. This particular defect, of course, constituted only one of many shortcomings in efforts to accommodate existing organizational forms to the requirements of a war in which an extensive employment of new technological facilities, such as the steam railway and electric telegraph, was revolutionizing the conduct of operations in the field. Failure to adapt many of the services required in support of combat parallels a want of success in the creation of a supreme command, with staff organs designed to meet the growing complexities of war. In effect, General Orders No. 75 were construed as having application only in that part of the over-all area of military operations which is now regarded as the zone of the interior.

The distinction was not so obvious during the Civil War. In reality, each army command exercised direct control over its communications zone and zone of interior. The distinction between the arms and services was equally indefinite. Quartermaster service troops were nonexistent. Just as the implementation of General Orders No. 75 in the rear areas was contingent upon the establishment of national cemeteries, so an effective extension of these orders to the battle zone depended upon the creation of a service especially designed for care of the dead after combat.

Six months later the War Department attempted in Section II of General Orders No. 33, 3 April 1862, to project the new burial program to the active theaters of hostilities. Army commanders were now assigned definite responsibilities in a plan which required nothing less than a theater of operations graves registration service.

> In order to secure, as far as possible, the decent interment of those who have fallen, or may fall, in battle, it is made the duty of Commanding Generals to lay off lots of ground in some suitable spot near every battlefield, so soon as it may be in their power, and to cause the remains of those killed to be

[7] Elsie Stommel, "National Cemeteries" (typescript study prepared for the Director, Memorial Division, OQMG, by the Special Assistant to the Director in Policy Matters, 1946), pp. 2–3. Hereinafter cited as Stommel, "National Cemeteries."

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

[9] *U. S. Statutes at Large*, XII, 596.

[10] Stommel, "National Cemeteries," p. 2.

[11] "Annual Report of the Quartermaster General for 1864," p. 48, in *Annual Reports of the Quartermaster General from 1861 to 1866* (Washington: G. P. O., 1880). Hereinafter cited as *QMG Reports, 1861–66*. Each annual report in this volume is separately paged.

[12] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

interred, with headboards to the graves bearing numbers, and when practicable, the names of the persons buried in them. A register of each burial ground will be preserved, in which will be noted the marks corresponding with the headboards.

In overlooking the fact that an effective burial system in the field required services of an extraordinary nature, the regulations of 3 April 1862 can be regarded as scarcely more than an official exhortation to the effect that army commanders were expected to do better by their dead than had heretofore been accomplished by General Winfield Scott in the Valley of Mexico. Use of the qualifying phrases, "as far as possible" and "whenever practicable," amounted to a confession that, however beneficial to the national morale, complete execution of the new burial regulations was secondary to the requirements of victory. Experience, nonetheless, had demonstrated in the performance of engineer troops and medical corpsmen that a practical contribution to the primary purpose of combat could be made by proper organization of technical services for the attainment of secondary objectives. While General Orders No. 33 recognized that burial of the dead and registration of graves in the battle zone were secondary objectives worthy of serious attention, no attempt was made to solve the problem by creating a specialized service capable of meeting these new requirements. Instead, the antiquated method of detailing burial fatigues from the line was continued.

Despite the failure to provide a specialized organization, considerable progress was made in the practice of battlefield burials and graves registration during the Civil War. This improvement may be attributed to the fact that soldiers with the colors shared much of the sentiment manifested by civilians at home. There are many instances of earnest endeavor on the part of combat troops to realize the ideal of individual burial in a registered grave. The resentment expressed by officers and men of the Army of the Potomac, when they passed over the battlefield of Chancellorsville and witnessed the exposed remains of their comrades who had fallen in that disastrous encounter, offers convincing evidence that American citizen soldiers would not tolerate the burial methods that had sufficed in wars of the past.

Just a year after Lee's victory at Chancellorsville, in the Wilderness of northern Virginia, surviving veterans of the Army of the Potomac had an opportunity to visit the scene of conflict. The circumstances were unique. Grant had launched the final drive on Richmond; again crossing the Rapidan and penetrating the Wilderness, the II Corps, Army of the Potomac, bivouacked at Chancellorsville on the night of 4 May 1864. Veterans flocked in droves to see the old battle lines. These were readily recognized by the remnants of log and earth breastworks and rows of partially buried skeletons. According to accounts left by regimental historians, the visitors were appalled at the scene. Although the Confederates had held possession of the battlefield during the intervening year and had exercised considerable care in burying their own dead, there was much to indicate that they had been satisfied with a perfunctory performance in disposing of the remains of their foe. Quoting a letter written by an observer, the historian of the 124th New York Volunteer Infantry records that "our dead were but partially buried, and the skulls and bones lay about in great profusion." [13] Confederate graves offered a striking contrast.

> The Confederate dead, it would seem, had all been decently buried very near where they had fallen. At one place in the woods, just in front of where the battle line of the 124th had been, we found over a hundred graves. They were generally in rows of from three to ten each, under trees, from the trunks of which patches of bark had been blazed. On these blazed places the number of men buried there and the company and regiment to which they belonged, were cut, and in many instances the names were given in full. We counted fifty-five graves marked "23 North Carolina." [14]

Along with a sense of outrage over the plight of their dead was an age-old urge to search through the scattered remains in hopes that the recognition of a bleached skeleton might vivify or even consecrate the memory of a departed comrade. The amateur devices employed on this occasion anticipated many of the standard techniques later written into graves registration manuals, such as the use of identifying marks on clothing and equipment, evidences left by the fatal wound, and individual characteristics of tooth structure. The identification of Captain Kirk, 105th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, was established beyond a reasonable doubt.

> I saw where poor Captain Kirk lay. His skull was entirely exposed, and lying on top of the grave. The fatal bullet that took his noble life was partly pushed out of the skull. We identified his remains by a peculiar mark on his shoulder-strap, one of which still adhered to his bones.[15]

Another positive identification was made by a combination of clues—clothing marks and evidence left by the fatal wound.

---

[13] Charles H. Wegant, *History of the One Hundred and Twenty-Fourth Regiment, N. Y. S. V.* (Newburgh, N. Y.: Journal Printing House, 1877), p. 272.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 272.

[15] K. M. Scott, *History of the One Hundred and Fifth Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861–65* (Philadelphia: New World Pub. Co., 1869), p. 267.

Digitized by Google

Skulls lay around, and among those picked up was that of Sergeant David Bender, of Co. H, with the cap still upon it. He had been shot through the head, the bullet piercing the visor of his cap. Upon the under side of the visor of his cap was stamped, "D. Bender, Co. H, 11 N. J. V." A. B. Searing, of Co. E, cut out the inscription and brought it home.[16]

Chaplain Warren H. Cudworth, 1st Massachusetts Infantry, records a feat of identification that may be regarded as a forerunner of the tooth-chart technique, perhaps the first authentic example of its kind. While it is unfortunate that Chaplain Cudworth neglected to give the name of the soldier so identified, there is no reason to question the fact of identification.

Occasionally something would be found to identify the remains, but not often. One former member of the First, whose skull lay bleaching upon the top of the ground, was identified by some peculiarity connected with his teeth.[17]

Many accounts of this incident conclude with the gratifying statement that parties were detailed to bury the exposed remain before the Army of the Potomac moved off, only to become involved the next day in the shambles of the Wilderness. Perhaps the most authentic interpretation of the deep feeling shared by these hard-bitten soldiers of the line was expressed by Capt. Charles H. Wegant, historian of the 124th New York Infantry, and destined two days later to lead his regiment through its bloodiest ordeal.

We spent the night near these scenes . . . and in many a letter written that afternoon there was enclosed a tiny wild flower, which the writer believed had been nourished by the soil enriched by his own blood, or by that of some friend or comrade who had there fought his last fight. It was a very easy matter to discover just where pools of blood had been, for particular spots were marked by the greenest tufts to be found on the field.[18]

Here, indeed, is the very sentiment felt a half-century later by John McCrae and immortalized in the lines of "Flanders Field."

In Flanders field the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders Field.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with those who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders Field.[19]

In reconstructing the story of this strange pilgrimage one is struck by the fact that no thought appears to have been given in official quarters to at least one of the many devices that have been used since time immemorial to ensure personal identification against the accidents of fate. The literature of the ages abounds with examples of rings, bracelets, and neck ornaments, bearing inscriptions that reveal the wearer's identity. Here, too, the rank and file of the Army was some 50 years ahead of the War Department. It is recorded that a crude form of identification tag came into use on the south bank of the Rapidan during the winter campaign of 1863. Swinton, the war correspondent, relates that, when Meade deployed his forces before Lee's fieldworks paralleling the ravine of Mine Run and ordered the V Corps to deliver a frontal attack, soldiers of the assault force, well aware of the cost of such an operation, carefully examined their equipment, then wrote their names on slips of paper and pinned them to their blouses. Happily for those immediately concerned, this early experiment in graves registration technique was interrupted by cancellation of the order to attack.[20]

In the act of 4 July 1864, "to provide better organization for the Quartermaster's Department," special attention was given to the problem of proper care for the Army's dead. Among the functions assigned in consequence of this act to the Sixth Division of the Quartermaster General's Office was the supervision of burials and preservation of interment reports.[21] In addition to laying out the Arlington National Cemetery, which was destined to become the largest and best known of the nation's burial places, the new cemeterial agency performed a feat that stands unique in American graves registration annals.

When General Jubal Early, commanding Stonewall Jackson's celebrated corps of the Army of Northern Virginia, dashed down the Shenandoah and then pushed eastward across Maryland, Washington felt the

[16] Frank L. James, *History of the Eleventh New Jersey Volunteers* (Trenton, N. J.: The Regimental Association, 1869), p. 161.

[17] Warren H. Cudworth, *History of the First Regiment (Massachusetts Infantry) From the 25th of May 1861, to the 25th of May 1864)* Boston: Walker, Fuller & Co., 1866), p. 456.

[18] Wegant, *Hist. of 124th Regiment, N. Y. S. V.*, p. 272.

[19] A. P. Sanford and R. H. Schauffer, eds. and comps., *Armistice Day: An Anthology . . .* (New York: Dodd, Meade Co., 1927), pp. 265–66.

[20] (1) Wm. Swinton, *Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac. A Critical History of the Operations in Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, from the Commencement to the close of the War, 1861–5* (New York: Charles B. Richardson, 1866), p. 397. (2) Francis F. Walker, Assistant Adjutant General, II Corps, *History of the Second Corps in the Army of the Potomac* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1886), p. 383.

[21] (1) *U. S. Statutes at Large*, XIII, 394–398. (2) "Annual Report, 1865," pp. 32–33, *QMG Reports, 1861–66.*

Digitized by Google

fright of a "bulge offensive" battering at her very gates. The threat was averted by arrival of Gen. H. G. Wright's VI Corps, which steamed placidly in convoy through the interior communications of Chesapeake Bay from the Petersburg front as Early's dusty columns converged on the national capital. Fearful of delivering a general assault against formidable works about to receive heavy reinforcements, Early paused and cautiously felt the Fort Stevens sector of Fortress Washington's defenses. A vigorous sortie from the works met and repelled the Confederate reconnaissance force. While medical detachments were evacuating the wounded, an improvised graves registration unit under command of Capt. James M. Moore began the work of identifying and burying the dead. If this action seems unimportant in a struggle marked by such battles as Gettysburg, the Wilderness, and Spotsylvania Court House, the skirmish at Fort Stevens is notable in American military history for the very significant reason that graves registration was first accomplished by a service unit especially organized for the purpose, and that this unit made a perfect score, identifying every body on the battlefield and correctly registering each grave. The incident is recorded in the following statement:

> The bodies of the loyal officers and soldiers who fell in the sortie [were] buried in a piece of ground selected for the purpose in the midst of the battlefield and in sight of Fort Stevens.[22]

Commenting in his annual report of 1864 on this singular feat, Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs expressed a hope that "Congress may see fit to cause a monument to be erected to the memory of these patriots, who fell in the defense of the Capital itself." The wish had its fulfillment that same year in the establishment of the Battleground National Cemetery, which is now entered by a memorial gate in the 6100 block of Georgia Avenue. The cemetery records list the names of 40 dead interred by Captain Moore's unit.[23] Unfortunately, the organizational principle which momentarily came into play and demonstrated its capabilities at Fort Stevens was not employed during the final operations which overthrew the Southern Confederacy.

It seems doubtful, indeed, if graves registration practices in the battle zone underwent any considerable improvement during the tragic years of 1864–65. The ability conferred by power machinery, steam transportation, and obligatory military service to repair, within limits, the wastage of war as rapidly as it occurred in combat enabled army commanders to fight prolonged battles of attrition and support continuous maneuver without serious loss of striking power. Now, for the first time, these forces were impelled by a supreme command in coordinated movement. As Commander in Chief, Grant directed operations against Lee in the Virginia theater, while Sherman struck down through the Chattanooga gateway and cut a wide path of devastation through the heart of the Confederacy. Yet, in consideration of the losses and exhaustion imposed by such prolonged fighting and maneuver, together with the imperative necessity of keeping combat units as strong as possible, there should be no great difficulty in understanding why the number of men available for burial fatigues was totally inadequate, and that expectations of a satisfactory performance were scarcely within reason. While there are grounds for condemning a system that compelled army commanders to diminish their striking power at the critical juncture of a campaign in order to dispose of their dead in accordance with ill-considered burial regulations, the evidence seems insufficient to justify any serious charge that Grant and his generals were indifferent to the obligation of affording the dead a decent burial. On the contrary, there is every reason to believe that, short of jeopardizing the chances of victory, they did their utmost in adapting antiquated methods to new requirements.

The program of exhuming remains of the war dead from scattered burials and concentrating them in national cemeteries was initiated within three months following Lee's capitulation at Appomattox. Exercising authority comparable to that now vested in The Quartermaster General as Chief, American Graves Registration Service, Quartermaster General Meigs issued General Orders No. 40, QMGO, on 3 July 1865.

> Officers of the Quartermaster's Department on duty in charge of the several principal posts, will report to this office, without delay, the number of interments registered during the war, white and black, loyal and disloyal, to be separately enumerated.
>
> All officers of the Quartermaster's Department who have made interments on battlefields during the war, will report the number of the same, giving the localities, dates of battles, and dates of interment.

The first notable operation was planned for the purpose of reinterring the Federal dead at Andersonville Prison, Georgia, and establishing a national cemetery on the site. The results of this expedition were reported in some detail by General Meigs to the Secretary of War.

> Captain J. M. Moore, Assistant Quartermaster, was, by your order, immediately upon the opening of communications, dispatched in a steamer, loaded with materials, with workmen, and clerks, to identify and mark in a suitable manner the

[22] "Annual Report, 1864," p. 21, *QMG Reports, 1861–66.*

[23] Battleground National Cemetery, Washington, D. C., "Transcript of Burial Records."

Digitized by Google

graves of those who died at Andersonville. With the aid of a detail, furnished by Major General Wilson, this duty was performed.

The ground in which 12,912 of our comrades had been buried in trenches was enclosed; the bodies, where the earth had been washed from them by rains, were again covered. Headboards, painted white, were placed over each, bearing the name, rank, regiment, and State, with the date of death, as ascertained from the captured hospital records.

Twelve thousand four hundred sixty-one were identified, and upon 451 graves Captain Moore was compelled to place the inscription "unknown U. S. Soldier." [24]

After the satisfactory accomplishment of this assignment at Andersonville and a promotion in rank, Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Moore undertook the supervision of concentration operations in northern Virginia. Two separate reports cover this activity and indicate the difficulties under which he labored in the interment of remains yet unburied, the location of isolated graves and identification of the dead. Of the 5,350 killed in action at the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House,[25] only 1,500, or approximately 26 percent, were identified.[26] This unsatisfactory performance was attributed to the following conditions:

Hundreds of graves on these battlefields are without any marks whatsoever to distinguish them, and so covered with foliage that the visitor will be unable to find the last resting place of those who have fallen until the rains and snows of winter wash from the surface the light covering of earth and expose their remains.

The accompanying list embraces the names of officers and men to whom headboards have been erected.[27]

In a subsequent report on the progress of concentrating battlefield remains at the eleven national cemeteries established during 1865 and 1866 in Virginia, Colonel Moore made the following comment:

As already stated . . . a large number of graves have never been designated by headboards or stakes; others have already been plowed over, or from other causes have become so obliterated, as to make discovery almost impossible. I am compelled therefore to proceed with the utmost caution, in order to prevent the possibility of overlooking graves. It is also a source of sincere regret, that notwithstanding every care is exercised to identify the remains, the names of only a small number can be ascertained.[28]

These pessimistic observations appear to challenge the assertion that some improvement had been made by combat troops in burial of the dead after action. Yet a close analysis of Colonel Moore's report reveals that the loss of many grave markers may be assigned to causes which lay beyond the control of army commanders and, indeed, outside the compass of existing policy. In the first place, no provision was made for the security and maintenance of burial grounds in the battle zones. In the second place, the concentration of battlefield remains for purposes of permanent care took place during the period of hostilities only when a national cemetery was established on the site of combat. Circumstances varied, however, in the establishment of different national battlefield cemeteries. Care and maintenance at the Battleground National Cemetery was continuous from the date of interment of those killed during the action at Fort Stevens. Dedicated within five months after Lee's withdrawal from the scene of conflict, the Gettysburg National Cemetery contained the remains of soldiers killed on the battlefield and in the immediate vicinity. In this situation it was possible to identify 82 percent of the dead.

Conditions favoring the perfect performance at Fort Stevens, and a fairly creditable one at Gettysburg, did not apply in the Virginia theater. The battlefield burials of 1862 at Fair Oaks, Gaines Mill, and Malvern Hill were abandoned when McClellan evacuated the Peninsula. Those of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville suffered a similar fate in 1863. Grant's continuous movement southward after his encounter with Lee in the Wilderness and at Spotsylvania Court House during May 1864, together with his shift of communications from the overland route to the waterway of Chesapeake Bay, abandoned these battlefields to local Confederate forces. Altogether, the Virginia battlefield burials had suffered neglect for one to four years before a concentration program was initiated. The percentage of identified dead, as a result, was low.

While the advance of the Western armies was not conditioned by the many reverses encountered in the East, the vast areas involved in the conquest of the Mississippi Valley and the final thrust into Georgia produced similar problems. Commenting on difficulties encountered in the Military Division of the Tennessee, which included the States of Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia, Bvt. Brig. Gen. J. J. Dana, Chief of the Sixth Division, QMGO, offered the following analysis:

The graves of this military division are very widely scattered, in most cases very imperfectly protected; and throughout the long and various marches of Grant's, Buell's, Sherman's and Thomas's armies, and in the countless skir-

[24] "Annual Report, 1865," p. 33, *QMG Reports, 1861–66.*

[25] *War of the Rebellion, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: G. P. O., 1880–1901), Series I, Vol. 35, Part I, pp. 133–149.

[26] "Annual Report, 1865," p. 33, *QMG Reports, 1861–66.*

[27] Rpt, Lt Col Jas. M. Moore to Bvt Maj Gen M. C. Meigs, QMG, U. S. Army, 3 July 1865, sub: Names of Officers and Men Found on the Battlefields of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House, Va. The complete report and list of names is published in *Roll of Honor, 1865–66* (Washington: G. P. O., 1866), Report No. 2.

[28] Rpt, Lt Col J. M. Moore to the Quartermaster General, sub: Report of Cemeterial Operations, Working Parties, Etc., under his charge for the Fiscal Year ending 30 June 1866. War Records Office, National Archives.

Digitized by Google

mishes which took place there, the dead appear to have been buried generally where they fell, with very little attempt to record or mark the place.[29]

The magnitude attained by the concentration program during 1866 is indicated by the fact that General Dana devoted all but one page of his annex to the annual report of the Quartermaster General to operations under the heading "Cemeterial." [30] It is interesting to note by way of comparison that Quartermaster General Jesup's annual report of 1848, which deals with the demobilization following the War with Mexico, makes no mention of military burials during that war, or of any cemeterial problems relating to the invasion and evacuation of Mexico.[31] Certain aspects of General Dana's report invite attention. Responsibility had been assigned to Colonel Moore for editing the *Rolls of Honor*, an official compilation of the names of the dead whose remains had been identified and reinterred in national cemeteries. The scope and purpose of this work were reported to the Secretary of War in the following statement:

> The names of those who have been interred in the military cemeteries of the District of Columbia and Washington have, by your authority, been published in a general order, which has been distributed to State authorities, public libraries, and to newspapers which publish official advertisements. The list is thus made accessible to the friends of those who have fallen. The lists of interments at Spotsylvania and the Wilderness, and those who died at Andersonville, are being printed. As other lists are received at this office they will be submitted to you for publication.[32]

Forty-one national cemeteries, containing the remains of 104,528 "loyal soldiers," had been established by 30 June 1866. An estimate of the total number of Union soldiers buried throughout the United States was put at 341,670.[33] Of paramount importance was the problem discussed by General Dana in connection with permanent grave markers:

> Public opinion seems to be turning to a more permanent mode of marking the graves than by wooden head-boards, and I would respectfully give it as my opinion that the sentiment of the nation will not only sustain the expense of marble or other permanent memorial, but, moreover, that it will be likely to demand it in a few years, if not now established.[34]

Here, indeed, is final recognition that public demand for "the decent interment of those who have fallen," as originally stated in General Orders No. 75 of 25 September 1862, and the sentiment voiced by Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address, must be permanently written into the military code. The Congress, the Secretary of War, and the Quartermaster General were well aware that public opinion and the armed forces would no longer tolerate the indifference that had heretofore attended the care of the nation's dead in war.

Between 1866 and 1870, when the work of collecting and reinterring the remains of deceased Union soldiers was, according to Quartermaster General Meigs, "virtually completed," the number of national cemeteries had been increased from forty-three to seventy-three. Within these seventy-three cemeteries the remains of 299,696 Union soldiers had been laid to rest.[35] The number of remains of Union soldiers in all types of burial grounds—national cemeteries (299,696), post cemeteries and private plots (13,575), and remains yet to be interred—aggregated 315,555. This final figure fell short by 26,125 of the total of remains of Union soldiers (341,670) estimated in 1866. Of the total interred by 1870, there were 172,109 positive identifications and 143,446 unknown dead. That is, 58 percent of the war dead were identified.[36]

Three major aspects of the historical experience in graves registration during and immediately following the Civil War should be noted. In the first place, the task completed in 1870 surpasses, with respect to the number of remains involved, all subsequent burial programs of the nation, excepting only the one in which the AGRS is now engaged. Yet even this exceptional case will hardly stand if consideration is given to the fact that the nation's present population is approximately seven times that of the North in 1865. Although a definitive figure for total fatalities in the oversea theaters of World War II has not as yet been established, it was possible to derive from War and Navy Department casualty records an approximate estimate in April 1947 for planning requirements of the AGRS. Put at 358,967, this tentative figure exceeds by only 43,392 the number of interments actually made in national cemeteries, post cemeteries and private plots (315,555) between 1862 and 1870. The comparable number for World War I (81,962, of which 31,591 were left abroad and 46,520 were returned to the United States)[37] was only one-fourth of the reinterments completed during the Civil War period.

---

[29] "Annual Report, 1866," p. 231, *QMG Reports, 1861–66.*

[30] "Annual Report, 1866," Annex No. 10, pp. 219–236, *QMG Reports, 1861–66.*

[31] Cf. *Report of the Secretary of War, 1848,* pp. 187–243.

[32] "Annual Report, 1866," p. 232, *QMG Reports, 1861–66.*

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 234.

[35] *Annual Report of the Quartermaster General made to The Secretary of War for the year 1870* (Washington: G. P. O., 1870), p. 68.

[36] *Ibid.*

[37] (1) Memo, Chief Opns Br for Asst Chief Mem Div, 21 Apr 47, sub: [Estimated total overseas fatalities as of 30 June 1946]. (2) Ltr, Col John T. Harris, Chief Mem Div, to Secy ABMC, 16 Apr 37.

Digitized by Google

Again, while the task of achieving a statistical record in body identification and graves registration commensurate with present-day standards was obviously beyond the capabilities of American military organization during that period, it is evidence that a dominant aspect of the national burial policy came out of the conflict that sealed a permanent bond of union between the North and South. This was the principle of return of remains to their native soil. While no problem of ocean transportation was involved, exhumation from battlefield burials in territory previously held by the enemy and reinterment in the consecrated ground of a national cemetery established such a principle and its extension to areas outside the continental domain awaited only the circumstances of war requiring the employment of United States forces beyond the seas.

Finally, while the postwar organization operating under direction of Quartermaster General Meigs was restricted to military departments within the continental United States and, therefore, encountered few, if any, of the complicated logistical problems that now condition the support of self-contained AGRS commands in every quarter of the globe, the magnitude of the program completed in 1870 definitely established as a tenet of policy that care and final disposition of American war dead would henceforth devolve upon The Quartermaster General.

The Spanish-American War

As already indicated, the Spanish-American War brought a major development in the national burial policy. By direction of President McKinley, and in consequence of enabling legislation, the Secretary of War took steps in August 1898 to cause the marking of all military graves in Cuba.[38] In February 1899 a Quartermaster Burial Corps composed of civilian morticians and assistants began the disinterment of remains in Cuba and Puerto Rico for shipment to the homeland.[39] On 27 April 1899, the United States Army transport *Crook* docked at New York with 747 casketed remains. In all, 1,222 bodies were returned to the United States by 30 June 1899. Of the total, 13.63 percent were unidentified.[40]

Commenting on the return of these war dead, Quartermaster General Marshall I. Ludington observed that it was probably the first attempt of a nation to "disinter the remains of all its soldiers who, in defense of their country, had given up their lives on a foreign shore, and bring them . . . to their native land for return to their relatives and friends or their reinterment in the beautiful cemeteries which have been provided by our Government for its defenders." [41]

The achievement of reducing the number of unknown dead to a ratio that had previously been attained only under exceptional circumstances marked a conspicuous stride in the practice of military burials. Noting this achievement in his final report to Quartermaster General Ludington, D. H. Rhodes, Chief of the Burial Corps, emphasized the necessity of accurately marking and registering graves within a minimum time after original burial.

> In view of the general bad condition of the graves, and the marking thereof, during the Campaign in Cuba, it should be highly gratifying to the country at large that the [Quartermaster] department by its prompt action took up this matter and located and marked the graves as it did in August last. Had it not been done or had it been delayed, it is probable that there would now have been at least fifty percent of the whole number "unknown" instead of only fourteen percent as it now stands.[42]

After completion of the mission in Cuba and Puerto Rico the Burial Corps, with D. H. Rhodes in charge, embarked for the Philippines to exhume the military dead of that archipelago and prepare the remains for shipment to Manila. In the meantime Maj. Gen. E. S. Otis, commanding the Pacific Department (later Department of the Philippines), had instructed Chaplain Charles C. Pierce to establish and direct the United States Army Morgue and Office of Identification at Manila.[43]

Staffed by military personnel of the department and subject to orders of the departmental or theater commander, the two units established by Chaplain Pierce had the basic organizational characteristics of a present-day theater graves registration service. At the same time, the Quartermaster Burial Corps, which was composed entirely of civilian personnel and operated under direct control of the Quartermaster General, performed all graves registration duties within the department excepting those expressly assigned to Chaplain Pierce.

[38] (1) *U. S. Statutes at Large*, XXX, 730. (2) *Annual Report of the Quartermaster General to the Secretary of War for the Fiscal Year Ended 30 June 1898* (Washington: G. P. O., 1898), pp. 23–24. (3) Rpt, D. H. Rhodes to the Quartermaster General, 14 Nov 1898, sub: Location and Marking of Graves of Soldiers who fell in the Campaign. War Records Office, National Archives.

[39] Rpt, D. H. Rhodes to the Quartermaster General, 12 June 1899, sub: Expedition for Disinterring and Shipping to the U. S. Remains of American Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines who have been buried in Cuba and Puerto Rico. War Records Office, National Archives. Hereinafter cited as Rhodes, Disinterring of Remains, 1899.

[40] *Annual Report of the Quartermaster General, 1899*, p. 39.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

[42] Rhodes, Disinterring of Remains, 1899.

[43] This order was issued on 29 March 1899. Rpt, Chaplain C. C. Pierce to the Adjutant General, 13 Feb 1901, sub: Report on Organization and Development of the Morgue, and the Identification of the Dead at Manila, P. I., p. 1. War Records Office, National Archives. Hereinafter cited as Pierce, Identification of the Dead, 1899–1901.

Digitized by Google

This relationship was scarcely in accord with current War Department policy which sternly forbids any expedient tending to produce division of authority within an active theater command. The one devised in the Philippine Department, however, had a double justification: care of the dead and return of remains to the United States were conducted simultaneously. It was productive, nevertheless, of a rivalry that would have defeated effective cooperation over any extended period of operations.

The Chief of the Burial Corps took occasion to write his animosity into the record, stating that "*Chaplain Pierce* will never be lost sight of in any work he may be in charge of," and dismissing the Chaplain's final report as "indecent in its claims . . . simply bosh." [44] On his part Chaplain Pierce took the precaution of submitting in an appendix to his report several letters which were obviously solicited from influential personages and which express high regard for the character and achievement of the chaplain. The one furnished by Brig. Gen. J. Franklin Bell, Provost Marshal General of Manila (subsequently Major General and Chief of Staff), would indicate that Chaplain Pierce may have had reasons other than self-advertisement for the solicitation of these testimonials. General Bell stated in part: "I also wish to express deep regret that, inspired by a religious antagonism or baser motives, certain persons in this city have seen fit to attempt to discredit a man so deserving of his countrymen." [45]

Despite heated controversies and bitter recriminations, the dual system worked. Moreover, no part of the over-all program was retarded by delimiting the activity of a specialized unit which could not be conveniently integrated into the theater establishment without compromising the accepted concept of the chain of command.

A just appraisal of the contributions of Mr. Rhodes and Chaplain Pierce to graves registration policies and procedures can scarcely be given in a summary statement. Briefly, Rhodes reaffirmed in his field work in Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines the principle already demonstrated during the concentration program of 1865–70 that the number of unknowns is directly proportional to the time span between original burial and registration of the graves. His advocacy of the use of bottles as a means of preserving an authentic record of identification and burial across the time span was written into the Army Regulations of 1913.[46] Chaplain Pierce demonstrated in his work at the Office of Identifications an equally valid principle. His advocacy of the identity disc as a required item of the field kit, and his insistence that responsibility for the collection and preservation of all mortuary records should be assigned to a central agency, outlined the essentials for putting identification on a scientific basis. These basic requirements were clearly stated in his final report to the Adjutant General.

> 1. In order to facilitate identification, I recommend the issue to all officers and men of a small tag of aluminum, bearing the name, rank, and regiment to be worn constantly around the neck. This method was followed largely by the organizations comprising the earlier Philippine expeditions, and it is better that all men shall wear these marks as a military duty than that one should fail to be identified. . . .
>
> 2. There should always, in my judgment, be a central office to which reports ought to be sent immediately by Surgeons, Chaplains, Company Commanders, Quartermasters and others who have any office to perform for the dead, in order that accounts should be compared, discrepancies corrected, and all data duly recorded, so that any person afterward charged with the duty might be able to secure the body and give all information desired by the pension office, by insurance companies, or by relatives in the settlement of their affairs. So wide is the variance in spelling of names and the location of graves, that the work of this central office in checking, tracing, and correcting, is shown by experience to be of vital consequence to the Government and other interested parties.[47]

The causes that impelled American expansion beyond the continental domain precluded a repetition of the national policy of rapid disarmament at the conclusion of a successful war. While no attempt was made to rival the contemporary military establishments of Europe, the fleet was greatly expanded and some attention was given to putting a relatively small permanent land force on a sound basis. Two great war ministers, Elihu Root and Henry L. Stimson, made substantial contributions to this latter effort between 1903, when adoption of the general staff principle and the creation of a general staff corps provided the elements of a new modern command system, and 1912, when the final step was taken in militarizing the Quartermaster service.

Section 3 of the Army Appropriations Act of 24 August 1912 authorized a consolidation of the Quartermaster, Subsistence, and Pay Departments into the Quartermaster Corps of the Army.[48] Effect was given to this act by War Department General Orders No. 40, 25 October 1912. By 30 June 1913, according to Quartermaster General James B. Aleshire, a total of

[44] Memo, D. H. Rhodes for Atherton, 19 Oct 1901. War Records Office, National Archives.

[45] Pierce, Identification of the Dead, 1899–1901.

[46] *U. S. Army Regulations, 1913, Corrected to 15 April 1917, with Supplement Containing Changes Nos. 56–77* (Washington: G. P. O., 1917), par. 491 (1913), p. 112.

[47] Pierce, Identification of the Dead, 1899–1901, p. 9.

[48] *Report of the Chief of the Quartermaster Corps to the Secretary of War, 1913* (Washington: G. P. O., 1914), p. 3.

Digitized by Google

1,594 civilian employees in the United States and 2,045 enlisted men of the line on detached duty with the Quartermaster Corps had been replaced by 2,816 enlisted men of the Quartermaster Corps.[49]

These figures have little meaning until they are referred to the effective strength of the Regular Army, which then numbered 82,305 and was so grouped in heterogeneous departmental commands as virtually to forbid an effective training program and prohibit any scheme of rapid mobilization. Despite these anomalies, the new command and organizational principles became powerful instruments five years later in creating a national army of 4,000,000 men, with a Quartermaster Corps which alone was twice the size of the regular establishment of 1912.[50] Militarization of the Quartermaster service beginning in 1912 was really achieved through the agency of specialized troop units which were authorized for the express purpose of assuming functions hitherto performed by civilian employees or detachments from the line. Thus, when the United States entered World War I the way was paved for the establishment of specialized theater units for care of the dead.

World War I

The maintenance of oversea garrisons during the interval of peace between the Spanish-American War and the outbreak of hostilities with Germany exerted a permanent effect on burial policies. The precedent created by Congress in appropriating funds for the return of remains interred in Cuba became an established practice during these intervening years. Recognition of this practice, together with the improvements made in graves registration techniques, was reflected in the Army Regulations of 1913.

> In order to secure, as far as possible, the decent interment of those who fall in battle and to establish beyond doubt their identity should it become desirable subsequently to disinter the remains for removal to a national or post cemetery, or for shipment home, it is the duty of commanding generals to set apart a spot near every battlefield, and to cause the remains of the killed to be interred therein, and when practicable, to cause to be placed in the coffin or grave a glass bottle, corked and sealed, containing a slip of paper on which shall be written the name of the decedent, giving the cause and date of death and burial, and, in the case of an officer or enlisted man, his rank, company, regiment, or corps, and bearing the signature of the surgeon or officer in charge of the interment. It is the duty of the commanding officer to cause to be made a sketch as accurate as the means at hand will permit of the burial places of those falling in battle.[51]

Three months after the declaration of war against Germany a change in paragraph 491 of the Regulations of 1913 specified aluminum tags as a required part of the field kit.[52] The final step in providing a service for care of the dead in the theaters of operations was taken when the Secretary of War directed, in War Department General Orders No. 104, 7 August 1917, that "there be organized for the period of the existing emergency . . . a Graves Registration Service, Quartermaster Corps." A strength of 2 commissioned officers (captain and second lieutenant), 16 noncommissioned officers, 1 mechanic, 1 cook, 4 wagoners, and 29 privates was authorized for the unit. Issuance of War Department General Orders No. 130, 4 October 1917, authorized three additional units. Paragraph 3 of Section II states: "The general recruiting service will make enlistments for the Graves Registration Service herein authorized to the extent that may be requested by the Quartermaster General." [53]

The organization of the service authorized by General Orders 104 and 130 of 1917, and recruited under direction of the Quartermaster General, was entrusted to Chaplain Charles C. Pierce, former Director of the Office of Identification at Manila. Recalled to active duty with the rank of major, QMC, and assigned to the Philadelphia Depot, Major Pierce trained the first Graves Registration Service unit for its overseas mission.[54] Confidential Order No. 80, War Department, 27 September 1917, established headquarters of the Graves Registration Service, QMC, at Tours in France and asigned Major Pierce to command the service, with the additional designation of "General Superintendent of American Cemeteries in France." Accompanied by Graves Registration Service Unit No. 301, Capt.

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

[50] The enlisted strength of the Quarermaster Corps increased from 8,246 on 30 June 1917 to 191,038 on 3 June 1918. *Annual Report of the Quartermaster General, U. S. Army to the Secretary of War*, 1918, (Washington: G. P. O., 1918), p. 24.

[51] *U. S. Army Regulations, 1913, corrected to April 15, 1917, with Supplement Containing Changes Nos. 56-77* (Washington: G. P. O., 1918), Article XLVIII, par. 491 (1913), p. 112.

[52] "491 (a) Two aluminum identification tags . . . will be worn . . . whenever the field kit is worn. . . . The identification tag worn around the neck . . . will be removed . . . and turned over to the person in charge of the burial, from which a record of the same, together with the cause and date of death, shall be made and reported to the commanding officer." *Ibid.*, Changes No. 58, 6 July 1917.

[53] *General Orders and Bulletins, War Department, 1917-1918* (Washington: G. P. O., 1918), no paging. Nineteen graves registration companies were eventually sent overseas.

[54] (1) "History of American Graves Registration Service, QMC, in Europe" (3 vols., typescript; an official history prepared by the Cemeterial Division, OQMG), I, 12. Hereinafter cited as "Official History, GRS." (2) J. Dell, "Historical Notes Prepared on Graves Registration Service," pp. 1-2. This typescript was transmitted 20 February 1926, by the Office of the Secretary of War to the OQMG for file. Hereinafter cited as Dell, "Historical Notes. GRS."

Digitized by Google

Charles P. Spence, commanding, Major Pierce arrived in France on 31 October 1917 and reported at Tours.[55]

The functions performed by Graves Registration Service Headquarters at Tours and the service units in the field were sixfold: (1) the deployment of units and groups along the entire line of battle, so that they might begin their work of identification of bodies and marking of graves immediately upon the beginning of hostilities in any given sector; (2) the location, acquisition, and maintenance of all semipermanent and permanent military cemeteries required for American use; (3) registry of burials; (4) furtherance of the work of identification during the concentration of remains from battlefield burials to permanent cemeteries; (5) correspondence with relatives and friends of deceased soldiers, together with photography and survey of cemeteries and graves; (6) liaison between the Government of the United States and foreign governments concerned with mortuary affairs in the theaters of military operations.[56]

The extent to which Graves Registration Service units achieved a revolutionary reduction in the time span between the identification and burial of bodies and the marking of graves is indicated by a letter of General Pershing, commending the work of an advance group under heavy fire.

> I have heard with great pleasure of the excellent work and fine conduct of the members of Headquarters Advance Group No. 1, Graves Registration Service, who are mentioned herein. . . . On April 20, [1918] Lieut. McCormick and his group arrived at Mandres and began their work under heavy shell fire and gas, and, although troops were in dugouts, these men immediately went to the cemetery and in order to preserve records and locations, repaired and erected new crosses as fast as the old ones were blown down. They also completed the extension to the cemetery, this work occupying a period of one and a half hours, during which time shells were falling continually and they were subjected to mustard gas. They gathered many bodies which had been first in the hands of the Germans, and were later retaken by American counter-attacks. Identification was especially difficult, all papers and tags having been removed, and most of the bodies being in a terrible condition and beyond recognition. The Lieutenant in command particularly mentions Sergeant Keating and Privates La Rue and Murphy, as having been responsible for the most gruesome part of the work of identification, examining every body most thoroughly, searching for scars and tattoo marks and where bodies were blown to pieces, these men were especially particular to make minute examination, regardless of the danger attendant upon their work.[57]

On 1 July 1919 the Commanding General, SOS, officially terminated by administrative action the work of recovering and concentrating remains prior to ultimate disposition. While the concentration was in fact far from complete, the decision to put this phase of the program on a so-called "maintenance basis" actually terminated the mission of the 19 Graves Registration companies in France. During August all records pertaining to the registration of American Expeditionary Forces deceased were returned to the United States for completion and the preparation of a final directory. At the same time, the office of the Chief of Graves Registration Service was established, first as a branch of the General Administrative Division, and then, after consolidation with the Cemeterial Branch, as an independent division of the Office of the Quartermaster General. Functioning thenceforth as a staff agency of the Quartermaster General, this division supervised operations of the American Graves Registration Service, QMC. in Europe.[58] By 30 May 1921 the return of 46,300 dead to the homeland, together with the burial of 31,595 in permanently established United States military cemeteries abroad, had been accomplished. Of the 79,129 fatalities in Europe approximately 3.5 percent were unknown.[59]

Two major trends in the historical development of American graves registration flow from the experience of World War I. First was the appearance of a theater graves registration service, with its operating units in close support to combat, and a headquarters staff charged with the preservation of mortuary records and maintenance of temporary burials and semipermanent military cemeteries. The assignment to a unified theater service of those functions which had been separately performed during the Philippine Insurrection by the Quartermaster Burial Corps and the Office of Identification, had the effect of eliminating an objectionable division of authority within the theater command. In reality, dual control was shifted to a higher level of authority: the theater commander became responsible for the conduct of all graves registration operations within the territorial limits of his

[55] Dell, "Historical Notes, GRS," p. 3. Pending arrival of Graves Registration Service units from the United States, General Pershing improvised a burial service. According to Dell, "the American Expeditionary Forces in France . . . found it necessary to effect a temporary organization . . . this arrangement was put into operation on August 29, 1917, and was known as the Burial Department. Its organization was similar to that adopted and operated by the British Army and which had been closely studied by Lt. Cols. Frederick G. Hilland and William E. Hoy, Q. M. C., the latter acting as chief of this Department. . . . On February 15, 1918, G. O. No. 30, G. H. Q., was issued directing the work of the Graves Registration Service and discontinuing the work of the Burial Department as a separate organization, and merging it into the Graves Registration Service." *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.

[56] *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12.

[57] Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[58] (1) *Report of the Quartermaster General U. S. Army to the Secretary of War, 1920* (Washington: G. P. O., 1920), pp. 57–58. (2) Official History, GRS, 1, 41 ff.

[59] (1) *Ibid.* (2) Ltr, Col John T. Harris, Chief, Mem Div, to Sec, ABMC, 17 Apr 37.

Digitized by Google

command, while the formulation of all general policies and technical standards looking to uniformity of practice devolved upon the Quartermaster General. When, however, hostilities came to an end and the theaters were inactivated, the Quartermaster General assumed full control over field operations and bore direct responsibility to the Secretary of War for final disposition of the remains of the dead.

A second important trend derived from the experience of World War I was a marked accentuation given those motives of sentiment and expedience that appeared with the primitive manifestations of total war during the struggle between the North and South. Conditions peculiar to World War I impelled all belligerents to devise effective methods for a prompt removal of the dead from the scene of combat. This war was waged in one of the most populous regions of the world; sanitary precautions alone imposed a primary rule of expediency. Moreover, the problem was complicated by the fact that armies of the period were relatively weak in offensive power as compared to their defensive capabilities. Sanguinary battles of attrition were fought over the same ground without preceptible change in the military situation. The very magnitude of this slaughter, however, was far-reaching in its effect on the minds of soldiers and civilians. With mass armies, comprising a higher proportion of the manhood population of warring nations than had ever before been called to arms, and committed to such violent and continuous combat, all belligerent governments came face to face with an identical problem of morale. The survival of wartime political regimes, whether autocratic or democratic, depended upon the will of their respective armies and peoples to endure the ordeal of blood sacrifice. All were equally concerned in removal of the dead from the sight of the living. Although human life had never been held so cheap, reaction to the frightful sacrifice came when each of the victor nations paid semi-divine honors to the remains of its Unknown Soldier.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II

Planning for the Activation of a Graves Registration Service in War

Planning Between Wars

THE experience of World War I gave emphasis to the historic problems of graves registration in a manner that could not be completely dismissed even after the Unknown Soldier had been entombed and a swing of national sentiment in the direction of pacifism virtually compelled the War and Navy Departments to pursue policies that sometimes disguised the very ends which the armed forces were intended to serve. While planning for the emergency of war was regarded in many intellectual circles as a base betrayal of the memory of those who had fallen in the recent conflict, the price paid for victory by a nation ill-prepared to fight was apparent to all who studied the record. A single item of this exorbitant bill was the cost of deferring preparation for proper care of the dead in war until the outbreak of hostilities.

It will be recalled that requirements for decent burial of the dead in registered graves had been written into Army Regulations since 1861.[1] Despite the experience of the Civil War and the Spanish-American War, to say nothing of operations of considerable magnitude in the Philippine archipelago, no recognition was given until 1917 to the historically established fact that a satisfactory attainment of the burial requirements first published in 1861 could be achieved only through the agency of a specialized service. But in 1917 the demands imposed by a war of unprecedented magnitude and waged in one of the most densely populated regions of the world impelled action without regard to historical precedent or considerations of sentiment. That is, the American forces in France faced the same practical problem that confronted the British, French and Germans—prompt disposal of the dead as a sanitary precaution and for reasons of morale.

Basic Regulations of 1924

While the return of remains to their American homeland became an ultimate objective, it was secondary during hostilities to those imperative requirements that were dictated by the grim realities of war. Reconciliation of wartime needs and the ultimate objective to be realized upon the cessation of hostilities presented a new problem, the significance of which was scarcely appreciated in 1861 and only partially understood in 1917. It was one, however, which could not be neglected in any comprehensive planning for war in the future. As a phase of military thinking which contributed to the National Defense Act of 1920, considerable study was given to the problem of graves registration, resulting in the publication on 1 February 1924, of the so-called "AR 30– series." [2]

Promulgation of the 1924 burial regulations marks a new period in the history of the American Graves Registration Service. In contrast to the Civil War regulations—Special Orders No. 75, 1861, and No. 33, 1862—which were largely experimental and, so far as their application to battlefield burials is concerned, singularly ineffective, the 1924 series represents a conscious effort to evaluate the lessons of the past in attempting to anticipate the conditions of war in the future. In general, the AR 30– series was based on five tested principles. These may be briefly summarized:

(1) Disposition of the remains of deceased military personnel in war and peace is an historic responsibility of The Quartermaster General.

(2) During peace, disposition of the remains of the military personnel, as well as the processing and preservation of all mortuary records, is a function of the Memorial Division of the Office of The Quarter-

[1] Above, ch. I.

[2] The AR 30– series falls into two classifications: one comprising AR 30–1805, –1810 and –1815, was originally adopted in 1924 and prescribed the organization and operation of a Graves Registration Service which was intended to function only in time of war; the other, AR 30–1820 to 30–1840 had to do, in general, with care of remains during war and peace in the continental United States and the operation of national cemeteries both in war and peace. Unless otherwise specified, reference to the AR 30– series of 1924 includes only the first classification, that is, AR 30–1805, –1810 and –1815.

Digitized by Google

master General. During a state of war the exercise of this function by the Memorial Division is necessarily restricted to the continental limits of the United States.

(3) During war, identification and burial of the dead, registration of graves, the administration of military cemeteries in active theaters of operations, and the original execution of mortuary records relative thereto, will be assigned to a graves registration service, the elements of which will operate in the field under orders of the theater commander through his chief quartermaster.

(4) During war the Memorial Division, in addition to its other functions, will operate a central clearing house for all mortuary records and complete identifications by relating fragmentary evidence with all assembled data, and correct inscriptions on grave markers to agree with official records.

(5) Within the limitations permitted by decentralization of command systems during war, as well as by those conditions in the various theaters that are imposed by climate, communications, terrain, and native population, The Quartermaster General will be assigned responsibility for the formulation of general policies and the exercise of technical direction (in an advisory capacity), with a view to establishing uniformity of procedures and consequent simplification of problems incidental to the eventual return of the dead or burial in permanent United States military cemeteries beyond the seas.

In general, the AR 30– series provided for the establishment of a Graves Registration Service in time of war and prescribed both methods of burial in active theaters of war and procedures for reporting such burials. AR 30–1805, like its predecessor, Special Order No. 75, 1861,[3] fixed certain supervisory responsibilities on The Quartermaster General for the proper conduct of military burials, stating specifically in Section I that "in time of war there will be organized by The Quartermaster General a Graves Registration Service for the purpose of supervising all mortuary matters pertaining to the personnel of the Army." It specified that "graves registration units organized in accordance with War Department tables of organization will constitute the principal agency through which the Graves Registration Service will function." Furthermore, to the service so organized were assigned seven specific functions: (1) acquisitions of lands for cemeterial purposes; (2) location and control of such cemeteries and marking of graves therein; (3) burial of the dead in accordance with existing regulations; (4) collection and disposal of personal effects of the dead; (5) registration of graves within established cemeteries and in isolated sites; (6) preparation of sketches showing references to indestructible landmarks and containing sufficient detail to establish permanently the location of cemeteries and graves; (7) general supervision and control of all personnel assigned to the Graves Registration Service. Under Section II, which prescribed procedures by which the seven assigned functions might be accomplished, appeared the statement that "Graves Registration Units will receive their technical instruction from, and render the reports prescribed by regulations, through military channels, to The Quartermaster General."

Detailed procedures and responsibilities as to burials on the battlefield were laid down in AR 30–1810. Paragraph I stated those responsibilities which were to be executed under direction of the commanding general by Quartermaster officers in charge of graves registration activities of each army or its component elements in the selection of suitable sites for battlefield cemeteries and in laying out such cemeteries in accordance with the standard plan furnished by The Quartermaster General.[4] Additional paragraphs established requirements for searching battlefields and prescribed procedures for the following activities: (1) registration of unmarked graves and disposition of unburied remains; (2) burial of enemy dead and outlaws; (3) supervision of burials, with a view to meeting requirements of a uniform system of record keeping; (4) observance of measures essential to proper sanitation and preservation of morale in the field and at home; (5) care of isolated interments; (6) disposition of identification tags of the dead; (7) fulfillment of responsibility by graves registration officers for the proper identification of all graves within their assigned areas, and for the required marking of graves with headboards or other authorized markers; (8) enforcement of the War Department prohibition against erection of monuments in temporary military cemeteries.

Requirements for the execution, distribution, and other processing of mortuary reports, the various responsibilities of graves registration and other attached personnel relating thereto, as well as the substance of all such reports, were stated in AR 30–1815. No reference, however, was made to an approved cemetery lay-out or to any standard form or forms for reports of

[3] See above, ch. I.

[4] QM Standard Plan No. 001–GR, approved 18 Dec 41, details the layout of a typical Graves Registration Service temporary cemetery. See form entitled "Office of The Quartermaster General—Memorial Division, Typical Grave Layout for GRS Temporary Layout, 12–18–41." Graves Registration Form No. 1, "Report of Burial," was approved on the same date.

Digitized by Google

burial, disinterment, reinterment, or for registration of various types of graves.

Three significant aspects of the problem were disclosed in the 1924 series. In the first place, The Quartermaster General became responsible in time of war for the organization of a Graves Registration Service, the elements of which might exist only on paper. Since these units could be activated only by superior War Department authority, the stated responsibility was restricted, in large measure, to an advisory role. Secondly, while the Graves Registration Service would function under technical direction of The Quartermaster General, the units which might be assigned to each army or attached to its component elements would operate in the field under orders of the commanding general. Third, the various Army Regulations grouped under the titles "Graves Registration Service" (30–1805), "Burials on the Battlefield" (30–1810), and "Reports of Burials" (30–1815) established a basis for detailed planning. In other words, after a lapse of 63 years, final recognition was given in 1924 to the proposition that graves registration is a technical function and that developments looking to improved performance in the execution of this function must be included with, and closely related to, the whole process of planning for the employment of all arms and technical services in war.

Organization of QM GR Company

The first practical development stemming from the AR 30– series was a fairly continuous program of staff studies on the type of graves registration unit best adapted to field service conditions. While the various tables of organization issued between 1924 and 1941 were tentative and designed for war purposes only, the habit of giving continuous attention to organizational requirements was one of vital importance. The growing tendency toward mechanization in this period, as influenced by the experience of Japanese arms in Manchuria and China, the Italian conquest of Abyssinia, and that remarkable series of tactical experiments conducted by the Fascist partners in Spain, was reflected in American military organization by a revolutionary shift from the square to the triangular division. Corresponding changes were effected in the organization and equipment of the various supply and technical service units, including graves registration.

Basically, mechanization resulted in an increased depth of deployment on any given front, along with a consequent emphasis on greater fluidity and rapidity of movement within the zone of deployment. These new conditions required more flexibility in command and staff procedures than had applied during 1917–18 in the relatively shallow fronts of deployment and corresponding sluggishness of movement. For tactical purposes the realization of these new demands was sought by a closer integration of combat elements than had heretofore been attained by combined action of the separate arms under the old divisional organization. With considerable reduction in size and abolition of the historic infantry brigade as a divisional element, the new triangular division was comprised of three regimental combat teams, each including a balanced combination of rifle, machine gun, and cannon companies, together with a mechanized reconnaissance unit and other auxiliary elements.

Similar trends are seen in the successive Graves Registration Service tables of organization during this transitional period. The Graves Registration Battalion of 1933–39 (T/O 694), which consisted of 4 two-platoon companies, a headquarters company, and a headquarters section, with an aggregate strength of 494 officers and men, embodied the organizational theories that had been associated with a field army composed of square divisions. Subsequent trends reflected the tendency toward decentralization and integration of function at lower-echelon levels. The battalion organization was dropped; the Graves Registration Service of a field army was, according to the new concept, determined on the basis of a four-platoon company for each army corps, one platoon being attached to corps troops, the others to the three divisions normally constituting an army corps.[5] The platoon was now regarded as the basic work unit and consisted of three sections or "teams," each of which included technical personnel capable of performing all the fundamental processes entering into identification, supervision of burials, registration of graves, and collection of personal effects.

The problems involved in planning for integration of function at lower-echelon levels were well illustrated by an interchange of views between The Surgeon General and The Quartermaster General during 1939 with reference to the incorporation of a Medical Corps detachment in the Graves Registration Company organization under study at that time. In forwarding to The Surgeon General a copy of T/O 10–167, which was proposed as a revision of T/O 694–2 (the two-platoon Graves Registration Company) and which embodied the four-platoon principle of organization, The Quartermaster General requested that "information be fur-

[5] (1) TM 10–630, *Graves Registration*, 23 Sep 41, par. 24, pp. 23–24. (2) T/O & E 10–297, 1 Nov 40.

Digitized by Google

nished this office as to the attached Medical Personnel to perform sanitary or other medical supervisory duties with the company, to include assisting in identifications, dental charts and preparation for burial." [6] In reply The Surgeon General recommended that "one staff sergeant and two sergeants, Medical Department, should be attached or assigned to each platoon of the proposed Graves Registration Company." [7] The Surgeon General justified his recommendation by reasoning which was entirely consistent with the logic of decentralization along upper echelons and closer integration at lower levels.

> In addition to the name, the Medical Department is especially interested in ascertaining the organization to which the dead belonged and the type and character of the fatal wound. In addition, it is believed that in some cases finger printing will be necessary to establish identity. For the accurate description of the type of casualty, specially trained noncommissioned officers will be required. Therefore no privates are recommended for this assignment. Three noncommissioned officers will afford one for each of the three teams into which it is understood each of the platoons is to be divided.[8]

The attachment of one staff sergeant and two sergeants, Medical Department, to each platoon of the proposed four-platoon Graves Registration Company was unacceptable to The Quartermaster General. No reasons were offered for such a position other than the terse statement that "this office does not concur in attaching 4 staff sergeants and 8 sergeants, Medical Corps, to one (1) Company-Graves Registration." [9]

The twelve Medical Department noncommissioned officers advocated by The Surgeon General appear to have been determined by the consideration that work performed by each one of the twelve "teams" or sections into which the four-platoon company was subdivided would necessarily include functions of vital importance to the Medical Department and, therefore, would demand the presence of a specially trained noncommissioned officer of the Medical Corps. Whatever the objections of The Quartermaster General may have been, it would seem that an organization table which carried a greater number of Medical Corps staff sergeants and sergeants than Quartermaster noncommissioned officers of equivalent ratings would be unsatisfactory, to say the least. Moreover, the proposal for attachment of a Medical Corps sergeant to the section, the chief of which held the rank of corporal, QMC, must have been regarded by The Quartermaster General as an encroachment upon a primary function of the Graves Registration Service. Certainly the emphasis which The Surgeon General put upon certain aspects of body identification as a technical function to be performed by Medical Department specialists was not calculated to allay such apprehension.

Whatever the precise nature of The Quartermaster General's objections, the views of The Surgeon General prevailed. A revised table, T/O 10–297, was approved and published under the date 1 January 1940. This in turn was revised in November of the same year. Examination of this table discloses an officer personnel of 5—1 captain, 2 first lieutenants, and 2 second lieutenants, all of whom were required to be civil engineers—and a total noncommissioned personnel, QMC, of 22, including 1 first sergeant, 1 technical sergeant, 6 staff sergeants, and 1 sergeant, with a subtotal of 9, together with 13 corporals. The aggregate strength was 130. Attached Medical personnel consisted of 4 staff sergeants and 8 sergeants, totaling 12. The first sergeant, of course, was the executive to the company commander. The technical sergeant, QMC, served as a topographical draftsman at company headquarters; 4 of the 6 staff sergeants, QMC, were assigned as platoon leaders, another as chief clerk at company headquarters, the remaining one as company supply sergeant. The single sergeant, QMC, acted as mess executive. One of the 13 corporals was assigned to company headquarters in the capacity of clerk; the remaining 12 served as section leaders. It should be noted that there were 29 specialists' ratings allotted the 90 privates, including 12 record clerks, 5th class, and 4 topographical draftsmen, 4th class. One record clerk was assigned to each section; one draftsman to each platoon. The enlisted cadre consisted of 9 noncommissioned officers and 2 privates.

In general, body identification and initial record-keeping were accomplished by combined Quartermaster and Medical Corps personnel within the section. The record-keeping and engineering phases relative to burial and cemetery administration were accomplished by the platoon. Company headquarters exercised general supervision over the operations of the four platoons. This company, it should be noted, was not responsible for the collection of the battlefield dead. Functions and operative capacity of the Quartermaster Company, Graves Registration, are briefly stated in column 9, T/O 10–297, 1 November 1940:

> Functions: Supervision of identification and burial of dead; collection and disposal of personal effects; location and registration of battlefield graves and cemeteries.
>
> Operating capacity: 1 platoon per combat division, 1 company per corps of 3 divisions.

[6] Ltr, Lt Col Roland Walsh, OQMG, to SG, 14 Nov 39.
[7] Nov 39. 1st ind to *ibid.*
[8] *Ibid.*
[9] *Ibid.*, 2d ind, 27 Nov 39.

Digitized by Google

Company does not perform embalming. Additional labor for grave digging furnished by service units.

Specifying an aggregate of 5 officers and 125 enlisted men and a motor transport of 11 vehicles, including 5 motorcycles with side cars, four ½-ton pickup trucks, one 1½-ton cargo truck, and one 1-ton cargo trailer, this table remained the paper organization for the Quartermaster Company, Graves Registration, until the outbreak of hostilities.[10] As described by the War Plans Branch, Planning and Control Division, OQMG, to the Memorial Division in a communication of 1 July 1941, the new Graves Registration Company consisted of four platoons of three sections each, the section "being so organized that it may operate independently." It was also stated that the Graves Registration Company was a theater of operations unit and that none was active at that time. "However, for planning purposes, four companies have been included in the War Department Augmentation Mobilization Plan, 1942. Their activation, of course, will depend upon circumstances." [11]

The circumstances contemplated during 1941 for future augmentation programs were entirely conjectural, depending largely upon whatever decision might be taken by hostile powers who then held the initiative both in the diplomatic and in the military spheres of action and, therefore, enjoyed unrestricted liberty of action in selecting the time and place for attack. As matters eventuated, instead of the four graves registration companies originally contemplated, thirteen were activated between 28 March and 2 December 1942.[12] But the conditions under which this accelerated program was carried out differed radically from the one foreseen in July 1941. Then the four proposed units were, as stated, intended "for planning purposes only." With adequate unit training these four companies would have served as a nucleus for expansion, supplying cadres or cells in a systematic multiplication of formations. Under the accelerated program of war, however, there was no unit training, and, consequently, there were no adequately trained cadres for purposes of augmentation. Not until the early part of 1943, over a year after the outbreak of war, were facilities available to provide a comprehensive course of unit training under provisions of Mobilization Training Program 10–3, 1943, for the five graves registration companies activated between 25 April and 15 August of that year.[13] The fourteen companies activated prior to April 1943 were, for the most part, synthetic creations, meeting War Department prescriptions as to the proportion of raw ingredients but lacking the one element that was indispensable in producing a satisfactory blend.

War Department tables of organization and equipment, it goes without saying, are essential in any scheme of creating a stated number of military units intended to serve a specified purpose. Such tables, however, provide no more than a blueprint or, to preserve the original figure, a prescription of ingredients. Mere existence of a prescription does not solve the problem of procuring the constituent elements and fusing them in such manner that the final result will serve a specified purpose. The complete process requires not only a table of organization but precise and authoritative definition of the specified purpose of the unit, together with a carefully devised system of instruction whereby the purpose so defined may be attained. In other words, a well-planned program looking to the activation of four or more graves registration companies presupposed the formulation of an approved tactical doctrine and some concept of the required training system. These essential steps were taken in so hesitant and belated a manner during the critical years preceding hostilities that neither doctrine, method of training, nor a nucleus of expansion for the Graves Registration Service was ready for the emergency of war.

Policy Fluctuations, 1939–1941

By September 1939, when Germany marched against Poland and the President of the United States proclaimed a state of limited emergency, the time had arrived for framing an authoritative analysis of doctrine in the form of a technical manual and a guide to training. The imminence of war made such a program mandatory. Furthermore, there was evidence of a growing conviction among War Department officials that the extraordinary responsibilities assigned to The

[10] This company, however, was never activated. T/O 10–297, 1 Nov 40, was revised on 21 January 1942.

[11] Memo, War Plans Br, P & C Div, OQMG, for Mem Div, 31 Jul 41.

[12] "List of all Quartermaster Graves Registration Service Units in Army of United States." Compiled by Organization & Directory Section, Operations Branch, AGO, 23 Mar 46. This list includes all Graves Registration units activated between 25 August 1942 and 29 December 1945.

[13] (1) Unit Training of QM Graves Registration companies under provisions of MTD 10–3, 1943 was initiated on 26 April when the 604th QM Graves Registration Company was activated at Vancouver Barracks Unit Training Center. Rpt, Mil Trng Div, OQMG, n. d., sub: The Training of Units, Part 1, 1 Jul 39 to 1 Dec 44, Vancouver Section, p. 18. The various sections of this study are separately paged. (2) Three more companies, the 605th, 606th and 607th, were activated at Vancouver between 26 April and 15 July 1943. On 15 September the 606th and 607th were transferred to Fort Warren Unit Training Center, the 604th and 605th remaining at Vancouver. *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20. The 608th Company was activated at Camp Ellis ASF Unit Training Center on 15 August and completed its training at that center by the end of the year. *Ibid.*, Ellis Section, pp. 30, 33. On 27 November four companies, the 609th, 610th, 611th and 612th, were activated at Warren and began unit training. *Ibid.*, Warren Section, p. 11. While the nine companies activated between 26 April and 27 November received unit training during 1943 at three different centers, only five completed the course prescribed in MTP 10–3, 1943.

Digitized by Google

Quartermaster General in the AR 30– series of 1 February 1924 were impracticable and would prove detrimental to the morale of combat troops in active operations.

Col. John T. Harris, director of the Memorial Division, shared this belief. Replying on 7 March 1939 to a request from War Plans and Training Branch, OQMG, in reference to a proposed revision of AR 30–1805 and –1810, Colonel Harris maintained that the draft should be confined to a request for revocation of the two regulations on grounds that burial of the dead in war imposed responsibilities on the Quartermaster Corps which were inconsistent and impracticable and which should be performed by combat troops in the interests of preserving their morale. On this basis, any subject matter relative to these duties could, he insisted, "more readily be covered in Training Regulations—or the New Field Service Regulations." [14] Then, questioning the wisdom of establishing any temporary military cemeteries during the conduct of active operations, and emphatic on the point that any variation from such a policy should be restricted to rear areas, Colonel Harris stated: "It seems to me that the practical way is to require the troops to dispose of their own dead and then . . . when peace comes, plans and policies can be established and carried out by civilian organizations."

By this reasoning, it appeared to be "not only impracticable but foolish to organize units to perform any duties in connection with the dead during active operations." For purposes of preserving all records relating to burial and grave locations, he thought that a small clerical force might be assigned to the division quartermaster's office. In view, however, of the fact that the division is a mobile unit and that imposition of this burden on the quartermaster of a division would result in doubtful efficiency, he concluded: "It would be better that reports go to some central office in the Zone of the Interior." [15]

It should be noted in passing that Colonel Harris virtually proposed a central office of mortuary records as a substitute for the graves registration service contemplated by the regulations under discussion. Whatever the deficiencies of the proposed substitution, it was by no means apparent to those who defended the traditional system that the central records office would constitute a prime essential to the effective operation of this system in a war which necessitated the deployment of American troops in several operational theaters beyond the seas.

[14] Ltr, Col John T. Harris to War Plans and Trng Br, Adm Div, OQMG, 7 Mar 39.
[15] *Ibid.*

Efforts to abrogate the historic policy of American graves registration, as written into the burial regulations of 1924, enjoyed little success; proposals for the revocation of AR 30–1805 and –1810 were abandoned. At the same time, a reflection of the attitude that had questioned a logical relationship between the Quartermaster Corps and graves registration appeared in a revision of the Staff Officers Field Manual made during 1940 by a committee of officers convened at the Command and Staff School for that purpose. While the old manual of 26 September 1932 had prescribed burials as a General Staff function of G–4, Supply, paragraph C 18, section 14, of Field Manual 101–5, Staff Officers Field Manual, as approved 19 August 1940, assigned the Graves Registration Service, including burials, as a function of G–1, Personnel.[16] Reassignment of the function, however, appears to have been accomplished in so haphazard a manner that neither G–1, G–4, nor the board of officers who amended the manual was able to give a satisfactory explanation of the proceeding. In fact, not until July of the following year, when the Chief of Chaplains (Chaplain Allen) inquired into the matter, and after a technical Manual (TM 10–630) for Graves Registration Companies had been approved, does it appear that the two General Staff sections concerned were fully aware that any such reassignment had been effected.[17]

Chaplain Allen's request for verification of the change of assignment was prompted by a desire to instruct his chaplains in connection with their participation in battlefield burials. Inability on the part of G–1 to furnish an adequate interpretation of the reassignment led to a searching investigation of War Department archives. Nothing was found in the files of the AGO, G–1, G–3, or G–4 bearing on the problem. Personal inquiries directed to General Staff officers involved in the business afforded little additional information.[18] An instructor of the Command and General Staff School and a former member of the committee on revision of FM 101–5 thought that the change was made by the War Department when it submitted the original draft of the manual to the committee sitting at Fort Leavenworth. This explanation, however, could not be verified by documentary proof; another search of War Department records failed to produce the original draft, while no supporting evidence was found in the files of

[16] Ltr, Lt Col I. Spalding, GSC, Chief, Misc Br, G–1, to Lt Col Thompson, Morale Section, G–1, 14 Jul 41. AGF files.
[17] Ltr, Maj Frank H. Collins to Col Leonard Boyd, 25 Jul 41. AGF files.
[18] Ltr, Lt Col L. R. Boyd, GSC, ACofS, G–3, to Maj Frank H. Collins, G–1, WDCS, 4 Aug 41. AGF files.

Digitized by Google

the Command and Staff School.[19] Col. Leonard Boyd, chairman of the committee, then recalled that it was the consensus of the committee, as well as the opinion of Col. H. L. McBride, chief of the G–4 section, that "Graves Registration was essentially a service dealing with personnel (although deceased)." It followed, according to this reasoning, that burial was so connected with graves registration "that it too should be a G–1 function." Finally, according to Colonel McBride, the committee held that the assignment to G–1 of these two important combat functions "would give a more equitable distribution of General Staff duties in the division and corps." [20]

Although no satisfactory explanation was revealed by inquiry into the circumstances and reasons that had impelled the replacement of G–4 by G–1 as the General Staff division responsible for planning and supervision of graves registration and battlefield burials, a staff study of this development, as reported on 9 August 1941, offered the following recommendations:

a. No change back to G–4 considered necessary. Function has already been determined and assigned, FM 101–5.

Personnel Division must have concurred in change when made although no comment or nonconcurrence is made in memo from G–1 to G–3 submitting comments and suggestions, subject: "Revision of S. O. F. M." dated April 16, 1940.

In divisions having no provision for G–1 section, the supervision of G–1 activities will be assigned to G–4 section, which reverts the function back to original assignment.

Graves Registration Service is organized only "in time of war" by Quartermaster General, AR 30–1805, which makes any immediate action unnecessary.

b. No change necessary in Army Regulations 30–1805, –1810, –1815, –1820, –1825, –1830. Prescribes regulation operations only for Quartermaster General. No mention made of General Staff sections for planning or supervision.

SOFM 101–5 prescribes current status as staff function for field service.

TM 10–630, Graves Registration, QMC, prescribes field operations only. No reference to General Staff for planning and supervision.

c. Separate memo to Chief of Chaplains (Chaplain Allen) attached to notify result of this study.[21]

Given the premise as stated, these recommendations presented a flawless piece of logic. Since no action was required in the immediate future, an inexplicable decision taken by the General Staff in the past should not be questioned. Yet these logical processes were hardly conducive to hopes that, in the event of war, an effective Graves Registration Service would spring full born from a War Department directive.

The achievement of creating by December 1941 four mobile field armies, superbly equipped and better trained than any American force ever previously mustered for battle, was such a complex undertaking that it would be difficult to place responsibility for oversight or negligence in taking appropriate measures at the right time to ensure the organization of an efficient Graves Registration Service. Technically, of course, this responsibility rested with The Quartermaster General. Yet his power to meet the obligation was hampered by the provision that the service in question would be organized only "in time of war." [22] Such, indeed, was the view of G–1 when it recommended inaction during August 1941. There was no impediment, however, to a program of formulating a graves registration doctrine. Yet the record clearly reveals that this possibility was not exploited with the vigor demanded by the emergency, as proclaimed by President Roosevelt.

Preparation of Technical Manual

During that very period when the question of General Staff responsibility with reference to graves registration planning and supervision stood in abeyance, studies looking to the production of a technical manual for the Graves Registration Service were projected under direction of The Quartermaster General. The problem was assigned to the Reserve Officers and Training Branch of the Military Personnel Division, OQMG.

On 10 May 1940 a tentative draft of the Technical Manual 10–630, "Graves Registration," was submitted to the Memorial Division, the organization most concerned in this undertaking.[23] Efforts extending to March of the following year were largely directed toward a revision which would bring into clearer contrast the emergency nature of graves registration operations in the battle zone and those more permanent aspects of the activity, such as the maintenance of large military cemeteries in rear areas, which, from the standpoint of administrative requirements, were not dissimilar to other theater installations. After securing certain revisions which were regarded as immaterial to the basic points at issue, the Memorial Division unofficially advised the Training Branch that the manual was unsatisfactory and that it washed its hands of any further responsibility in the matter.[24] The Quartermaster General, nevertheless, submitted the draft to

[19] Memo signed "F. H. C." [Collins] for Colonel Spalding, 9 Aug 41. AGF files.

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] See above, p. 16.

[23] Memo, Lt Col H. M. Andrews, Reserve Officers and Training Br, to Mem Div, 10 May 40.

[24] Interv with Miss Elsie Stommel, Policy Advisor to Chief, Mem Br, (1941–44), 20 Jul 46.

Digitized by Google

The Adjutant General, with a recommendation that the manual be published in its existing form.[25]

Review by the War Department General Staff was now required for final approval on the part of the Secretary of War. Three months were consumed in reconciling the different positions taken by the Assistant Chiefs of Staff, G–1 and G–3, and The Quartermaster General. Differences centered on five points: (1) the proposal to find a more suitable designation for the Graves Registration Service; (2) the type of material best suited for the temporary grave markers specified in TM 10–630; (3) stamping a symbol for the religious faith of the wearer on identification tags at time of issue; (4) the regulation size of temporary graves; (5) procedures as to burial of enemy dead.[26]

The Assistant Chief of Staff, G–1, insisted that "the designation 'Mortuary Service' was simpler and . . . more in accord with modern practice," while The Quartermaster General was equally insistent on retaining the old name "in the interest of morale." [27] The Assistant Chief of Staff, G–3, felt that no change should be made since "it would serve no useful purpose, and since a great many changes in military texts and regulations are involved." [28] Where G–1 contended that "metal markers would better serve the purpose since they are easier to carry and insert in the ground," both The Quartermaster General and G–3 were in agreement that "wooden markers should be used for reasons that they will be easier to procure." [29] The Assistant Chief of Staff, G–1, and The Quartermaster General, however, reached an accord in the matter of identification tags, agreeing that "they should be marked when issued by letters C, H, P, indicating Catholic, Hebrew or Protestant, this to facilitate temporary and permanent burial and insure the proper type of permanent grave marker." [30]

The Quartermaster General was supported in these representations by the Memorial Division. While there seems little reason to dispute the logic of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G–1, in his contention that the term "mortuary service" gave a more accurate description of the varied functions actually performed, and while the existing designation indicated but one of many functions,[31] the very suggestion to alter the name written by President Wilson into the Special Order that created the Graves Registration Service of World War I aroused ire within the office claiming lineal descent from the Sixth Division of Civil War days. Always sensitive to public opinion and acutely aware of the attitude of the line of the Army regarding the manner in which its historic responsibility was discharged, the Memorial Division replied as follows: "It is the opinion of this office that to the public mind, the word 'grave' is far less repugnant—if not gruesome than the word 'mortuary' and that if the designation 'Graves Registration Service' is changed to 'Mortuary Service' the personnel comprising same would be less favorably referred in soldier parlance, and, for this reason, this office does not concur in the recommendation for the change of designation." [32]

Consideration of the other changes proposed by the General Staff was more objective. The Memorial Division readily concurred in the suggestion that identification tags should indicate the bearer's religious faith when he so desired. The metal grave marker, however, was disapproved on the ground that "such markers having more possible value than wood, they would be more susceptible to unauthorized removal than wooden markers." [33] Objection was also made to specifying the size of a temporary battlefield grave, as circumstances might not allow the practice of conforming to a prescribed earth coverage.[34]

The matter of procedure in the burial of enemy dead appears to have been dropped by the General Staff, despite an untenable position occupied by those immediately responsible for accuracy of statement in the manual. Although AR 30–1810 treats the subject in somewhat summary fashion, the Geneva Convention of 1929, governing treatment of prisoners of war, required some correction of the procedures specified in 1924. Paragraph 12, section II, TM 10–630, attempted to bring requirements in this regard up-to-date by stating

[25] Ltr, Lt. Col. Andrews to TAG, 22 Mar 41.

[26] Memo, Brig Gen Wade H. Haislip, ACofS, G–1, for ACofS, G–3, 7 May 41.

[27] Memo, Brig Gen Harry L. Twaddle, ACofS, G–3, to CofS, 7 May 41. General Haislip offered the following argument: "It is believed 'Mortuary Service' has a better effect on morale of both military personnel and civilians. The word 'Graves' is both gruesome and unpleasant to most humans both under peace or war conditions. Most civilians and new citizen soldiers are accustomed to referring to undertaker and funeral parlors as 'mortician' and 'mortuary.' Recommend name shorter and more simplified for records and verbal reference, such as 'mortuary service,' 'mortuary officers,' 'mortuary troops.' "

[28] Twaddle to CofS, 7 May 41.

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] (1) *Ibid.* (2) Memo, Haislip, to ACofS, G–3, 7 May 41. (3) Same to Chief of Chaplains, 16 Apr 41.

[31] General Haislip enumerated in his memorandum of 7 May 41, ten distinct functions performed by the Graves Registration Service: (1) acquisition of land for use as burial places; (2) control of such cemeteries and proper marking and recording of graves until permanent burial is accomplished; (3) proper burial of dead in accordance with existing regulations; (4) collection and disposition of personal effects of the dead; (5) registration of all graves for reinterment; (6) preparation of sketches of location of graves and cemeteries; (7) disinterment and reinterment of remains, including embalming; (8) submission of reports and maintenance of records; (9) obtaining and maintaining permanent cemeteries for permanent burial; (10) supervision and control of all personnel assigned to service.

[32] Ltr, Lt Col Harry M. Andrews to ACof S, G–3, 5 Jun 41.

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

that "there will be established in the central records office, Adjutant General's Department, the Prisoner of War Information Bureau prescribed by the Hague Convention . . . Information concerning enemy dead must be handled through the Prisoner of War Information Bureau." [35] Whatever may have been the original difference of opinion concerning procedures in reference to the disposal of enemy dead, it is apparent that both the error of fact in referring to the Hague Convention instead of the Geneva Convention and the erroneous statement that the Prisoner of War Bureau was, or would be, operated by The Adjutant General when, as a matter of fact, it came under The Provost Marshal General, went undetected by a score of concurring offices and authorities, including The Quartermaster General, The Adjutant General, and two Assistant Chiefs of Staff.[36] Unfortunately no one seems to have been aware that The Provost Marshal General might have been interested in reading the manuscript. It is even more unfortunate that, during the three months' discussion of minutiae and trivia, such as change of the name and the exact depth of graves dug under fire, none of the high reviewing authorities took cognizance of the fundamental objection raised by the Memorial Division, namely, confusion in the treatment of temporary and permanent aspects of graves registration.[37]

On 19 June 1941, the draft of TM 10–630, as revised by the General Staff and approved by the Secretary of War, went to the Publications Branch of The Adjutant General's Office. Proof sheets were sent to The Quartermaster General for examination and the opportunity of making any last-minute changes deemed necessary.[38] This was accomplished by the Memorial Division. Corrected sheets were returned to The Adjutant General and the publication was issued from the press under the date of 23 September 1941, some two years after the project had originally been undertaken and less than three months before the outbreak of hostilities in the Pacific.[39]

Like many technical manuals written in anticipation of assumed conditions that could only be revealed in actuality by war at a later date, TM 10–630 left much to be desired. More than this, it was prepared for a service that existed only on paper. The format and arrangement of subject matter, rather than the content itself, presented obvious deficiencies when viewed in the light of practical utility under service conditions. It was more a textbook, written with a historical perspective, and less a handy, on-the-job pocket reference. Section VIII, "Reports and Records," for example, offered a convincing discussion of the various types of mortuary records. Even the lay reader gains an impression that this phase of the whole activity is one of vital importance. The text, however, gives no form reproduction of any of the reports under discussion and fails to indicate the conditions under which these reports will ordinarily be made or the sequence in which they would normally appear in connection with the operations of a graves registration company, or any of its detached elements. It is true that the treatment begins with WD AGO Form No. 52, "Report of Death"—the only one, incidentally, which is cited by its official title.[40] Confusion is promptly introduced by discussion of the exceptional circumstances requiring a fourth copy of this form and its proper distribution.

Confusion is thereafter confounded by a rapid summary in paragraphs 43–46 of miscellaneous paper work, including daily work reports, preparation of cemetery inspection sheets, reports on confirmation of burial, final inspection reports, and surveys for the closing of cemeteries. Paragraph 47 deals with the handling of original burial reports. Instructions for the accomplishment of this particular report, however, are given in the section reserved for a discussion of the related duties of chaplains and constitute a part of the substance of paragraph 21, which has the subject heading: "Observance of rules of religious faiths and racial practices." [41] In view of the fact that accuracy in the whole process of identification and registration is dependent upon the degree of intelligence applied in preparing the original report of burial, an arrangement of materials that excludes treatment of this basic document from the discussion of other mortuary records offers grounds for serious criticism. Indeed, the section on "Reports and Records," when considered from the view point of on-the-job requirements, can scarcely

[35] TM 10–630, Graves Registration, 23 Sep 41, p. 7. Hereinafter cited as TM 10–630.

[36] Ltr, Lt Col Howard Breese, Ch, POW Info Bur, to Mem Div, 10 Sep 42. "The Prisoner of War Information Bureau established in conformity with the provisions of the Geneva Convention of 1929 governing treatment of prisoners of war is operated by the Provost Marshal General."

[37] See above, p. 21. See also ltr, Col Harbold, Ch, Mem Br. to Dir, Svc Instls Div, 30 Nov 43, which includes a report on accomplishments of the branch to date. Colonel Harbold states, in part: "Revised TM–630 'Graves Registration,' clarifying temporary and permanent procedures therein."

[38] TAG to TQMG, 12 Sep 41: "It is deemed [sic] that the attached proof of TM 10–630 be examined and any changes deemed necessary submitted before final publication. Typographical errors may be ignored as the proof is read in this office."

[39] Ross W. Mayer to TAG, 16 Sep 41, 1st ind to *ibid.*

[40] TM 10–630, p. 26.

[41] *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14.

964114—52——3

Digitized by Google

avoid characterization as a hodgepodge of misplaced information.[42]

Similar objections may, with varying degree of justification, be made in reference to other sections of the manual. Note has already been made of the fundamental objection that no clear distinction is drawn between temporary aspects of graves registration activities requiring extraordinary measures to meet unforeseen crises and those of a more permanent nature concerning which standard procedures might be laid down.[43] In view of the unsatisfactory manner in which the disposition of personal effects of the dead had been performed during World War I, it also seems inexplicable that only eleven lines in the text of the manual should have been devoted to this activity. It seems even more incomprehensible that the following instructions should have been permitted to stand: "The effects of each deceased individual are wrapped in the handkerchief or placed in a bag with the name of the deceased and all supplemental information placed therein and sent to the Graves Registration Officer who will comply with the one hundred and twelfth article of war or such other regulations as are in effect at the time."[44] The writer, of course, cannot be censured for a situation he was powerless to alter; if regulations had not been drawn at or before the time of writing to simplify procedures specified in the 112th Article of War, or if no provision had been made for the issue of equipment that would obviate the use of handkerchiefs for wrapping effects of the dead, he could not remedy such defects in the preparation of his text. These eleven lines are meaningful in what they do not prescribe: study of procedures in this respect was neglected by responsible authority until the actual delivery to relatives of the personal effects of soldiers killed in action would no longer permit procrastination.[45]

Indeed, any reasonable criticism of TM 10–630, 23 September 1941, is bound to consider the date of publication. The date itself marks one of the most serious deficiencies in the lag of preparing a graves registration service for the eventuality of war. While the Augmentation Mobilization Plan for 1942, it will be recalled, included a number of graves registration companies by the end of that year, and while the Quartermaster Mobilization Training Program applicable during the period 1 October 1940—2 September 1942, was susceptible of improved training methods for the technical instruction of graves registration units, there were no companies to train prior to the outbreak of war and, except during the brief interval between 23 September and 8 December 1941, no technical manual was available for training purposes. This fantastic situation is well illustrated by the reply of The Quartermaster General to a communication from the Quartermaster, I Army Corps, Columbia, S. C., requesting "any instructional data governing graves registration; field burials and the safeguarding and recording the effects of deceased personnel."[46] On 3 September 1941, The Quartermaster General replied: "Until such time as TM 10–630, Quartermaster Company, Graves Registration Service, is published, the only available data are pertinent Army Regulations AR 30–1805 to 30–1830, copies of which are enclosed."[47] In other words, a do-nothing policy with respect to many phases of possible graves registration planning put The Quartermaster General in the position of having to inform an officer responsible for the training of troops for hostilities thought to be imminent and, in fact, destined to erupt in the Pacific within four months, that the only available instructional data of the nature requested consisted of some Army Regulations published in 1924, seventeen years before the date of request.

Both the date of publication of the technical manual and the dates selected for progressive activation of graves registration companies were too late to meet the emergency of war. Issued two years after declaration of the limited emergency, with the Graves Registration Service still merely a paper organization, TM 10–630, 23 September 1941, may be regarded as the product of a program that consistently ignored the graves registration problem as a phase of military expansion. While four field armies were being assembled and trained, the manuscript of this manual was making its tedious rounds for criticism and revision. As proof sheets were being read for final correction, the four field armies, complete with such new elements as armored divisions and parachute units, participated in field exercises that brought the prewar training program to its culmination. Accompanying these intensive and ever-expanding processes of organization went an evaluation of the lessons learned from current operations in Europe and the consequent revision of

[42] The statement that TM 10–630 left much to be desired does not necessarily imply that the author alone was at fault. Forms for many of the reports discussed in Section VIII had not been prescribed. Graves Registration Form No. 1, "Report of Burial," was authorized on 18 December 1941, some three months after publication of the manual. One can hardly insist on specific instructions for filling out a form that did not exist.

[43] See above, p. 21.

[44] TM 10–630, par. 51, p. 49.

[45] See criticism of GHQ, for neglect of planning for personal effects in communication of 19 January 42, and plan submitted by TQMG on 5 February 1942, for establishment of Effects Bureau, below, pp. 27–28.

[46] Ltr, Lt Col Owens to TQMG, 25 Aug 41.

[47] 1st ind on *ibid.*, 3 Sep 41.

Digitized by Google

training literature for the Army. This revision resulted, according to General Marshall, in the preparation and publication of 60 field manuals and 160 technical manuals during the fiscal year 1940–41.[48]

Technical Manual 10–630 thus made its appearance during a period when professional military thought was carefully appraising the strategical and tactical lessons of the Polish campaign and the catastrophic fall of France. The whole problem of graves registration, however, was denied the rigid analytical study and elaborate experimentation that accompanied the development of the Armored Force and other types of combat organizations and service units required for the final test of battle. When war came, the Graves Registration Service was still a paper organization. Even the procedure for its establishment in the crisis produced by the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor was unforeseen.

War—Establishment of Graves Registration Service

Quartermaster General Edmund B. Gregory reacted vigorously to the actuality of war. On 8 December he arranged by telephone with The Adjutant General for a casualty and identification set-up for those who had fallen in action at Pearl Harbor on 7 December.[49] On the following day, 9 December, two requests submitted for War Department approval by General Gregory to The Adjutant General marked important steps in the initiation of a graves registration policy. One called attention to the extraordinary demands that participation of United States forces in overseas operations would impose on existing oceanic transport and the consequent necessity of suspending the shipment of remains from all stations outside the continental limits of the United States to the homeland.[50] The other suggested that The Adjutant General include in his notification of death to next of kin the following statement: "No remains can be transported to the United States until after termination of hostilities, when The Quartermaster General . . . will if possible, and upon written request of the next of kin, bring the remains to the United States for final interment." [51]

Emergency Measures in ZI

Measures were then directed toward the establishment of a central office of mortuary records in the Memorial Division. Designated on 22 December as the Overseas Branch and charged with the custody of all records pertaining to death, burial, identification and grave location of all military personnel abroad,[52] this office embodied a considerable departure from policy pursued during World War I.

With the major effort of United States forces then confined to a single sector of the Western Front there seemed no valid reason for duplicating elsewhere the burial records maintained at Graves Registration Service Headquarters in the field. Avoidance of duplication, however, did not necessarily represent a true economy of effort. Effective use of American Expeditionary Forces mortuary records was by no means restricted to transfer of this assembled data to the agency which would function as headquarters of the Graves Registration Service in Washington and supervise the final disposition of remains. Such an office must first be established and then, while in the process of organization, attain a degree of operating efficiency that promised an effective pursuit of its complex mission. In January 1920 an investigation of the confusion attending these adjustments disclosed that "the Washington office . . . was not functioning in an efficient manner due to a number of reasons, the principal reasons being lack of adequate personnel; lack of sufficient office space; inadequate and incomplete records; and the fact that the Chief of the Service was occupied with those larger matters pertaining to legislation, Congressional inquiries, etc. . . ." [53]

There is no certainty, of course, that the existence of a central office of records in Washington during hostilities could have corrected conditions accountable to inadequate and incomplete theater records. At the same time, it seems reasonable to assume that the functioning of such an office would not only have given advance notice of the nature of many problems arising from faulty procedures in the field but, in addition, have provided a nucleus of trained personnel for the agency to be concerned with the ultimate disposal of remains. While a review of World War I graves registration policies does not clearly reveal the precise nature of organizational forms and operational procedures that would have been most effective in that situation, it was obvious by December 1941 that the deployment of American forces on a global scale would

[48] *Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, 1 July 1941 to 30 June 1943*, p. 22.

[49] Transcript of telephone conversation, 8 Dec 41.

[50] Ltr, TQMG to TAG, 9 Dec 41, sub: Shipment of Remains.

[51] *Ibid.*

[52] Annual Report of the Mem Div to TQMG for the Fiscal Year ending 30 June 42, p. 315.

[53] Memo, Col W. C. Jones, QMC, for TQMG, Director of Purchases and Storage, 7 Feb 20, sub: Report on Graves Registration Service, War Records Office, National Archives.

Digitized by Google

require wide departures from methods which were scarcely adequate during the first world conflict.

Unfortunately, the hasty revision of war plans following Japan's aggression nullified the beneficial influence that might have been exerted by a central office of graves registration records in the Memorial Division. Sweeping changes within the Office of The Quartermaster General accompanied the basic scheme authorized by Executive Order No. 9082 for reorganization of the War Department and the Army. On 31 March 1942 the Memorial Division was incorporated within a grouping of miscellaneous functions called Service Installations. By another office reorganization a few months later, it was automatically reduced to branch status,[54] thereby losing much of its administrative autonomy. Its chief was relegated to a status which was incompatible with his responsibilities as technical advisor to The Quartermaster General in all graves registration matters. Furthermore, the branch personnel ceiling was frozen and its strength limited to fifty-four civilian employees at a time when increasing workloads and expanding functions should have suggested augmentation rather than contraction.

Although the far-reaching consequences of these impediments are reserved for detailed treatment, it should be noted at this juncture that two years later, when the Army had reached a strength of 8,000,000, the Chief of the Memorial Branch was still reiterating a request that "the Overseas Section be considered as a new installation incident to our entry into the War and the allotment of civilian personnel necessary for the efficient operation of this section be authorized over and above the existing ceiling for the OQMG." [55] For immediate purposes, however, the measures taken on 22 December 1941 toward establishing an Overseas Branch seemed adequate.

Two days later The Quartermaster General took another step in the formulation of graves registration policy. Again calling attention to the need of conserving cargo space, he recommended issuance of a War Department order prohibiting the shipment of caskets and other mortuary supplies to overseas stations and base commands.[56] A memorandum to this effect was promulgated on 31 December 1941.[57]

While meeting a requirement of war, issuance at the instigation of The Quartermaster General of the War Department directives of 13 and 31 December created in itself a new requirement—one calling for immediate solution. Every command mentioned specifically or by implication in these directives was confronted with the necessity of establishing its own graves registration service. This problem, according to AR 30–1805, 1 February 1924, was a responsibility of The Quartermaster General. Yet discharge of the obligation during the crisis of December 1941 was another matter. Strictly speaking, he had no power of independent action in any such emergency. Such authority as he had exercised with respect to graves registration organization in time of peace had been indirect and incomplete. That is to say, he was authorized and required to pass on all measures concerning the organization, equipment, and training of graves registration units and to concur in plans involving the activation of such units and their assignment to field commands. He approved, for instance, those provisions of the Orange Plan, 1938 (Defense of the Philippines), which called for a specified number of graves registration companies. The extent of his participation in this planning was the measure of his responsibility for the organization of a graves registration service in the Far Eastern Command. As matters eventuated, no graves registration companies had been activated either in the Far East or in the continental United States when the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbor. In these circumstances a graves registration service could be activated in the Philippines only by order of the Chief of Staff or by the commanding general of the Far Eastern Command, acting on his own responsibility.

Faced with these restrictions, Quartermaster General Gregory took steps looking to the establishment of graves registration services in all commands affected by the new War Department orders. On 16 January 1942, he informally communicated his views to the Chief of Staff, GHQ, calling attention to the necessity of immediate action in those commands from which the dead could not be shipped home and to which mortuary supplies could no longer be sent from the United States. The draft of a tentative War Department directive was inclosed with the memorandum.[58]

The reply of GHQ was noncommittal, stating that

[54] (1) OQMG OO No. 84, 31 Mar 42. (2) OQMG OO No. 184, 31 Jul 42.
[55] Ltr, Col R. A. Harbold, Chief, Mem Div, to TQMG, 10 Mar 44.
[56] Ltr, TQMG to TAG, 24 Dec 41, sub: Shipment of Mortuary Supplies.
[57] AGO Memo MB-A-M, 31 Dec 41, sub: Shipment of Supplies.

[58] Search of the files of OQMG and AGO, as well as those of GHQ, AGF, and WDGS, failed to locate this important document. Although the general nature of its content is indicated in GHQ's reply of 19 January 1942, inability to consult the precise wording, particularly that of the inclosed draft, is regrettable. This inclosure, it will be appreciated, embodied the initial effort by TQMG to implement his responsibility for the organization of the Graves Registration Service in time of war. Adequate treatment here requires a close comparison of the tentative draft submitted on 16 Jan 42, with the one that was inclosed to the Chief of Staff on 20 January 1942, and which, insofar as the incomplete record shows, became the basis of framing the desired War Department directive. In other words, it is impossible to furnish a fully accurate and complete account of the process by which the Graves Registration Service of World War II came into existence.

Digitized by Google

"the Chief of Staff, GHQ, cannot take cognizance of the attached memorandum and its enclosure unless referred to him by the proper authority." [59] At the same time a degree of concurrence with the views of The Quartermaster General on the part of General Headquarters was unofficially indicated, providing, however, that certain statements and policies were included in the proposed War Department directive. Taken together, these prescriptions disclosed a certain amount of dissatisfaction at General Headquarters in reference to the status of graves registration planning. It was indicated that detailed planning in certain aspects of the activity, particularly disposal of personal effects of the deceased, had not been carried forward by the Office of The Quartermaster General to a point that promised much improvement over practices in these same respects during World War I. In matters of policy it was held that (1) information to relatives and friends concerning grave location, disposal of remains and effects, and other burial matters should be given only by The Quartermaster General; (2) that the photographing of graves should be forbidden; (3) that the proposed directive should provide detailed instructions covering the establishment and procedures of effects depots to be located in the zone of the interior.[60]

It was also apparent that General Headquarters entertained some doubts as to the adequacy of TM 10–630 from the point of view of meeting many field service requirements. The following statements were suggested for inclusion in the text of an acceptable War Department directive:

> *c.* Standard name pegs will be used for marking of all graves. Crosses or Stars of David will not be used in temporary cemeteries during the period of hostilities. Technical Manual 10–630, Graves Registration, permits the use of crosses and Stars of David and other markers for other faiths than Christian and Jewish. In order to avoid any favoritism or neglect, it is deemed advisable that the same marker be used for our own, allied, and enemy dead in temporary graves. The use of standard pegs will tend to eliminate some lost graves and simplify supply markers. . . .
>
> . . . . .
>
> *f.* Experience from the last war indicated the need for more care in gathering up effects of deceased; no improvements exist in present regulations or methods; therefore, it is recommended that the Quartermaster Graves Registration Service Companies be supplied with small waterproof containers about 8" x 12", with a zipper or draw string, capable of being sealed, and with a tag under cellophane to show name of deceased and shipping instructions.
>
> *g.* After the last war in a great number of cases, remains were unidentifiable after temporary burial because identification tags were not available and grave markers had been lost or destroyed. In order that all available information as to identification, time, date, and circumstances of death and burial may be of record in the grave, a paper containing this information should be buried with the remains. For protection of this paper, it is recommended that a plastic waterproof tube be provided by the Quartermaster Corps and issued to Graves Registration units.[61]

Discussion of detailed operational procedures was beside the immediate purpose sought by General Gregory in referring his tentative draft to the Chief of Staff, GHQ. As previously indicated, he was urging simultaneous action in the organization of graves registration services within all commands deprived by the war crisis of mortuary services and facilities normally provided by the Quartermaster Corps in peace. He assumed that General MacArthur would take the necessary steps to this end in the Philippines.[62] Definition of policy and elaboration of detailed instructions could be deferred. In the light of General Headquarters' reply, however, he submitted a second memorandum to the Chief of Staff on 20 January.[63] In this communication he discussed the problem in general terms and admitted the validity of criticism offered "informally" by GHQ, particularly in reference to faulty planning for the collection and disposal of personal effects and the failure to develop a suitable record container for use whenever necessity arose through loss of identification tags. Attached to the second memorandum was the draft of a briefly worded ten-point statement, which, in General Gregory's opinion, seemed adequate to the purpose in view and the issuance of which as a War Department directive was recommended.

Pending completion of the filtration process through which the tentative draft of 20 January must pass before a refined product could be promulgated by The Adjutant General in the form of a War Department directive, General Grgeory gave attention to other matters pressing for immediate action. One had to do with the collection and disposal of the personal effects of overseas dead. For the present this problem acquired a priority over all other phases of graves registration policy; the very circumstances that constrained

[59] Ltr, Col. R. C. L. Graham, Quartermaster, GHQ, to TQMG, 19 Jan 42.
[60] *Ibid.*

[61] *Ibid.* The objection raised here by GHQ had been anticipated in the preparation of TM 10–630 to the extent, at least, of recommending the use of a sealed bottle. The purpose, however, differed slightly from that mentioned by GHQ in that it was proposed as both a substitute graves marker and as a record container. TM 10–630, 23 Sep 41, par 20c, p 12, advocates the following procedure: "In many cases where the erection of a marker is temporarily impracticable, the desired data may be written in hard, black pencil on a piece of paper and placed in a bottle, which should be tightly corked and sealed and half buried, neck downward, on the grave, to serve as an additional marker. Only one name should be placed in each bottle, otherwise the record will be useless."
[62] Ltr, TQMG to CofS, 20 Jan 42.
[63] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

the War Department to admit to next of kin of the deceased its inability to accomplish the return of remains until after the cessation of hostilities only emphasized the urgency of ensuring a prompt recovery of all personal effects of the dead. Delivery of these precious relics became a token of good faith.

The plan submitted by General Gregory on 9 February 1942 urged the advisability of avoiding the confusion that had resulted early in World War I from receiving effects from overseas at several ports of embarkation and then attempting to distribute these effects from the several ports. The confusion, he pointed out, especially regarding correspondence with relatives of the deceased, had led to concentration of the activity at Hoboken by establishing an Effects Bureau as a part of the Port Quartermaster's Office. In the present situation he urged a complete separation of the receipt and ultimate distribution of effects from the port of embarkation Quartermaster. Insisting that present requirements pointed to the advisability of establishing "one and only one Effects Bureau . . . in some more or less central location in the country," he recommended the activation of an "Effects Bureau" as a branch of the Kansas City Quartermaster Depot and that this branch be assigned the following responsibilities:

(1) The receipt, storage and disposal of the personal property, other than household effects, left at camps and stations by military personnel upon departure for overseas.
(2) The receipt, storage and disposal, under the 112th Article of War, of the effects of deceased officers, enlisted men and civilian personnel serving beyond the continental limits of the United States.

To implement this policy it was recommended:

> That instructions be issued to the Commanding Generals of all forces serving outside the continental limits of the United States to ship through the appropriate port, to The Commanding Officer, Kansas City Quartermaster Depot, all lost luggage and the effects of deceased commissioned, enlisted and civilian personnel of their commands.
>
> Upon receipt of such authority it is proposed to draft detailed instructions for the operation of this Effects Bureau upon the recommendation of The Judge Advocate General, when received, and the experiences in Hoboken which are a matter of record.[64]

Paralleling efforts to hasten the organization of graves registration services in all overseas commands was a final revision of T/O 10–297, "Graves Registration Company," as issued 1 November 1940. On 13 January General Gregory approved and submitted to The Adjutant General the suggested changes, noting that the revised table increased the officer strength from five to six and the enlisted strength from 125 to 129. The revision, moreover, substituted one-quarter-ton trucks for motorcycles with side cars and increased the number of pickup trucks (new weapon carriers) from four to twelve. Permitting an assignment of one such vehicle to each section "for transportation of the personnel," this revised table virtually mechanized the Graves Registration Company.[65]

Authorization for Overseas Graves Registration

Meantime, progress on the proposed War Department directive to implement the establishment of graves registration organizations in commands and stations beyond the continental United States gained headway. The 20 January draft was approved by G–1, War Department General Staff, with only minor alterations and referred back to The Quartermaster General for his concurrence.[66] General Gregory, having in mind his plan for establishment of an effects bureau at the Kansas City Quartermaster Depot, which was submitted four days later for approval, withdrew his original text of paragraph 10 and substituted the following: "Detailed instruction with reference to the disposal of effects of officers, enlisted men, and civilian personnel dying outside the continental limits of the United States will be issued at a later date." [67]

The urgently required directive was published as an unnumbered restricted War Department circular on 18 February, over two months after the declaration of war.[68] Entitled "Graves Registration Service," the circular established three general principles: (1) the commanding general of each theater of operations or defense command, including the Hawaiian and Alaskan Defense Commands, was responsible for organizing a graves registration service which would function as a part of the office of the Quartermaster of the theater or defense command, while theaters and defense commands under the Commanding General, GHQ, would act on instructions transmitted through General Headquarters and framed in accordance with those con-

[64] Ltr, TQMG to CofS, 9 Feb 42.

[65] Ltr, Col Guy I. Rowe to TAG, 13 Jan 42. This change was embodied in T/O 10–297, published 21 January 1942.

[66] Ltr, Brig Gen J. B. Hilldring, ACofS, to the Secretary, General Staff, 1 Feb 42.

[67] TQMG to the Deputy CofS (General Braden), 5 Feb 42. Par. 10, as originally drafted, read as follows: "Effects of all deceased personnel will be shipped to either the Commanding General, Port of Embarkation at New York or the Commanding General, Port of Embarkation at San Francisco, each of whom will organize an Effects Bureau for handling these matters, and the disposal of effects under the 112th Article of War. Detailed instructions with reference to the effects of the deceased personnel will be issued at a later date." *Ibid.*

[68] The final draft, as approved by the Secretary of War, was forwarded by ACofS, G–1, to TAG for publication with the following memorandum for record: "The Quartermaster General by Memorandum QM 293 G–F, 1–20–42, recommends a general directive to be published covering the entire subject of Graves Registration. GHQ did not concur entirely in the draft of the proposed directive. New draft by the Secretary of War, 2–11–42."

Digitized by Google

tained in Technical Manual 10–630 and AR 30–1805; (2) the forms of all necessary reports would be prescribed by The Quartermaster General; (3) the Memorial Division, Office of The Quartermaster General, would perform all duties of the Graves Registration Service within the continental limits of the United States.

Aside from statement of these general principles, there were a number of provisional regulations governing procedure not expressly covered in AR 30–1805 or TM 10–630. Paragraph 3 prescribed that "information to relatives and friends concerning grave locations, disposal of effects, and other related matters will be given only by The Adjutant General or The Quartermaster General." [69] Paragraph 4 prohibited the photographing of graves. Paragraphs 5 and 6 outlined procedures following the occurrence of death at sea. As proposed by The Quartermaster General, issuance of instructions with reference to the disposal of personal effects (paragraph 10) was left to future action.[70]

Review of related correspondence between Quartermaster General Gregory, General Headquarters and the War Department General Staff clearly reveals that the issuance of this circular came in recognition of the fact that such planning as had been projected since 1924 was deficient in the face of developments suddenly imposed by war and that extraordinary measures were demanded to meet the crisis. In this respect, the circular really served as a stopgap, authorizing, in fact requiring, the very sort of hasty improvisation that consistent and maturely developed planning should have obviated. Improvisation necessarily involved performance by makeshift methods and without regard to technical standards. Technical standards themselves, however, had not as yet passed beyond the theoretical stages of development: the first graves registration company of the field forces of World War II, the 46th, was not activated until 28 March 1942, ten days after issuance of the stopgap directive, and nearly three months following the declaration of war. During the ensuing year—February 1942 to February 1943—while twelve more companies were activated, only five completed an adequate course of unit training by the end of that year. In other words, there was a lag of one year in supplying technically trained graves registration units for the combat forces.

The makeshifts which necessarily conditioned the conduct of graves registration operations in the active theaters had a tendency to retard the normal process of correcting training methods in the light of field experience and to subvert the exercise of technical direction on the part of The Quartermaster General. The very necessity of improvisation restricted the possibilities of applied technology and put severe limitations on the formulation of policy as a legitimate function of The Quartermaster General. Efforts to remove prohibitions that piled up in the confusion resulting from incomplete and retarded planning through the years 1939–1941 dominated the development of uniform graves registration procedures during the first two years of war. Instructive variations of this theme are found in the expedients which were adopted by General MacArthur and other theater commanders during this period.

[69] It is important to note that the CofS, with the concurrence of TQMG and TAG, overruled GHQ in its contention that information concerning burial and disposition of personal effects should be issued exclusively by TQMG. Rectification of the confusion resulting from the joint system prescribed in paragraph 3 of the circular of 18 February 1942 became a major problem in the development of graves registration policy and forms an important part of the theme of a later chapter of this study.

[70] See above, p. 28.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III

Graves Registration Overseas: The Period of Improvisation

The Philippine Campaign

ORGANIZATION of a graves registration service for the forces in the Philippines throws a high light on the state of preparedness for war in the Far East. The measures taken by General MacArthur during the critical days of December 1941 recall those adopted by General Pershing in 1917 in setting up an Expeditionary Force Burial Department to function in France while units of the newly created Graves Registration Service underwent training in the United States. Pershing, however, had the threefold advantage of approaching numerical preponderance, powerful allies firmly established in the theater of war, and secure oceanic communications with his national base. Isolated from his homeland, MacArthur commanded a force doomed in the nature of the situation to fight a sacrifice action.

While The Quartermaster General at Washington was endeavoring to establish contact through proper channels for the express purpose of expediting the establishment of graves registration services in the overseas theaters, measures were taken in Manila to care for the dead resulting from incessant air bombardment. The Army mortuary, which was located in the port area and which functioned in peace under direction of The Quartermaster General and a local staff of two American morticians and 14 Filipino assistants, became the nucleus of expansion. The Paz Funeral Parlor, the largest mortuary establishment in the Philippine archipelago, was taken over by the Army. With these increased facilities and an augmented staff of 6 Americans and 300 Filipinos, the dead of the Manila blitz were identified and prepared for burial. Army and Navy personnel were interred at the Fort McKinley post cemetery.[1]

On Christmas Day, 1941, Brig. Gen. Charles C. Drake, Chief Quartermaster, USAFFE, called Mr. S. J. Gladys, a civilian mortician on the staff of the Army mortuary and subsequently captain, QMC, to General Headquarters for consultation regarding the activation of graves registration units to serve with the field forces. Owing to misplacement of plans for the purpose in view, and inability at that juncture to communicate with Colonel Carter, War Plans Officer, General Drake instructed the civilian mortician to organize three graves registration companies and report at 2300 hours the following day for movement to Limay. Although some difficulty is found in comprehending the whole course of events subsequently narrated by Captain Gladys, it appears that he rounded up over night all personnel engaged in mortuary activities during the blitz and put them aboard a 50-truck convoy loaded with supplies for the forces then withdrawing to the Bataan Peninsula.[2]

The convoy arrived before dawn at Limay, on the Peninsula, where Captain Gladys reported to Lieutenant Colonel Harwood, Acting Quartermaster, and received instructions to establish two temporary camps, one at Limay, the other at Mariveles, and to hold the third unit in reserve. Cemeteries were established at Limay and Mariveles. Commissioned second lieutenant, QMC, upon recovery from a wound received in action, Gladys took command of the Mariveles cemetery. Meantime, Col. Frank M. Brezina, Depot Quartermaster of the Port Area, directed a reorganization of the Bataan Graves Registration Service, designating Lt. Col. Joseph Sullivan as Graves Registration Officer and assigning Capt. (later Major) A. L. Fullerton to GRS Company No. 1.[3]

While it had been General Drake's intention to activate graves registration companies in accordance with the current T/O & E–297,[4] conditions on Luzon during

[1] Rpt, Capt S. J. Gladys, QMC, to TQMG, sub: An Outline Through Recollection of Graves Registration Service in Bataan and Corregidor (a paper prepared in Washington during April 1946 for the Office of The Quartermaster General), p. 1. Hereinafter cited as Gladys, Graves Registration Outline.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Interv with Brig Gen Chas. C. Drake, formerly Chief Quartermaster, USAFFE & USFIP, at OQMG, Washington, D. C., 21 Apr 46.

Digitized by Google

December 1941 were scarcely favorable to an undertaking which was not accomplished in the United States until February 1942. Actually, the Bataan graves registration units were skeleton organizations at best, depending largely on native labor for duties that would otherwise have been performed by drafts from Quartermaster service units and, in certain instances cited by Major Fullerton, by detachments from combat formation. This officer reports that Company No. 1 "was allocated only sufficient personnel and vehicles to operate at approximately ½ strength authorized by Tables of Organization for a standard Graves Registration Company." [5]

Somewhat conflicting evidence is offered by 1st Lieut. J. Goodman, who served under Captain Gladys at Mariveles and compiled a unit diary.[6] According to Lieutenant Goodman, the Graves Registration Service on Bataan during the period from 3 January to 8 April 1942 consisted of 7 officers and 7 non-commissioned officers, U. S. Army, 25 non-commissioned officers and 63 privates of the Philippine Scouts, together with 2 American morticians, 5 Filipino morgue attendants and 5 chauffeurs, with a supplementary force of 25 to 200 native laborers, hired at $5 per day.[7]

The discrepancy indicated in these two statements may be reconciled by the supposition that Major Fullerton included native laborers in his estimated strength of Company No. 1, and that Lieutenant Goodman was attempting to recapitulate totals for operating units and staff overhead. It will be noted that his maximum of 294 military and civilian personnel would slightly exceed the aggregate of two graves registration companies organized in accordance with current tables. Furthermore, the excess in this computation would be somewhat diminished by allowance for the staff overhead.

Inability to activate graves registration units in accordance with authorized tables of organization and equipment went hand in hand with want of information concerning procedures recently approved and published by the War Department. While it is known that 300 copies of Technical Manual 10–630 were marked on The Adjutant General's Office distribution list for the Far Eastern Command during September 1941, General Drake seems positive in his recollection that the Graves Registration Service on Bataan was unaware of the existence of such a manual and that standard operating procedures were based on generalizations stated in the AR–30 Series of 1924.[8] The meaning seems obvious: so far as organization of the first theater graves registration service units to act in support of combat during World War II is concerned, the effect of 16 years' planning was practically nil.

The primary function of the first service improvised under these conditions is indicated in Major Fullerton's report of operations. Written from memory some four years after the campaign, this document supplements Captain Gladys's sketchy narrative of activities in rear areas by furnishing close-up glimpses of operating conditions and procedures at the front. As stated by Major Fullerton, the mission of the three graves registration companies was "to operate Army Cemeteries in the Service Command Area of Bataan and to coordinate the activities of the various Combat Division Quartermasters in respect to burials." [9]

The four "Army Cemeteries" mentioned by Major Fullerton were designated as follows: No. 1 at Limay, which was closed out about 10 January on account of incessant enemy bombing; No. 2 at Kilometer Post 162.5, which handled bodies evacuated from Hospital No. 2, as well as dead evacuated from the front on the east side of the Peninsula; No. 3 at Kilometer Post 179.3 Mariveles, which handled interments from Hospital No. 1 and the dead from the west sector of the front line, as well as Navy dead from nearby Naval Base; No. 4 at Kilometer No. 178.5, Mariveles, which served the same area as No. 3.[10]

Captain Gladys is not in agreement with Major Fullerton as to the numbering of these four army cemeteries. Where the captain refers to the two cemeteries under his charge near Mariveles as No. 1 and No. 2, the major designates these same cemeteries as No. 3 and No. 4, respectively. It is presumed that Captain Gladys, who took command of the first cemetery located in the vicinity of Mariveles and then established the second one in this area,[11] may be correct in his designation. At the same time, it must be remembered that both officers wrote the reports in question four years after the events they recall, with an intervening period of captivity in Japanese prison camps.

In the absence of qualifying or contradictory evidence, Major Fullerton's version of activities in the battle zone should be accepted at face value. The fact that his report is relatively free of internal contradictions tends to justify such an evaluation. Operating under

[5] Maj A. L. Fullerton, Rpt of Opn GRS Bataan, Annex D of Brig Gen Charles C. Drake, Rpt of Opn QMC, USA, in Philippine Campaign, 1941–42 (Annex XIII of Gen Jonathan M. Wainwright, Rpt of Opn of USAFFE and USFIP in P. I., 1941–42). Hereinafter cited as Drake Rpt and Fullerton Rpt.

[6] Interv with Capt S. J. Gladys, QMC, OQMG, Washington, 29 Apr 46.

[7] 1st Lt J. Goodman, Rpt of Opn GRS, Fort Mills, Corregidor, Annex D of Drake Rpt. Hereinafter cited as Goodman Rpt.

[8] Interv, 21 Apr 46.

[9] Fullerton Rpt.

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] Gladys, Graves Registration Outline, p. 3.

964114—52——4

Digitized by Google

severe shortages of personnel and transport, Company No. 1 was frequently compelled to divert its slender resources from evacuation and interment of the dead in army cemeteries to collection on the battlefield and burial of remains in nearby regimental and division cemeteries. While continuous fighting on the east sector drove this unit to the limits of endurance, Japanese landings on the southwest tip of the Peninsula required a detachment of emergency burial teams to the west sub-sector. Major Fullerton notes the extraordinary difficulties of this assignment.

> At Quinauan Point, the largest battlefield of the West Sub-Sector, the dead had been in the sun of the tropical dry season for 14 days before the Graves Registration Service company No. 1 was assigned the task of handling their burial. Mortuary Reports for each of the American and Filipino dead were prepared on these burials and unidentified were fingerprinted. [12]

Procedures governing the preparation and disposition of burial reports were designed to meet requirements specified in AR 30–1810, February 1, 1924. A "Mortuary Report" was prepared in triplicate for each interment in an army cemetery, such reports containing all data relative to the establishment of positive identification and location of the grave. Finger prints and dental charts were attached to original copies of reports on "unknowns." Division Quartermaster became responsible for the execution of similar reports on "field burials," as well as plot plans for all regimental and division cemeteries. Two copies of all types of mortuary reports were transmitted daily to headquarters in Corregidor. An official diary of significant activities of the Graves Registration Service was maintained and forwarded weekly to Army Headquarters.[13]

The problem of personal effects received early and continuous attention. Graves Registration Service personnel collected and listed such effects at the time and place of burial and packed them in denim bags especially designated for the purpose. These bags, each with an attached copy of the related mortuary report, then went to local storage, where they were held for shipment in large consignments to Corregidor. Separate procedures controlled the disposition of cash and checks found on the deceased. These items were deposited daily with the Service Command Finance Officer who, in turn, credited the decedent's relative with the sum involved.[14]

Little is known concerning the administration of army cemeteries on Bataan. The scant evidence would indicate that, aside from faulty advance planning and deficient organization, the conduct of this activity was largely conditioned by those heart-breaking difficulties that portend defeat. After indiscriminate bombing in the Mariveles area, enemy planes were guided to Cemetery No. 2 by a large white cross made of bed sheets and placed to mark the spot. On 7 April they succeeded in "obliterating graves and markers." [15]

The following day, Japanese bombers visited new horrors on helpless patients and attendants at Hospital No. 2. While search teams were removing mangled remains from the smoking ruins, Colonel Brezina, Theater Graves Registration Officer, instructed Captain Gladys to open a new cemetery directly across the road. Upon representation that the proposed action would involve greater difficulties than evacuating the remains to Cemetery No. 1, Colonel Brezina cancelled the order and authorized the evacuation as suggested by his subordinate. A formal protest over the outrage incited another attack which added 48 deaths to the senseless slaughter. "All of these remains," the captain asserts, "were properly identified and buried in Cemetery No. 2." [16]

Meantime, the American defense lines were crumbling. Exploding ammunition dumps rocked the earth as emaciated formations fell back to new positions. All communication between rear area elements and General Headquarters was cut. On the morning of 9 April Captain Gladys, acting on his own initiative, arranged transportation for his company to Corregidor. "We were fortunate," he relates, "to make the last boat that left Bataan." [17]

Withdrawal of the Mariveles unit to Corregidor ended the graves registration saga of Bataan. Repeated enemy bombings of headquarters installations and cemeteries undid much of the work accomplished in the field. The duplicate records forwarded to Corregidor either perished in the fall of the island or were confiscated and perhaps destroyed by the Japanese. As yet, no definite evidence has come to light concerning the final disposition of these priceless records.

Graves registration operations continued on the island fortress under direction of Captain Gladys. The original burial records of 500 American and Filipino defenders were hidden behind the retaining wall of Malinta Tunnel. The place of concealment was subsequently discovered by the Japanese. Failure on the part of our military authorities to find any clue indi-

[12] Fullerton Rpt.
[13] *Ibid.*
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] Gladys, Graves Registration Outline, p. 4.
[16] *Ibid.*
[17] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

cating their final disposition supports an assumption that these records, as well as those sent daily and periodically from Bataan to USFIP Headquarters, were wilfully destroyed by the enemy.[18] Duplicate copies, however, of the Corregidor burial records were intrusted to Col. Perry O. Wilcox, Corps of Chaplains, who managed to safeguard the precious packet during his period of captivity at Bilibid Prison and deliver it upon his liberation in 1945 to the proper authorities.[19]

One contribution that would have done much to mitigate the grief of those who suffered personal loss in the fall of Corregidor was denied the Philippine Graves Registration Service. Unwilling to reveal the extent of their losses in the landing operations and final assault on Corregidor, Japanese Headquarters refused a request of General Wainwright that he be permitted to bury his American and Filipino dead. With the thousands of Japanese corpses littering the field, these remains were heaped in huge funeral pyres and cremated.[20]

Achievements of the Philippine Graves Registration Service, as organized in December 1941 and then dispersed with the scattering of troops in different prison camps after the fall of Corregidor, can scarcely be regarded as a triumph of planning pursuant to the AR 30– series of 1924. Its record, however, cannot justly be dismissed with such a statement. Called into existence without regard to War Department tables of organization and operating without the advantage of specialized training or benefit of an approved technical manual, the officers and men of this service wrote a noteworthy chapter in the annals of American graves registration. Those who survived the surrender carried on in the prison camps to which they were sent. Under intolerable conditions of physical hardship and mental torture they persisted in their efforts to realize the ideal that no American soldier shall be buried without identification or in an unregistered grave. Lieutenant Goodman assisted in this work at Horton Military Prison Camp, Mukden, Manchuria. Records of the cemetery established there were turned over to members of the processing team who released the survivors of that camp.[21] Captain Gladys acted as voluntary Graves Registration Officer at the infamous Cabanatuan camp until failure of health compelled him to relinquish the work. He buried there 2,000 dead—more than he interred at Mariveles and on Corregidor. "All died," he reports, "of either starvation, malnutrition or dysentery. Very few died of other causes."[22] Copies of these burial reports were preserved and transmitted to the proper authorities in 1945.[23]

The extent to which uninterrupted communications between Washington and Manila might have furthered an exercise of technical direction by The Quartermaster General over graves registration operations during 1941 and 1942 remains a matter of conjecture. However, the losing side in war conducts such operations only on sufferance of the victor.

Australia and the Southwest Pacific Area

The story of graves registration in the Southwest Pacific relates an important chapter of the epic march from Port Moresby to Manila. Many of the difficulties that beset this arduous advance were beyond the scope of American military thinking prior to 1941. Jungle tactics were developed under tuition of a relentless foe. Cunning in a type of combat that aroused the dormant instincts of primeval savagery went hand-in-hand with skill in the complicated techniques of landing assaults. Not infrequently expert automatic riflemen were called into service as burden bearers, threading their way like primitive porters through trackless jungle swamps. Again, these same combat technicians awaited the delivery of reinforcement and vital supplies by air transport. In this anomalous situation graves registration personnel had one advantage over their comrades of the other technical services—they had little or nothing to unlearn.

Like its predecessor on Bataan, the Graves Registration Service in the Southwest Pacific took form under pressure of unforeseen circumstances, and without strict regard to the dictates of high level policy. Improvised for the express purpose of meeting a series of local emergencies, it developed step by step with an expanding theater force which pursued a mission without parallel in the annals of war. In this respect it was an indigenous growth.

The decision to select Australia as the base of an operational theater was dictated by events that disrupted United States Army mobilization schedules for 1942. The nucleus of the theater force was furnished by a group of replacements originally destined for the Philippines. Apprised by radio while steaming from Honolulu to Manila that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor and the Philippines, Brig. Gen. Julian F. Barnes, troop commander afloat, designated the contingent as Task Force—South Pacific. The convoy

[18] (1) *Ibid.* (2) Interv with Captain Gladys, 2 May 46. Cf. Goodman Rpt.
[19] (1) Gladys, Graves Registration Outline, p. 4. (2) Goodman Rpt.
[20] Gladys, Graves Registration Outline, p. 5.
[21] (1) *Ibid.* (2) Goodman Rpt.
[22] Gladys, Graves Registration Outline, p. 5.
[23] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

turned south and, on 5 January 1942, after disembarkation at Brisbane, the designation United States Army Forces in Australia (USAFIA) was published in orders.[24]

Graves Registration in Australia

During the early period of its existence, Headquarters, USAFIA, was primarily concerned with the subsistence, quartering, and training of reinforcements which periodically arrived from the United States. Although the tide of Japanese aggression ran unchecked until August 1942, occupying strategic areas along the north coast of New Guinea and throughout the Admiralty, Bismarck, and Solomon Archipelagos, no serious diversion was made from the original purpose of transforming Australia into a spring-board for offensive operations toward the Philippines.[25] Little thought was given to graves registration until the problem obtruded itself in the form of dead bodies requiring quick and suitable disposition. Furthermore, the Quartermaster Corps took action at the instance of another service which would have been first to suffer in the absence of provision for burial of the dead.

On 14 February 1942, while The Quartermaster General in Washington still awaited War Department approval of the directive requiring the establishment of graves registration services in all the oversea commands, the Chief Surgeon, USAFIA, recommended in a report to G–4 that local cemeteries should be designated for the interment of American dead. The proposal was urged on grounds that shipment of remains to the United States was impracticable because of inadequate facilities for the preservation of bodies, the wide dispersion of troops, and a shortage of transportation.[26]

After study of the Medical Department report, G–1 transmitted to the Chief Quartermaster a policy statement prescribing four main objectives: (1) appointment of a Graves Registration Officer at Headquarters, USAFIA, and a similar officer at each of the several Base Section Headquarters; (2) prohibition of the shipment of deceased soldiers to the United States; (3) negotiation of agreements with civil authorities of the Commonwealth Government for exclusive use of burial areas in each of the headquarters cities of the several base sections; (4) procurement of caskets built on American lines.[27]

The first stipulation was met by the appointment of Maj. (later Lt. Col.) L. C. Butterworth, QMC, as Graves Registration Officer, Headquarters, USAFIA, and the establishment of a Graves Registration Branch within the Administrative Division of the Office of the Chief Quartermaster. A comprehensive set of instructions was then prepared by the Quartermaster Section and published as Headquarters Memorandum No. 20, dated 20 March 1942. These regulations specified that each base section commander should conclude arrangements for the interment of all military personnel who should die or be killed within the area of his command. In consequence of the prohibition on shipment of remains to the United States, it was further required that steps be taken to (1) establish local cemeteries, (2) provide for suitable burial services, (3) formulate plans for the construction of caskets which would conform to established usage in the homeland, and (4) procure the authorized types of grave markers.[28]

There are a number of noteworthy trends in these transactions. The initiative looking to establishment of a graves registration service in Australia was furnished by the Medical Department. Then, after G–1 had stated major policy requirements, the Quartermaster Corps became concerned with matters of detail. The stated requirements, however, betray a somewhat limited view of the whole problem. Little consideration was given to the primary objective of graves registration troops acting in close support of combat; namely, the identification of remains. Memorandum No. 20 was addressed to a special set of conditions, rather than those which might be associated with a combat zone.

USAFIA was quartered in a civilized community. Although its population and facilities were concentrated in relatively small areas of a vast territorial expanse—somewhat greater in fact than that of the United States—conditions prevailing in the southern continent were more suggestive of the American zone of interior than those which would be encountered on the island stepping stones of the Southwest Pacific. The memorandum therefore, sought an arrangement whereby native Australian facilities and services might be supplemented in meeting the standards of American military burial. With no immediate concern for an active theater establishment, it put greater emphasis than would otherwise have been the case on such aspects as ceremony, exclusive burial sites, and the sort of mortuary practices to which Americans were accustomed in their homeland.

[24] Hq, USASOS, SWPA, History of Major Activities of the Quartermaster Section (7 Vols), I, 1. Hereinafter cited as SWPA QM History.

[25] Office of the Chief of Engineers, General Headquarters, Army Forces Pacific, *Engineers in The Southwest Pacific*, Vol. I, *Engineers in Theater Operations*, (Hq, AFPAC: 1947), pp. 32–3, 63. Hereinafter cited as *SWPA Engineers*.

[26] SWPA QM History, IV, 80.

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 81.

Digitized by Google

Neither a Headquarters memorandum nor, for that matter, a War Department circular, can call into being a service for which there has been little or no preparation by way of specialized training and standardization of procedure. In undertaking responsibilities somewhat similar in scope and, on a comparative basis, in magnitude to those assigned the nine service commands of the Zone of the Interior, the seven Australian base commands worked under the pressure of emergency conditions that did not apply with equal intensity in the United States. Offensive preparations were actively projected by Headquarters, USAFIA. while the Australian Defense Committee completed plans for a scorched-earth policy in the event that the Japanese should successfully invade the continent.[29] Aside from a universal want of trained graves registration personnel, these seven commands possessed but a small fraction of the manpower required at that time for a satisfactory accomplishment of their ambitious missions. Implementation of Headquarters Memorandum No. 20 suffered many delays before competent staff supervision could be geared to efficient technical performance.

The appointment of graves registration officers in the various base commands was largely nominal, such officers being assigned the function in addition to other pressing responsibilities. The work was therefore delegated to subordinates who were necessarily restricted in exercising those qualities of personal initiative and judgment that would otherwise have contributed to vigorous and constructive methods of administration. A report on the status of graves registration organization in the different commands during May of 1942 indicates that only two, Base Sections 1 and 2, had full-time Graves Registration officers, while Base Sections 3 and 4 employed subordinates acting in the place of nominal appointees. The status of graves registration personnel in Base Sections 5 and 6 is reported as "unknown" and, according to the report, no action had as yet been taken to establish a service in Base Section 7.[30]

By a curious sort of paradox, an acute personnel situation at Headquarters, Base Section 4, in Melbourne, became instrumental in shaping a uniform service for the continent. The main Australian terminal for shipping and inland transportation, Melbourne, had been selected as one of the principal ports of troop debarkation. Accordingly, Headquarters, USAFIA, which was also located at Melbourne, anticipated the need of extensive camp construction in the vicinity of the port. Due, however, to preoccupation of the nominal chief with other assignments, a civil service employee had assumed the duties of graves registration officer in an area which was shortly destined to support a considerable concentration of troops. The Quartermaster Section was thus prompted to intervene and expedite the organization of an adequate Base Section Graves Registration Service. In so doing it developed procedures which were given a general application.[31]

Attainment of the four major objectives listed in Headquarters Memorandum No. 20 involved various types of contracts which must be negotiated in accordance with the requirements of Australian law. Those pertaining to the acquisition of burial sites, the exclusive use of which would be reserved for stated periods by the United States Government, presented special difficulties. As a general rule, the trustees of established cemeteries in Australia were statutory bodies, occupying a position similar to that defined by the Cemeteries Act of the State of Victoria, where chartered cemeteries were conducted as a public trust on a non-profit-making basis. In the absence of precedents and directions for the guidance of Quartermaster officers in conducting negotiations of this nature, the legal staff was called upon for advice and active assistance.[32] After consideration of various sites in the vicinity of Melbourne, arrangements were concluded with the trustees of Necropolis Cemetery at Springvale, Victoria, for use of an undeveloped tract about one acre (160′ x 320′) in extent and capable, according to calculation, of being subdivided into approximately 1,000 grave plots.[33]

The Springvale contract established useful precedents for the negotiation of similar instruments in the various base commands. In transacting this agreement, the Americans were put at a serious disadvantage in being unable to calculate ultimate requirements as to burial space. While reluctant to agree to short-sighted economies which would satisfy immediate needs, they were equally hesitant to commit their Government to an extravagant scheme of rentals for land that might never be used. The Australians, on their part, were not disposed to exploit these embarrassments by driving a hard bargain. It was finally agreed that the United States would meet the cost of opening and closing all graves, the rate being fixed somewhat below the standard

[29] *SWPA Engineers*, I, 32, citing Memo, The Australian Defense Committee for Secretary, Department of The Army of Australia, 27 Jul 42, sub: Denial of Resources to the Enemy.

[30] Rpt, W. G. Vellerlein, GRO, Office of CQM, to CQM, USAFIA, 21 May 42, sub: Report on Status of Cemeteries and Graves Registration. AFWWESPAC, QM 333.1—Inspections, Vol. I, Doc 8.

[31] (1) *Ibid.* (2) *SWPA Engineers*, I, 43, 53. (3) SWPA QM History, IV. 81.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 81.

[33] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

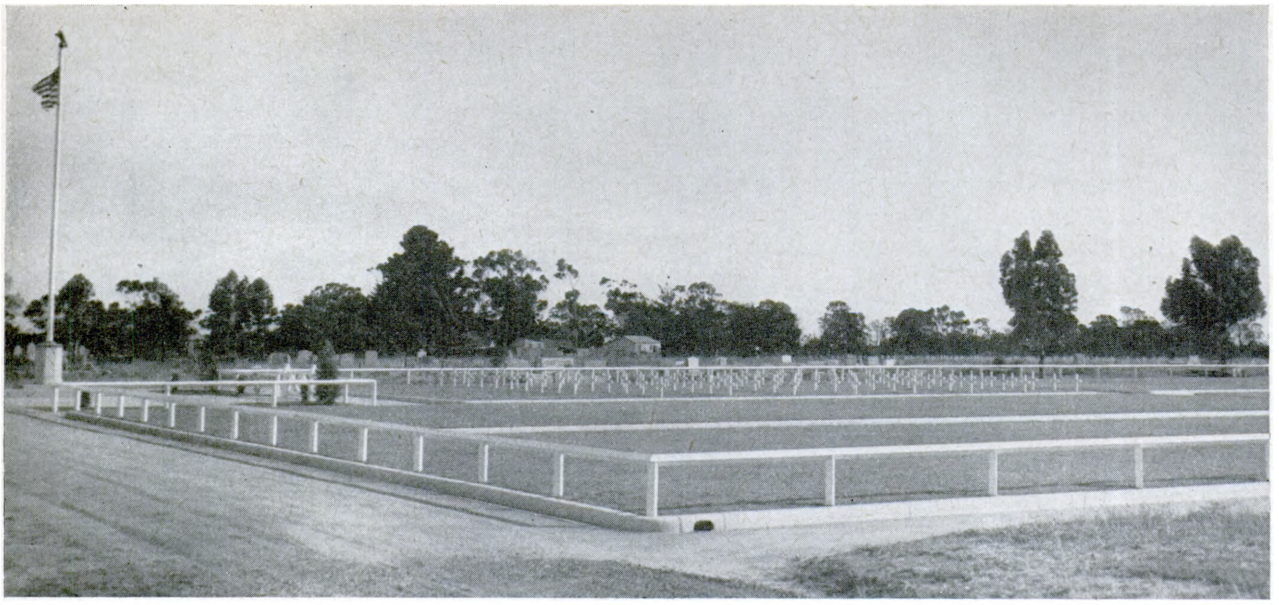


Figure 1.—U. S. Armed Forces Cemetery, Springvale, Melbourne, Australia.

charge, and would pay a fixed charge for the rental of only such graves as were actually used in the reserved tract. The tract, however, would be held exclusively for American burials during the period of hostilities and 6 months thereafter, or for 21 years, whichever might be the shorter. In the event of any demand for additional burial space, the reservation privilege might be extended to another undeveloped section of the cemetery. The trustees, in consideration of an annual fee, assumed responsibility for care and maintenance of the reserved area and, if required by the Government of the United States, would undertake the exhumation of bodies at any time during the period of the lease. If, however, the removal of bodies should not be required, the burial right in respect of grave plots actually paid for would remain in the Government in perpetuity without payment of additional fees.[34]

Problems of a different order were encountered in the preparation and negotiation of contracts for mortuary services and supplies. Had it been possible to reproduce in Australia the system applicable under terms of the uniform burial contract used in the United States, the over-all problem would have been relatively simple. The Quartermaster Section might then have worked out a modified burial contract which would have placed Australian morticians on the same footing with respect to the Army in Australia as that occupied by their professional counterparts in the United States. That is, all services and supplies relative to burial of military personnel would, apart from according military honors, have been furnished by commercial undertakers in accordance with contract specifications.

However desirable, such an arrangement was impracticable. Very few Australian undertakers had either the facilities or the professional qualifications to embalm bodies in accordance with American practice. Nor did the trade produce a type of casket acceptable to United States Army standards. Separate contracts, therefore, were required for the procurement of suitable caskets, while the uncertain quality of other mortuary services necessitated agreements adaptable to varying circumstances.

The problem of drawing casket specifications was conditioned by want of precise information concerning the characteristics and availability of native woods. Then, unfamiliarity with the habits of Australian handicraft and manufacturing methods complicated the difficulty. Study of these aspects, however, indicated the possibility of achieving a design which would conform to the canons of American taste in such merchandise, but which fell somewhat short of United States Army specifications.[35]

Considerable delay was encountered in getting quantity production of caskets. As a matter of fact, the problem was never completely solved. After experimentation with various types of native woods, Capt. E. N. Loeb, who served in the dual capacity of Purchasing and Graves Registration Officer at Base Section 3,[36]

[34] *Ibid.*, pp. 81–2.

[35] *Ibid.*

[36] Ltr, Maj C. E. Butterworth, Chief, Mem Div, to CQM, USASOS, 18 Aug 42. RAC (AGO Records Administration Center, St. Louis, Mo.). AFWESPAC, QM Inspections, Vol. I.

Digitized by Google

negotiated a contract with H. H. Webb Pty., Ltd., of Brisbane, calling for a casket, the corner posts, lid, sides and ends of which were to be constructed of silky oak, the bottom of tongue and grooved cypress pine, and the inner metal casing of 26-gage iron, with a lid piece for hermetic sealing.[37] Difficulties in securing deliveries of the specified woods, together with technical deficiencies in connection with sealing the inner lining, suggested the advisability of designing an all-metal casket. The development of this project during 1943 was retarded by increasing demands on the supply of domestic steel, resulting in the use of whatever caskets could be procured under existing shortages of both wood and steel.[38]

The general type of contract for burial services reflects considerable doubt both as to the resources and capabilities of Australian commercial firms, as well as the potentialities of the newly established Graves Registration Service. The Government was careful to avoid any commitment which would involve the payment of a set price for performance of the complete funeral service in any particular case. In lieu of a blanket arrangement, it stipulated rates for the performance of only those specific services that might be required at any given time and place. Such services included the following: (1) collection and removal of remains; (2) embalming; (3) transportation to place of burial; (4) provision of hearse and driver; (5) attendance of the funeral director and other incidental services. While the contractor was bound to perform such services as might be directed by United States military authorities, there was no obligation on their part to pay for services which could be suitably performed by American graves registration personnel.[39]

As already indicated, the availability of mortuary services in Australia on a par with those in the United States would have offered a ready-made solution to the whole problem. Such a solution, however, would have deprived the American forces of practical experience in many phases of graves registration operations. With commercial firms satisfactorily functioning under a system of uniform contracts, it seems doubtful if American military authorities in Australia would have directed any more attention to the organization and training of a graves registration service for combat than was actually given in the United States prior to the dispatch of forces for the invasion of North Africa. But, as matters eventuated in Australia, the Quartermaster Corps was compelled by inescapable circumstances to establish a cemeterial system and then, owing to inadequate mortuary facilities in the civil community, to assemble step by step an organization capable of supplementing these deficiencies. While the organization thus created could not be readily adapted to field service conditions, it was composed of personnel who had gained some familiarity with the basic problems of cemetery administration and maintenance and who, at least, were capable of anticipating the sort of adaptations that would be required in the combat situation. Even if the experience afforded by mortuary operations in the Australian base commands was incomplete, the training was realistic. In the school of graves registration there is no substitute for dead bodies.

Following the uneven state of affairs reported during May 1942, when only two base sections had full-time graves registration officers, substantial progress appears to have been made in rounding out the organizational structure and speeding the negotiation of contracts for cemeterial sites and mortuary services. Capt. Edward J. Barnes, Catholic Chaplain and Graves Registration Officer of Base Section 7, overcame considerable difficulty in bringing the Board of Trustees of Rookwood Cemetery to agreement on charges for a desirable plot in the Church of England section of the cemetery. Under persistent urging, the Episcopalian trustees "listened to reason" in lowering the quoted price of £5.10.0 to £3.12.6 for opening and closing each grave.[40] Bids received for caskets constructed of Queensland silky oak and embodying structural specifications later written into the contract of 1 September 1942, ranged from £16.10.0 to £17.4.4.

Fortuitous circumstances which determined organizational trends in Base Section 4 exercised considerable influence on the composition of graves registration detachments throughout the continent. Discovery of four licensed morticians in the ranks of the 360th Quartermaster Company at Melbourne permitted the formation of a technical graves registration group. After acquiring the necessary embalming materials and equipment, including a rebuilt army truck to serve as a hearse, this group performed so efficiently that the base section command discontinued its former policy of contracting

[37] Contract for Burial Supplies Between the United States Forces in Australia and H. H. Webb Pty., Ltd., Brisbane, 1 Sep 42. RAC, AFPAC GPA 400.12 (QM 3), Gen Proc Corres with QM APO, 923, Book No. 2.

[38] (1) Rpt, CQM, USASOS, to G–4 27 Nov 42, sub: Weekly Rpt on QM Activities. RAC, AFWESPAC, QM 400.1924 Rpt of Progress. (2) SWPA QM History, IV, 88.

[39] *Ibid.*, 82.

[40] Rpt, 2d Lt W. G. Vetterlein, QMC, Hq USAFIA sub: Cemeteries Graves Registration Activities Base Section No. 7, 26 Jun 42. RAC, AFWESPAC, QM 333.1 Inspections, Vol. 1.

Digitized by Google

for burial services.[41] Difficulties arising elsewhere in consequence of the steady deterioration of wartime commercial services persuaded General Headquarters that duplication of the set-up at Melbourne offered the only solution. Base Section 7 was advised on 4 November 1942 that wherever personnel and material became available, "it was advisable that all mortuary functions be carried out by Military personnel." [42] Disclosures of inefficient casketing by Australian morticians during the reinterment of 39 bodies at the Springvale Cemetery in December led to recommendations that "all embalming be carried out by military personnel." [43] These recommendations were emphasized on 21 February 1943 when all base sections were notified that "whenever possible all graves registration activities, including embalming, dressing, sealing of caskets and other functions incident to burial of United States Armed Forces personnel be conducted by soldier personnel of the Graves Registrations Service." [44]

The establishment of exclusive American plots in the several base commands required the concentration of isolated burials. Concentration, in turn, emphasized the necessity of uniform burial reports and standard cemetery layouts. The latter requirement was particularly important wherever the acquired plots lay within the bounds of established civilian cemeteries. Unless otherwise instructed, graves registration officers seemed prone to follow the local numbering system. Several quaint arrangements were evolved. One, it is noted "had five different letters for each grave-section, block, plot and row numbers or letters—which offered five different possibilities for error in reporting burials." [45] Such anomalies prompted the Graves Registration Branch to insist that all cemetery layouts must conform to Plan 001–OQMG. In addition to the uniform layout plan, the Chief Quartermaster, in conjunction with the Engineer Section, prescribed a standard flagpole design. Other decorative features, such as fencing and landscaping, were left to the discretion of the individual base section commands.[46]

By 22 July 1942 the basic elements of a cemeterial system had been assembled. On this date the cemeteries authorized by the Commanding General, United States Army Services of Supply (USASOS), which had superseded Headquarters USAFIA in the reorganization attending establishment of General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area (GHQ, SWPA) on 18 April 1942, were listed in a letter transmitted to all base sections. While the establishment of cemeteries remained a responsibility of base section commanders, additional cemeteries were to be established only upon approval of the Commanding General, USASOS. The approved cemeteries were—

Base Section 1—USAF Cemetery—Adelaide River No. 1.
Base Section 2—USAF Cemetery—Townsville.
Base Section 3—USAF Cemetery—Ipswich.
Base Section 4—USAF Cemetery—Springvale.
Base Section 5—USAF Cemetery—Centennial Park.
Base Section 6—USAF Cemetery—Karakkatta.
Base Section 7—USAF Cemetery—Rookwood.[47]

While inability on the part of commercial undertakers to meet even minimal requirements caused the various base section Graves Registration Service units to assume greater responsibilities in providing burial services, so the increasing demands imposed on Australian labor by the military and industrial mobilizations compelled the trustees of cemeteries including American burial areas to curtail the services they had originally agreed to perform. Base section Quartermasters were thereupon advised to exclude all maintenance provisions from contracts with cemetery trustees and substitute provisions whereby the direct hire of civilians for such purposes might be placed on contract demand.[48] In areas of acute labor shortage the Commonwealth Government allocated Australian Army personnel for maintenance work in United States military cemeteries. While acting under orders of their own officers, these detachments were subject to American Graves Registration Service supervision.[49]

Modification of policy relative to maintenance of cemeteries and an inescapable tendency to establish mortuary groups capable of performing all services incidental to burial encouraged the concept of a self-contained organization. Aside from the desirability of attaining ends that far exceeded those contemplated in Headquarters Memorandum No. 20 of 20 March 1942 and, indeed, anticipated organizational theories explored during 1944 in proposals to set up in rearward areas of the active theaters a specialized organ-

[41] (1) Rpt, Maj Robert S. O'Brien, 25 Jun 42, sub: Report of Field Examination. RAC, AFWESPAC, QM 333.1 Inspections, Vol. I. (2) Rpt, 2d Lt W. G. Vetterlein, QMC, HQ USAFIA, sub: Cemeteries and Graves Registration Activities, Base Section No. 3. RAC, AFWESPAC, QM 333.1 Inspections, Vol. I.

[42] SWPA QM History, IV, 85.

[43] (1) *Ibid.*, 85–6. (2) Rpt 2d Lt Martin, 9 Dec 42. sub: Conditions in Base Section. RAC, AFWESPAC, QM 333.1 Inspections, Vol. 3.

[44] SWPA QM History, IV, 85–6.

[45] (1) *Ibid.*, 84. (2) Rpt, Col Meyer, 30 Dec 42, sub: Recent Trip to Townsville. RAC, AFWESPAC, QM 333.1 Inspections, Vol. 3.

[46] SWPA QM History, IV, 86.

[47] *Ibid.*, 80.

[48] *Ibid.*, 84.

[49] *Ibid.*, 86.

Digitized by Google

Figure 2.—U. S. Armed Forces Cemetery, Ipswich, Brisbane, Australia.

ization known as the "Quartermaster Graves Registrations Service, Zone of the Interior," trends of 1942 in Australia had the practical effect of stimulating a search throughout the command for individuals of professional qualifications in the mortuary field and actually procuring a number of competent technicians for impending operations in New Guinea.

In other words, a step-by-step accommodation of immediate needs, rather than a far-sighted evaluation of ultimate requirements, governed the early stages of graves registration development in the Southwest Pacific. The implication that shortsightedness was characteristic of planning for care of the dead would, of course, be unfair. Consideration of far-sighted measures, however, presupposed some anticipation of theater requirements on the part of responsible echelons in the Zone of Interior, namely the Office of The Quartermaster General, Headquarters, ASF, and the War Department General Staff. As a matter of fact, the status of graves registration planning in Washington failed to keep abreast of theater developments. When the Quartermaster Section, USAFIA, listed on 26 April 1942 one Quartermaster Graves Registration Company as a minimum theater requirement, the War Department refused the requisition because no such companies were available at that time.[50] Faced with this situation, USASOS provided its own solution by instituting a six-weeks' course of instruction at Melbourne during August 1942 for 37 civilian-trained morticians drawn from various organizations throughout the command.[51]

The success of this program depended upon the determination of qualifications for candidates rather than the preparation of comprehensive instructional matter. While a logical continuation of the practice of procuring qualified graves registration technicians by reassignment, this method furthered the interests of one service at the expense of others. Indeed, the practice brings into question the operation of personnel policies which permitted such faulty assignments in the first place and passed on to the theaters the problem of unscrambling personnel omelets cooked up in the Zone of the Interior. But aside from any serious flaws that may have characterized basic personnel policies, the absence of any apparent demand for specialized qualifications related to the graves registration activity at the

[50] SWPA QM History, II, 86–87. On 30 August 1942, G–3 WDGS advised HQ, USASOS: "Present indications are that few of recently approved additions will be available for shipment during remainder of calendar year." The requested GR unit was therefore given Priority 3. *Ibid.*, 87.

[51] (1) Rpt, CQM, USASOS, SWPA to G–4, 27 Aug 42, sub: Weekly Rpt of Activities. AFWESPAC, QM 400.1924 Rpts of Progress, Vol. I. (2) SWPA QM History, IV, 84–5.

Digitized by Google

outbreak of war largely accounts for the fact that funeral directors were assigned to uncongenial pursuits in laundry companies or Engineer battalions, while many embalmers found themselves doing their bit as stevedores. At any rate, the training course set up at Melbourne afforded the Graves Registration Service, SWPA, 37 additional technicians. Nineteen were given various technical ratings and shipped to the Advanced Base in New Guinea, where Japanese invasion forces based on the Buna-Gona area were dangerously threatening both Milne Bay and Port Moresby.[52]

Graves Registration in British New Guinea

Collapse of the enemy's effort to establish a chain of landing fields on the Papuan Peninsula and support by land-based aircraft his plans for continued aggression in the Southwest Pacific committed GHQ, SWPA, to a desperate counter-stroke. No preparations for graves registration operations in the battle zone appear to have been made prior to 14 October, when the bulk of the 128th Infantry was flown to Wanigela Mission, a point on the New Guinea coast some 56 miles southeast of Buna.[53] On 11 November, almost a month later, two graves registration technicians, Sergeants Sanerio Giordano and Walter G. McCrame, joined the forces then moving into position south of Buna. A reinforcement of two technical sergeants on 25 November and four more on 21 December, together with the loss of two stricken by malaria and evacuated to Port Moresby, left only two graves registration personnel for assignment to each regimental combat team during the climactic phase of the operation.[54]

This arrangement marked the first operational scheme for employment of graves registration forces in the Southwest Pacific area. It should be noted, however, that there was no unit organization; individual Graves Registration Service members were assigned as technical specialists to detachments furnished by the combat units and, according to the available evidence, supervised the collection, identification, and burial of the dead. So far as is known, there was no over-head supervision. The only Graves Registration Service member of commissioned rank in New Guinea did not reach the combat zone until 5 January 1943. Apart from an occasional order by regimental commanders,[55] there is little to indicate that combat officers exercised any influence or authority over graves registration activities. In fact, the absence of adequate supervision and shortage of technical personnel became points of criticism concerning these activities in the report of the commanding general on the Buna campaign.[56]

The evidence in this respect seems conclusive. After loss of his coworker, Sergeant Barnes carried on singlehanded in supervising graves registration operations on the Urbana Front. "Many times," it is related, "he braved the dangers of the Front with a squad of men to bring the dead back so that they would not be buried in isolated spots. He had his crew of workers going day and night and as he worked, his cemetery grew." [57]

Conditions on the Warren Front were even less favorable to the collection and evacuation of bodies.

> On the Warren Front, the Battle was a slow one, and the dead had to be buried where they lay, and when the firing ceased a bit. The many snipers and pill boxes made it necessary to [sic] Sgts. Prince and Winsor to crawl out almost in front of the pill boxes under cover of darkness, at times when the Commanding Officer would order them. These men would go unarmed at times because of the cumbersomeness of their rifles. Two or three times they were straffed by Zeroes and narrowly missed death by grenades. They may not have been able to start a big cemetery, but they marked their graves so that they could be found when the time came. Help for them was a Godsend, because they had lost so much weight that their clothes were hanging on their undernourished frames.[58]

Concentration of burials began on 5 January 1943 with the arrival of 2d Lt. Roy F. Sulzbacher, senior Graves Registration Service Officer, in New Guinea. After securing three details of five men each from the 126th Regimental Combat Team and placing these units under the direction of graves registration sergeants, the lieutenant disinterred most isolated remains on the Warren Front within three days and began an area search for the missing in action. Ability to consult and check eye-witness evidence concerning the disappearance of combat personnel in action contributed greatly to the success of this phase of the concentration program, "making the Campaign," according to Lieutenant Sulzbacher, "a record one for the few bodies lost and a minimum of unidentified bodies." [59] Meantime reburial operations were extended to the Urbana Front. All isolated burials were concentrated in three approved cemeteries, one near Buna Village, another at Soputa and the third on Duropa Plantation. Laid out in accordance with OQMG Plan—001, then properly

[52] *Ibid.*

[53] Unit History of 1st Platoon, 48th QM GRS Co., January 1943–January 1944. Hist Rec Sec, AGO. Hereinafter cited as 48th GRS Co History.

[54] (1) *Ibid.* (2) SWPA Quartermaster History IV, 89–90. This latter source state that "on 15 January the only men on duty in the combat area were six NCOS," i. e., two graves registration men for each of three regiments.

[55] See quoted account of operations on Warren front, below.

[56] Rpt of CG Buna Forces, on the Buna Campaign. Tenth Army AG, Historical 000.4, 53.

[57] 48th GRS Co History.

[58] *Ibid.*

[59] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

fenced and provided with flag poles, these cemeteries were promptly put on a maintenance basis.[60]

While concentration operations were progressing in the Buna area, advanced Base Headquarters at Port Moresby announced in General Orders No. 2, dated 19 January 1943, activation of the 1st Platoon, 48th Quartermaster Graves Registration Company. The personnel was composed of the 19 technical sergeants who had been previously selected for specialized training at Melbourne and then shipped to New Guinea.[61] Platoon Headquarters remained at Port Moresby while various task forces of Sixth Army troops advanced northwestward, securing air bases along the New Guinea coast and on off-shore islands and, toward the

Figure 3.—View of U. S. Armed Forces Cemetery, Buna Mission, New Guinea, taken on Memorial Day, 30 May 1943.

end of the year, participated with South Pacific forces in operations which were intended to isolate Rabaul, on New Britain Island. The primary responsibilities assumed by platoon headquarters included the selection of graves registration personnel on temporary assignment with the task forces and the distribution of mortuary supplies.[62] Maintenance of established cemeteries was taken over by the various advanced base commands.[63]

The platoon organization appears to have had little effect on the conduct of operations in close support of combat. The procedure improvised at Buna in assigning graves registration technicians to combat forces by pairs or small detachments prevailed throughout the year 1943. It is apparent, however, that Headquarters, Sixth Army, and task force commanders appreciated many of the lessons learned during the Buna campaign, and were anxious to obviate by careful advance planning the unhappy consequences arising from a tardy and piecemeal commitment of graves registration forces. Plans for the occupation of Kiriwina Island by Byproduct and Leatherback Task Forces specified detachments of enlisted men from the 48th Graves Registration Company, together with the designation of task force Graves Registration officers by their respective commanders. Operating under direct command of the task force Graves Registration Officer, these assigned technicians were responsible for supervision of over-all activities incidental to the collection, identification and burial of the dead.[64]

Emphasis on technical standards appears in this planning. Annex 3 of the Quartermaster Plan stated that graves registration procedures must conform to those prescribed in TM 10–630 and USASOS Regulations No. 30–30, dated 10 November 1942, a set of theater regulations which were drawn up during the Buna campaign and intended to emphasize such basic procedures as execution of GRS Form No. 1, Report of Interment, the disposition of identification tags, and the use of other identifying media—finger prints, tooth charts and physical peculiarities.[65]

Graves registration activities in connection with Sixth Army operations throughout 1943 appear to have been conducted on the Kiriwina Island model. Without positive evidence to the contrary, it is difficult to believe that operating conditions which prevailed during this period permitted any other arrangement. Certainly the provisions for care of the dead written into plans for the Morobe—Salamaua series of operations culminating on 12 September 1943 sustain such a view. It was stipulated that "a graves registration NCO will be assigned to each company, battery or separate company or detachment, either from the Graves Registration Service or from the unit itself." [66]

The Sixth Army Casualty Reporting Manual, 20 May 1943, outlined the duties of noncommissioned officers so appointed, stating specifically that they were "to supervise the collection of bodies of deceased from

[60] (1) *Ibid.* (2) SWPA QM History, IV, 90.

[61] 48th GRS Co History, 1.

[62] Rpt, Lt Col C. E. Butterworth, Chief, Mem Div, to the QM, Hq, USASOS, 24 Aug 43, sub: Report of Inspection trip by Lt Col Butterworth, 2, 4. RAC, AFWESPAC, QM 333.1 Inspections, Doc 26 A. Hereinafter cited as Butterworth, Rpt on GR activities, 1943.

[63] 48th GRS Co History, 5.

[64] (1) Hq Byproduct Task Force, FO 1, Adm O 1, 20 Jun 43. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 98–TF2–0.3. (2) Butterworth Rpt on GR Activities, 1943, 2. Five GR Sergeants, according to Colonel Butterworth, were assigned to each of these task forces.

[65] Hq Byproduct Task Force, FO 1, Adm O 1, Annex 3.

[66] Hq MacKechnie Force, Morobe, N. G., Adm O No. 1 to accompany FO No. 2, 26 Jun 43, quoted in Opn Rpt 162d Inf Regt—Morobe-Nassau-Bitoi Ridge-Mt. Tambu-Tambu Bay-Salamaua Area of New Guinea, 29 Jun–12 Sep 43. Dept Rec Br, AGO, 341–70.2 (21585).

Digitized by Google

the battle field and to see that all bodies are properly buried." Additional responsibilities included the selection of suitable sites for temporary cemeteries and isolated graves. Both organic and attached noncommissioned officers were to be assisted by details from the line and whatever native labor might be required. In the absence of a regular graves registration service, Chaplain Youngs, Force Headquarters, was designated as the Force Graves Registration Service Officer and was "directly responsible to the Force Adjutant for all required reports." [67]

During the course of this campaign only four enlisted men of the theater Graves Registration Service were attached to the 162d Regiment. A wide dispersion of force confined the activities of these technicians to four separate columns, while other elements of the command were dependent entirely upon chaplains and especially instructed noncommissioned company officers for the collection, identification, and burial of the dead. Although no distinction or differentiation of function appears in the activities of attached and organic graves registration personnel while acting in close support of combat, the concentration of isolated remains became an exclusive responsibility of the theater Graves Registration Service.

> At the conclusion of the campaign a large cemetery site was located near the beach opposite the landing strip at Salamaua. Instructions had been issued to the Graves Registration Service to assemble all bodies of the dead and reinter the remains in this cemetery at the time the regiment was relieved and returned to Australia. Prior to departure of the regiment memorial services were held and the cemetery was blessed with fitting ceremony by the Catholic and Protestant Chaplains. [68]

The fragments of available evidence, to be sure, prohibit a categorical statement that the experience of the 162d Regiment was typical. At the same time, the Sixth Army Casualty Reporting Manual reflects a state of affairs which would scarcely permit any wide departure from the methods prescribed in Administrative Order No. 1, 26 June 1943. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that the Kiriwina Island model prevailed until arrival in the theater of the 601st Graves Registration Company on 10 November 1943. Thereafter greater resources of manpower and organization permitted improvements and innovations that had hitherto been impossible. These changes are reserved for treatment in a subsequent chapter. It should nevertheless be noted that, aside from concentration of isolated burials, little or no differentiation of function in the performance of attached and organic graves registration personnel appeared for over a year. By contrast to the lag in this respect in the Southwest Pacific area, the trend toward specialization of function becomes so marked in the North African Theater during the Tunisian and Sicilian campaigns as to become a recognized requirement of planning before the invasion of Italy. The lag in the Southwest Pacific, however, must be attributed to delay in the activation and training of Graves Registration Service companies at home, together with the strategic policy of regarding Germany as the principal enemy and, consequently, giving prior consideration to requirements of the forces engaged with that adversary.

[67] Opn Rpt, 162d Inf Regt.
[68] *Ibid.*

Guadalcanal To Rabaul

The same emergency which involved Southwest Pacific forces in a desperate counter-offensive stroke against the Japanese in North–East New Guinea diverted all resources at the disposal of Admiral Nimitz in the Central and South Pacific Ocean areas to a series of limited offensive operations that began in August 1942 with the attack on Guadalcanal. Continued progress early in 1942 of Japanese aggression from Rabaul in the Bismarck Archipelago, down through the Solomon Islands and along the adjacent coast of northeastern New Guinea not only brought the enemy perilously close to Milne Bay and Port Moresby, last remaining outposts on that island, but posed a threat to Allied sea communications extending southwestward from Oahu to Australia and New Zealand. Reports of construction on landing fields in the southern Solomons during June served warning that the direct ocean route through New Caledonia to Brisbane was in imminent peril of attack by air.[69]

Three courses of action were examined in this emergency: (1) selection of an alternate route which would detour widely through the southern Pacific and, while avoiding the reach of hostile aircraft, would necessarily incur the disadvantage of overburdening a limited number of cargo carriers; (2) revision of allocations to Europe and the Mediterranean with a view to mounting a powerful offensive which would retake the Solomons and North–East New Guinea and then reduce Rabaul with converging movements from these areas; (3) consideration of an offensive-defensive pro-

[69] (1) John Miller, Jr. *Guadalcanal: The First Offensive*, UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II (Washington, 1949), p. 7. Hereinafter cited as Miller, *Guadalcanal*. (2) Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, Vol. IV, *The Pacific: Guadalcanal to Saipan, August 1942 to July 1944* (Chicago, 1950), pp. 10, 14–15. Hereinafter cited as AAF, IV, *Guadalcanal to Saipan*.

Digitized by Google

gram which would be gradually intensified by deliveries of scheduled allocations and, while courting a risk in prolonging the total effort in reaching Rabaul, would, nevertheless, offer the immediate advantage of meeting enemy pressure without incurring the disadvantage that conditioned action in the first and second alternatives.[70]

Two of these three proposals presented complex variations of the strategic problem involved in assessing the value of position in terms of effort demanded at a given time to insure or acquire possession. Reduced to a form of the over-simplification that delights arm-chair strategists and public relations officers, it was a case of "trading space for time." The third alternative might, in similar terms, be described as a scheme for buying space on the installment plan.

After sustaining General Arnold's view that the situation in the Pacific should not be permitted to interfere with allocations for support of the North African invasion, or build-up of the European bombardment force,[71] the Joint Chiefs of Staff, on 2 July 1942 directed that an offensive be mounted in the Pacific at once, the ultimate aim of which was seizure of the New Britain-New Ireland-New Guinea areas. This objective, it was specified, would be reached in three successive movements or "tasks," the first looking to Guadalcanal and adjacent islands in the southern Solomons as its target area, the second including occupation of the central and northern Solomons, together with points on the northeastern coast of New Guinea, the third to be consummated by reduction of Rabaul and supporting positions in the Bismarck Archipelago.[72] Task One, according to Operation Plan 1–43, as issued on 12 July 1942 by Vice Adm. R. L. Ghormley, commanding the South Pacific Area, would be accomplished by an assault team comprising Task Force 63, a land-based bombardment formation of seven air groups, and Task Force 61, which included an Air Support Force, two Fire Support Groups, and a Landing Force to be furnished by the 1st Marine Division, reinforced.[73] A revised target date of 7 August called for assault landings on Guadalcanal and Tulagi. United States Army troops were to garrison these areas after seizure by the Landing Force.

The tactical and logistic aspects of this program imposed severe restrictions on provisions for care of the dead. A graves registration doctrine nicely adjusted to conventional methods of land warfare could not be readily adapted to a situation without parallel in the annals of American military history.[74] Then, while pursuing limited objectives, the scope of offensive action was to be expanded by a piecemeal commitment of reinforcements. Such a process of expansion, it goes without saying, would complicate the mission of most technical services. In any rapid build-up, the just ratio between combat formations and supporting elements is seldom maintained. The problem becomes difficult indeed when a particular service, such as graves registration, is nonexistent.

A somewhat similar situation had been encountered on the Bataan Peninsula, and was soon to be repeated during the North African landings and, again, on the northeastern coast of New Guinea. Although the hasty adaptations made in each of these situations offer interesting variations of methods by which a graves registration service may be improvised during hostilities, the one developed in the southern Solomons may be regarded as unique, not only for the reason that it was the first of World War II to act in support of offensive action, but because of the fact that this service was improvised during the initial phase of fighting by combat personnel of the Marine Corps.

A curious inversion of long-range expectations put this responsibility on the soldiers of the sea. Prewar planning for expansion of the Marine Corps devoted no more attention to the graves registration problem than was given by the Army during its augmentation programs prior to hostilities. Aware, however, that amphibious warfare would involve large naval forces in off-shore operations, the Navy Department realized that interment on land of its seamen, together with Marine Corps and Coast Guard dead, must be substituted for the traditional burial at sea. Going too far, perhaps, in assuming that the Army actually had a graves registration service, the Navy determined to follow Army standards in this respect and, whenever the two arms participated in joint operations, to work under direction of the Army's Graves Registration Service.[75]

As a matter of fact, the model to which the Navy looked for guidance existed only on paper. Only seven regularly constituted Quartermaster Graves Registration Service companies had been activated in the United States prior to August 1942, the same month which witnessed the initiation of offensive operations in the Solo-

[70] *Ibid.*

[71] AAF, IV, *Guadalcanal to Saipan*, pp. 48–49.

[72] Miller, *Guadalcanal*, pp. 15–17.

[73] *Ibid.*, pp. 28–31.

[74] As discussed in Chapter II, above, the doctrine developed in TM 10–630 was limited to actual experience with the square divisions of World War I. Some adaptations in the paper organization of QM Graves Registration companies had accompanied the shift to the triangular division.

[75] Ltr, Rear Adm L. Sheldon, Actg Chief, Bur of Medicine and Surgery, to TQMG, 15 Aug 44, sub: Return of Remains. Admiral Sheldon reviewed naval policy regarding care of the dead in agreeing to proposals that responsibility be assigned to TQMG for returning all American dead after hostilities. Cf. ch. VI, below.

Digitized by Google

mon Islands.[76] Furthermore, the practical experience enjoyed by South Pacific Army troops in the disposition of remains was limited to conditions applying at a number of island garrisons where deaths were few and problems of evacuation, identification and burial were totally dissimilar to those encountered in the battle zone. In New Caledonia, for example, interments had been made in burial plots acquired through the good offices of resident French officials and, according to report, with the use of local mortuary facilities.[77] In addition, garrison burial plots had been established in the Fiji Archipelago and on other islands along the sea route from Oahu. While suggestive, perhaps, of developments then taking place in Australia, some distinction should be recognized between the relatively simple task of maintaining a few burial plots on relatively small islands in mid-ocean and the complicated problems of administration that arose in developing a centralized cemeterial system spread out over the Australian continent. Where one anticipated the nature of adjustments that must be made in organizing a graves registration service for support of combat, and, indeed, took some steps to provide personnel for such an eventuality, the other limited its efforts to immediate requirements. In consequence little or no provision was made by the South Pacific area command for graves registration in the battle zones until the first Army units went ashore at Guadalcanal.[78]

The Southern Solomons

In assuming responsibility for burial of their dead in the southern Solomons, Marine Corps units, like Army forces on Bataan, undertook the task of improvising a provisional organization which would answer the purposes of a theater graves registration service. Since the two arms were equally inexperienced in such matters, it cannot be assumed that one enjoyed any marked advantage over the other. The Army, it is true, had a doctrine and a paper organization. The Marine Corps, however, had accepted the Army's doctrine and, in so doing, endeavored to develop its provisional field service along organizational lines prescribed by the Army. At the same time, there seems reason to believe that the Marines enjoyed some advantages in the fact that over-all staff supervision of the activity was vested in the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, while the Army, after dividing this responsibility between G–1 and G–4 sections of the General Staff, had left the obligation of organizing a graves registration service in time of war with The Quartermaster General. As noted elsewhere,[79] this division of responsibility gave rise to considerable confusion whenever combat formations were deployed before Quartermaster Graves Registration Service units were available to perform their supporting function. In such circumstances, Quartermaster officers were no better prepared than other responsible officers to attack a problem which, for one reason or another, had been neglected by all parties concerned.

The Marine Corps plan for evacuation and burial of remains during the first phase of fighting on Guadalcanal called for a graves registration platoon of combat personnel which was to follow the landing force ashore and make proper disposition of all fatalities. According to a subsequent critique, this organic unit confined its activities almost entirely to emergency burial on the battlefield.[80] A practice which virtually ignored the Army's doctrine of reducing small burial plots and isolated graves to a minimum appears to have been accepted by the Marines as a necessary concession to conditions of combat. It was frankly admitted that "initially fatalities will have to be buried at or near the spot they are killed." [81]

In contrast to the policy which later took shape in the Southwest Pacific Area, notably during the Admiralty Islands operation, and which emphasized the desirability of selecting sites for consolidated task force cemeteries as early as possible during the assault phase, the experience on Guadalcanal suggested that only after the main objective had been attained did it seem practicable "to establish a semipermanent cemetery." Given the central location, it was thought that mechanical diggers might be useful in the event of heavy casualties, and that a chaplain should serve with the provisional graves registration platoon to assure the performance of appropriate burial rites on all occasions. Experience also suggested the economy of setting up a morgue for the reception of all bodies delivered directly by units and hospitals, or evacuated from the front line. For the rest, it was recommended that the provisional platoon should consist of two commissioned officers (1st

[76] AGO, List of all Quartermaster Graves Registration Service Units in Army of the United States (typescript, 23 March 1946). Compiled by Organization and Directory Section, Operations Branch, AGO, this list includes all graves registration companies and separate platoons activated between 28 March 1942 and 29 December 1945.

[77] (1) Rpt. Col Alexander J. Smith, QMC, to CG SPBC, 28 Aug. 44, sub: Geographical and Historical Sketch U. S. Cemetery No. I, New Caledonia. RAC, New Caledonia 687, Cemeteries, Fields of Honor.

[78] Pers ltr, Col J. H. Burgheim, QM Sv Cmd, to Maj Gen E. B. Gregory, 24 Feb 43, no sub. RAC, GRS (SPA).

[79] See above, ch. II; also III, below, The North African Landings.

[80] Intervs and Statements of officers of the 1st Marine Div of the Guadalcanal Opns. Compiled by Col B. Q. Jones, GSC, 5 Dec 42–19 Jan 43. P & O Files, 1245: 45 Hist Rec Sec, AGO.

[81] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

and 2d lieutenant) and twenty privates, together with three pharmacists mates, who would act as specialists in matters concerning identification and preparation of remains for burial. Finally, in consideration of the difficulties encountered in moving bodies to the rear, it was urged that an allotment of two 2½-ton trucks should be regarded as the minimum requirement for transportation.[82]

Two important distinctions may be noted between basic Army concepts of graves registration and those developed by the Marines in this situation. One has already been noted—that of accepting emergency battlefield burials as a necessary concession to conditions of combat, rather than regarding these conditions as a transient phase which might justify only a temporary departure from the general requirement of evacuation to a central burial place. The other appears in the Navy assumption that personnel of medical training were best qualified to perform the office of identification and other activities requiring some proficiency in mortuary practices. The Army, in contrast, had always maintained that identification was related to a diversity of procedures—prompt collection and evacuation of bodies, reduction of isolated burials to a minimum, scrupulous attention to the preservation of basic identifying media found on bodies, and meticulous accuracy in the preparation of burial records—the efficient performance of which automatically established the identity of a great majority of recovered remains. Then, aside from results of an efficient routine, it was held that the solution in individual cases of exceptional difficulty did not necessarily involve an application of techniques which were an exclusive monopoly of the medical profession. In this connection, it will be recalled that in 1939 The Quartermaster General resisted suggestions of The Surgeon General to the effect that inclusion of Medical Corps sergeants in the type of Quartermaster Graves Registration Company then under consideration offered an opportunity of acquiring especially qualified personnel not otherwise available for purposes of identification.[83]

During the course of Army-Navy cooperation in the South Pacific area, these distinctions tended to disappear. At the same time, the Marine Corps concept of emergency burial, or rather the conditions that justified such a view, imposed modifications on Army graves registration practices during the Solomons campaign that were generally avoided in other theaters, particularly those which became the seats of large-scale warfare.

In November and December 1942, elements of the Americal and 25th Infantry Divisions landed in the Southern Solomons to relieve the decimated 1st Marine Division and complete the conquest of Guadalcanal. These units were incorporated in the XIV Corps, under command of Maj. Gen. Alexander M. Patch (later Lt. Gen., commanding Seventh U. S. Army, ETO).[84] Departure from the original plan of employing these Army troops as a garrison force hastened planning for a provisional graves registration service to act in support of combat. The measures which were taken to meet this emergency would indicate that little forethought had been given to the problem.

In organizing the Island Quartermaster's Office on Guadalcanal, a Graves Registration Section was established within the Administrative Division.[85] A search for technically qualified individuals to direct graves registration operations disclosed a Field Artillery corporal who had been a mortician in civilian life, and whose unit had just landed on the island. Promptly transferred to the Quartermaster Corps with the rank of warrant officer, this ex-artilleryman (later 1st Lt. Chester E. Goodwin, QMC) took over the burial site originally selected by the 1st Marine Division and created the United States Armed Forces Cemetery, Guadalcanal No. 1. The cemeterial unit consisted of six enlisted men and a force of native laborers. An engineer detail corrected the haphazard plot layout in conformity with standard specifications prescribed by The Quartermaster General.[86] Contrary, however, to customary procedure, the concentration of remains from emergency graves was deferred for the following reasons:

> No attempt has been made to date, to move battlefield casualties to the cemetery owing to the battered condition under which these bodies were interred and the rapidity with which decomposition takes place in the tropical climates, and these bodies must wait for a considerable time before they can be exhumed and reburied in proper cemeterial plots.[87]

Departure from basic graves registration doctrine was of course not formally sanctioned by higher authority. XIV Corps Headquarters directed in Field Order No. I, 16 January 1943, that "Burial will be by the Quartermaster in Island Cemetery." At the same time, Maj. Gen. (now General and Chief of Staff,

[82] *Ibid.*

[83] Correspondence between The Quartermaster General and The Surgeon General concerning this matter is reviewed in Chapter II, above.

[84] Miller, *Guadalcanal*, pp. 212–13.

[85] Personal ltr, Col J. H. Burgheim, QM Sv Comd, New Caledonia to Maj Gen (later Lt Gen) E. B. Gregory, 24 Feb 43.

[86] *Ibid.*

[87] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

Figure 4.—U. S. Army, Navy, Marine Cemetery, Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands.

USA) J. Lawton Collins, commanding the 25th Division, offers evidence which should establish beyond serious doubt that a combination of inexperienced personnel, difficult terrain, and shortage of motor transport compelled his division to accept the Marine Corps practice of restricting graves registration activities in the battle area to emergency burials. Discussing this matter in conference with his divisional officers, General Collins stated that prior to the opening of the campaign he had issued Administrative Memorandum No. 7 with a view to laying down procedures "for that part of the Graves Registration Service which we have to handle within the Division." [88]

The original graves registration plan, it was explained, had been modified in the field by supplementary instructions which amounted to a frank admission that conditions made it mandatory "to bury dead right on the ground instead of littering them to the rear." [89] Then, recalling that he had seen bodies being littered in the scorching sun from Mt. Austen and Hill 52 over "terrible trails," while many wounded lay unattended on the battlefield, General Collins insisted that undue concern for the dead at expense of succor to the wounded was an expression of false sentiment that had no place in war.

Assuming that conditions dictated burial "right on the ground," precautions should, he urged, be taken to ensure the marking of every grave and proper disposition of identification tags, one being left with the body, the other attached to the grave marker. Furthermore, the General insisted that "you must bury the dead far enough off the trail so that, when the trail is extended, a bulldozer does not carry away the cross erected to mark the grave and cover the grave so that we cannot find it again." [90]

In other words, realistic measures should be taken in making the best of an admittedly difficult situation, rather than attempting to realize an unattainable ideal. Lacking trained personnel and motor transportation essential to the operation of a collecting point system, any persistent effort at evacuation of bodies to a centrally located burial place only tended to defeat the utilitarian purpose sought in first removing the dead as a sanitary precaution and as a means of preserving combat morale. The summarization of "Lessons Learned" in this report emphasized the realistic point of view: "It is essential to the health of the command that rigid field sanitation be carried on in all units. This is especially true in advancing operations where supporting units occupy areas recently evacuated by tactical troops. The dead must be buried promptly and use of slit trenches must be required whenever it is tactically feasible." [91]

The Road to Rabaul

The lessons of Guadalcanal do not differ in important essentials from those learned during the Bataan cam-

[88] Rpt, Opns of the 25th Div, Guadalcanal, 17 Dec 42—5 Feb 43, Sec V, p. 120. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 325-33.4.

[89] *Ibid.*

[90] *Ibid.*

[91] *Ibid.* Sec. V.

Digitized by Google

paign, or in North Africa and on the northeastern coast of New Guinea. Fundamentally, a technical function cannot be satisfactorily performed by novices. In the South and Southwest Pacific Areas, the commitment of imperfectly organized forces to a campaign of limited objectives recognized that the enemy, while deprived in some measure of his former offensive power, had not entirely lost the initiative; that victory in counteraction must be purchased at a price which might well exceed the anticipated costs of an all-out offensive toward the same objective. Bataan, of course, presents the situation of an army doomed to defeat under circumstances which limited the scope of graves registration to a minimum—in the last analysis, to the pleasure of the victor. In the other situations under review the price of victory permitted only a parsimonious provision for care of the dead. While relief to this condition was afforded in North Africa by the early arrival of two regularly constituted graves registration companies, offensive-defensive operations continued in the South and Southwest Pacific at a pace which scarcely permitted the provisional graves registration services in those areas to cope with their expanding responsibilities. Nearly a year had elapsed when, on 2 August 1943, the first Quartermaster Graves Registration Company, the 49th, landed at Guadalcanal.[92]

After supervising developments at the Armed Forces Cemetery on Guadalcanal, Lieutenant Goodwin organized and trained the provisional graves registration units with which he served at Munda, Rendova and on other islands of the Solomons group. There are indications that these provisional units were stiffened by the attachment of highly trained specialists, and that the method which was extensively used during the same period in northeastern New Guinea obtained similar results in the Solomons. A 25th Infantry Division

[92] Station List, 49th GR Co. Orgn & Dir Sec, Opns Br, AGO.

Figure 5.—A soldier from a nearby unit examines identification tag attached to an isolated grave on New Georgia Island.

Digitized by Google

report states: "Two Graves Registration Service enlisted men from Guadalcanal were attached and carried out normal GRS functions." [93]

No definite figure is given for the size of provisional graves registration units serving in close support to combat. Bodies were removed from the battlefield and, whenever possible, carried to task force or island cemeteries, some of which were in course of time operated by detachments of the 49th GR Company. Otherwise, the practice of emergency burials appears to have been accepted, not so much as an unavoidable evil, but as a practical alternative to evacuation and burial in a rear area cemetery. In the 25th Division, burial and related graves registration responsibilities were shared jointly by chaplains and the Graves Registration Section. On New Georgia, the 161st Infantry wrapped its dead in shelter halves and, insofar as circumstances permitted, evacuated remains to a central burial point. "This system," it is reported, "worked very well and all dead of the regiment were accounted for and buried in the island cemetery." [94]

The same procedure was carried out by the 27th Infantry until it engaged the enemy on Arundel Island. There the difficulties of evacuation required many emergency burials on the battlefield. Steps were taken, however, to accomplish the concentration of these remains at the earliest possible date. According to report, overlays of the exact place of burial were made by the unit chaplains, "who later guided graves registration personnel to the graves so that the bodies could be reburied in the island cemetery." [95]

The 35th Infantry encountered similar difficulties on Vella Lavella, where, it is reported, the regiment "was constantly on the go and transportation to bring the dead in was unheard of since roads were almost nonexistent." [96] Owing to these circumstances, eight remains still rested in their emergency graves when the 35th returned to Guadalcanal. By use of carefully prepared overlays, a graves registration unit of the 3d New Zealand Division recovered the eight bodies and reinterred them in the island cemetery at Maravari.[97]

The shortcomings of provisional units in coping with difficult tactical situations led to proposals by the 37th Infantry Division that a permanent type of organization should be adopted and that greater emphasis on uniform procedures would correct many existing deficiencies in the recovery and burial of remains. Viewing graves registration primarily as a logistical problem, the recommendation stated in part:

> It is essential that a graves registration platoon be attached to the Division Quartermaster and should accompany the first echelon of Quartermaster troops to a combat area. The presence of a graves registration platoon insures the proper marking and location of graves and also provides experienced personnel in the performance of these duties.[98]

Uniformity of procedure, according to the 37th Division report, depended in large manner on standardization of method at the regimental and battalion level for purposes of coordinating graves registration activities within the division. Regiments and battalions, it was urged, should designate an officer or warrant officer to perform the function and, as unit graves registration officer, assume responsibility for the proper marking of all graves, the preparation and submission of overlays of graves outside the assigned cemeteries, and the handling of all equipment recovered from deceased personnel.

Burial of enemy dead in the South Pacific, as in the Southwest Pacific Area, was regarded as a problem of field sanitation rather than one which primarily concerned the Graves Registration Service. The distinction is clearly drawn in the following statement: "Sanitary conditions in the front lines were jeopardized but did not actually prove a health hazard because of the close cooperation of regimental and battalion surgeons with the Division Medical Inspector. Japanese dead were buried as quickly as the tactical situation permitted." [99] In this same connection, it is related that a detail of forty men was dispatched to the 129th regimental area during March 1944, and that two additional parties numbering twenty each were required within the month to clear this area of Japanese dead. As related elsewhere, a similar problem arose during the same month on Los Negros Island in the Admiralites. There, too, sanitary precautions required the mass burial of several hundred enemy dead by combat troops, while only one Japanese soldier was interred in the island cemetery.[100] Conventions and regulations notwithstanding, equal care of enemy dead went beyond the capabilities of graves registration units which, according to criticism, were scarcely able to fulfill their function with respect to American and Allied dead.

[93] Rpt, Opns of the 25th Inf Div in the Central Solomons: New Georgia—Arundel—Vella Lavella, 16 Aug–12 Oct 43, p. 124. R & O Files, Drawer 1235. Hist Rec Sec, AGO.

[94] Rpt, Lt Col Kress R. Williams, 25th Div QM, n. d., sub: Opns of the Div QM Co in Opns of Central Solomons and New Georgia, 16 Aug 43–12 Oct 43. RAC, New Caledonia, QM 370.2, No. 3, AG Oct 43. This report appears to have been embodied as Paragraph 240 of the 25th Division Operations Report cited above.

[95] *Ibid.*

[96] *Ibid.*

[97] *Ibid.*

[98] After Action Rpt, Opns of the 37th Inf Div on Bougainville B. S. I., 8 Nov 43 to 30 Apr 44. P & O File, Drawer 1233: 17. Hist Rec Sec. AGO.

[99] *Ibid.*

[100] See below, chapter VII, The Admiralty Islands Campaign.

Digitized by Google

Tendencies of Army procedure toward evacuation of bodies to central burial points, together with a reduction of emergency battlefield burials to the minimum actually justified by circumstances, were paralleled by changes in operating practices of Marine Corps graves registration units. Plans for the disposition of remains during operations on Cape Gloucester obviously presupposed the existence of an effective collecting point system which enlisted cooperative effort on the part of combat personnel and members of the provisional graves registration unit supporting each regiment.

> Primarily the disposal of the dead will be the function of the Graves Registration Unit. The dead will be segregated and properly covered by the various units until transportation is available, then they are sent to the Graves Registration Unit for identification, preparation for burial, and burial. Burial will be in areas designated by the Group Commander only. The personal effects of the deceased will be handled only by this unit and they will be held accountable.[101]

Composed of ten Marines and one pharmacist's mate, this graves registration unit was to remain at the regimental aid station so long as the tactical situation permitted, and, in any event, would deal directly with the Regimental Surgeon and Regimental Adjutant. A detailed explanation of required procedure stipulated that the graves registration section would handle all burials in designated cemeteries and that pharmacists' mates attached to the section were to be the only persons authorized to remove identification tags from bodies. In cases of emergency, one tag might be detached in order to substantiate a certificate of identification forwarded by an officer to the Graves Registration Section. In all such cases identification must be absolute. When all identifying media, including the tags. were missing, identification might be established by personal recognition on the part of a member of the unit engaged in the area. The section was to serve as the supply agency for all graves registration equipment.

Plans formulated by combat team "A," Bronze Force, specified that all burials would be under the direction of one section of the combat team, and that the graves registration section attached to this team "will perform all duties in connection with burial in established cemeteries or on the field of battle when necessary." It was further specified that the location of permanent or semi-permanent cemeteries would be designated by the combat team adjutant only, and that "burials on the field of battle will, when circumstances permit, be reburied in regularly established cemeteries." [102]

Closure of the Bismarck Sea with occupation of the Admiralties, and the development of bases on New Britain and New Ireland within easy bombing range of Rabaul, secured the isolation of that point. With the climactic assault which was to have concluded the movement launched at Guadalcanal no longer necessary, the South Pacific ceased to exist as a major theater of combat operations, except for air strikes against Truk. Its naval forces were largely diverted to the Central Pacific, where attack through the Gilbert and Marshall Islands toward the Marianas was already in progress. Army ground forces in general were transferred to the Southwest Pacific.

The North African Landings

The story of graves registration in all overseas theaters during 1942 and for a considerable part of 1943 has a common theme. This may be summarized in a single word—"improvisation." Three hastily assembled graves registration units which went under the organizational designation of Quartermaster Graves Registration Service companies began functioning at the beginning of hostilities on the Bataan Peninsula. Activated in the absence of the war plans officer and operating without benefit of the technical manual (TM 10–630) published three months previously, these units made a creditable effort in meeting requirements written into the AR 30—series of February 1924. Improvisation took a different trend in the Southwest Pacific, first achieving some success in the establishment and operation of a cemeterial system on the Australian continent and then creating a provisional theater Graves Registration Service unit which managed after a fashion to support combat troops during the first year of active operations in New Guinea. Then the drive through the Solomons toward Rabaul required adaptations for care of the dead that were as hastily contrived as those employed during the Bataan campaign or in Papua.

The graves registration story in North Africa presents still another variation on the theme of improvisation. Launched 11 months after the outbreak of war, Operation TORCH reveals a disappointing lag in the program of providing Quartermaster Graves Registration Service companies for care of the dead. While it is true that thirteen such companies were activated

[101] Annex A, Adm O 5–43, Medical Plan, 18 Dec 43, to accompany Opn O No. 1–43, in Opn Rpt, First Marine Division (transmitted 13 Jul 44), sub: Phase II. Landing and Seizure of Cape Gloucester Airfields. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 12–1.0312/3 (7813–b).

[102] Annex A, Adm O 5–43 to accompany Opn O 5–43, Combat Team "A," Bronze Force, 20 Dec 43, in *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

in the Zone of the Interior during 1942,[103] no comprehensive course of unit training was developed until April of the following year. Furthermore, only six of the total number of graves registration companies then in existence were destined to complete their training before the end of 1943.[104] It is also true that plans for Operation TORCH included with the assignment of service troops for Task Force "A" the 46th and 47th Quartermaster Graves Registration companies. Due, however, to tonnage restrictions, this arrangement was canceled, transferring care of the dead from partially trained service units to untrained detachments supplied by combat organizations.[105]

Field and administrative orders for the Western Task Force, organized in the United States, specified that burial of the dead would be accomplished by organizations and that graves would be carefully marked and locations reported to Task Force "A" commander.[106] Arrangements made by Headquarters, Sub Task Force Goal Post, for the conduct of burial and other graves registration activities reflect an apparent disposition on the part of the Quartermaster Corps to permit other technical services, notably the Corps of Chaplains, to take the initiative in matters pertaining to care of the dead. No doubt the shortage of Quartermaster troops contributed to this disposition; at any rate the selection of graves registration officers for each of the four groups constituting this force fell to the chaplains. They were each to be assisted by one noncommissioned officer, who would be detailed by the unit commander, and by one medical noncommissioned officer furnished by the unit surgeon. Unit commanders would also supply enlisted personnel on call from graves registration officers, who were responsible for the organization of graves registration groups and burial parties. To graves registration groups were assigned the following duties:

(1) Making of Burial Record (temporary) Field Emergency QMC Form No. 1–GRS in triplicate. . . .
(2) Proper identification of body (one identification tag left on body, one on marker).
(3) Collecting of personal effects . . .
(4) Marking of grave with entrenching tool or other expedient.
(5) Map location of graves . . . on back of the burial record form with proper compass bearing from prominent landmark.[107]

The attached medical noncommissioned officer was specifically charged to identify dismembered portions of bodies, take fingerprints and furnish other data pertinent to the identification of unknown dead. In addition to these functions, he became responsible, in the absence of unit medical personnel, for the preparation of WD AGO Form No. 52B (report of death) and for rendering emergency first aid. The burial detail undertook a three-fold function: (1) collection of bodies to avoid isolated burials; (2) the digging of graves; (3) assistance in the search for unfound dead.[108]

Inclusion of the collection of bodies, search for unfound dead, and digging of graves in an operations cycle by a single unit betrays a somewhat rudimentary concept of the graves registration problem. Stout resistance by the Vichy French forces would, after continuous movement and mounting fatalities, have soon stretched the limited capabilities of such a scheme to the breaking point. Fortunately, opposition to the Western Task Force, although sharp and momentarily bitter, did not require the intervention of reserves which were not available, or subject to prolonged stress a supply organization which had considerable difficulty in supporting the initial landings. Sub Task Forces Blackstone, Brushwood, and Goal Post reached their immediate objectives—Safi, Fedala, and Mehdia, respectively—according to schedule, while Brushwood, reinforced by armored elements landed at Safi, drove toward Casablanca. Active resistance collapsed on 12 November, four days after the landing assaults on the morning of the 8th.[109]

The assigned graves registration details established four temporary cemeteries during and immediately after the period of hostilities—one on Medhia Beach, later to be known as Mehdia Military Cemetery, another on 10 November within the walls of the Christian Cemetery at Fedala, a third on the 13th at Fort Kasba, near Port Lyautey, and the fourth on the same date in a plot adjoining Ben Ni Sik Cemetery at Casablanca.[110]

An incident relating to the early history of Mehdia Military Cemetery characterizes the makeshift nature of graves registration operations during the advance on Casablanca. Chaplain Cecil L. Propst, GRO, 60th Infantry Regiment, selected the site and made preliminary

[103] (1) Data in AG Organization and Directory Files. (2) See above, ch. II.
[104] *Ibid.*
[105] (1) Memo, Maj Gen Thos. T. Handy, ACofS, for CG AGF and CG SOS, 2 Sep 42, sub: Preparation of Units for Overseas Service, OPD 370.5/CT (9-2-42). (2) Rpt, Col J. A. Dabney, CofS Center Task Force, n. d., sub: Lessons Learned from North African Landings. Hist Rec Sec AGO, 95-TFI-0.4.
[106] Final Report of Western Task Force on Operation "Torch," 8-11 Nov. 1942, Vol I (Summary of Plans), Adm O No. 1. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 95-TF3-0.3.
[107] *Ibid.*, Vol. II (annexes), Annex No. 4 to Adm O No. 1.
[108] *Ibid.*
[109] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Appendix No. I, pp. 1, ff.
[110] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, G-1 Periodic Reports, Item No. 4, Graves Registration.

Digitized by Google

arrangements for plot development, while S/Sgt. Charles J. Kierman supervised the collection of bodies in a jeep borrowed without authorization from his battalion commander. Burial operations proceeded smoothly enough until the versatile sergeant was arrested for theft following an accidental encounter with the rightful owner of the jeep. After being restored to duty and undertaking the construction of grave markers, Sergeant Kierman met death while demonstrating mine clearance techniques to a group of French officers. He was buried on 12 November under one of the crosses made by his own hands. President Roosevelt visited Mehdia Military Cemetery during the Casablanca conference and placed a wreath in memory of the sergeant and his comrades.[111]

While poorly supported combat forces were saved the rigors of a protracted campaign, to say nothing of the waste and disorganization that attend planning on a narrow margin, after-action appraisals of the five-day operation in Morocco disclosed that preparations for maximum utilization of the forces in hand left much to be desired. According to a G–1 critique, it was originally intended that the commander of each smaller unit would carry certain minimum service records and report to the next higher unit of the task force to which he was attached. Yet no assignment of administrative personnel to the major task forces for such purposes was made. Again, the required equipment and supplies were not issued. Deprived of complete and timely reports, higher headquarters was frequently compelled to make important tactical decisions on a basis of defective information.[112] Such faulty intelligence could only be compensated for by ingenious but costly improvisation in the field.

Many of the difficulties actually encountered at the front and in the communication zone had been foreseen during the planning phase of Operation TORCH. Due, however, to the demand for profound secrecy in mounting an operation of such magnitude, and the necessity of achieving surprise in delivery of the initial assault, security measures appear to have been enforced at the expense of transmitting orders that, in many instances, were vital to an effective control of the operation. Before leaving Washington, the G–1's of divisions met and prepared written instructions to the major units. These instructions, however, did not reach the smaller units. Although security restrictions certainly forbade any scheme of wide publication and indiscriminate distribution, it was subsequently admitted in the G–1 critique that "detailed instructions could have been issued in sealed orders to the various smaller units and assimilated aboard ship." [113]

The same general deficiency existed in regard to advance planning for graves registration operations in the field. Aside from the fact established in field and administrative orders that organizations would bury their own dead, no one seems to have been aware of just how the responsibility would be assigned or where one might find detailed instructions for conducting the activity. Theoretically, burial of the dead in an active theater became a function of G–1. It will be recalled that the burial function had been transferred from G–4 to G–1 in 1939 on the ground that matters relating to dead soldiers were still personnel problems and that the change of assignment promised a more equitable distribution of staff work in the field.[114] No change, however, had been made in the basic Army Regulations which held The Quartermaster General responsible in time of war for the organization of graves registration service and delegated actual supervision over the operations of this service to unit quartermasters. Thus the presence of Quartermaster Graves Registration Service units in the Tunisian and Sicilian campaigns had the practical effect of restoring the function to its original status, while the absence of such units created the very situation which the AR 30–series of February 1924 sought to correct. Circumstances attending the establishment and development of the Mehdia Military Cemetery may be offered as an illustration of this point. The rationalization that burial was a personnel matter offered no remedy until G–1 could, in any given situation, secure properly trained individuals from combat units to perform this function under supervision of chaplains acting in the capacity of graves registration officers. As a matter of fact neither G–1 nor G–4 was prepared to organize and administer a graves registration program for the North African adventure. G–1 officers, at any rate, put themselves on record to this effect, commenting on "the lack of detailed plans and instructions to combat units, who, of necessity, had to assume the responsibility for actual burial," with the result that "records in connection therewith were inadequate." It was recommended that, if possible, "graves registration personnel should be attached to all major units of the Task Force and, where this is impractical, definite responsibility should be placed with

[111] Rpt, Supply in the Port Lyautey Area before ABS, n. d. RAC, Atlantic Base Section 314.7 (Port Lyautey).

[112] Final Report of Western Task Force on Operation "Torch," 8–11 November 1942, Vol I, G–1 Annex to Final Report, 7 Jan 1943.

[113] *Ibid.*

[114] See above, ch. II.

Digitized by Google

individuals in the force and these individuals should be adequately trained in the proper procedure." [115]

Graves registration procedures for American elements of the Center and Eastern Task Forces, which were organized in the United Kingdom, were prescribed in Allied Force Headquarters Circulars Nos. 1 and 2, dated 1 and 5 October 1942, respectively. Circular No. 1 specified requirements relative to establishing the identity of unknowns, the handling of enemy dead, care of personal effects, and the execution of burial forms.[116] Paragraph 1 of Circular No. 2 stipulated that detailed procedures governing battlefield burials and graves registration would conform to those stated in TM 10–630 and that "each company commander and similar unit will thoroughly familiarize himself with the procedures stated therein." Additional paragraphs of this circular required the following:

> (2) . . . Each regiment, separate battalion, division and higher headquarters will appoint an officer (usually the organization chaplain) to perform the duties of Graves Registration Officer. . . . Each unit will be prepared to furnished trained burial personnel when called upon by the Graves Registration Officer.
>
> (3) Task Force commanders will designate the location of cemeteries to be used for all burials. No isolated burials will be permitted. . . . British Forces will follow procedures prescribed in their own regulations for members of their own services. U. S. casualties should be reported by U. S. Army serving with British units. If no American authorities are available, casualties will be reported as indicated in Circular No. 1 of this Headquarters.[117]

Provisions of Circular No. 1 were reflected in Field Order No. 1 for the Center Task Force, as issued on 4 October 1942. These provided that evacuation and burial of the dead would be accomplished by their own organization and that a military cemetery would be established at Arzew after capture of that point. The G–1 annex indicated that while isolated burials should be avoided, it would be permissible during initial phases of the operation for organizations to make such burials on "Z" beach.[118]

Directions contained in the two Allied Force Headquarters circulars and Field Orders No. 1 appear to have been executed as well as might have been expected by untrained burial detachments. Organizations of the 1st Division interred their dead in eight different places, including the Oran city cemetery, and at isolated sites in the vicinity of Assi Ben Okba and St. Clois. By 21 November all recorded burials in isolated graves and small plots were concentrated either in the Arzew Military Cemetery, which was opened during the course of operations, or at the American Cemetery, Oran, which was established on 14 November.[119]

The conduct of graves registration operations by American elements of the Eastern Task Force was modified by the fact that this force, being essentially British in composition, did not include an American supply organization.[120] According to plan, personnel of the Imperial War Graves Service were not to become available until D plus 4 Day—that is, after the fighting was actually over.[121] Meantime, the collection and burial of American dead would be accomplished by their own organizations. Administrative Order No. 1 accompanying Field Orders No. 19, 14 October 1942, specified that one identification tag should be left with the body and the other forwarded to Personnel Section, pending further instructions. Although in contravention to TM 10–630 and Circular No. 2, Allied Force Headquarters, no explanation is offered for this unusual procedure. In addition, it was required that "a complete record will be made by burial parties of all information required by Circular No. 1. . . ."

On 11 November a unit of the Imperial War Graves Service established an Allied Force cemetery at El Alia, eight miles southeast of Algiers. Both British and American remains recovered from isolated graves and scattered burial places were concentrated in this cemetery.[122]

After-action criticisms of graves registration procedures during operations of the Center and Eastern Task Forces are similar to those noted in connection with the Western Task Force. Opinion held that the method of assigning responsibility to combat units for recovering and burying their own dead was objectionable, and that a satisfactory remedy would not be found until specialized Graves Registration Service units were assigned to combat formations. G–1 of the Center Task Force summarized its views in the following comment:

> GRS units on the basis of one company per corps should be included in lists of units to participate in an operation. This unit can maintain accurate records of the deceased and loca-

[115] Final Report of Western Task Force on Operation TORCH, 8–11 November 1942, Vol. II, G–1 Annex, 7 Jan 1943.

[116] Field Order, Brig Gen Lowell W. Brooks, CofS, for CG Center Task Force, TORCH Operation, 4 Oct 42. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 95–TF1–3.9.

[117] Rpt, n. d., sub: History of the 168th Inf Regt, Africa [Oct–Dec 42]. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 334 Inf (168)—C.3.

[118] Quoted in Rpt, Col H. B. Cheadle, USA, comdg 16th Inf Regt, 1st Inf Div, TORCH Operation, to TAG, 21 Nov 42, sub: Rpts after action against the enemy. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 301–Inf (16)—0.3.

[119] Rpt, G–I, 1st Inf Div, Center Task Force, in Report of 1st Division, TORCH Operations, 8–10 November [1942]. Hist Rec Sec, AGO 301–1 (22268).

[120] *Logistical History of NATOUSA-MTOUSA, August 1942 to 30 August 1945* (Caserta, Italy, 30 November 1945), p. 21.

[121] Rpt, History of the 168th Inf Regt, Africa.

[122] Opns Br, Mem Div, Opns & Plng Data, AGRS-AMEZ (OQMG, 15 Nov 46), Tab A.

Digitized by Google

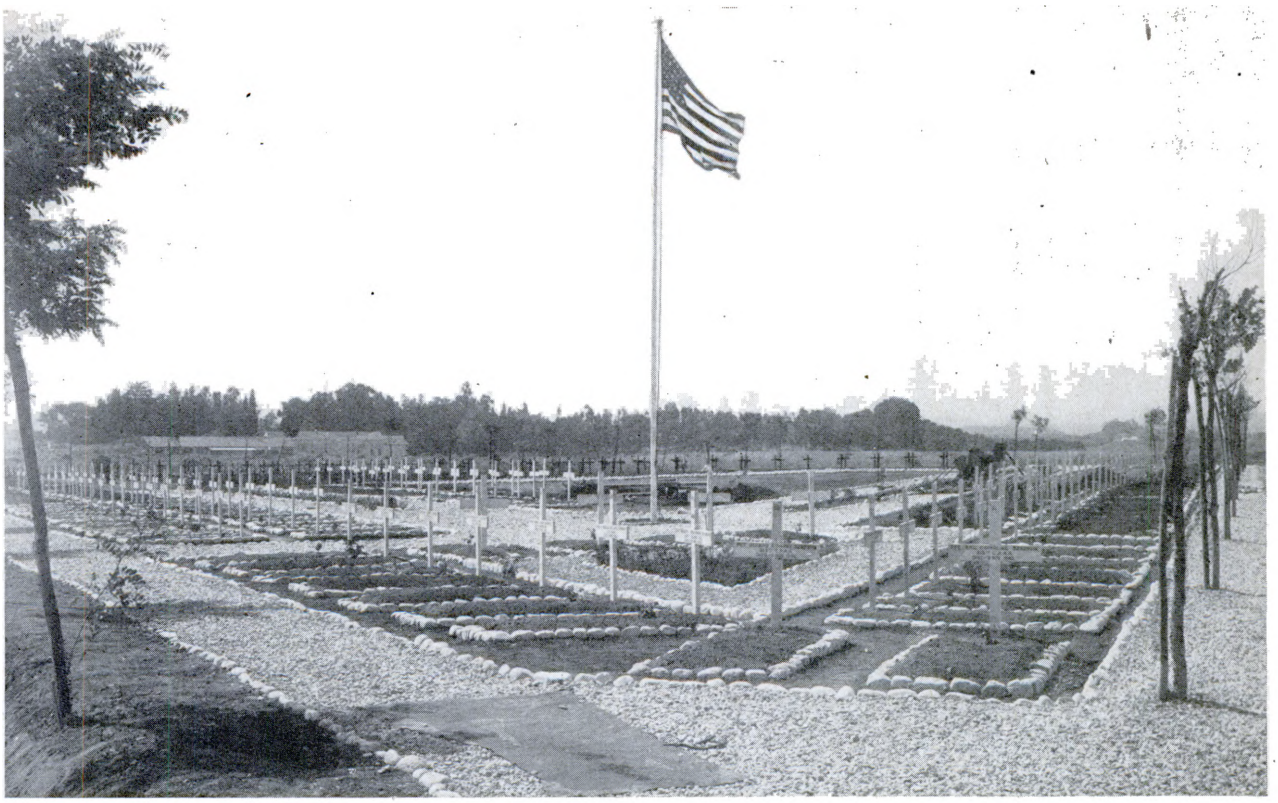


Figure 6.—El Alia Military Cemetery, near Algiers, North Africa. Originally established by a British graves registration unit, the layout does not conform to the American plan.

tion of graves. The duties performed by the GRS units should be removed from the responsibilities of combat units. This removal of such responsibilities is possible *only* through including GRS units in the operation. GRS units were not included in assault convoy because of limitations on shipping. If space is available, it is desirable to include a GRS unit in the assault convoy.[123]

Considerable attention was given to the inadequacy of basic planning and the want of detailed instructions for combat units which, in the absence of Graves Registration Service personnel, were obliged to assume responsibilities for which they were not trained. Furthermore, want of trained service troops went hand in hand with defective provisions for prompt and accurate reporting. The importance of receiving reports for tactical and administrative purposes was again stressed, along with suggestions that a sufficient number of administrative personnel should accompany the assault echelon, and that the highest headquarters should establish a clear-cut interpretation of the requirements of such reports, "regardless of how routine and obvious they may seem." The interpretation should, it was insisted, be conveyed by written instructions "down to and including the smallest units from which reports are required." While it seemed advantageous to hold joint discussion with all personnel concerned, the insurance of security in a large-scale amphibious operation might necessitate the transmission of detailed instruction under seal for purposes of consideration aboard ship.[124]

Generally speaking, the conduct of graves registration operations in Morocco and Algeria was characterized by procedures which can only be described as hasty attempts at improvisation. Although little or no provision had previously been made with a view to including the basic aspects of graves registration in training schedules for combat personnel, combat elements of the various task forces were expected to look after their own dead. Furthermore, this obligation was stated in terms so vague as to be all but incomprehensible to the untrained personnel of organic burial units established for the emergency. Finally, these units, in the absence of seasoned Quartermaster Graves Registration Service troops, were required to carry the whole burden. Only the brief duration of hostilities averted a situation which, to say the least, would

[123] Rpt, Col J. A. Dabney, CofS, Center Task Force, 29 Dec 1942, sub: Lessons from Operation TORCH. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 95–TF1–0.4.

[124] Center Task Force Hq, combined G–1, G–4, and AG Report on Lessons from Operation TORCH, n. d., Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 95 TF1–1.04.

Digitized by Google

have been embarrassing to those responsible for the development of an effective Graves Registration Service in time of war.

The Tunisian Campaign

In tracing the development of graves registration practices during World War II, the Tunisian campaign deserves close attention. Just as the Graves Registration Service of the Pacific Ocean Areas learned the rudiments of its craft on the landing beaches and in the jungles of northeast New Guinea, so the first action fought against German troops in Tunisia during the early months of 1943 served as a school of experience for the Graves Registration Service of the North African Theater of Operations and, in turn, afforded many tested policies and procedures which were successfully applied later in Peninsular Italy and Continental Europe.

Combat and service troops in Tunisia, as in New Guinea, became battlewise: precepts of theoretical training were translated into practice on a real terrain against a living enemy. In the case of Quartermaster Graves Registration Service units, which belatedly entered the campaign with a minimum of training and began operating under inexperienced staff direction, the process of adjustment depended more on the knack of learning by trial and error and less on a reasoned application of theory to practice. Due to long neglect of graves registration over the years preceding World War II, there was little theory to apply.

When elements of the Eastern Assault Force established a front on the Medjez-el-Bab line in western Tunisia during December 1942, preparations for care of the dead were inferior to those effected just a year before by USAFIP at the beginning of the Bataan Campaign. Indeed, the graves registration situation in Tunisia suggests a parallel drawn from the preceding century. Apart from the existence of identification tags and provision for delegating to unit graves registration service officers the commanding general's responsibility for burial of the dead, it afforded little improvement over the one prescribed by burial regulations of the period of the Spanish-American War. The fault, of course, cannot be attributed to Allied Force Headquarters, or even to the War Department General Staff in its planning for offensive operations in North Africa. As already indicated, the original assignment of the 46th and 47th Quartermaster Graves Registration Service Companies to Task Force "A" had been canceled on account of shipping restrictions. That is, the primary requirements of victory overruled secondary considerations of sentiment, which may be useful in preserving a high state of morale but which actually contribute only in an indirect manner to defeat of the enemy.

The measure of success given by surrender of the Vichy French only hastened another crisis. The Germans were determined to hold Tunisia at all costs. Despite enormous losses, considerable forces were ferried by air and sea across the narrow waist of the Mediterranean from Sicily to Bizerte, while Rommel, in one of the masterly retreats of military history, withdrew his shattered army from El Alamein to the southern frontier of Tunisia. With a gravely deficient supply organization, the American II Corps, in conjunction with the British First Army, undertook the difficult mission of advancing swiftly into Tunisia and disputing possession of that strategic area with enemy forces converging from Sicily and Tripolitania. In the race against time, troop movements anticipated organizational requirements of the chain of command and the services of supply. On 4 February 1943 the North African Theater of Operations, United States Army (NATOUSA), was announced and all troops, materials and installations within its boundaries passed from control of the Commanding General, ETO, to Allied Force Headquarters.[125] The theater organization was further developed eight days later by establishment of the Communications Zone (COMZONE, NATOUSA).[126] Meantime logistical difficulties encountered by the Eastern Assault Force led to recommendations that the Commanding General, Mediterranean Base Section (MBS), be charged with responsibility for supplying United States troops in Tunisia. However, recognition that the problem of supply would become more complex as the II Corps lengthened its lines of communications, and that land transportation from the established base sections in Morocco and Algeria was already inadequate, suggested the advisability of establishing a new logistical group. Designated as the Eastern Base Section (EBS), this group was constituted on 13 February, with headquarters at Constantine.[127] The supply organization was finally completed on 15 February, when the Service of Supply (SOS, NATOUSA) was constituted and placed under command of Brig. Gen. (later Lt. Gen.) Thomas B. Larkin. "All supply activities and personnel pertaining to, assigned or attached to MBS, ABS and EBS were transferred to SOS, NATOUSA."[128]

[125] NATOUSA General Orders No. 1, 4 Feb 43, cited in *Logistical History of NATOUSA*, p. 22.
[126] NATOUSA GO No. 40, 12 Feb 43.
[127] *Logistical History of NATOUSA*, p. 23.
[128] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

Digitized by Google

These rapid organizational transitions diverted attention from comparatively minor problems arising from deficiencies in various categories of service troops. The fact, for instance, that no laundry units were available at the beginning of the campaign [129] did not seriously diminish the chances of coming to grips with the enemy. Immaculate linen is not a prime requisite of mobility. Nor could the advance be stayed by any melancholy reflections that, in the absence of Quartermaster Graves Registration Service units, a few graves might go unmarked. While clean linen and registered graves contribute to the morale of any army, nothing can replace the tonic effect of victory. Furthermore the two graves registration companies originally slated for Task Force "A" were expected in the theater at an early date. The 47th actually landed at Oran on 27 January, while the 46th reached Casablanca on 12 February.[130] In these circumstances it would appear that Allied Force Headquarters was quite justified in its reluctance to activate a provisional graves registration force, and that the reasons which had constrained General MacArthur to organize three provisional units on Bataan had little or no application in Tunisia. The one operation was a delaying action in which the forces involved were sacrificed to gain time elsewhere; the other amounted to nothing less than a daring play for high stakes. Any measure which hampered bold decisions or restricted rapidity of maneuver jeopardized the chances of victory.

Despite the preoccupation of higher headquarters with major problems of organization in mounting the Tunisian offensive, graves registration matters were not entirely neglected. On 20 December II Corps Headquarters published Memorandum No. 19, a three-page pamphlet outlining procedures for care of the dead. The brevity of this document suggests either great haste in composition or an extremely limited fund of information on the subject. It stressed the requirement of executing Report of Burial, Form No. 1 (QMC), immediately after interment, and assigned responsibility for proper execution of this form to graves registration officers who were to be appointed by each regimental, separate battalion, or company commander. Such officers, it was further stated, "will have authority to establish cemeteries, when civilian cemeteries are not available, or when it appears that the number of casualties warrant such action. . . ." These appointed graves registration officers, it is remarked in passing, "should familiarize themselves with Technical Manual 10–630, and other graves registration instructions and pertinent regulations." [131]

Aside from the statement of responsibilities regarding burial reports, selection of cemeteries, disposition of identification tags (one being left with the body, the other securely attached to the grave marker), and an injunction to avoid isolated burials, Memorandum No. 19 apparently intended that the appointed Graves Registration officer would somehow improvise methods for meeting all contingencies not expressly mentioned in the document. No provision was made for the assignment of details to collect and bury the dead. Nor was there mention of arrangements whereby this officer might procure transportation for the evacuation of bodies. No procedure was suggested for the identification of remains in the absence of identification tags. Briefly, the memorandum is scarcely more than a delegation of responsibility for the performance of a few specified acts in connection with burial of the dead. The consequences of assigning duties in so haphazard a manner are summarized in the comment of a 1st Division Quartermaster officer.

> Anticipating the Graves Registration problem, the Division Quartermaster detailed an officer to handle the job. He was attached to G–1 and with the limited personnel at his disposal and with the aid of the Division Chaplain satisfactorily handled this important problem. However, this officer had no training in the work and his problems were great.[132]

Adjustments made by the 1st Division appear to have been similar to those effected by other divisions of the II Corps. That is, inexperienced graves registration officers were assigned to G–1 and received such assistance as the chaplains of the various units could render. In many instances chaplains served as regimental Graves Registration Service officers. The 1st Armored Division went to the length of delegating the entire function to its chaplains. Circumstances, it is related, dictated this solution: "Because of the organic distribution of the Chaplains Corps within the division, expediency caused the assignment of this task thereto." [133]

The assignment of Graves Registration Officer fell to the division Chaplain, Lt. Col. Edward R. Martin. Excerpts from his reports indicate the varied nature of his activities in this capacity. While performance of the graves registration activity was regarded as a "secular duty," he and his chaplains gave unstinted effort to the task. In the absence of burial parties, they hired na-

[129] Rpt, Asst QM 1st Inf Div, to QM 1st Inf Div, 30 May 1943. RAC.
[130] Unit Files, Orgn and Dir Sec, ACO.
[131] Hq II Corps, Memo No. 19, 20 Dec 42.
[132] Rpt, Asst QM, 1st Inf Div, to QM, 1st Inf Div, 30 May 43. RAC, GR File—Tunisia.
[133] Rpt, Lt Col J. E. James, Jr., Div QM, 1st Armored Division, 26 Jan 43, sub: Adequacy of Pers and Trans for Sup of a Div in Combat. RAC, GR File—Tunisia.

964114—52——5

Digitized by Google

Figure 7.—Primitive graves registration methods in Tunisia. Ceremonies attend the burial in crudely marked graves of U. S. soldiers killed at the battle of Sedjenane.

tive laborers and supervised every detail of evacuation and burial, not infrequently working late into the night. "Our chaplains," he records, "have done all functions pertaining to this work, especially Chaplains Abbott, Doyle, Carper, Donahue, Bailey, and Kane. . . . One cannot speak too highly of their fortitude and courage—at times heroic—words simply do not fit." [134]

While it is impossible to reconstruct from the fragments of available evidence even a summary narrative of graves registration accomplishments during the period of improvisation which preceded arrival of the 46th Quartermaster Graves Registration Service Company and assignment of service platoons to the combat divisions, the observations and recommendations of various chaplains serving as graves registration officers give some indication of the conditions which beset their provisional units and the expedients which were attempted in overcoming initial obstacles to the development of an effective theater Graves Registration Service. Many of the problems posed in these observations remained unsolved during the Tunisian campaign and continued to vex theater commanders throughout the war.

The much-debated question of responsibility for evacuation of battlefield dead was, according to the available evidence, first broached by Chaplain Richard H. Chase, GRSO, 26th Infantry. For reasons of morale and health, this officer insisted that the dead should be removed to burial grounds as soon as found. While granting the general proposition, he thought that removal by combat troops had a demoralizing effect on men keyed to the strain of continuous action and, therefore, tended to defeat in localized sectors the underlying purpose. With a view to obviating this contradiction, he recommended that "during periods of combat higher headquarters should supply each infantry regiment with sufficient personnel to assist the GRO in the evacuation of the dead." Furthermore, since an expeditious accomplishment of the operation required special transport, he urged that "tactical vehicles should not be jeopardized by being tied up or contaminated in such an undertaking." [135]

Similar views were advanced by Chaplain Harry P. Abbott, who served as Graves Registration Officer of Combat Command "B", 1st Armored Division. Experience with make-shift arrangements which were

[134] Chief of Chaplains Name Files, Martin, Edward R., 016358, Jan 39 to Dec 45. Gen Rec Sec, AGO.

[135] Chief of Chaplains Name Files, Chase, Richard H., 403631, Dec 45. Gen Rec Sec, AGO.

Digitized by Google

particularly ill adapted to the needs of mechanized warfare prompted the suggestion that "service personnel be assigned to combat units for grave digging details, together with transportation and equipment, including compressor for digging through rock." [136]

Chaplain Abbott noted a special problem in connection with the evacuation of battle fatalities sustained by the armored force. He recommended "that troops especially trained in advanced be attached with suitable transportation to each Combat Command, with mine detectors for future operations." This suggestion was justified by the observation that "it was necessary in many cases in recent operations for chaplains and their assistants to get in tanks and physically extract bodies or remains, as well as dig graves to bury them." [137]

In view of the fact that Memorandum No. 19 gave little or no importance to the function of identification, Chaplain Abbott's remarks on this subject seem highly significant. They also emphasize the fact that graves registration amateurs in any provisional organization tend to overlook the importance of identification while contending with inadequate means for evacuation of the dead. In this situation identification appears to be a refinement rather than a fundamental requirement of the activity.

> Recommended asbestos type of Identification tags in place of present ones used, or present ones encased in asbestos bag since present ones will not withstand terrific heat or fire. Especially is this true in cases of Armored Units and Air Corps. A pressed asbestos material with names and serial number pressed in, and with small chains for wearing around the neck would correct the large loss of identification tags and facilitate identification.[138]

A hit-and-miss system in the procurement of transportation for the evacuation of bodies is emphasized in the report of Chaplain Karl G. Kumm, GRO, 109th Medical Battalion. During April 1943 he obtained vehicles from battalion headquarters to aid Chaplains Bessinger and Suchman in their evacuation activities. Under the heading of "Pastoral, Educational, Recreational and Miscellaneous Activities" during this month, Chaplain Kumm notes that he traversed a mine field to evacuate the bodies of six men killed in a tank.[139]

Improvised graves registration methods extended over an interim period of some three months. A gradual transition toward standard practices is discernible during March 1943. With arrival of the 46th Graves Registration Company at Constantine on 2 March,[140] service platoons became available for direct support to combat divisions. While the date of assignment is uncertain, it appears that a graves registration platoon supported the 1st Infantry Division during the Cafsa-El Guettar operations of 16 March–6 April. G–1, which requested the assignment from II Corps Headquarters and supervised the platoon during this phase, seems to have been sufficiently well impressed with the performance to recommend that "in all operations in the future any division moving into combat have at least one Graves Registration Platoon attached to it." [141] The 9th Infantry Division, however, appears to have relied on make-shift arrangements for care of the dead during its advance from Gafsa to El Guettar. A headquarters report states that Medical Corps collecting companies evacuated 1,095 casualties from the battlefield of El Guettar and that "after hostilities ceased and the enemy withdrew, the collecting companies went over the battlefield to assist burial parties in locating and disposing of our own and enemy dead." [142]

Coincident with the appearance of Quartermaster Graves Registration Service troops on the battlefront in southern Tunisia, the Commanding General, SOS, NATOUSA, undertook a reorganization of the theater Graves Registration Service. His effort was directed toward an integration of activities performed by various agencies of the Base Section Commands and those which would be undertaken by the regularly constituted Graves Registration Service units. SOS, NATOUSA, Circular No. 46, dated 1 April 1943, detailed the new organizational concept, first laying down as fundamental the proposition that "the Graves Registration Service in this theater will consist of a Chief Graves Registration Service Officer, SOS, NATOUSA; Base Section Graves Registration Service Officers; Graves Registration Service Officers of combat and service units of depots, hospitals and similar establishments, and all Graves Registration Companies." After noting that "each company, battalion, regiment, division and higher headquarters, as well as hospitals, depots and other separate organizations will appoint an officer to perform the duties of Graves Registration Officer," responsibilities were allocated in the following manner:

> Graves Registration Service officers, within divisions and higher units, and Quartermaster Graves Registration units

[136] Chief of Chaplains Name Files, Abbott, Harry Phines, 219676, Jun 38 to Dec 46. Gen Rec Sec, AGO.
[137] *Ibid.*
[138] *Ibid.*
[139] Chief of Chaplains Name Files, Kumm, Karl G. Gen Rec Sec, AGO.
[140] Orgn and Dir Sec, AGO, Unit Files, 46th QM GRS Co.
[141] G–1 Operations Report, 1st Infantry Division, 11 Nov 42–14 Apr 43. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 301–1 (22268).
[142] Rpt on Operations Conducted by the 9th Division in Tunisia, 26 Mar–8 Apr. Hist Sec, AGO, 309–0.3.

Digitized by Google

are responsible to the unit Quartermasters who in turn are responsible to the Base Section Graves Registration Service Officer for the proper performance of Graves Registration functions. Graves Registration Service Officers of separate units and establishments are responsible directly to Base Sections.

* * * * *

The Chief, Graves Registration Service, SOS, NATOUSA, will coordinate the activities of Base Section Graves Registrations Officers, and will maintain the principal office of record on Graves Registration matters.[143]

The functions of the Quartermaster Graves Registration Company included various supervisory duties and actions, including identification and burial of bodies, the disposition of identification tags, the collection and disposition of personal effects, and the plotting and registration of battlefield graves and cemeteries in the combat zone. Labor for grave digging, it was stipulated, "will be furnished by service units of the Quartermaster Corps when available or by organizations when service units are not available."

Effective performance required that elements of the Graves Registration Company should be stationed at points which were readily accessible to battlefield collecting details and which facilitated the identification of remains and evacuation of bodies to designated cemeteries. Whenever conditions prevented evacuation, both Graves Registration Company personnel and Graves Registration Service officers became responsible for supervising temporary burials on the battlefield. Unit Graves Registration officers and Graves Registration Company officers were jointly responsible for the conduct of such activities and both were expected to coordinate planning for efficient supervision and uniformity of operations. During lulls in combat the Graves Registration Company was required to search the battlefield for unburied dead and isolated graves and, insofar as possible, to evacuate these remains to the nearest established cemetery. In so doing, every means of identifying unknown remains should be exhausted and every possible precaution taken to preserve established identities. Finally, the Graves Registration Company was regarded as a base of supplies for all graves registration personnel in the area which it served. Provisions were suggested whereby burial forms, temporary grave markers, ink pads for finger printing, and personal effects bags might be secured by requisition upon Base Sections.[144]

One of the significant changes effected by Circular No. 46 related to the selection and administration of cemeteries in the battle zone. Memorandum No. 19 of 20 December 1942 had, it will be recalled, delegated this function to unit Graves Registration officers, with instructions that existing Christian cemeteries would be utilized whenever possible. In practice, this duty had devolved upon chaplains who, as a general rule, assumed the functions of Graves Registration Service officer and operated under supervision of G–1 staff sections. In accordance with this arrangement, Chaplain Richard H. Chase, GRSO, 26th Infantry, 1st Division, conducted negotiations for the purchase of a small tract which became the nucleus of Gafsa Cemetery. After paying five dollars in cash and ten pounds of tea for the land, he supervised burial activities while it served the purpose of a division cemetery.[145] In contrast to these rough and ready methods, Circular No. 46 directed that procedures specified in AR 30–1810 should henceforth govern the establishment and administration of temporary cemeteries, namely that "it is the duty of the Quartermaster in charge of graves registration activities of each army, corps, division or other command, under direction of the Commanding General, to set apart a suitable area near or upon every battlefield for a cemetery, and to supervise the proper interment of the dead therein." In addition, the circular required that "accurate detailed maps of all cemeteries be prepared immediately after being established, showing plot, row and grave numbers, and that these maps be furnished the Chief, Graves Registration Service, SOS, NATOUSA, as early as possible.[146]

Unquestionably, the most significant development in graves registration practices arose from the requirement that Graves Registration Company detachments take station at points most suitable to their work. This arrangement foreshadowed the later collecting point system. Effective operation, however, of such a system depended upon the availability of trained Graves Registration Company personnel, together with adequate transportation and highly developed techniques of identification. Considerable difficulty was experienced in bringing these three elements together.

Due possibly to deficient training and want of familiarity with active service conditions, the new Graves Registration platoons encountered considerable difficulty in meeting all requirements of their assignment. Despite favorable reports from 1st Division Headquarters concerning the work of its supporting platoon dur-

[143] SOS, NATOUSA, Cir No. 46, 1 Apr 43, Pars 4a–4c, as cited in ltr, Hq, SOS, NATOUSA, to Commanders concerned, 29 May 43, sub: Army Burials and Graves Registration in Battle Areas. Hereinafter cited as Burials and Graves Registration, NATOUSA, 29 May 43. No copy of Cir No. 46 has been found.

[144] Burials and Garves Registration, NATOUSA, 29 May 43, Par 3.

[145] Chief of Chaplains Name Files, Chase, Richard H, 403631, Dec 46. Gen Rec Sec, AGO.

[146] Burials and Graves Registration, NATOUSA, 29 May 43, Par 5.

Digitized by Google

ing the Gafsa-El Guettar operations, the division Graves Registration Service officer remained critical of an arrangement which entrusted collection and evacuation of the dead to the coordinated efforts of combat details and Graves Registration Company personnel. Contending in a study which purported to review experience gained under combat conditions from 21 January to 13 May that the combat unit was unable to furnish either graves registration details or the transport required for its participation in collection and evacuation of bodies, he proposed a remedy by "increasing the GR personnel and by eliminating the assistance of combat troops and transportation." [147] To this end he recommended the organization of a division graves registration company which would consist of a headquarters platoon and three evacuation platoons. "The Headquarters Platoon," it was stipulated, "will be the rear unit and the evacuation platoons will operate with the combat teams, one platoon to each combat team." The aggregate strength was put at 110, comprising 3 officers and 107 enlisted men.[148]

While subsequent experience in Italy and Western Europe, to say nothing of the Southwest Pacific, established beyond serious doubt that personnel allotments for this company were excessive, the proposal brought into question one aspect of the graves registration problem that still remains unsolved. This is the division of labor between the service company and the combat unit and the extent to which the utilization of more Quartermaster Graves Registration companies, or a larger type company, might be justified in the interests of sparing combat troops the demoralizing consequences of handling their own dead. There can be little doubt that carrying the entire graves registration load during the first three months of fighting in Tunisia produced a much more intense form of demoralization among combat personnel than would have taken place had the dual system of collection and evacuation operated smoothly from the beginning of hostilities. There is also reason to believe that combat details continued to carry a disproportionate part of the load for some time after the service platoons were assigned to divisions. The reasons justifying the proposed division Graves Registration Service Company seem significant in that they overemphasize the symptoms of a disorder and, while seeking a permanent remedy, confuse these symptoms with the underlying causes.

All-but-complete ignorance of both the administrative and technical aspects of the activity was the basic cause of disorder. However, as unit graves registration officers and combat details acquired some competence in their assignment, some of the causes making for disorder were removed. Others disappeared after the service platoons made some headway in learning the practical aspects of their function. Throughout these difficult adjustments it appeared that there were too many combat personnel and too few service personnel engaged in the activity. Undoubtedly this assumption was well taken to the extent that combat units had been required to assign a disproportionate number of effectives for graves registration purposes, while Graves Registration Service personnel were unable to restore the balance immediately after their assignment on the basis of one platoon to the division. Although the recommendations in question were more concerned with arresting symptoms than removing causes, they offer some evidence as to the nature of the transition from improvisation to policy.

The problem of transportation remained difficult, if not insoluble, to the end of the campaign. Rapidity of movement, poor roads, the rugged terrain of southern Tunisia, and a chronic shortage of motor vehicles complicated these difficulties. During the winter fighting the 1st Division graves registration officers were frequently obliged to employ pack mule trains and Arab

Figure 8.—Evacuation of dead by pack animal from fighting in the hills of Tunisia.

[147] Ltr, 1st Lt George D. Steinborn, GRO, to CG 1st Div, 25 May 43, sub: GRS.

[148] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

labor in evacuating both dead and wounded from front line positions.[149]

Considerable improvement in evacuation procedures came with establishment of the collecting point system, which appears to have come into general use during April 1943, and which functioned with reasonable efficiency after the shift of II Corps troops to northern Tunisia. According to G–4, 1st Division, this system facilitated collection and burial by "(a) providing a definite point to which unit graves registration officers could deliver their dead; (b) permitting graves registration platoon personnel to assume direct charge of burials; and (c) permitting all dead to be buried in the Army cemetery and eliminating the necessity of establishing numerous Division cemeteries." [150]

Despite improvements brought by the collecting point system, G–4 of the 1st Division staff shared G–1's opinion that the attachment of one graves registration platoon to an infantry division was "entirely inadequate to accomplish prompt, decent disposal of the Dead." While not going the length of G–1 in proposing a division graves registration company, G–4 recommended that "at least one (1) platoon, which is normally attached, be increased by sufficient labor personnel to permit direct attachment to each combat team of a graves registration unit of at least one (1) officer, twenty (20) men, and four (4)—¾-ton Weapons Carrier." [151]

Improvement in identification procedures came late during the campaign. This difficulty cannot be attributed to faulty training and lax supervision. A basic misconception of the problem had been reflected in burial regulations of the prewar period which required fingerprinting of only one hand. Attempts to identify unknown dead by matching fingerprint impressions on burial reports with fingerprint files of The Adjutant General's Office and the Federal Bureau of Investigation encountered difficulties that even an elementary study of the problem should have anticipated. That is, to establish the identity of unknown dead through the thumb and fingerprints of one hand necessitated a search of millions of fingerprint records, while a complete set of prints of both hands localized the search to less than two hundred individual files.[152]

War Department Circular No. 79, dated 19 March 1943, was promulgated with a view to correcting this situation. Following delays of transmission, the directive was disseminated in NATOUSA by a technical memorandum, No. 26. The first paragraph quoted the text of WD Circular No. 79; the second required the following procedures:

> In compliance with the above, the fingerprints of all ten fingers will be taken in every case where there is a question of identity. The Report of Interment (QMC Form No. 1) will be completed in triplicate for the right hand and so stated. Another set of Report of Interments will be made out in triplicate for the left hand, and so stated. The two originals and two carbons will be forwarded to this office. The remaining carbons will be retained by the Graves Registration Officer concerned.[153]

Operation of the collecting point system to a degree of efficiency that permitted burials in an Army cemetery, together with an improvement of identification techniques in accordance with Technical Memorandum No. 26, marks the enormous stride taken in graves registration practices which were initiated by amateurs during the Tunisian campaign and completed by service specialists who acquired technical competence in the field. By 31 October 1943 all isolated burials, less 34 unrecovered remains, had been concentrated in 11 temporary cemeteries. The total number of burials, as then recorded, was 4,600. The percentage of unidentified dead had been reduced to 5.42. The comparable figure for the Imperial War Graves Service was 8.48.[154]

---

[149] G–4 Opns Rpt, 1st Inf Div, 11 Nov 42–14 Apr 43, sub: Rpt of Action Against Enemy, Summary of Events, 1 Sep 43. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 301.4 (7933).

[150] *Ibid.*

[151] *Ibid.*

[152] Ltr, Brig Gen F. H. Pope, QMC, to CG SOS, 6 Mar 43, sub: Identification and Burial of Deceased Outside Continental U. S. AG 293 (3–6–43) (1) WD 799.

[153] Hq SOS, OQM (NATOUSA), Tech Memo No. 26, dated 13 May 43.

[154] SOS, NATOUSA, Statistical Summary of Quartermaster Graves Registration. RAC, EBS-MTO 319.1—XVIII.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV

Designation of The Quartermaster General as Chief American Graves Registration Service

Problems of Policy Making

IN turning from a review of graves registration operations abroad to the study of events nearer home which enhanced The Quartermaster General's authority in matters pertaining to care of the dead, one is impressed by two qualifying factors. General Gregory does not appear to have been in position to exert pressure on the War Department for purposes of expediting the discharge of his responsibilities in this regard. Again, long disuse of the policy-making function did not facilitate any sudden assertion of the prerogative.

A three months' delay in promulgating the unnumbered restricted War Department Circular, dated 18 February 1942, requiring the establishment of graves registration services in overseas commands, may be taken as an example of the first factor. This illustration is multiplied in tracing the devious procedures by which such services were activated from time to time in these commands. It is taken for granted that General Gregory could not influence the course of graves registration developments during the Philippine campaign of 1942. Nor could he, in the absence of Quartermaster Graves Registration troops, prescribe procedures for collection and burial of the dead during initial phases of the North African campaign. At the same time, he remained a passive spectator to halting steps that attended the establishment of a graves registration service in the Caribbean Defense Command. The story is instructive.

During the latter part of June 1942, some four months after issuance of the restricted circular, The Adjutant General's Office became aware that the commanding general, Caribbean Defense Command, was seeking authority to activate three graves registration platoons, and that a letter requesting such authorization had been dispatched from Quarry Heights, Canal Zone, on 20 April.[1] In July The Adjutant General's Office was reminded that Caribbean headquarters still awaited the authority requested in April: a follow-up communication—the fourth of the series—was transmitted by radio, referring to the original request and stating that the same request had been repeated on 14 May and again on 15 June.[2]

Confronted with this emergency, The Adjutant General conveyed in a four-paragraph letter to Quarry Heights full authority for the activation of three graves registration platoons, the organization of each to conform to Column 4, T/O 10–297, and to have the following distribution: one in the Panama Canal Department, another in the Puerto Rican Department, and the third in the Trinidad Base Command. It was further stated that "authority given for the activation of three graves registration platoons does not authorize an increase in the ground forces allotted the Caribbean Defense Command." [3]

Armed with proper authority and reassured that deliberation of action had so far precluded the possibility of committing any gross administrative blunder or small procedural error, the Caribbean commander methodically continued in pursuit of his purpose. In due course the three platoons were activated. Notice of this achievement was flashed by radio from Port of

---

[1] "Pursuant to directive contained in unnumbered circular dated February 18, 1942, subject, 'Graves Registration,' it is requested that authority be granted to activate in the Panama Canal Department, the Puerto Rican Department, and the Trinidad Base Command, a graves registration platoon, one for each command, in accordance with Column 4 of Tables of Organization No. 10–297, with attached medical for platoon, including one medical Staff Sergeant (673) and two (2) medical sergeants (673)." Ltr, Col T. B. Woodburn, AG, Hq CDC, to TAG, 20 Apr 42.

[2] AGO on 25 June acknowledged receipt of the third communication (15 June 1942) with an indorsement stating: "Letter referred in basic paper cannot be located in this office. Desire you furnish us a copy of this letter." The requested copy was furnished on 21 July 1942. Ltr, Woodburn, AG, Hq CDC, to AGO, 15 Jun 41; 1st ind, 25 Jun 41; 2d ind, 21 Jul 41. It is interesting to note that the original letter of 20 April 1942, bears the mail stamp, "Received, Apr. 24, 1942, Miscel. Br. AGO." This document and the copy furnished by Hq CDC, on 21 July 1942, are now filed in the same AGO case.

[3] Ltr, D. T. Sapp, AGO, to CG CDC, 31 Jul 42.

Digitized by Google

Spain to the Commanding General, ASF, on 3 September 1942, just 6 months and 13 days after issuance of the circular requiring such action.[4]

The difficulties encountered by The Quartermaster General in overcoming obstacles to exercise of his prerogative as policy maker in graves registration affairs extended over a period of 18 months, only to find a partial solution in his designation, on 11 September 1943, as Chief, American Graves Registration Service. This expedient was intended to resolve an accumulation of difficulties which began early in 1942.

Headquarters of the Bermuda Base Command accepted with reservations the announcement of policy in regard to suspension of the shipment of remains to the Continental mainland and the embargo placed on mortuary supplies in the United States. On 15 January 1942 inquiry was made through the Quartermaster, Second Corps Area, regarding several points which were obviously covered by the two War Department memoranda promulgated on 13 and 31 December 1941, respectively. Bermuda sought an interpretation on the following aspects:

a. Authorization for return to the United States of the remains of military personnel prepared from supplies now on hand, provided space on government transportation is available;

b. Authorization for the return of civilian personnel, under the same conditions;

c. Authorization for the return of the dependents of military and civilian personnel not at government expense;

d. Authorization for return of the remains of Base Contractors' civilian personnel by government transportation, if space is available;

e. Authorization for return of the same by commercial shipment not at government expense.[5]

No doubt headquarters of the Bermuda Base Command became aware of marked dissatisfaction, not to say open resentment, on the part of the resident American population after publication of the order of 13 December 1941. Conditions at Bermuda were not dissimilar to those applying at many large military installations then under construction on the mainland. Bermuda seemed as far removed from the threat of enemy attack as any of the important cities along the Atlantic seaboard. The death rate at Bermuda did not exceed that of areas of equivalent population in the United States. It seems evident from the conditions under which authorization was asked for shipment of remains to the mainland that cargo space was available on both Government transports and commercial carriers, and that mortuary supplies were still available for preparation of bodies for the return voyage and burial in the homeland. The commanding general could scarcely allay local resentment on the plea of military necessity; it was difficult to answer the common-sense argument that a blanket regulation, whatever the need of its application elsewhere, should not be invoked to suspend the use of services and facilities then available at Bermuda. The overriding of this common-sense view was destined, as will presently be seen, to undergo a curious reversal in another but not dissimilar situation.[6]

Second Corps Area Headquarters expressed an opinion that points *a*, *b*, and *c* submitted for consideration by the Bermuda Base Command should be answered in the negative. Points *d* and *e* were referred to The Quartermaster General with a request for information as to policy that might be involved.[7] Request on the part of The Adjutant General for an interpretation of policy on all points raised by the Bermuda Base Command elicited from The Quartermaster General a brusque response: "The answer to each and all questions asked in the basic communication is no."[8] The statement in this form was returned with War Department approval, by The Adjutant General through Second Corps Headquarters to the Bermuda Base Command.

During the first 8 months of hostilities, the accomplishments of The Quartermaster General in organizing a graves registration service undoubtedly fell short of those expectations that had been written into Army Regulations 30–1805 and –1810 of 1924. While the guiding principles laid down at that time were sound—as demonstrated on Bataan—subsequent planning had been defective in that no effective steps were taken in the direction of supplying properly trained cadres and establishing by 1940 at the latest a rate of expansion for graves registration companies that would have maintained some sort of balance with the mobile forces. It goes without saying that efficient leadership and competent staff work in any branch of the military service cannot exist apart from seasoned troops. Yet, aside from this basic deficiency and certain oversights in advance planning—notably the tardy action in preparing an authoritative statement of graves registration doctrine and field practices—The Quartermaster General had been prompt in taking the necessary steps to project a policy. He lost no time after the action at

[4] Rad, CBC, to CG SOS, 3 Sep 42. Received by Misc Br, AGO, 5 Sep 42.

[5] Ltr, Lt Col F. D. Shawn, QMC, Hq Bermuda Base Command, to QM Second Corps Area, Governor's Island, New York (Thru Channels), 15 Jan 42, sub: Burial Supplies and Shipment of Remains.

[6] Below, pp. 64–66.

[7] Ltr, Maj T. J. Smith, Asst AG, Second Corps Area, to TAG, 4 Feb 42. 2d ind on Hq Bermuda Base Command to Second Corps Area, 15 Jan 42.

[8] Ltr, OQMG to TAG, 11 Feb 42, 4th ind on above basic communication.

Digitized by Google

Pearl Harbor in setting up a casualty clearance procedure with The Adjutant General. At his instance cargo space had been withheld both from the shipment of remains to the United States and the exportation of mortuary supplies to all oversea commands. In hastening issuance of the stopgap directive of 18 February 1942, which required that instructions issued by the commanding general of each theater or defense command outside the continental United States for the organization of a graves registration service should conform to those included in AR 30–1805 and TM 10–630, The Quartermaster General preserved, in theory at least, his position as policy maker and technical director of this service. Finally, this position was sustained by the War Department in rejecting efforts on the part of the Bermuda Base Command to secure modifications of the order requiring suspension of the shipment of remains to the homeland.

However successful in defending his initial pronouncement of policy, The Quartermaster General's position was still insecure. Circumstances attending the organization of graves registration services in the overseas commands were so diverse in nature as to interpose serious obstacles to either a realization of uniform policies or the adoption of standard procedures. Where General MacArthur was constrained to solve his problem by methods reminiscent of those improvised by General Pershing in France during World War I, the Caribbean Defense commander proceeded in the business of activating three graves registration platoons with a caution and circumspection that were more in keeping with the leisure of peace than the accelerated pace of total war. While these obstacles may not in themselves have been insurmountable, The Quartermaster General was soon confronted at home with impediments even more formidable than those encountered abroad. The fact that our enemies were permitted the advantage of selecting a time for attack that best suited their own strategic needs threw our own war planning into confusion, not only demanding a deployment of forces under conditions dictated by enemy dispositions but requiring a consideration during hostilities of major organizational problems that should have been solved before the outbreak of war. Reorganization in such circumstances involved a serious dislocation of current routine and, not infrequently, some damage to the prestige of established authorities.

ASF and Graves Registration

A complete reorganization of the War Department and the Army, effective 9 March 1942, was approved by the President on 18 February 1942.[9] The Army was divided into three major branches—the Army Ground Forces, the Army Air Forces, and the Services of Supply.[10] Command and staff functions of The Quartermaster General, including those that related to the Graves Registration Service, underwent considerable modification in this scheme. Briefly, the Quartermaster Corps was included as a component of the Services of Supply (later Army Service Forces), and The Quartermaster General was subordinated to the Commanding General, ASF.[11] In accordance with the program announced on 2 March, nine service commands were established during July 1942 by a redesignation of the existing nine corps areas.[12] To each service command was assigned the mission of rendering assistance, as a field agency of the Commanding General, ASF, in matters of supply and administration to all elements of the Army within the geographical limits of the service command.[13] Included with these responsibilities were specified functions that directly and indirectly affected the position of The Quartermaster General with respect to graves registration, namely: the command and training of all units and individuals assigned to service command control; the command (except for certain phases of operations) of replacement training centers and schools of the supply services; purchase or leasing of real estate at installations under service commands; command over Class I installations, including all national cemeteries with the single exception of Arlington.[14] The Northwest Service Command, which embraced a vast area of western Canada lying between the Alaskan boundary, the Arctic Ocean, and the international boundary between Canada and the United States, was established by the same order.[15]

The workings of this organizational device tended to enhance rather than resolve the confused state of affairs into which the Graves Registration Service had been plunged by the crisis of war. While a speedier resolution of these difficulties might well have been effected by the vigorous initiative and resolute direction of a single will—putting, in other words, the graves

[9] Executive Order No. 9082, 28 Feb 42, *Federal Register*, Vol. III, Pt. I, p. 1609.

[10] WD Cir No. 59, 2 Mar 42.

[11] *Ibid.*, par. 2*e* (6).

[12] WD GO No. 35, 22 Jul 42.

[13] AR 170–10, 10 Aug 42, Cf OQMG OO No. 185, 5 Aug 42: "The mission of each Service Command, as the field agency of the Services of Supply, is to perform the basic functions of the Services of Supply (except those related to procurement, including experimentation, purchasing and manufacturing, new construction and depots, port and certain transportation operations) for elements of the Army located within the geographical limits of the Service Command."

[14] AR 170–10, 10 Aug 42.

[15] *Ibid.*

964114—52——6

Digitized by Google

registration problem on the basis of a one-man show—the number of echelons involved in every decision related to this problem was actually multiplied. As a matter of fact, the multiplication of authorities between The Quartermaster General and the Chief of the War Department General Staff was accompanied by a similar process in the reorganization of the Office of The Quartermaster General when, as will be recalled, the Memorial Division was reconstituted as a branch and, on 31 March 1942, incorporated in the Service Installations Division.[16] This administrative readjustment interposed the Director, Service Installations Division, between The Quartermaster General and his technical advisor on graves registration matters. An additional intermediary was subsequently provided when direction and supervision of the Service Installations Division was assigned to the Deputy Quartermaster General for Supply Management and Operations.[17] As a consequence of reorganization at all levels of authority, the advisor on graves registration matters was relegated to the comparatively remote and obscure status of a branch chief, while The Quartermaster General occupied a position of similar remoteness with respect to the Chief of Staff.

Out of disorder imposed externally by enemy action and then compounded by internal reorganization came the first serious challenge to The Quartermaster General's position as policy maker and technical director of the Graves Registration Service. The area of controversy was the Northwest Service Command. In contrast to the comprehensive mission assigned the nine service commands within the continental United States, the Northwest Service Command had a distinct and limited mission, namely, to "direct and coordinate the construction, maintenance and supply activities serving United States Forces in Western Canada and Alaska, notably those connected with the White Horse Pass and Yukon Railway and the highway from White Horse to Fairbanks."[18] In other words, this so-called service command was actually a zone of communications, responsible for a supply system extending across the territory of an ally and connecting the American Zone of Interior with the outlying Alaska Defense Command.

In March 1943 the Northwest Service Command revived the opposition which had been unsuccessfully raised during January–April 1942 by the Bermuda Base Command against an unqualified application of the policy prohibiting the return of remains to the homeland. While in point of established policy the two cases were identical, they presented differences in their practical aspects. An imaginary line separated the Northwest Service Command from the Zone of the Interior; 800 miles of ocean rolled between Bermuda and the nearest American port on the Atlantic seaboard. Whereas the Bermuda Base Command had been attached to the Second Corps Area, the commanding general of the Northwest Service Command at White Horse, Yukon, was a field representative of the Commanding General, ASF, who was also the immediate superior of The Quartermaster General. Again, The Adjutant General, whose control over casualty reports brought him into close association with The Quartermaster General in graves registration matters, was also subordinate to the Commanding General, ASF. If the two cases were identical, the parties involved in a renewal of the controversy had been radically altered between March 1942 and March 1943. Moreover, a new element, the Military Personnel Division, ASF, was added to the number of contestants and, by virtue of its function as a staff agency of the Commanding General, ASF, was in a position to exercise a sort of balance of power between The Quartermaster General, as policy maker and technical director of the Graves Registration Service, and G–1, Personnel, of the War Department General Staff, which, subject to review by the Chief of Staff and the Secretary of War, exercised final authority in graves registration matters pertaining to the overseas defense commands and theaters of operations.

Modification of Basic Directives

The issue took definite form on 13 March 1943. On this date The Adjutant General informed Brig. Gen. Russel B. Reynolds, Director of Military Personnel, ASF, that "a distressing state of affairs was developing in consequence of the strict interpretation heretofore put upon War Department directive 13 December 1941 (Subject: Shipment of Remains), which had been issued pursuant to request of The Quartermaster General in the interest of conserving cargo space." The Adjutant General noted in particular that, "as an example of the present effect of this directive, it is possible for a soldier to die in Canada or Mexico, within sight of his home in the United States, and yet his remains must be left at the place of

[16] Above, p. 26.

[17] Two Deputy Quartermaster Generals were appointed on 10 October 1942, one to assist The Quartermaster General in matters relating to administration and management, the other to aid in reference to supply planning and operations. The latter was to assume direction and supervision of the so-called operating divisions, including the Service Installations Division. Brig. Gen. J. L. Frink was designated as Deputy Quartermaster General for Supply Planning and Operations. OQMG OO No. 25–10, 10 Oct 42.

[18] AR 170–10, 10 Aug 42.

Digitized by Google

death until some future indeterminate time." [19] Reference of the issue thus defined to General Gregory brought forth a reply on 20 March to the effect that he had recommended issuance of the directive not alone in the interests of conserving cargo space but with a view to putting a complete embargo on the return of remains while the United States was at war, "regardless of the means of transportation available." [20]

In this representation, it will be noted, The Quartermaster General shifted his ground; the sole reason supporting his recommendation for suspension of the shipment of remains, as stated to The Adjutant General on 9 December 1941, had been conservation of cargo space.[21] Justification for taking this new position was based on the argument that any modification or even minor and apparently inconsequential departure from the established policy must necessarily involve additional concessions and eventually put the War Department in the embarrassing position of defending in general the very policy which it had violated in detail. It was pointed out that some thirty deaths had taken place with interment in Canada and that "a modification of the current instructions will result in requests that these bodies be disinterred and returned to the United States." [22] The prediction was ventured that such a concession would lead to requests "for the return of bodies from other theaters, particularly Alaska, after the Alaskan Highway is in full operation, and the War Department will be placed in the position of explaining why this cannot be done." The public, General Gregory submitted, "has become more or less educated on this subject and has generally accepted the views and decisions of the War Department." It was, therefore, the considered opinion of the Quartermaster Corps that "a change in this policy at this time would be unwise." [23]

There was divided opinion as to the readiness of a more or less "educated public" to accept the views of the War Department, or of a particular official speaking for the War Department, on the subject of returning the dead. In transmitting on 25 March to Military Personnel Division, ASF, The Quartermaster General's objections to any modification of policy, The Adjutant General attached the case of a deceased Army lieutenant, which, he stated, was "self-explanatory." He took this occasion to refute General Gregory's views.

> The proposal to amend the directive has been submitted to The Quartermaster General and his comments and non-concurrence are also attached hereto. In view of his statement that only "some thirty odd deaths have taken place with interment in Canada," the magnitude of the task does not appear to constitute an insuperable obstacle. In fact, it is a comparatively simple operation. Furthermore, it is possible to reinstate the original directive if it appears desirable or necessary to do so.[24]

After review by the Commanding General, ASF, the matter was referred on 25 March 1943 to the Transportation Corps for remark and recommendation.[25] Ten days later Lt. Col. A. H. Harder, Director, Executive Administration Division, Transportation Corps, delivered an opinion to the effect that there was no objection to a conditional modification of the directive of 13 December 1941. The conditions stipulated were that the return of remains from points on the North American continent should be restricted to commercial carriers other than airplanes, ocean-going vessels, or coastwise craft, that use of such available facilities must not be diverted from scheduled movement of troops or supplies, and that local sanitary and shipping requirements must be observed. This opinion, however, was qualified by the observation that "no commercial carrier transportation is available at present by land between Alaska and the United States." [26]

In practice, the interpretation of the Transportation Corps narrowed the problem down to the Northwest Service Command. Furthermore, in view of the limited possibilities afforded by commercial carrier transport facilities of the vast region embraced by that command, the area actually concerned was restricted to the southern portions of Alberta and British Columbia served by the Canadian railway net. The facts of the case, however, appear to have been avoided in the discussion that led to a modification of policy. Headquarters at White Horse was, however, reluctant to accept these restrictions. After the modification of policy had been effected in accordance with requirements imposed by the Chief of Transportation, the Commanding General, Northwest Service Command, sought permission to expedite the shipment of remains to the United States by the following expedients:

[19] Memo, Maj Gen J. A. Ulio, TAG, for Dir, Mil Pers Div, ASF, 13 Mar 43, sub: Shipment of Remains.

[20] Ltr, Brig Gen F. H. Pope, QMC, to TAG, 20 Mar 42, 1st ind on above basic communication.

[21] Cf. TQMG to TAG, 9 Dec 41, inclosing draft of directive and letter. In his letter of March 1943, General Ulio states that the directive requested by TQMG on 9 December 1941, "was approved by the Assistant Chief of Staff, December 12, 1941, and was intended to conserve cargo space in ocean going tonnage."

[22] Pope, OQMG, to TAG, 20 Mar 42, 1st ind on Memo, TAG for Dir, Mil Pers Div, ASF, 13 Mar 43, sub: Shipment of Remains.

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] Memo, TAG for Dir, Mil Pers Div, ASF, 25 Mar 43, sub: Shipment of Remains.

[25] D/F, Brig Gen Russell B. Reynolds, Dir, Mil Pers Div, ASF, to TC, 25 Mar 43, sub: Shipment of Remains.

[26] Memo, Lt Col Harder, TC, for Dir, Mil Pers Div, ASF, 5 Apr 42, sub: Shipment of Remains.

Digitized by Google

> Air transportation, in a large number of cases, is returning empty to Edmonton, Alberta, from points within this command. Boats are returning empty from Skagway, Alaska, to Prince Rupert, B. C. Authority therefore is requested for shipment by air and water of deceased personnel to points where commercial land transportation is available to the United States.[27]

In other words, transport facilities of categories expressly prohibited by the Transportation Corps and written into the new directive were available for the purpose of bringing remains to the northern and western terminals of the Canadian rail net, which, according to this directive, was the only lawful vehicle of carriage.

The views expressed by The Adjutant General in his two communications of 13 March and 25 March, together with those qualifications that had been prescribed by the Transportation Corps, were, under instructions of the Director, Military Personnel Division, ASF,[28] embodied in the draft of a new War Department directive by The Quartermaster General and, upon subsequent approval by Military Personnel Division, ASF, and clearance through G–1 and G–3, War Department General Staff, were promulgated by The Adjutant General on 29 April 1943.

> Letter, this office, AC 293.8 (12–9–41) MB–A–M, Dec. 13, 1941, . . . is rescinded and the following is substituted therefor:
>
> 1. During the period the United States is at war, the shipment home of remains from foreign possessions and other stations outside the continental limits of the United States is suspended, except as provided herein.
>
> 2. Remains may be returned to the continental United States from points on the North American continent by commercial carrier transportation other than air or ocean or coastwise vessels provided that sanitary and shipping requirements of the several countries are observed and that such transportation is available therefor and not required for the movement of troops or supplies.
>
> 3. In this connection no commercial transportation is available at present by land between Alaska and the United States proper.[29]

Issuance of the new directive amounted to an important amendment over vigorous protest by The Quartermaster General of the policy he had originally formulated and upheld. The third paragraph of the new directive may be construed as an indication that the Alaska Defense Command might, upon completion of the Alcan highway, be brought within the meaning of the second paragraph. In principle there can be no doubt that The Quartermaster General, as policy maker of the Graves Registration Service, had suffered a serious reverse. In practice, however, the very relaxation of restrictions heretofore applying to the Northwest Service Command created new difficulties, the eventual solution of which was destined to restore to The Quartermaster General most of the prerogatives that appeared to have suffered damage in the modification imposed on his original policy.

As a matter of fact, The Quartermaster General did not, in the strictest sense of the term, defend his original policy—that of conserving cargo space—when he came to grips with The Adjutant General and the director of the Military Personnel Division, ASF, during March 1943. The observation has been made that he shifted his ground from conservation of cargo space, as urged in December 1941, to the embarrassments that would be visited upon the War Department if the original policy, however justified in the first instance, underwent the slightest modification. In other words, General Gregory was looking to the future rather than the past and was in the process of evolving a policy that was far more comprehensive than the one he actually appeared to be defending.

Reassignment of Responsibilities

If, indeed, The Quartermaster General encountered a tactical reverse in April 1943, he directed his attention toward a new objective that well may be described as strategic in its scope. He was assisted in this endeavor by Col. R. P. Harbold, who assumed direction of the Memorial Branch on 5 July.[30] The new chief brought to his difficult assignment the advantages of wide experience in graves registration operations during World War I and the prestige of a distinguished record on the staff of Col. H. F. Rethers, Chief, AGRS, QMC, in Europe. He was best known, perhaps, for planning and directing the operation at Chalons in October 1921, which resulted in selection of the casket containing the remains of America's Unknown Soldier.[31]

The first move toward the new objective was made on 15 July in a letter prepared by Colonel Harbold and submitted through the Under Secretary of War to the Commanding General, ASF.[32] This document presents

---

[27] Hq NWSC, to TAG, 19 Jul 43.

[28] (1) D/F Brig Gen Russel B. Reynolds, Dir, Mil Pers Div, ASF, to TQMG, 9 Apr 43, sub: Shipment of Remains. Notation by Brig Gen H. G. White, ACofS G–1, indicates approval 12 Apr 43, "By order of the Secretary of War." (2) Brig Gen F. H. Pope, QMC to TAG, 1st ind on above cited basic communication.

[29] WD Memo, W55–16–43, 29 Apr 43.

[30] OQMG OOs 30–14C, 5 July 43; 45–70, 7 Jul 43.

[31] Official History, GRS, II, 117–120.

[32] In accordance with the practice that the Director, General Administrative Services Division, sign all communications from the OQMG indorsing inclosed drafts for publication by the War Department, the letter of 15 July 1943 was signed by Brigadier General Pope. The draft of the inclosed War Department circular, as well as the covering letter, was prepared by Colonel Harbold.

Digitized by Google

a succinct analysis of the whole graves registration problem, noting that two areas of confusion had grown out of the stopgap directive of 18 February 1942, and calling attention to the need of correcting this confusion in order to insure an efficient performance when the military dead were returned after the cessation of hostilities.

Regarding the first area of confusion, it was pointed out that the joint responsibility placed on The Quartermaster General and The Adjutant General by paragraph 3 of the restricted circular, 18 February 1942, for the dissemination of information relative to the location of graves contributed not only to duplication of effort but, in many instances, to the release of erroneous information. Colonel Harbold insisted that "unless the dissemination of the above information is under one head, confusion and embarrassment to both relatives and the War Department are inevitable." [33] He submitted that a clear line could and should be drawn between the responsibility of The Adjutant General in reporting casualties and that of The Quartermaster General in the release of information concerning the disposal of remains. In other words, Colonel Harbold now advocated the very scheme which had been proposed by General Headquarters in its objection to Quartermaster General Gregory's tentative draft of the restricted circular, but which had been overruled by the Chief of Staff.

> The Casualty Branch [AGO] receives and edits all casualty reports for personnel in the military service both in the United States and outside the continental limits of the country; maintains files of casualties, sends notices to emergency addressees; prepares instructions for commanders in all theaters of operations regarding methods of handling casualty reports and correspondence in connection therewith; and final delivery of mail addressed to personnel who have become battle casualties.
>
> . . . The Quartermaster General . . . is charged by law (U. S. C. Title 24, sec. 279) as follows: "Register of burials to be kept at each cemetery and at the office of the Quartermaster General, which shall set forth the name, rank, company, regiment, date of burial of the officer or soldier; or if these are unknown it shall be recorded," and with further duties as set forth in the Manual of The ASF, 15 February 1943, as follows: "Provides for the disposition of deceased personnel of the War Department; maintains all Graves Registration records." [34]

In consequence of this allocation of responsibility it was the opinion of the Office of The Quartermaster General that release of information by The Adjutant General regarding burial places beyond the continental limits of the country duplicated a function that logically belonged to The Quartermaster General and that methods pursued in violation of this logic were responsible for a considerable amount of misinformation to next of kin as well as embarrassment to the War Department. The point was stressed that reburials were frequently made by graves registration forces in the field and, while reports of all such reinterments were forwarded to The Quartermaster General and filed in the Memorial Branch, information available to The Adjutant General's Office was restricted to reports of original burial. There were instances, according to Colonel Harbold, of official advisement to relatives of two different burial places, one furnished by The Adjutant General, the other by The Quartermaster General. The result, it was insisted, "is not conducive of assuaging the grief of the relatives and will create doubt in their minds when bodies are returned as to whether or not the bodies are those of their loved ones." [35]

The second area of confusion related to the want of uniformity in policies and procedures followed in the various theaters. Study of burial reports received by the Memorial Branch from overseas revealed that "each theater had its own method of handling its dead and unless some uniform policy is established and installed embarrassment and confusion will result and much grief will be brought upon the relatives after cessation of hostilities." [36]

With the experience of a year and a half of war, including the shortcomings and mistakes of graves registration practices in different theaters where offensive operations had been successfully supported against the enemy—the Central and Southwest Pacific and North Africa—The Quartermaster General was now requesting not only the full measure of authority that had been intended in the AR 18–30 series of 1924 and reaffirmed in the Graves Registration Technical Manual of 1941, but also the establishment of procedures commensurate with the exercise of such authority.

> . . . it is earnestly recommended that TQMG be designated as Chief, American Graves Registration Service, to direct the establishment of, and formulate policies for the operation of the Graves Registration Services in the theaters of operations and that TQMG be authorized to correspond direct with such chiefs of Graves Registration Services to insure the uniform methods of carrying out the duties of the Graves Registration office and the return of the military dead after cessation of hostilities in a manner befitting our national heroes.[37]

[33] Ltr, Brig Gen F. H. Pope, QMC, to CG ASF (Thru: USW), 15 Jul 43, sub: Dissemination of Info re: GR Matters.
[34] *Ibid.*
[35] *Ibid.*
[36] *Ibid.*
[37] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

Added weight was given on the same day, 15 July, by Col. C. S. Hamilton, Director, Service Installations Division, OQMG, to Colonel Harbold's analysis of the unsatisfactory state of affairs and his suggestion for correction along lines of the draft submitted for a War Department directive to replace the restricted circular of 18 February 1942. Colonel Hamilton examined a special phase of the confusion attending exercise of joint responsibility in the release of burial information, pointing out that deficiencies of the dual control system had prompted a number of unofficial agencies to assume informational functions. On 15 July he apprised the Commanding General. ASF, that inquiries from theater and defense commanders for instructions in reference to the proper handling of correspondence with relatives of the deceased, particularly requests for detailed information as to burial location and the future possibility of visiting these graves, presented difficulties that could not be solved by existing procedures. The very nature of such correspondence, Colonel Hamilton observed, required tact, patience, and not only a scrupulous regard for fact but the accessibility of all pertinent information. It could not always be expected that theater commanders would invariably exercise the requisite degree of tact and patience, or that they would be in a position to furnish all the desired information at a given time. Aside from reporting original burials, The Adjutant General did not have at his disposal the necessary data to give additional burial information. Yet a situation had developed in which "The Adjutant General's Office, the Office of The Quartermaster General, the Red Cross, the Knights of Columbus, the American Legion, and even individuals had assumed informational functions." [38]

Clarification of Procedures

As a remedy to these dangerous tendencies, Colonel Hamilton suggested the following procedures: (1) all cemeterial information should be furnished by the Memorial Branch, through The Quartermaster General; (2) all inquiries addressed to overseas commanders should be promptly acknowledged in the field, with an explanation that The Quartermaster General would, military security permitting, supply the requested information; (3) the overseas commanders should then forward the original requests to Washington, "together with such pertinent information which might amplify any data for making a reply." [39]

[38] Ltr, Col C. S. Hamilton to CG ASF, 15 Jul 43, sub: Furnishing information in connection with deceased Military Personnel, etc., interred outside the continental limits of the United States.

[39] *Ibid.*

Action in providing the remedies urged by Colonel Hamilton and Colonel Harbold would, no doubt, have been reasonably expeditious had not the Northwest Service Command precipitated a problem that demanded immediate attention. On 17 July Colonel Hamilton took this matter in hand, apprising The Adjutant General that correspondence between his office and Headquarters, Northwest Service Command, indicated that that Command was "automatically returning bodies of deceased military personnel without reference to the Office of The Quartermaster General." After noting that information concerning disposal of remains should, according to paragraph 3 of the War Department Circular dated 18 February 1942, be given only by The Adjutant General or The Quartermaster General, Colonel Hamilton observed that disregard of such requirements would lead to embarrassments to both the War Department and to relatives of the deceased in the future. He therefore recommended that a uniform policy be adopted by requiring "that no remains should be returned from outside the continental limits of the United States, unless so directed by this office and on specific request of the next of kin." Then, in order to give immediate effect to the proposed policy, he suggested that "the attached radiogram be dispatched [to the Northwest Service Command] in order to avoid shipment of additional remains." [40] Operations Branch, AGO, immediately requested "comment or concurrence" from the Director, Military Personnel Division, ASF, in regard to dispatch of radio instructions to the Northwest Service Command and also instructions concerning the recommendations that a uniform policy governing return of remains be adopted.[41] Upon ascertaining that the matter in no way concerned or affected the Casualty Branch, AGO, General Reynolds forwarded the recommendation of 17 July through channels for War Department approval.[42] The Assistant Chief of Staff, G–1, concurred on 30 July and formal approval of the Secretary of War was indicated on the same day.[43]

On 27 July, just 3 days before final approval of the measure designed to bring the Northwest Service Command into proper relations with The Quartermaster

[40] Memo, Col C. S. Hamilton, QMC, for TAG, 17 Jul 41, sub: Return of Remains.

[41] IAS, Lt Col Geo. A. Capp, AGO, to Dir, Mil Pers Div, ASF, 19 Jul 43, sub: Return of Remains.

[42] (1) MRS, Brig Gen Russell B. Reynolds to TAG, Casualty Branch, 23 Jul 43. Notation by Col. K. G. Hoge, 24 July, states: "I took this up with the Chief, Casualty Branch and he states this subject in no way concerns or affects the Casualty Branch." (2) D/F, Reynolds to TAG (thru ACofS), G–1, 27 Jul 43, sub: Return of Remains.

[43] *Ibid.* Memo for record states: "Approved July 30, 1943. By order of the Secretary of War."

Digitized by Google

General regarding the return of remains, an action originated in the Office of The Quartermaster General which sought abrogation of the existing policy of returning remains to the United States from points on the North American Continent. The inconsistency of this proposal with the one previously initiated by Colonel Hamilton gives rise to a suspicion that so many officials operating on levels between those of The Quartermaster General and the chief of the Memorial Branch were taking a hand in graves registration matters that some did not always appear to be fully aware of just what the others were doing. At any rate, Brig. Gen. J. L. Frink, The Deputy The Quartermaster General for Supply Planning and Operations, recommended in a letter transmitted through the Under Secretary of War to The Adjutant General that the War Department memorandum of 29 April 1943, which permitted under specified conditions the return of remains to the United States, be rescinded and that the original policy of prohibiting return under any conditions be restored.

There can be no question that General Frink urged cogent reasons in support of his contention and that these reasons had an indirect influence in realizing the objectives sought by Colonel Hamilton. If, indeed, the tempest was inadvertently brewed, as all the available evidence in the case would indicate, it had something of the effect of an electrical storm that clears the atmosphere. In justifying his recommendation, General Frink related that the Office of The Quartermaster General had experienced considerable difficulty with the Northwest Service Command and relatives of the dead whose remains were being shipped to the United States in contravention of provisions of the memorandum of 29 April 1942 and paragraph 3 of the War Department circular of 18 February 1942. "In several instances," he stated, "this office has not known of the return of bodies from the Northwest Service Command until claims are received from relatives for interment or a letter was dispatched from the Northwest Service Command giving report of burial and shipping expenses to the next of kin, which letter was received months after the return of remains." In view of the complications which would arise from a continuation of such practices, he "earnestly requested that the original policy [of 13 December 1941] be adhered to and that the policy recommended . . . be disseminated to the field, especially to the Northwest Service Command, at the earliest possible date." [44]

The Under Secretary of War approved General Frink's request on 29 July.[45] As already stated, the Secretary of War approved on 30 July Colonel Hamilton's proposal that the Northwest Service Command should be instructed by radio to conform to requirements of the existing policy.[46] Duly approved by superior authority, both measures were transmitted for final action to The Adjutant General. On 3 August General Ulio dumped the matter into the lap of the Chief of Staff. Calling attention to the conflict of directions, he requested instructions as to the desired course of action.[47]

Upon findings of a study conducted by the Acting Assistant Chief of Staff, the Chief of Staff proposed an affirmation of favorable action on the part of G–1 and the Secretary of War regarding Colonel Hamilton's request of 17 July and, in the same connection, suggested that the Under Secretary's indorsement on recommendations subsequently submitted by General Frink without regard to G–1 should be rescinded. On 14 August the Secretary gave his approval to this disposition of the case.[48]

On the same day the Assistant Chief of Staff, by direction of the Secretary of War, transmitted to The Adjutant General for publication the approved draft of a War Department directive to supersede the one of 29 April and give effect to the "uniform policy" proposed by Colonel Hamilton. Then, for purposes of immediate application in the Northwest Service Command, The Adjutant General was also furnished the copy of a radio message which required the commanding general of that command to request instructions from The Quartermaster General prior to the shipment of remains to the United States.[49] The radio message was dispatched on 18 August.[50] The War Department memorandum, which translated into general terms of policy the instructions issued by radio to the Commanding General, Northwest Service Command, was published by The Adjutant General on 21 August. "Memorandum No. W55–16–43, this office, 29 April 1943 . . . is rescinded and the following substituted therefor:"

1. During the period that the United States is at war, the shipment home of remains from Alaska, foreign possessions,

[44] Ltr, Brig Gen J. L. Frink to TAG (Thru: USW), 27 Jul 42, sub: Shipment of Remains.

[45] OUSW to TAG, 29 Jul 43, 1st ind on above cited basic communication.

[46] Memo for record on D/F, Reynolds to TAG (thru ACofS, G–1), 27 Jul 43, sub: Return of Remains.

[47] IAS, Maj Gen J. A. Ulio, TAG, to ACofS, G–1, 3 Aug 43, sub: Return of Remains.

[48] Ltr, Col Geo. A. Miller, Actg ACofS, to CofS, 9 Aug 43, sub: Shipment of Remains. Notation by Col W. A. Schulgen, Asst Sec, WDGS, states: "Approved Aug 14, 1943, by order of the Secretary of War."

[49] D/F, ACofS (Col R. W. Berry, Executive) to TAG, 14 Aug 43, sub: Return of Remains.

[50] *Ibid.* A marginal notation reads: "Action Taken: Radio to CG, NW Serv Command, White Horse. YT. 8/18/43—M. R. K."

Digitized by Google

and other stations outside the continental limits of the United States is suspended, except as provided herein.

2. Remains may be returned to the continental United States from points on the North American continent, except Alaska, by commercial carrier transportation other than air or ocean or coastwise vessels, provided that sanitary and shipping requirements of the several countries are observed and that such transportation is available therefor and not required for the movement of troops or supplies.

3. Prior to shipment, a request for instructions will be submitted to The Quartermaster General, and shipment will not be made until receipt of instructions from The Quartermaster General.[51]

In effect, the Memorandum of 21 August 1943 authorized The Quartermaster General to require strict observance of War Department policies and procedures in reference to the return of remains by all commands in North America beyond the continental limits of the United States. Furthermore, the authority thus granted prepared the way for acceptance of Colonel Harbold's proposal that The Quartermaster General be designated as Chief, American Graves Registration Service, with authority to communicate directly with graves registration officers in the field.

Dissemination of Burial Information

Disposal of the problems thrust into the foreground by the Northwest Service Command during July now permitted consideration of the recommendations originally submitted by Colonel Harbold. His tentative draft of a War Department directive to replace the circular of 18 February 1942 had reposed in the Casualty Branch, AGO, to which it had been referred at that time. On 18 August the draft was sent to The Adjutant General with favorable comment on the part of Lt. Col. George F. Herbert, Chief, Casualty Branch, with an explanation that "the apparent undue delay in this case is due to the fact that two other cases of a similar nature have been under consideration by the General Staff and as a result the suspended date on this paper was set ahead to 18 August in the hope that action on the General Staff cases would be completed by that date." [52] The Adjutant General, in submitting this case to the Secretary of War on the same day, stated his agreement with The Quartermaster General in his letter of 15 July 1943.[53] He also noted that paragraph 10 of the draft for revision was, according to his understanding, then under review by the General Staff and that, "inasmuch as detailed instructions had already been issued in Memorandum No. W600–61–43, AGO, 28 July 1943, it was his opinion that Par. 13 of the draft should be deleted." [54]

Although The Adjutant General appears to have been in accord with the view that joint responsibility in the dissemination of burial information had been productive of confusion and required correction, the problem of tracing a clear line of demarcation between the legitimate functions of The Adjutant General in reporting deaths and places of original burial, and those of The Quartermaster General in the issuance of information relative to places of burial, could not be arbitrarily drawn. The Adjutant General derived his data from the theater casualty officer, whose sources of information did not extend beyond the place of original burial. The Quartermaster General obtained reports of death through The Adjutant General from the same source in the theaters. Additional information concerning subsequent disinterment and reinterment by theater graves registration forces became available to The Quartermaster General but not to The Adjutant General. This latter information, however, was classified and, as such, could not lawfully be disclosed to relatives and friends of deceased soldiers. Furthermore, a ready solution to the problem was complicated by the situation presented in Colonel Hamilton's memorandum of 15 July 1943 which, it will be recalled, examined the possibilities of additional confusion that would necessarily accumulate in the absence of a realistic policy governing the treatment of requests for burial information addressed to the theaters.

With a view to intelligent consideration of the whole problem, and the formulation of workable procedures for inclusion in the draft of the War Department circular then under consideration, the Control Division, ASF, undertook a survey of the past workings of the joint control system and the various proposals that had heretofore been offered to correct its deficiencies. The study was completed and reported on 27 August.[55] It was pointed out that the procedures, as originally practiced under joint control, had broken down and that in consequence of the collapse no official information regarding place of burial was being issued by the War Department to relatives of the deceased. This report emphasized the following points:

[51] WD Memo, W55–39–43, 21 Aug 43.

[52] IAS, Lt Col George F. Herbert, Chief, Casualty Br, AGO, to TAG, 17 Aug 43, sub: Revision of WD Cir dated 18 Feb 42, restricted. AG 322 GRS.

[53] Memo, TAG for USW, 17 Aug 43. AG 322 GRS (15 Jul 43) PC–1.

[54] *Ibid.* The paragraph in question concerned issuance of detailed instructions for care of personal effects.

[55] Memo, 1st Lt Robert K. Straus, Control Div, ASF, for Lt Col M. W. Cresap, 27 Aug 43, sub: Furnishing of Graves Info to Families of Deceased. Lieutenant Straus states that he was instructed to investigate the question raised by Colonel Hamilton's memorandum of 17 August 1943, with regard to handling requests from families concerning burial locations and the visiting of graves. *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

(1) Notice of death was sent by the theater commander to the Casualty Branch, AGO, and this information was immediately transmitted by telegram to the next of kin, together with a copy to the Memorial Branch.

(2) After dispatching the notice of death, the Casualty Branch originally sent a "follow-up" letter, informing the next of kin that the deceased had been given a military funeral and that his personal effects would be returned as soon as possible. Until recently any burial information given in the follow-up letter had been based on the report of the theater casualty officer. While accurate as of the date of report, this information was misleading whenever reinterment in a military cemetery had been effected by theater graves registration forces. Such information was reported only to The Quartermaster General and, for reasons of military security, could not be disclosed. In consequence of the misunderstanding created by release of incomplete burial information in the follow-up letter, The Adjutant General had ceased the practice of giving any burial information. Kinsfolk of the fallen were thus compelled to rely on whatever unofficial information could be gathered from letters written by a comrade of the deceased or by some thoughtful company commander or devoted chaplain. The report positively states: "Under existing procedure no burial information whatsoever is being transmitted to the next of kin by any branch of the War Department." [56]

Correction of this unsatisfactory state of affairs was viewed with such concern that a special board of officers had been created to investigate the problem and propose remedial action. Consisting of Lt. Col. Herbert, Chief, Casualty Branch, AGO, Col. R. P. Harbold, Chief, Memorial Branch, OQMG, Col. H. A. Cooney, G–1, WDGS, and Col. Frank G. Davis, Joint Security Control, WDGS, the board recommended procedures the substance of which was incorporated in the directive then being considered to replace the circular of 18 February 1942. As reported by the Control Branch study, the board recommendations were summarized in the following points:

(1) The Casualty Branch, AGO, will notify next of kin in its follow-up letter that burial information will be forwarded by the Memorial Branch, OQMG, as soon as such information is available and considerations of military security permit its dissemination.

(2) The Memorial Branch will make a monthly check through the Director, Military Intelligence Division, ASF, with G–1, G–2, and the Joint Security Control, WDGS, for the purpose of ascertaining, as soon as possible, when the names of individuals buried in particular cemeteries of a given area or theater of operations can be cleared from security restrictions.

(3) Upon clearance of a particular cemetery, or group of cemeteries, the Memorial Branch will write letters giving the desired burial information.

Directive of 11 September 1943

The Control Branch study, as reported on 27 August, drew general conclusions to the effect: (1) that assurance by The Adjutant General in the new form of a follow-up letter to next of win that authentic burial information would be forthcoming as soon as military security permitted, together with the warning that all unofficial reports must be discounted, should relieve the pressure to which the War Department had been subjected by distressed and misinformed kinsfolk; (2) that authority given in paragraph 3 of the proposed circular to The Quartermaster General to correspond directly with theater graves registration officers and to formulate general policies for these theaters conferred the authority requisite to a realization of the original intention that he should initiate general policies and serve as technical adviser in the conduct of graves registration operations at home and abroad. Approval of the draft of the proposed War Department circular was given by the Director, Control Division, ASF, to which it had been submitted in connection with the study prosecuted by that division. With concurrences received from the Chief, Memorial Branch, OQMG, the Chief. Casualty Branch, AGO, the Joint Security Control, WDGS, and the Director, Military Intelligence Division, ASF, the paper was routed to the Publications Division, AGO, on 1 September 1943.[57] The Secretary of War gave his approval [58] to the proposed directive on 9 September, and it was published as War Department Circular No. 206 under date of 11 September 1943.

Circular No. 206 is an interesting document in many respects. Improvisation and experimentation, with incidental embarrassments to the War Department, had disclosed the inadequacies of the stopgap directive issued on 18 February 1942. These were repaired by paragraphs 1, 2, 5, and 6 of the new directive. In the first two appeared the designation of The Quartermaster General as Chief, American Graves Registration Service, together with an assignment of responsibility

[56] *Ibid.*

[57] Col Kilborne Johnston, GSC, Deputy Dir. Control Div, ASF, to Dir, Publications Div, AGO, 2 Sep 43.

[58] Col Marion Rushton, OUSW, to CG ASF, 9 Sep 42, 1st ind on above cited basic communication.

Digitized by Google

for the formulation of graves registration policies in the various theaters of war and authorization to correspond directly with theater graves registration officers on matters pertaining thereto. Paragraphs 5 and 6 specified procedures for dissemination of burial information that avoided the ambiguities of joint control and, as far as practicable, met all restrictions imposed by military security. The remaining paragraphs were carried over from the old directive. Taken as a whole, Circular 206 established a titular office and conferred a measure of authority and responsibility that seemed adequate to clothe The Quartermaster General with the realities of power. In so doing it gave a belated recognition to those principles of organization and control that had been indicated in the AR 30– series of 1924 and that, in accordance with objectives then clearly stated, should have been available as an effective instrument of policy on the first day of hostilities—not 18 months later.

The product of tardy efforts to repair in war a situation that should have been anticipated during peace, the new arrangement perpetuated one of the flaws of this very situation. In consequence of relegating the Memorial Division to the status of a branch during March 1942, a sort of administrative jungle now stood between the newly created chief of the American Graves Registration Service and his technical assistant. Administratively an element of the Service Installations Division, the Memorial Branch was subject not only to a large measure of supervision by the divisional director but also to that of other divisional directors of the Office of The Quartermaster General in matters pertaining to personnel, planning, organization, and control, and in matters concerning the availability of classified records, as well as facility of communication with other Government agencies, particularly members of Congress. Operations conducted during 1943 on the divisional level had not always been happy in their results; one, it will be recalled, was so poorly coordinated as to bring the Under Secretary into conflict with the Secretary of War. The way was cleared, nevertheless, for some correction of these administrative impediments and for initiation of planning for the eventual return of remains.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V

Graves Registration in the Mediterranean Area

The Sicilian Campaign

THE successful execution of Operation HUSKY, the invasion of Sicily, completed a transition in the fortunes of the United Nations which Winston Churchill aptly called the "end of the beginning." When remnants of the once-celebrated Afrika Corps escaped under fire across the Straits of Messina into Italy, Nazi Germany witnessed a reassertion of naval control over the Mediterranean by its adversaries. The Fascist dictatorship fell; the Italian armies disintegrated and the fleet surrendered. American arms were a major factor in the course of events which isolated the surviving Axis Powers and put them on the defensive in their respective strategic areas. The United States Army was rapidly learning its trade in the school of war. The Sicilian campaign definitely marks a transition from haphazard improvisation to firm policy and standard procedures in many respects, including the conduct of graves registration operations.

While notable progress was made in this direction during the Tunisian campaign, improvement came largely as a result of adaptability on the part of untrained officers and men in perfecting their performance by trial and error. The Sicilian campaign, in contrast, was planned on the assumption that trained Quartermaster Graves Registration Service units would be available for the operation, and that combat formations would, for the most part, find competent personnel for the evacuation of bodies to collecting points. These assumptions, however, were somewhat optimistic when the decision was taken at the Casablanca Conference in January 1943 to launch an attack against Sicily, "with the target date in the period of the favorable July moon." [1]

At that time, it will be recalled, there were no Quartermaster Graves Registration Service companies in the Tunisian battle zone, while unit chaplains were begging their S–4 sections for transportation to evacuate the dead. Detailed planning for the invasion of Sicily was undertaken in accordance with Planning Instructions No. 1, as issued by Headquarters, Force 141 (Combined Allied Ground Forces), on 12 February, that is, about a month before the assignment of graves registration units in Tunisia on the basis of one platoon to the division, and some two months before the collection point system came into successful operation. It may be assumed, then, that planning for care of the dead in Sicily was based on an appraisal of shortcomings revealed by the North African landings, together with a belief that combat and service units might acquire the experience in Tunisia that would enable them to meet all reasonable requirements of a comprehensive graves registration program elsewhere. In other words, it was supposed that the painful process of learning by trial and error would make good those aspects of basic graves registration training that had been consistently overlooked during the prewar years. Whether or not a reasoned assumption, this view was sustained: the veteran 1st, 3d, and 9th Divisions, as well as the 2d Armored Division, met most expectations of the plan, while the 45th Division, lately arrived from the United States, was destined to experience many of the difficulties which its sister divisions met and overcame in Tunisia.

The Graves Registration Directive for Operation HUSKY was prepared as Annex No. 5 to Administrative Order No. 1 by the Office of the Quartermaster, Headquarters, Force 343 (American Task Force), and issued on 15 June to accompany Field Order No. 1, dated 20 June.[2]

The directive assigned responsibility to each company, battalion, regiment and division, as well as hospitals, depots and other separate organizations, for the appointment of an officer to perform the functions of Graves Registration Service Officer. Such officers, within divisions and higher units, became responsible to the unit Quartermaster "who in turn is responsible to [sic] the Graves Registration functions." Sub-

[1] Rpt, Opns of the US Seventh Army in the Sicilian Campaign, 10 Jul–17 Aug 43 (Hq, Seventh Army, Sep 1943), Part I, Sec d, Planning Instructions No. 1, 12 Feb 43, p. 1. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 107–0.3. Hereinafter cited as Seventh Army Report.

[2] *Ibid.*, Part I, Sec d, Grave Registration Directive, pp. 44–6.

Digitized by Google

task force Graves Registration officers were responsible for the planning, operation, and coordination of all burial functions within their units, including the formulation of appropriate recommendations to subtask force G–4's concerning burial and maintenance of liaison with G–2 and the subtask force surgeons for plans regarding evacuation. Graves Registration Service officers of separate units and establishments were responsible directly to Force 343.[3]

Based on the assumption that a Quartermaster Graves Registration Service platoon would be attached to each division or subtask force, it was prescribed that "the platoon commander will work with the Division GRS Officer under the supervision of the unit Quartermaster." In this capacity the platoon commander would assign sections of his platoon to elements of the division and supervise their work. The Division GRS Officer, however, became responsible for the performance of graves registration functions in detached units or elements at distances beyond support of the graves registration platoon. In such cases he would "call upon the unit Graves Registration Officer to perform burial and related functions for the organization concerned." [4]

In the event that no Quartermaster Graves Registration Service personnel were attached to a division or subtask force, the directive specified that a provisional organization would be established under supervision of the unit Graves Registration Officer. A type organization was suggested, with the provision that personnel allotments might be altered upon recommendation of the division or task force Graves Registration Officer. The basic organization comprised two principal components—(1) the Office of the Division Graves Registration Service Officer, and (2) three registration sections. The division or subtask force Graves Registration Officer, with two noncommissioned officers and four privates, comprised the headquarters unit. The basic organization of the graves registration section included one noncommissioned officer (section leader), one attached medical noncommissioned officer, and five privates. Allowances for motor transport were meager, one ½-ton truck being allotted to the headquarters detachment and one ¾-ton weapons carrier to each of the three registration sections. It was also specified that drafting equipment and required burial forms would be supplied the headquarters unit, and that blankets and shelter halves, together with such technical items as rubber gloves, absorbents and disinfectants, would be issued to the registration sections. Three principal functions were assigned this provisional service, namely collection of bodies to avoid isolated burials, digging of graves, and assistance in search for unfound dead. The attached Medical personnel were responsible for identification of portions of bodies dismembered, fingerprinting in event of doubtful identity, the preparation and disposition of WD MD Form 52 B, and rendering first aid in emergency.[5]

The Quartermaster Graves Registration Service Company comprised a headquarters detachment and four service platoons. Normally the company was assigned to an army corps of three divisions. One platoon serviced corps troops or remained in reserve, while the other three were attached to divisional elements, usually on a basis of one to the division. The platoon, in turn, was subdivided into three sections for distribution among the combat teams. The company headquarters and its operating platoons were responsible for five principal functions: (1) accomplishment and forwarding of final burial reports and records; (2) proper identification of bodies; (3) collection of personal effects; (4) marking of graves; (5) preparation of cemetery maps. It was emphasized that "Graves Registration personnel are not to be used for grave digging." [6]

The directive attempted to be specific in defining the division of labor between the Quartermaster Graves Registration Service platoon, on the one hand, and the provisional service unit, with its attached Medical personnel, on the other. A close comparison of assigned functions, however, indicates some confusion of purpose. Those delegated to the provisional service unit were taken bodily from Allied Force Headquarters circulars Nos. 1 and 2, of 1 and 3 October 1942, respectively. In reproducing old burial regulations intended for a situation in which all graves registration activities were conducted by a provisional service, the directive of 15 June 1943 appears to have caused some duplication of effort. That is, while the Graves Registration Service platoons became primarily responsible for the identification of bodies, Medical personnel attached to organic service units were assigned the same responsibility. The apparent overlapping of function, however, may be explained in part on grounds that service unit personnel were still responsible for identification, burial, and other graves registration functions whenever evacuation through the collecting point system became impracticable, or in those instances when the absence of Graves Registration Service troops com-

[3] *Ibid.*, Par 1.
[4] *Ibid.*, Par. 2.
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

pelled a particular division or subtask force to set up its own provisional organization for care of the dead. The type unit recommended for such a contingency was not unlike the cadre of a standard Graves Registration Service platoon, the noncommissioned officers and men of which were to be detailed "by division or separate unit commander upon call by the Graves Registration Officer." It was further stipulated that "the number and disposition of service troops would be determined by the type of action involved, number of casualties, and terrain fought over.[7]

In other words, the Quartermaster Office of Force 343 provided against the necessity of hasty improvisation in action during the development of Operation HUSKY. Since the Administrative Annex which included the Quartermaster plan for Graves Registration antedated Field Orders No. 1 by 15 days, it seems probable that the detailed provisions for establishing provisional service units were drawn up before definite information came to hand concerning the number of available Quartermaster units. The provisional scheme of organization, in fact, bears some resemblance to the one developed in New Guinea during 1943. There, it will be recalled, combat formations furnished provisional service units to which graves registration technicians were assigned in small groups numbering from two to five or six. While these technicians came from a platoon of the 48th GRS Company, the platoon itself had been activated in the field and was composed of civilian specialists drawn from the line. It was now proposed to find similarly qualified individuals among the veterans of Tunisia and utilize them as key personnel in the identification sections of provisional service units. Briefly, this scheme represents the final step in passing from improvised methods to standard procedures.

After outlining the organizational structure of graves registration and stating the division of responsibility, the directive set forth in detail (paragraph 3–10) the sequence of procedure relating to burials, reburials, operation of cemeteries, grave marking, revised techniques of identification, handling of personal effects, and the execution and processing of burial reports and records. All these processes, of course, had been indicated in various planning documents relating to the landings in North Africa, the Tunisian campaign, and the invasion of northeastern New Guinea. Such indications, however, invariably took the form of brief references to requirements prescribed in Army Regulations and amplified in TM 10–630. In other words they called for performance without means of implementation. Any expectation of real accomplishment was as illusory as the hope that a technical manual which expounded the theory of tank warfare in 1918 might somehow serve the purpose of a nonexistent armored force on the battlefields of World War II. Thus the Graves Registration directive of 15 June 1943 seems significant because it presupposes the availability of battle-trained technical troops and translates vague references into a precise statement of operating procedures. Again, such statements were framed in the light of contemporary operations, rather than those of World War I. It should be noted in this connection that SOS NATOUSA Circular No. 46, 1 April 1943, and such changes as were written into Technical Memorandum No. 26 not only parallel in point of time the preparation of the directive for HUSKY, but embody the same lessons of experience, including improved techniques for fingerprinting, tooth charting, standard cemetery layout and report forms such as Report of Burial (QMC Form 1–GRS, SOS NATOUSA, 1 June 1943), and the Weekly Report of Burials Recorded (QMC Form No. 2–GRS). Finally the directive supplemented those deficiencies that limited the usefulness of TM 10–630 as a handy reference work in the battle zone by indicating in simple and explicit terms those specific acts which graves registration personnel are expected to perform and the sequence in which they must be done. Indeed, this directive may be likened to a postdated preface which is prepared with a view to reconciling the ambiguous generalizations of a standard work and reinterpreting its text in the light of contemporary conditions.

While the Office of the Quartermaster was preparing the Graves Registration directive, difficulties were encountered in earmarking Graves Registration Service units for the invasion force. According to the Assistant Chief of Staff, G–1, the Outline Plan, as issued on 18 May, "called for the landing with the assault echelons of the various task forces of eight Graves Registration Service platoons, earmarked for Force 343."[8] While the 46th GRS Company, then in northern Tunisia, was alerted early in June and relieved by the 47th, which continued concentration activities in that area, the 48th was reassigned on 17 July from the I Armored Corps to Force 343.[9] A modification of these arrangements appears to have been made sometime prior to issuance of Field Orders No. 1 on 20 June.

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] Seventh Army Report, Pt. II, Sec B, Rpt of ACofS, G–1, p. 6.

[9] (1) Rpt, Hq EBS, OQM Historical Report, June 1943. RAC, EBS, MTO File 314.7 (Mil Hist, Hq 1, 1943–44). (2) Org and Dir Sec, AGO, Unit Files.

Digitized by Google

The troop list indicates that the 46th had been allotted to Shark Task Force (II Corps) and that the 48th, less one platoon, was assigned to Joss Task Force (3d Infantry Division, reinforced).[10] Since Shark consisted of two subtask forces, Cent (45th Infantry Division) and Dime (1st Infantry Division), the 46th GRS Company would, as originally assigned, have had a platoon for each infantry division and two more for corps troops, or other contigencies such as support of the 9th Division when this formation should reinforce the II Corps.[11]

Subsequent changes in the assignment of Graves Registration troops seem to have been made between the issuance of FO No. 1 on 20 June and D Day, 10 July 1943. The Assistant Chief of Staff, G–1, reports that "only six platoons were made available and that in one case a Task Force did not land its Graves Registration Platoon with the assault.[12] Whatever the changing circumstances that whittled down the original assignment of eight platoons to six, the diminished number still afforded the possibility of allocating service platoons on the basis of one to the division. With a total of three infantry divisions in the D Day landing assault, and an allocation of one platoon to each of these units, there were three more to carry the additional burden of attached and reinforcing troops, including the 2d Armored Division, the 82d Airborne Division, and the 9th Infantry Division. Altogether, graves registration planning for the invasion of Sicily definitely passed beyond the phase of indicating objectives in terms of vague generalities and then delegating the responsibility for implementation to a provisional organization manned by inexperienced personnel. While only incidental to a vast planning program that occupied many staff sections over a period of some six months, and required in the training and mounting of assault forces a complicated series of troop movements from points as far apart as Washington, D. C., and Tulsa, Oklahoma, the graves registration plan, like other related parts of the whole, marks a capacity to assemble and organize all the elements that give victory in battle. Pride of accomplishment, no doubt, prompted a Seventh Army officer to paint a word picture that is usually prohibited by the stiff prose of an after action report.

> A rare summer windstorm kicked the Mediterranean into a white-capped frenzy the morning of July 9, 1943. Now wallowing in the troughs of the twenty to thirty foot sea, now plunging their noses into green water and shaking spray off their superstructures, the ships of history's greatest armada converged toward Malta. Battleships and monitors, cruisers, destroyers and escort vessels shepherded their flock of transports and invasion ships across the heaving sea. Occasionally a flight of bombers swept overhead against the storm, intent on their mission of softening enemy defenses before the invasion.[13]

However conceived and coordinated, no operational plan has ever worked with absolute precision in the fog of war. The landing assaults delivered on 10 July 1943 by forces Shark and Joss were no exception to the rule. General Patton observes in his Notes on the Sicilian Campaign that the preparation of troop lists for an assault convoy involves a difficult adjustment of conflicting requirements. While the Seventh Army Commander concedes that men and equipment will be needed "to operate harbors, or beaches, or graves registration, or hospitals, or to restore and maintain airfields," he insists that these elements "are utterly valueless until the fighting infantry, supported by artillery and tanks, has captured a beachhead." The problem is further complicated by over-optimistic estimates on the part of service units concerning the time it takes to secure the beachhead. "Nonkillers," the General concludes, "must be held to an irreducible minimum in the early echelons."[14]

Dispositions by the various divisions for inclusion of graves registration troops among assault echelons presented many departures from over-all requirements stated in the Outline Plan of 15 May 1943. The extent of departure, as well as the reasons that might account for variation in a particular case cannot be precisely determined. It appears, however, that assigned graves registration units moved in with the advance echelons of Joss. The 3d Division burial plan provided for a subsidiary cemetery behind each beach. These sites were to be used as collecting points for burials if the operation did not progress fast enough to permit evacuation to the main cemetery. Actually no burials became necessary at these points.[15] On D plus 1 Company Headquarters and one platoon of the 48th GRS Company established a cemetery at Licata, 1,000 yards northeast of the town on Highway 115. Subsequently known as United States Military Cemetery No. 1, this burial ground was closed on 11 August 1943. The layout included five plots with 346 graves, of which 176

[10] Seventh Army Rpt, Pt. I, Sec d, Annex No. 3 to FO No. 1, p. 10.

[11] The 9th Division was originally assigned to the Seventh Army Reserve. Since no Graves Registration Service units were allocated either Kool Force, the Reserves Afloat, or to the Reserves in North Africa, it may be presumed that all elements of the 46th GRS Company were originally earmarked for Shark Force. *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 10–11.

[12] *Ibid.*, Pt, II, Sec B, Rpt of ACofS, G–1, p. 6.

[13] *Ibid.*, Pt. I, Sec b, The Operation, p. 2.

[14] Rpt, Hq, Seventh Army, n. d. sub: Notes on the Sicilian Campaign, 10 Jul–18 Aug 43. Hist Rec Sec AGO, 107–11.7.

[15] Rpt, Maj Gen L. K. Truscott, Cmdg, to TAG, 10 Sep 43, sub: Participation of 3d Inf Div (Renf) in the Sicilian Operation, 10 Jul–18 Aug 43. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 303–0.3 (22289).

Digitized by Google

were American (12 unknown), 6 British, 1 French and 163 enemy dead.[16] Between D plus 4 and D plus 8 two of three 48th GRS Company platoons were reassigned, one going to the 2d Armored Division, another to the 82d Airborne Division, leaving one with the 3d Division.[17] By 31 July these three units had buried 149 American dead, of which only nine remained unidentified. The latter group of remains "were charred bodies taken from LST No. 158 on July 12." A careful check with Army and Navy records gave little hope of establishing identification either on an individual or service basis. Excepting the burial of 36 enemy remains at Agrigento, all 3d Division dead were evacuated to Licata during the first two weeks of operations.[18] Both attached Graves Registration Service units and organic graves registration sections encountered many difficulties in the identification of remains. Due largely to loss of identification tags and the mutilated state in which many bodies were found, these difficulties, according to the Assistant Chief of Staff, G–1, Seventh Army, were considerably reduced "by requiring the identity of every officer and enlisted man to be marked inside of each legging." [19]

During the first two weeks of the campaign all troops sent to reinforce the left were incorporated with the original elements of Task Force Joss in a Provisional Corps. By the end of the period this command had occupied Palermo and taken position on a line facing eastward toward Messina. Meantime, the II Corps swept northward and connected with the right of the Provisional Corps. Altogether an advance of approximately a hundred miles had been sustained. On 24 July the 2nd Armored Division, which had entered Palermo two days previously, established a cemetery west of the town. Operated by the 2nd Platoon of the 48th GR Company, this burial site received 133 American and 8 Allied dead during the course of hostilities in that area.[20]

The troop list of the 1st Division, as published on 22 June 1943, stated that two platoons of the 46th GR Company, totalling 2 officers, 56 enlisted men, and 8 vehicles would land with the D plus 4 follow up. Annex No. 12 of the division administrative order to accompany Field Order No. 26, dated 19 June, prescribed the following operational procedures for graves registration: "(1) The Shore Regiment will establish a cemetery at a central point adjacent to the beach; (2) Isolated burials will be avoided; (3) Burials made on the battlefield through force of necessity will be reported to this headquarters without delay by overlay, showing coordinate location and listing the name, rank, serial number and organization." [21]

Unless Annex No. 12 of the Administrative Order of 19 June was amended between the date of publication and D Day, it may be presumed that personnel of the organic service units carried the graves registration load of Dime Sub-Task Force through the first four days of the invasion. Such a presumption, however, is questioned by the Assistant Chief of Staff, G–1, Seventh Army, who reports that only one task force failed to land its graves registration platoons with the assault. Since the 45th Division Graves Registration Service Officer has clearly established that the task force in question was Cent, there seems reason to believe that the two graves registration platoons assigned to Dime landed with the assault at a date earlier than the one originally intended. At the same time, G–1's detailed statement leaves the whole matter in doubt.

> At a point seven miles north of Gela, the First Infantry Division [Dime] started making burials on 10 July 1943 and continued doing so until 20 July 1943. On 21 July the 1st Platoon of the 45th [sic] Graves Registration Company started making burials, as the 4th Platoon of this unit attached to the First Division Infantry sent bodies back to this cemetery. In this place there are buried 1,008 American, 12 Allied and 586 enemy dead. This cemetery is known as United States Military Cemetery No. 2.[22]

While conflicting evidence thus fails to establish whether both Cent and Dime, or Cent alone, deferred the landing of attached Graves Registration Service platoons until D plus 4, the 1st Division apparently followed the scheme of the 3d in evacuating its dead to a centrally located cemetery on the south coast as the advance moved inland. The fact that 3d Division remains were carried upward of one hundred miles from the moving flank to Licata before a cemetery was established in the vicinity of Palermo would indicate that unit graves registration officers were no longer dependent upon local S–4 sections for such arrangements as might be made from time to time for the transportation of bodies. Again, the consideration that the battle

[16] (1) Seventh Army Rpt, Part II, Sec B, Rpt of ACofS, G–1, p. 6. (2) Mem Div, Administrative and Historical Data Relating to Overseas Cemeteries (Prepared by Opr Br for Return of World War II Dead Program, 1945). Active File, Opr Br, Mem Div. Hereinafter cited as Mem Div Planning Data for Return Program.

[17] (1) Rpt, Hq 82d Airborne Div to AGO, sub: G–4 Journal of Sicilian Campaign. Hist Rec Sec, AGO 382–4.2. (2) Rpt, Maj Gen L. K. Truscott, Cmdg Joss Task Force, to TAG, sub: Participation of 3d Inf Div (Renf) in Sicilian Operation, 10–18 Jul 43. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 303–0.3 (22289).

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] Seventh Army Rpt, Part II, Sec B, Rpt of ACofS, G–1, p. 6.

[20] Seventh Army Rpt, Part II, Sec B, Rpt of ACofS, G–1, p. 6. (2) Mem Div Planning Data for Return Program, U. S. Cemeteries in Sicily.

[21] Rpt, Lt Col Frederick W. Gibb, GSC, ACofS, G–3, 1st Inf Div, 31 Jul 43, sub: Operation BIGOT HUSKY. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 301–3 (222325).

[22] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

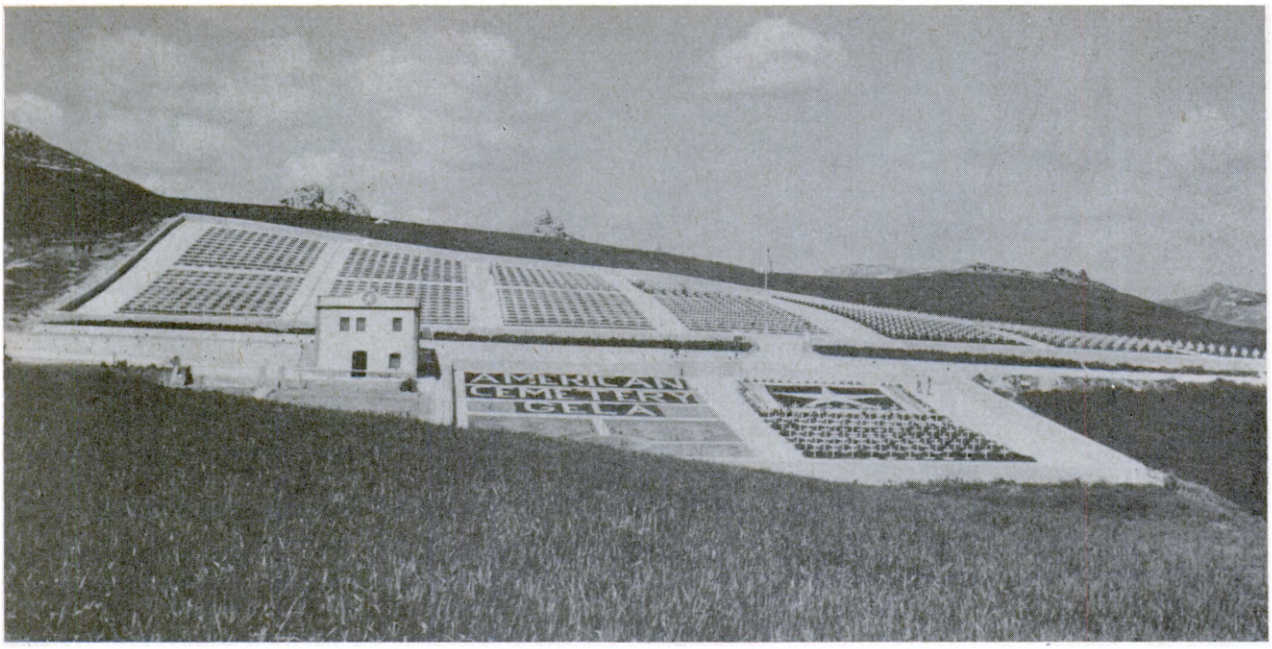


Figure 9.—U. S. Military Cemetery, Gela, Sicily.

front advanced without set-back or retrograde movement, and that the rearward flow of remains was continuous up to a point where distance alone necessitated the selection of a new burial place, suggests that comprehensive planning and expeditious execution reduced the problem of isolated burials to a minimum. Such favorable results, however, could not have been attained without the participation of organic service units and assigned Graves Registration Service platoons whose personnel had learned their business in the school of war.

There was one notable exception in the Sicilian campaign to the standard of efficiency acquired on the battlefield. Earmarked as a major element of Force 343 in March 1943,[23] the 45th Infantry Division hastened preparations to sail from the United States and complete its battle training in North Africa.[24] An advance staff preceded the division to Oran and participated in the detailed work of mounting the assault forces. In keeping with the attitude of all new formations regarding care of the dead, the advance group ignored graves registration problems until three days after the convoy reached Oran, when Maj. Albert J. Gricius, assistant to G–3, was appointed Division Graves Registration Service Officer. Entirely unprepared by training or experience for the assignment, Major Gricius undertook the task of hastily establishing provisional service units in a division which had assigned responsibility for such graves registration training as had been heretofore conducted to the division chaplain. On the day of his appointment Major Gricius obtained a copy of Force 343 Graves Registration Directive. This directive, he states "could not be carried out because of our combat loading in the United States." He related his difficulties in the following statement.

> I did not know anything about the work, and the only U. S. publication the division had was a technical manual on Graves Registration. There is nothing in it which helps much in combat—obsolete. . . . I had to go and dig up supplies. Went everywhere to get details on the job. Three days before sailing from Oran, I got 3,000 temporary markers, 4,000 bed sacks, and 3,000 personal effects bags. I distributed them to the eight assault ships, and notified the units, but they failed to understand the matter.[25]

While harassed with the details of finding supplies that should have been procured in the United States and properly loaded, Major Gricius requested that each regiment appoint a graves registration officer and then undertook the preparation of a graves registration annex to the division Administrative Order. Hastily compiled from matter contained in Force 343 Directive and NATOUSA circulars, this annex did not meet the requirements of a training manual, and was admittedly deficient as a guide to operations in the field. In view

[23] Seventh Army Report, Par I, a (The Plan), p. 4.
[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.
[25] Rpt, Col R. G. Hamilton, AGF Board, to CG AGF, 6 Aug 43, sub: Interv with Major Gricius, GRO, 45th Div, in Rpts from AGF Board to CG, AGF, Army War College, Washington, D. C. AGF, G–3 Sec, Training FFHG, 1943. Hereinafter cited as AGF Board Interview with 45th Div GRO, 6 Aug 43.

Digitized by Google

of the fact that the subject was new to all concerned, division headquarters reluctantly approved the compilation for publication on grounds that "there should have been a prior U. S. training directive because G–1 and the Quartermaster were not acquainted with the Force directive until we landed at Oran." [26]

The selection of unit graves registration officers brought additional perplexities. One regiment named a special service officer who performed efficiently; the other two appointed chaplains. Characterizing the latter as "flops," Major Gricius felt constrained to add that chaplains, however qualified in other respects, generally fail on a graves registration assignment "because they do not understand combat maneuvers." At the same time, he shifted his criticism of individuals to condemnation of a policy which was not only obscure and contradictory in its delegation of over-all responsibility, but objectionable in its method of selecting those least fitted by temperament and experience for the function of unit graves registration officer. "This matter," he insisted "is a Quartermaster function, but the Quartermaster has nothing to do with it. I started out on the beaches without a detail or vehicle." [27]

Difficulties encountered by the 45th Division during the first 10 days in Sicily were largely a repetition of those which had been faced by other inexperienced combat divisions in Tunisia and New Guinea. Contrary to expectations that the heaviest losses would be incurred in storming the beaches, most of the casualties suffered during this phase were accountable to boat accidents and to enemy mines. Organic service units, however, failed to follow the assault battalions. Although instructed to supply their graves registration officers with transportation on D Day, the regimental combat teams neglected to provide the required vehicles at the appointed time. Some units remained on the beach for 4 to 5 days without motor transportation. During the confusion no search parties were sent out. The dead were found by accident, largely by smell. "In Sicily," related the division Graves Registration Officer, "this odor begins after 4 hours instead of the normal 2 days. Being on foot the graves registration officers had to hitch hike, find picks and shovels, and had difficulty in locating men to dig graves. There were no bulldozers to dig with, so their work consisted mainly of picking up bodies along the road which would have been stepped on or run over." [28]

Landing on D plus 4 without equipment or vehicles, two platoons and headquarters of the 46th GR Company brought no immediate relief to the confused situation. Although the 45th Division battle-front had pushed from 10 to 15 miles inland, "there was still no system or means of evacuating the dead." Confronted by the fact that both organic and attached graves registration units were immobile, the division commander instructed each regiment to bury its own dead.

A complete breakdown of planned procedures was only averted by establishing a division graves registration office under immediate supervision of the 46th GR company commander and, at the same time, detailing company personnel in groups of seven to each of the combat teams to assist in the execution of burial reports. The balance of command was sent in search of its missing equipment and vehicles.

Meantime, the division Graves Registration Service Officer went forward with such transportation as the combat teams had provided and succeeded in opening a cemetery at Comiso airport. A bulldozer and prisoners of war for grave digging speeded progress in clearing up the immediate area until parachute elements of the 82d Airborne Division not only added to the number of unburied dead but claimed all vehicles recently furnished for the evacuation of bodies. While this loss was in some degree compensated when the 46th GRS Company recovered its equipment and vehicles at Gela on D plus 8, the shortage of transportation remained critical for some time and, according to Major Gricius, "caused quite a few isolated burials." [29]

A chronic shortage of transportation was but one of many problems that beset the 45th Division Graves Registration Officer. Like all units undergoing their first experience in war, the combat teams were, as a general rule, both inefficient and reluctant in supporting their full share of responsibility toward the dead. This attitude was strengthened whenever the attached Graves Registration Service units, for one reason or another, failed to perform their allotted function. Another vexation was added by the use of war prisoners for grave digging and related fatigues. Responsibility for guarding, supervision, and subsistence fell directly on the graves registration officer. Although Major Gricius concedes that his use of prisoners during one phase of the campaign accomplished results that would otherwise have required the detachment of 300 combat troops, he makes note of the fact that he "had to run around getting water and rations," that "the Germans required too many guards," and were willing to work only when "getting their dead out," and, finally, that the same results could be attained by labor troops.

[26] *Ibid.*
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] *Ibid.*
[29] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

"The Quartermaster," he insists, "should have a labor unit for this work." [30]

Graves registration operations of the 45th Division began to assume a normal aspect on 24 July (D plus 14), when the unit reached Cefalu on the north coast of Sicily and its combat teams were prevailed upon to assist in evacuating their dead to a division cemetery established at that point. Improvised procedures persisted, however, until permission was secured from Seventh Army headquarters to use attached Graves Registration Service personnel for concentrating isolated remains at Cefalu.

In reviewing his experience during these critical days, Major Gricius urged that the collecting point system should be maintained, despite any objections that combat units might offer to searching the battlefield and delivering remains to the collection point. Then, with a view to avoiding the sort of paralysis that halted his operations for some ten days after the landing, he offered seven specific recommendations.

(1) Get out in the United States a Directive like [Seventh] Army's. It is the only practical workable solution.

(2) Train personnel section of all units to use Graves Registration Forms 1 and 2, and AGO Form 54, with absolute accuracy.

(3) Get graves registration platoon in on D Day with vehicles.

(4) If this work is a Quartermaster function, don't take a staff officer of the division and put on it. The Quartermaster should accept responsibility if it is his, and if Quartermaster function, his unit should be increased to provide the personnel named in the Army directive.

(5) Need a special Quartermaster labor unit to dig. Graves registration platoons are incapable of doing more than run Division cemetery, strip and search bodies, make out forms, and consolidate isolated burials.

(6) Graves registration supplies, if units have to do as we did, must be given to units in the United States.

From July 10–31—the buried dead: 3 Captains; 7 Lieutenants—remaining 216 of Division, enlisted men. Outside of division: 80 paratroopers, Navy, unidentified.

Since July 31, 50 U. S. dead have been buried near Stefano, 41 of which resulted from mines.

The dog tag must always be with the body.[31]

The final phase of Operation HUSKY began on 1 August (D plus 22) with a violent Seventh Army thrust which drove eastward through the Troina-San Fratello line and hurried the evacuation of enemy forces, under conditions reminiscent of Dunkirk, across the straits of Messina to the Italian mainland.[32] Temporary burials during this phase were made by the 3rd, 9th, and 82d Airborne Divisions at Aqui Dolci and San Stefano, Troina, and Montevago, respectively. On 16 August (D plus 37) the 48th GR Company opened a cemetery at Caronia, which later became known as United States Cemetery No. 3 and which served as the concentration point for remains interred elsewhere during the final drive on Messina. Including remains concentrated from the 45th Division cemetery at Cefalu, a total of 451 American and 408 enemy dead were interred at Caronia.[33]

The conduct of graves registration operations during the Sicilian campaign marks notable progress in the application of standard field procedures. Advance planning was keyed to an understanding of those requirements that had been disclosed by actual experience during the North African landings and in the invasion of Tunisia. Effective execution of the directive so prepared achieved a considerable reduction in the ratio of isolated burials, together with a relatively small number of temporary burial places and unidentified dead. Another distinguishing feature was the improved use of transportation, permitting the evacuation of bodies over greater distances than had heretofore been found practicable as a standard practice. While delays in the landing of organic and attached graves registration units with full equipment and transportation, notably those of the 45th Division, left much to be desired, the units thus impaired recovered in time to continue their normal function. During the final phase of Operation HUSKY the veteran GRS platoons and organic service units operated the collecting point system with greater efficiency than had heretofore been attained. Indeed, the quality of this performance, while still marred by a reluctance on the part of combat formations to collect and evacuate their dead, may be justly described as the end of a difficult beginning in the establishment of effective graves registration services in the theaters of operations.

The Italian Campaign

Although the invasion of Italy was launched late in the summer of 1943, the American contingent of the Allied force which fought its way from Salerno to the Alps was created about eight months before, on 5 January.

Composed originally of major elements of the Western and Central Task Forces, and held in reserve against the threat of a German attack through the Iberian Peninsula and Spanish Morocco, the Fifth Army did not become available for offensive operations beyond

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] *Ibid.*

[32] Seventh Army Rpt, Part II, Sec b, Summary of Operations, p. 14.

[33] *Ibid.*, Part II, Sec B, Rpt of ACofS, G–1, p. 6.

Digitized by Google

North Africa until the latter part of July. Only when the conquest of Tunisia had been completed, and the progress of Allied arms in Sicily assured a rapid occupation of that island, did the Combined Chiefs of Staff seriously entertain an assault on the Mediterranean sector of Fortress Europe. With approval on 26 July 1943 of operation AVALANCHE, the United States Fifth and British Eighth Armies were definitely committed to the invasion of Italy.

During this long preparatory period the Fifth Army command pursued its primary mission of developing a mobile striking force, giving special emphasis to training for amphibious operations.[34] The army Director of Training established eight centers for specialized instruction and embodied in the courses given at these different installations the lessons derived from critical analyses of the North African landings, as well as those suggested by observation of current operations in Tunisia. When elements of the Seventh Army underwent training for the invasion of Sicily, they utilized both the methods and facilities provided by the Fifth Army.[35] Training doctrine and procedures which reflected an evaluation of past performance offered much toward improvement in the conduct of future operations. The graves registration problem was not overlooked in this careful examination of faulty accomplishment. Improved practices for HUSKY and AVALANCHE thus proceeded from a common background and followed parallel lines of development.

The problem of improving graves registration procedures in the Fifth Army became a matter of concern during the early months of 1943. Lt. Col. James F. Tweedy, Executive Officer, 1st Armored Corps, expressed alarm in conference on 29 April over want of progress in this direction. While conceding that the inability of combat troops to evacuate their dead during the assault landings of November 1942 clearly necessitated the attachment of Quartermaster Graves Registration Service units in any future operation, he was doubtful of the ability of attached technical personnel to solve the problem without active cooperation on the part of combat troops. He therefore concluded that combat divisions should have a "Graves Registration Section in readiness to function from the beginning of the assault landing." [36]

Ample scope for the application of such views was afforded by provisions written into the Graves Registration Directive of HUSKY Operation Plan, as annexed to Administrative Order No. 1 on 15 June 1943. Meantime, the Commanding General, SOS, NATOUSA, had taken the graves registration problem in hand and issued a comprehensive set of organizational and operational instructions in NATOUSA Circular No. 46, dated 1 April. These regulations were restated for purposes of general dissemination in a pamphlet entitled "Burials and Graves Registration in Battle Area," and published on 29 May. The documents of 1 April and 29 May, together with their enclosures and exhibits, offered the basic planning data with reference to graves registration for both HUSKY and AVALANCHE. The use of such data, however, took different forms in two operational plans.

The HUSKY directive was designed to serve every purpose of a technical manual, furnishing a complete compendium of organizational and procedural requirements. In contrast, graves registration planning for AVALANCHE was directed primarily toward improving the quality of those operations which would devolve upon combat units in the absence of attached technical personnel. On 14 July, just one day preceding promulgation of the HUSKY directive, Fifth Army Headquarters published Circular No. 29, "Battlefield Burials and Graves Registration by Troops." Its announced purpose indicates a limited approach that the Quartermaster Section of Force 131 was particularly careful to avoid. Paragraph 2 states: "This circular is planned entirely to aid the unit Graves Registration officers, who may be required to act in the absence of any Graves Registration Service personnel and without other reference material being available." In keeping with this restricted view, paragraphs 3–8 describe procedures relating to burial, handling of personal effects, disposition of QMC Form GRS–1, processing of other burial records and procurement of mortuary supplies. Paragraph 9 specifies that "all unit commanders are responsible for the necessary training of personnel to insure full compliance with this directive." [37]

Comparison of Fifth Army Circular No. 29, 14 July 1943, with those sections of the HUSKY directive of 15 July which outlined procedures for battlefield burials discloses that the latter document prescribed a definite type of organization for organic service units, while the former stresses only the function to be performed by unit graves registration officers. Presumably, the problem of organization was regarded as a

[34] *Fifth Army History* (9 vols. Florence, Milan, and Washington, 1945–47), I, 5.

[35] (1) *Ibid.*, pp. 6ff. (2) Seventh Army Rpt, Part I, pp. 4–5.

[36] Rpt of Conference in Personal Diary of Brig Gen Joseph P. Sullivan, QM Fifth Army, 29 Apr 43.

[37] On the same date, 29 May 1943, Fifth Army published Training Memorandum No. 29, "Battlefield Burials and Graves Registration by Troops." No copy of this Memorandum is presently available.

Digitized by Google

responsibility of the unit commander. This problem, it followed, would be solved only when the Fifth Army was definitely committed to one of the several operations for which outline plans had been prepared under direction of Allied Force Headquarters.[38] Furthermore, the final commitment to AVALANCHE on 27 July, only a month and 13 days before the landing assault, may have precluded any possibility of preparing a graves registration directive in the elaborate and detailed form of the one drawn up for HUSKY. However, the mature training and battle experience of many of the combat formations earmarked for AVALANCHE, together with the consideration that supporting platoons of the 47th and 48th Graves Registration Service Companies had been seasoned by two campaigns, argues that any such directive would have been superfluous. At any rate, the statement of procedures governing evacuation and burial of the dead in Administrative Order No. 1 of AVALANCHE Operation Plan, dated 26 August 1943, was brief indeed:

> (1) By units assisted by available graves registration platoons. For US Troops, see SOS NATOUSA pamphlet, "Army Burials and Graves Registration in Battle Areas," 29 May 1943, and Circular No. 29, Headquarters Fifth Army. For British troops see appropriate instructions. (2) Cemeteries—Locations to be selected by Task Force Commanders.[39]

However brief, the operational plan for AVALANCHE called into play the specialized training of combat troops, as well as the technical competence of experienced graves registration service units. Two sections of the 47th GRS Company accompanied the initial assault force across the beaches of Salerno on 9 September 1943. An additional section followed on D plus 2, while the balance of the 47th and the 3d Platoon of the 48th GRS Company came ashore on D plus 12.[40] Despite violent enemy counterattacks which momentarily threatened disaster to the assault force, there was no collapse or serious halt of planned procedures for evacuation and burial of the dead. Difficulties, to be sure, were encountered; transportation was not furnished in accordance with demands, and labor detachments failed to arrive when most needed. Nevertheless, the 36th Division GRO established a temporary cemetery on D Day at Vannulo, near the Division CP, and made strenuous efforts to evacuate all dead to this point.[41]

The Division Engineer received instruction to furnish a larger bulldozer than the one already in use at Vannulo. An urgent request followed, seeking a detachment of twenty men, armed with automatic rifles, to guard an additional party of prisoners expected from the beach. Owing, however, to misdirection of instructions, the prisoners failed to appear. Then a shortage of transportation prompted unit graves registration officers to recommend the extraordinary expedient of making battlefield burials. Corps Headquarters promptly forbade the practice, ordering the units concerned to supply such vehicles as were required for evacuation of remains to the division cemetery. A group of 63 prisoners (50 Italians and 13 Germans) were digging graves at Vannulo on D plus 3, and all remains evacuated to this cemetery were underground by D plus 4. Two days later the cemetery detachment was preparing graves in anticipation of deliveries.[42]

On D plus 10 (19 September) Vannulo was closed to further burials. In the meantime, three additional cemeteries had been established, one at Maiori, another at East Altavilla and the third at Mount Soprano.[43] Four more temporary cemeteries—Altavilla, Oliveto Cirta, Monte Corvina, and Rorella—were opened during the latter part of September, making seven in all and having a total of 1031 interments, including 846 American, 14 Allied and 171 enemy dead. There were 45 unknown American dead, approximately 5 percent of the total. During October, as the Allied forces drove northward beyond Naples toward the Winter Line, the American dead of September's fighting, excepting those at Maiori, were concentrated in the Mount Soprano cemetery. Graves registration forces of the Peninsular Base Section subsequently concentrated the Maiori dead at Mount Soprano.[44]

Graves registration accomplishments during September 1943 in the Salerno-Naples area mark a notable advance in field practices. As indicated by a relatively low percentage of unknown dead, the difficult problem of providing technical support during the build-up of a shore-to-shore assault force was solved for the first time. This percentage of unknowns was ap-

---

[38] Following instructions from AFHQ, Gen. Clark prepared outline plans for five operations—BRIMSTONE (invasion of Sardinia), BARRACUDA and GANGWAY (Assault landings near Naples), MUSKET (an assault landing near Taranto), and AVALANCHE. On 26 July Combined Chiefs of Staff urged General Eisenhower to direct that detailed plans for AVALANCHE be made. *Fifth Army History*, I, pp. 16–17.

[39] QM Annex to Adm Order No. 1, Fifth Army Operation Plan, 26 Aug. 43.

[40] Hq Fifth Army, Operation Plan, 26 Aug 43, sub: Outline Plan Operation AVALANCHE, VI Corps, Annex 1, Final Troop List AVALANCHE (S). Hist Rec Sec, AGO, Microfilm Reel 191-D.

[41] (1) Annex No. 1 to G-1 Journal, 36th Div, Opn AVALANCHE, 9–21 Sep 43. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 336-1.2. (2) Rpt QM Fifth Army, GRS, 17 Apr 44, sub: Burials. RAC, Littlejohn Collection.

[42] *Ibid.*

[43] QM Fifth Army, GRS, Chart No. 1, Burials—U. S. Military Cemeteries (Reporting total burials as of 31 Sep 43). Sullivan Collection.

[44] Rpt, Brig Gen Joseph P. Sullivan to CG Fifth Army, 17 Apr 44, sub: Interpretation of Graves Registration Chart [No. 7]. Sullivan Collection.

Digitized by Google

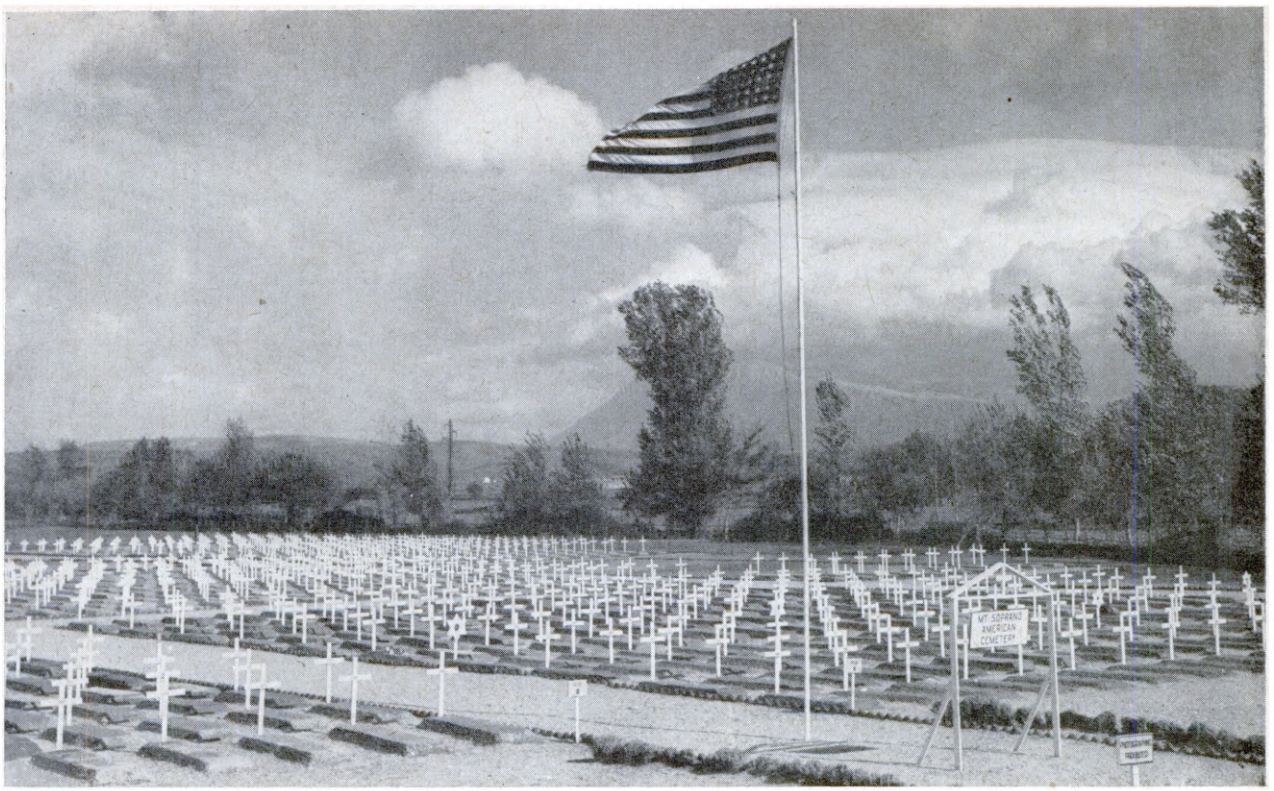


Figure 10.—U. S. Military Cemetery, Mount Soprano, Paestum, Italy.

proximately that of World War I and lower than that of the recent campaign in Tunisia. The record established during the battle of the Salerno beaches was improved during the course of the Italian campaign. This development is aptly summarized at a later date by Brig. Gen. Joseph P. Sullivan, Chief Quartermaster of the Fifth Army.

> An analysis of figures covering the unidentified U. S. dead through June 1944 shows a total of 260 or 1.8%. This figure is low, and particularly so when it is considered that it includes two amphibious operations—the landings at the Salerno beaches and the Anzio beachheads—the difficult terrain and rapid movement after the crossing of the Rapido and the Garigliano River and the Cassino Area, where recovery of bodies was in some instances long delayed due to the tactical situation and the many unknowns resulting from the long unrecovered bodies left in the Beachhead period at Anzio. Identifications established of previously "unknown" bodies and increase in "unknowns" during the past month due essentially to the Beachhead and clearance of the Rapido River areas have increased the percentage of unknowns by 50% of the May figure of 1.2%.[45]

Taken as a whole, the Italian campaign represents a special case in the development of graves registration organization and procedures. While improvement of the service, as reflected in the relatively low number of isolated burials and a corresponding high percentage of positive identifications, may be attributed in part to superior planning and effective training, there were factors peculiar to this campaign alone which exerted considerable influence on the conduct of graves registration operations. Aside from the advantage of containing in Italy large German forces which might have been used to greater advantage elsewhere, strategic prizes were limited to employment of the Foggia air fields for long-range bombardment of Central Europe and whatever political prestige might accrue from a military occupation of Rome. Pursuing limited objectives on a terrain best suited to defensive tactics, the Italian campaign was characterized by encounters which, in many respects, recall the prolonged battles of position of World War I and which, excepting occasional opportunities for a restricted use of mechanized columns, forbid any strict comparison with the decisive operations of World War II.

For the most part, German resistance to Allied progress up the peninsula was confined to two battles of position, one being waged on the so-called Winter Line which covered Cassino and the Liri Corridor to Rome, the other on the Gothic Line, guarding all land approaches from the south into the Po Valley. Graves registration operations were adapted to the tactical

[45] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

situation. Despite difficulties of transportation over a rugged terrain, stationary warfare usually favored efforts to restrict the number of isolated burials and, at the same time, offered opportunities for the identification of unknowns that seldom apply in a campaign of rapid movement. Again, the emphasis that Fifth Army training doctrine had from the first put on the delivery of battlefield dead to division collecting points as a primary responsibility of combat units furnished a sound basis for evacuation of bodies under conditions imposed by the tactical situation in Italy.

The essential characteristics of a smooth working organization appear as early as September 1943. G–1 of the 45th Infantry Division relates that one officer and thirty enlisted men were designated as "a full time G. R. S. Platoon during combat." Equipped with one ¼-ton truck, one 2½-ton truck and a 1-ton trailer, this unit worked in separate parties immediately behind the infantry battalions, collecting bodies as soon as the area was beyond hostile machine gun range and moving them to collecting points convenient for traffic established in rear of the regiments. "The collecting points" it is noted, "are kept as close to the front line as possible." Whenever necessary, detachments of similar composition removed bodies from the corps artillery regiments to established collecting points. The dead of divisional artillery battalions were usually gathered by detached parties of the regimental platoons while collecting infantry remains. Personnel of the attached Quartermaster Graves Registration Service platoon was customarily distributed between collection point details and a detachment stationed at the division cemetery. The collection point detail consisted of four enlisted men each, with one ¾-ton truck and a 1-ton trailer. These details evacuated bodies to the division cemetery, where the platoon commander and enlisted personnel of the cemetery detachment supervised burials, executed QMC Form 1, Report of Burial, and made proper disposition of personal effects. Prisoners or hired civilians were used for grave digging.

A full-time Division Graves Registration Service Officer coordinated all operations incidental to care of the dead within the division area, and gave particular attention to the policy of avoiding isolated burials. Expediency, however, required some relaxation of the absolute requirement by resorting to the use of small unit cemeteries. That is, a new cemetery might be opened whenever fifty or more bodies could be conveniently carried to the designated site.[46]

[46] History of G–1 Section, 45th Inf Div, Sep 10–30, 43. RAC, Hq Fifth Army, GRS file.

The trend toward specialization of function in the collection, evacuation, identification, and burial of bodies becomes apparent in all Fifth Army divisions during this phase of the campaign. According to the testimony of Army Ground Forces observers, unit graves registration officers operated on the assumption that "the Quartermaster Graves Registration platoon attached to each infantry division is incapable of collecting, evacuating, and burying the dead without some assistance from combat troops." [47]

The method of battlefield collection developed by the 45th Division was practically identical to that of the 3d Division. Special service officers directed graves registration activities within the latter unit. The battalions furnished ten men each to service regimental collecting points, where graves registration service detachments took over and completed evacuations to the division cemetery. Burials by units, of course, became impossible. "The Graves Registration Service platoon," it was emphasized, "is insufficient to do the job of evacuation and burial alone. The collecting teams organized under Special Service officers in the division mentioned above operated efficiently and successfully." [48]

Standardization of the organization developed by the 3d and 45th Divisions is indicated in an observer's report on an unidentified division.

> In one division the dead are collected by teams formed for the purpose in each combat team. These teams consist of one officer and fifteen to twenty enlisted men two of whom are noncommissioned officers. The bodies are brought to collecting points along nearest road that can support a 2½-ton truck or weapons carrier. Bodies are loaded on truck and taken directly to division cemetery. The Graves Registration Section (attached) supervises interment of bodies by civilian labor which was arranged for by the section. Collection of personal effects, identification, and necessary records are carried out by GR Personnel.[49]

A more complete and authoritative interpretation of Fifth Army graves registration doctrine and practice is presented by 3d Infantry Division Memorandum No. 82, "Burial and Graves Registration," 6 December 1943. While similar memoranda of other divisions are not available, the 3d Division directive spells out in precise detail the procedures derived from miscel-

[47] (1) *Ibid.* (2) Notes of Lt Col Bridgewater on 3d Inf Div in RPT (T/S) Maj R. J. Delacroix, AGF, Asst Ground Adj Gen, to CG's Second and Fourth Armies, *et al*, 7 Feb 44, sub: Observers Notes on the Italian Campaign during the period 4 Oct 43 to 29 Dec 43, inclusive. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, AGF Reports.

[48] (1) *Ibid.* (2) Rpt, Dissemination Div, G–2 Sec, AGF, to CG, AGF, 15 Jun 44, sub: Report on Italian Campaign, Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 13–3, 1506 (44 (3344)).

[49] Notes of Maj Elias C. Townsend, Inf, in Ltr, CG, AGF, to CG's Second and Fourth Armies, *et al*, 2 May 44, sub: Observers Notes on the Italian Campaign, 13 Dec 43 to 10 Mar 44. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 13–3.0204 (2602).

Digitized by Google

laneous sources and described above. Developed under four paragraph headings, Memorandum No. 82 first defines the responsibilities of all echelons of command with respect to care of the dead in their respective areas of action. The second paragraph sets forth the organization designed to implement these responsibilities; the third offers a detailed discussion of procedures by which each element of the organization will accomplish its prescribed mission; the fourth summarizes War Department and NATOUSA regulations applicable to battlefield burials. In other words, the document covers all aspects of graves registration which may concern the combat division.

Responsibility varies with the echelon of command. Where the function of platoon leaders and commanding officers of companies and batteries is limited to marking and reporting the location of dead within their areas, battalion commanders are assigned the responsibility of gathering and evacuating all bodies within their areas to collecting points established by the next highest headquarters. Regimental commanders, in turn, become responsible for evacuation to division collection points, while final responsibility for the collection, evacuation, and burial of all dead found within the divisional area devolves upon the division commander. In practice, the division Quartermaster supervises and controls all such activities through the division burial and graves registration officer.

The organization designed to implement these stated responsibilities consists of burial and graves registration officers designated by the various echelons of command and battalion, regimental and division burial and graves registration sections. Each section operates under its unit burial and graves registration officer.

Specific duties assigned section officers are determined by the responsibilities of their respective echelons. At the company level they are required to mark the location of dead, report positions to the next highest headquarters or nearest burial and graves registration officer, and keep a record of such locations and reports. Assisted by his section, the battalion burial and graves registration officer is obligated to search his unit area as soon as the danger from small arms fire has abated and, upon location of a body, to take the following steps: (1) verify or execute the emergency medical tag Form No. 52B; (2) assemble primary identifying media by examination of identification tags or, if required, such data as afforded by individual pay records, personal papers found on the body, and by questions addressed to members of units operating within the battalion area; (3) record identifying media on the reverse side of the emergency medical tag; (4) collect and list personal effects; (5) wrap the body in a mattress cover and attach personal effects for evacuation to a regimental collecting point or directly to the division cemetery.

The regimental burial and graves registration officer, assisted by his section, is assigned four specific functions, namely: (1) supervision and coordination of activities performed within subordinate battalion areas; (2) evacuation of bodies from regimental collecting points in battalion areas to division collecting points or directly to the division cemetery; (3) collection and evacuation of bodies in rear areas of the division; (4) assistance in collection and evacuation of dead in battalion area.

The participation of organic graves registration units culminates in the performance required of the division burial and graves registration officer, who is responsible for the following: (1) supervision and coordination of all burials and graves registration within the division area and those of subordinate units; (2) assistance to regiments, separate battalions, and companies in the collection and evacuation of bodies; (3) collection and evacuation of dead in rear areas of the division; (4) establishment of division collecting points (normally in the vicinity of quartermaster supply points); evacuation of bodies from division collecting points to the division cemetery.

Entitled "Burial and Graves Registration Procedures," the fourth paragraph presents a synopsis of pertinent procedures contained in current War Department and NATOUSA directives. A restricted application, however, seems to have been intended in the qualifying remark that "requirements of the pertinent parts of the above references, insofar as they pertain to unit personnel *required to make burials on the battlefield,* are contained in this paragraph." Nevertheless, the space allotted to paragraph 4 exceeds that of the three preceding parts of Memorandum No. 82 taken together and actually offers an abbreviated manual on standard burial procedures, including identification of remains, selection of cemetery sites, layout of plots, interment operations, and execution of burial records. In other words, the 3d Division graves registration directive applied to isolated burials and small unit cemeteries the same standards prescribed for graves registration service detachments in established division cemeteries. No doubt, insistence on such standards was regarded as most effective in holding isolated burials to a minimum. At least, this objectionable practice was greatly diminished in certain difficult situations by the utilization of burial plots just large enough

Digitized by Google

to meet minimal requirements of an established cemetery and, at the same time, by observing all other requirements that would apply to evacuations and interment in a division cemetery. Organic graves registration units of the Fifth Army made a creditable record in overcoming the conditions that had heretofore produced a relatively high number of isolated burials and unknown dead.

Adoption of similar graves registration instructions by other Fifth Army divisions tended to standardize the operations of organic collecting platoons. At the same time, stabilization of the tactical situation along the Winter Line enabled attached Graves Registration Service platoons to achieve a similar degree of uniformity in their conduct of operations incidental to evacuation, burial, and maintenance of division cemeteries. Preservation of the balance thus attained became a dominant concern of the Fifth Army Graves Registration Service. One influence, however, worked constantly against this equilibrium. The reluctance of combat divisions during the Tunisian and Sicilian campaigns to accept the responsibility of collecting their battlefield dead lingered in the company or battalion level after the invasion of Italy.

Since the number of both isolated burials and unidentified dead is always proportional to the time-lag in evacuation, negligence on the part of the platoon commander and commanding officers of companies, batteries, and battalions in reporting the exact location of bodies created obstacles that could not be overcome by the most efficient performance of regimental collecting teams and attached Graves Registration Service units. The time lost in searching for unreported remains might well mark the difference between success and failure of the entire operation. Yet at the very time when there were bodies to report the combat responsibilities of small unit commanders became most exacting. Pressure from division and army headquarters was required to break this impasse.

On 21 December 1943 the Commanding General, 45th Infantry Division, noted that regimental graves registration officers were working "in the dark" through failure on the part of graves registration officers appointed in companies and batteries to report the location of remains. Such reports, he directed, must be transmitted through battalion headquarters to the regimental graves registration officer or S–1. Company and battery graves registration officers should, he stated, be prepared to furnish guides for organic graves registration platoon members in order to expedite the evacuation of bodies. Company and battalion commanders, in turn, were reminded of their responsibilities in correcting these laxities.

> There have been many cases where bodies have been neglected due to the lack of coordination between the Company or Battery GRO's and the channels necessary to reach Regimental GRO's. Company Commanders will notice bodies at certain points and are too busy on an immediate assignment to bother about getting the information back. Battalion Commanders have been known to have neglected giving the Regimental GRO information as to bodies in their sectors. As a result, the GRO works completely "in the dark" at times. This situation certainly does not help the morale of troops and it is necessary that all Officers regardless of rank or status give their full cooperation at all times in this matter.[50]

The following June General Sullivan had occasion to criticize the laxness of nondivisional troops and hospitals in complying with those provisions of Fifth Army Circular No. 29, "Battlefield Burials and Graves Registration by Troops," 14 June 1943, and Training Memorandum No. 45 of the same date and title which governed the appointment and training of unit graves registration officers. By way of correction he recommended that "the matter should be included in the subjects into which inquiry is made at the time of formal inspections." While small unit participation in graves registration activities was mildly censured, the carefully measured criticism was directed toward faults which were exceptional and, in fact, indicated some improvement over the situation previously prevailing in the 45th Division. General Sullivan wrote in this connection:

> The corps, divisions and their major subordinate units, engaged as they are in very active evacuation and care of the dead, are not included in the above comments, although some *lower* divisional units of company or battalion level have on occasion demonstrated a lack of proper knowledge on the part of the unit graves registration officers of their proper duties.[51]

Despite difficulties of enlisting the cooperation of small unit commanders in primary phases of evacuation, participation of the major elements in graves registration activities should, it seems, have continued with increasing effectiveness. Such expectations, however, were modified by the replacement of several veteran divisions with new formations. Reconstitution of the Seventh Army during June 1944 for Operation ANVIL took the VI Corps Headquarters with three old divisions—the 3d, 36th and 45th—and the 48th Graves Registration Service Company. While the vet-

[50] Memo, Lt Col Henry B. Roach, AG, 45th Inf Div (By command of Major General Eagles) 21 Dec 43, sub: Gr Reg. RAC, Fifth Army File, Gr Reg, 45th Div.

[51] IRS, Sullivan to IG, Fifth Army, 13 Jun 44, sub: Gr Reg. RAC, Fifth Army File, GRS Policy Folder, 1933–44.

Digitized by Google

eran infantry units were replaced by new ones,[52] no provision was made for the loss of four Graves Registration Service platoons.[53]

The imbalance that might have been expected from such detachments and partial replacements was in large measure averted by a progressive training program. Originally initiated in accordance with paragraph 9, of Fifth Army Circular No. 29, dated 29 July 1943, and Training Memorandum No. 45, of the same date,[54] the program was expanded under direction of Lt. Col. Arthur L. Warren, Fifth Army Graves Registration Officer. Details of the advanced phase of this program were developed in collaboration with Capt. Steven F. Capasso, commanding the 47th Graves Registration Company.

Discussing the problem from the viewpoint of newly arrived or activated divisions, Captain Capasso observed that "the training program was set up with the idea that at least two experienced GR personnel (one officer and one NCO) be made available to assist the Division GRO in acquainting and instructing personnel of the division chosen to perform the Graves Registration function within the division by lectures and illustrations of critical problems resulting in the field." [55]

The time required for training division graves registration platoons was estimated at two weeks. Seventy hours were allotted to the six main topics of the course designed for instructors, namely: (1) GRS organization within army corps, division, regiments and battalions (10 hours); (2) procedure of graves registration units within divisions, regiments and battalions (30 hours); (3) isolated burial procedure, including establishment of small "unit" cemeteries; (4) search of battlefields for isolated burials (5 hours); (5) coordination of other services with unit graves registration personnel (15 hours). Perhaps the best expression of Fifth Army graves registration policy appears in Captain Capasso's statement of ultimate objectives set before the candidate instructors.

> The actual performance of Graves Registration within the division whether independent, or assigned to a higher headquarters, is the most important part of the function of Graves Registration. Originating on the battlefield, the personnel responsible for the proper evacuation of division dead should be of a caliber capable of understanding the importance of their task. Identifications have undoubtedly been lost through careless and incapable GR personnel, not thoroughly instructed or acquainted with their obligations and duties, and have resulted in the interment of unknown American soldiers. The GR personnel selected for this function should receive complete instructions and comprehend the scope of this most important mission. In training the entire personnel should be instructed on the absolute seriousness and wholehearted effort demanded of the Graves Registration assignment.[56]

The fact that isolated burials and unidentified remains were kept at the rate established prior to loss of several veteran divisions and half the number of supporting Graves Registration Service platoons would indicate that measures taken to improve the quality of performance were eminently successful. This measure of success, however, cannot be attributed wholly to a training policy that was intelligently adapted to changing circumstances of the campaign. Three additional factors were instrumental in achieving this success.

In the first place, all elements of the chain of command gradually outgrew the indifference that had characterized new formations in regard to care of the dead and came to the realization that an efficient Graves Registration Service was indispensable in preserving a high state of morale. Again, economies found in shifting operational control of the collecting point system and established cemeteries from a divisional to an army basis enabled four platoons of the 47th Graves Registration Service Company to continue without decline in efficiency the function previously performed by eight platoons. Finally, adherence to a consistent policy governing the selection of organic graves registration personnel, together with the progressive training program, preserved those conditions that had favored an effective performance.

Appreciation of the graves registration function by all Fifth Army elements may be attributed largely to the attitude of the commanding general and his Chief Quartermaster. Freed from many of the distractions that beset force commanders who led inexperienced and inadequately equipped troops during the early offensive operations of 1942 and 1943, Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark, Commanding General of the Fifth Army, enjoyed some liberty of action in composing conflicts of interest between the combat and technical services. Confident of

---

[52] VI Corps Hq was assigned to the Seventh Army on 15 June 1944. *Fifth Army History*, VI, 12. Cf., *Report of Operations of the Seventh United States Army in France and Germany, 1944–45* (3 vols., 1946), I, 57. The three divisions assigned to the Seventh Army were subsequently replaced by the 91st and 92nd Infantry Divisions and the 10th Mountain Division. See *Fifth Army History*, VI, 12, and *Ibid.*, VIII, Annex 4, Fifth Army Troop List.

[53] Fifth Army unit commanders were warned of the impending loss of GRS Platoons and urged to consider necessary adjustments. Memo, Maj B. W. Saurel, Asst AG, Fifth Army, for CG IV Corps, 24 Jul 44, sub: Gr Reg RAC, Fifth Army File, GRS Sec-Policy Folder, 1943–44.

[54] Par 9 states: "All unit commanders are responsible for the necessary training of personnel to insure compliance with this directive."

[55] Rpt, Capt Steven F. Capasso, cmdg 47th GRS Co, to GRO, OCOM, Fifth Army, 19 Feb 45, sub: Trng Program for Div Gr Reg, RAC, Fifth Army File, GRS-Corresponence, 47th GRS Co.

[56] *Ibid.*

964114—52——7

Digitized by Google

support in high quarters, Lt. Col. Arthur L. Warren, Army GRO, took occasion during March 1944 to remind commanding generals of corps and divisions that attached Graves Registration Service personnel could not be expected to do all the work in connection with evacuation of the dead. "Proper administration", he maintained, "may and likely will cause them to be otherwise engaged." Furthermore, he cautioned against interference at the operating point of the Graves Registration Service platoon on the ground that division graves registration officers and attached platoon commanders should not be impeded in the performance of their duties by arbitrary interference from the chain of command. In justifying his contention, Colonel Warren observed that "there has been a great deal of this through the commendable anxiety of some commanders to honor properly their dead." Whatever the motive, he insisted that "the Commanding General should deal with his experts." [57]

Positive evidence that unit graves registration officers could enlist support at army headquarters is offered by the outcome of an attempt on the part of a corps commander to disregard the cemetery established at Prata and order burials elsewhere. Reference of the matter to Fifth Army headquarters invoked an order from General Clark, specifying that the establishment of cemeteries should, after technical advice from qualified Graves Registration Service personnel, be made by the responsible commander on the ground, and that "once established the cemetery should not be closed except for technical reasons—generally the movement of combat to a distance making evacuation and cemetery operation difficult with the facilities at hand." [58]

Unit graves registration officers who had occasion to complain in North Africa and Sicily that the Quartermaster Corps seemed indifferent to its responsibility regarding care of the dead discovered a more positive attitude on the part of the Fifth Army Quartermaster in Italy. Commenting on proposals looking to a reorganization of Fifth Army headquarters during April 1944, General Sullivan called attention to the fact that graves registration was becoming more important as the war progressed and, therefore, the selection of a fully qualified army graves registration officer became correspondingly difficult. After noting that very little had been written on the subject, and that field experience in the activity appeared to be the best qualification from an operational point of view, General Sullivan stated that an officer so recommended should also have a rich military background, versed in staff procedure and familiar with problems that confront the small unit commander and the means available to him in disposing of his dead. Insisting again that the subject was one of utmost importance to the army commander, he added: "More repercussions from a military, political and morale point of view can be felt from poorly regulated graves registration activity than any other under jurisdiction of the Army Quartermaster. It is a subject requiring keeping of accurate records which must be referred to for years after the war is over." [59]

The shift to army control over operation of collecting points and established cemeteries in the battle zone was completed by August 1944 without appreciable increase in the number of isolated burials and unidentified dead. A special report of the IV Corps GRO indicates that great economy of effort had been effected by reducing the total number of Graves Registration Service personnel previously allocated to evacuation. This was accomplished by distributing a single platoon, composed of one commissioned officer and 25 enlisted men, among three army collecting points, two of which serviced the IV Corps and one the II Corps. Functioning under army control, the three remaining platoons of the 47th Graves Registration Service Company operated military cemeteries in the combat area. The over-all responsibility assigned these four platoons included "proper identification [of the dead], burial, recording of the fact of burial and location of graves and disposition of personal effects on the body of the deceased." Labor was performed by Quartermaster service companies or local civilians.[60]

The Graves Registration Service detachment at an army collecting point assumed full responsibility for the dead after delivery by organic collecting teams and completed a great proportion of positive identifications before evacuation to the army cemetery. Continued emphasis on the vital importance of this phase of graves registration, according to the IV Corps GRO, "is evidenced by the fact that the percentage of unidentified Americans buried is less than one half of one percent." [61]

[57] Notes of Maj Robert A. Billingsly, FA, submitted with ltr, CG, AGF, to CG's Second and Fifth Armies *et al*, 2 May 44, sub: Observers Notes on the Italian Campaign, 13 Dec 43 to 10 Mar 44. RAC, Fifth Army File, GRS Policy Folder, 1943–44.

[58] Ltr, Maj B. W. Saurel, Assistant AG, Fifth Army, to CG, 34th Inf Div (through CG VI Corps), sub: Establishment and Operation of Battlefield Cemeteries. RAC, Fifth Army File, GRS Policy Folder, 1943–44.

[59] Memo, Brig Gen Joseph P. Sullivan, Fifth Army QM, for Brig. Gen. Kaiser, Dep CofS, Fifth Army, 23 Apr 44. RAC, Fifth Army File, GRS Policy Folder, 1943–44.

[60] Rpt, Lt Col W. J. Ryan, Asst QM, IV Corps GRO, to CofS, G–1, IV Corps, 2 Aug 44, sub: Gr Reg. Proc. RAC, Fifth Army File, GRS, 47th GRS Co Correspondence.

[61] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

Identification procedures employed at army collecting points enabled a diminished number of technicians to maintain the standards previously developed at divisional points. Although two identification tags were deemed sufficient to establish a positive identification, a double check against papers found on the body—drivers' licenses, letters, lodge cards, etc.—was invariably made. If no discrepancies appeared, the body was wrapped in a mattress cover for transportation to the army cemetery. In the event that the evidence of identification tags and personal papers did not coincide, the unit to which the deceased presumably belonged was requested to initiate an investigation similar to one required whenever a body was delivered without tags. Such inquiries usually established the validity of the two tags as identifying media. The absence of identification tags, however, involved a wider search for clues. Identifying papers on the person were carefully examined. The identity of the unit was determined by the reported time and place of death. Then the unit concerned made a check of all personnel reported missing during the specified day and sent a competent person, preferably a commissioned or noncommissioned officer, to examine the unidentified body, held at the collection point pending investigation. In the absence of commissioned or noncommissioned personnel, recognition by two or more close personal friends of the missing was acceptable for purposes of positive identification. A practical example best illustrates the ingenuity and resourcefulness developed at army collecting points in this phase of the identification procedure.

> A body was brought in to the collecting point a (Q335385) [sic] with no identification tags. The only clues were an envelope in the soldier's pocket on which the name "Cook" could be discerned and the letter "C" followed by four numbers on his belt, apparently being the marking prescribed by Army Regulations. Investigation revealed that he had been picked up in the 351st Infantry Sector. The N. C. O. in charge of the Collecting Point fingerprinted him, filled in his tooth chart and gave the data along with a note on the envelope and belt marking to the 88th Division Quartermaster.
>
> The 351st Infantry was contacted. There it was found that the regiment had a soldier named Cook whose serial number ended in the four figures marked on his belt and that he was missing in action. Soldiers who had known him were sent to the collection point and they positively identified him.[62]

After completion of identification, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the army collecting point attached to each body a partially completed copy of QMC Form GRS–1, Report of Burial. Whenever a positive identification could not be made, he prepared eight copies of GRS–1 to accompany the unidentified body, each containing finger prints, tooth chart and notation of physical characteristics. All bodies were wrapped in mattress covers before movement to the army cemetery. While evacuation was a responsibility of the collecting point detail, corps and division quartermasters were required to furnish additional transportation whenever required by an excessive number of casualties.

Sufficient copies of GRS–1 were prepared at the army cemetery to permit the following distribution:

> Original and 1 copy to Chief Graves Registration Officer, Hq, SOS, NATOUSA. Original later forwarded to Quartermaster General.
>
> One copy to unit GRO.
>
> One copy to Army or highest administrative headquarters to which the deceased's unit belongs.
>
> One copy to remain in custody of personnel operating cemetery.
>
> For Allied Co-belligerent and enemy dead, one additional copy to Hq, SOS, NATOUSA, for forwarding to proper Allied or Co-belligerent authority or Provost Marshall General, Prisoner of War Information Bureau, SOS, NATOUSA.[63]

Cemeteries also submitted a weekly report of burials (GRS–2) to the Chief Graves Registration Service Officer, Headquarters, SOS, NATOUSA. This report included known burials in insolated graves, as well as cemetery burials. Detailed maps of each cemetery were prepared and forwarded to NATOUSA as soon as possible after opening.

There was no relaxation in the insistence that every precaution be taken to avoid isolated burials. When burial in an isolated grave became absolutely necessary, it was required that the body be wrapped in a mattress cover or blanket and placed in an excavation deep enough to afford protection against predatory animals. With a view to reinterment in the nearest army cemetery as soon as possible, an immediate report of the isolated grave became mandatory. This report included a description of the site by exact coordinates, together with compass bearings on and the measured distance to a permanent landmark.[64]

This description of identification procedures at army collecting points scarcely does justice to the advanced techniques developed by Captain Capasso, of the 47th Graves Registration Service Company. In November 1944, Col. Warren, Army GRO, recommended that this officer be awarded the Legion of Merit for exceptional ability and ingenuity in the development of new methods of identification. The proposed citation states: "Through his ability, the identity and status of

[62] *Ibid.*

[63] *Ibid.*

[64] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

many deceased personel have been established after many months of death where the original status and identity were either unknown, in doubt, or wrong . . ." [65]

Captain Capasso's first conspicuous contribution was his discovery of a technique for obtaining finger prints from bodies in advanced stages of decay and putrefaction. He accomplished this feat by severing the fingers and sealing the severed joints. Then, after a delicate process of cleansing, the skin tissues were enlarged by means of a fluid injection. When first employed at the U. S. Military Cemetery at Mount Soprano for purposes of investigating the doubtful identity of an American soldier, this new method yielded results "of such excellence that definite identity of the deceased was established by prints obtained four months after interment." [66]

Another field of identifying media was opened up by successful experimentation in removing body fluids, blood stains and impregnated deposits of gelatinous internal organs from clothing in which the deceased were customarily buried. Application of these processes revealed laundry marks on garments which had hitherto been discarded after cursory examination. The supporting evidence of such marks became instrumental in completing a number of positive identifications upon exhumation several months after burial as "unknowns."

Upon completion of the assignment at Mount Soprano, Captain Capasso prepared several lectures for personnel of the 47th Company, explaining his methods and stressing the thesis that, regardless of the length of time of burial, substantiating data should be sought. The substance of these lectures, together with commentaries on application and development of the new techniques in practice, was published in a memorandum, the use of which, according to Colonel Warren, "has since resulted in the identification of many American deceased, otherwise completely unknown due to lack of identification tags and other identifying data." [67]

In addition to his other duties, Captain Capasso gave considerable attention to the investigation of Air Force crashes. Although these investigations originated from the mere information that a bomber had crashed somewhere in Italy, his reports revealed data that permitted the status of entire aircraft crew personnel to be changed from MIA, as all were originally carried, to KIA, POW, or returned to duty. The methods employed in this pioneer stage served as useful precedents in correlating the programs of Air Force casualty detachments (investigating detachments) and Fifth Army Graves Registration Service units when, early in 1945, recovery, identification and reinterment of fallen airmen was undertaken as a joint enterprise of the Ground and Air Forces.[68]

Adherence to a definite policy governing the selection of organic graves registration personnel provoked more lasting controversy than any other phase of the problem pertaining to care of the dead. Tradition dictated that combat units should at least collect the remains of their dead, killed in action. It will be recalled that Col. M. H. Harris, Director of the Memorial Division during 1939, invoked this tradition in his contention that the entire responsibility of evacuation and burial should be assigned to combat troops.[69] Unit commanders, however, were reluctant during the early offensive operations of the war to dilute their combat strength by furnishing details for collection and evacuation of the battlefield dead. Moreover, experience in the field disclosed that men weakened by battle fatigue could not endure the added strain that came with handling the mutilated remains of their comrades.[70]

Various expedients in meeting these objections included the use of bandsmen or detachments from Quartermaster service units. Such solutions, however, lost the advantage of employing personnel who not only understood combat operations and were familiar with the terrain on which the action took place, but who were best qualified to initiate the process of identification at regimental collecting points. A different approach was attempted in proposals for a reorganization of the existing Quartermaster Graves Registration Service Company. In November 1944 the War Department authorized a table of organization which increased the aggregate strength of the existing company from 130 to 265 effectives and assigned the new unit full responsibility for collection and evacuation of the battlefield dead.[71] Numerical expansion of a given

[65] Ltr, Col Arthur L. Warren, Fifth Army GRO, to CG, Fifth Army, 12 Nov 44, sub: Recommendation for Award. RAC, Fifth Army File, 47th QM GR CO-Corres.

[66] *Ibid.*

[67] *Ibid.*

[68] (1) *Ibid.* (2) Ltr. Maj Owen Elliott, asst AC, Fifth Army to CG Fifth Army, 10 Mar 45, sub: Correlation Programs for AF Casualty and Gr Reg Svc. RAC, Fifth Army File, Graves Registration Plats-Technical Bulletins & Misc.

[69] See above, Chap. I.

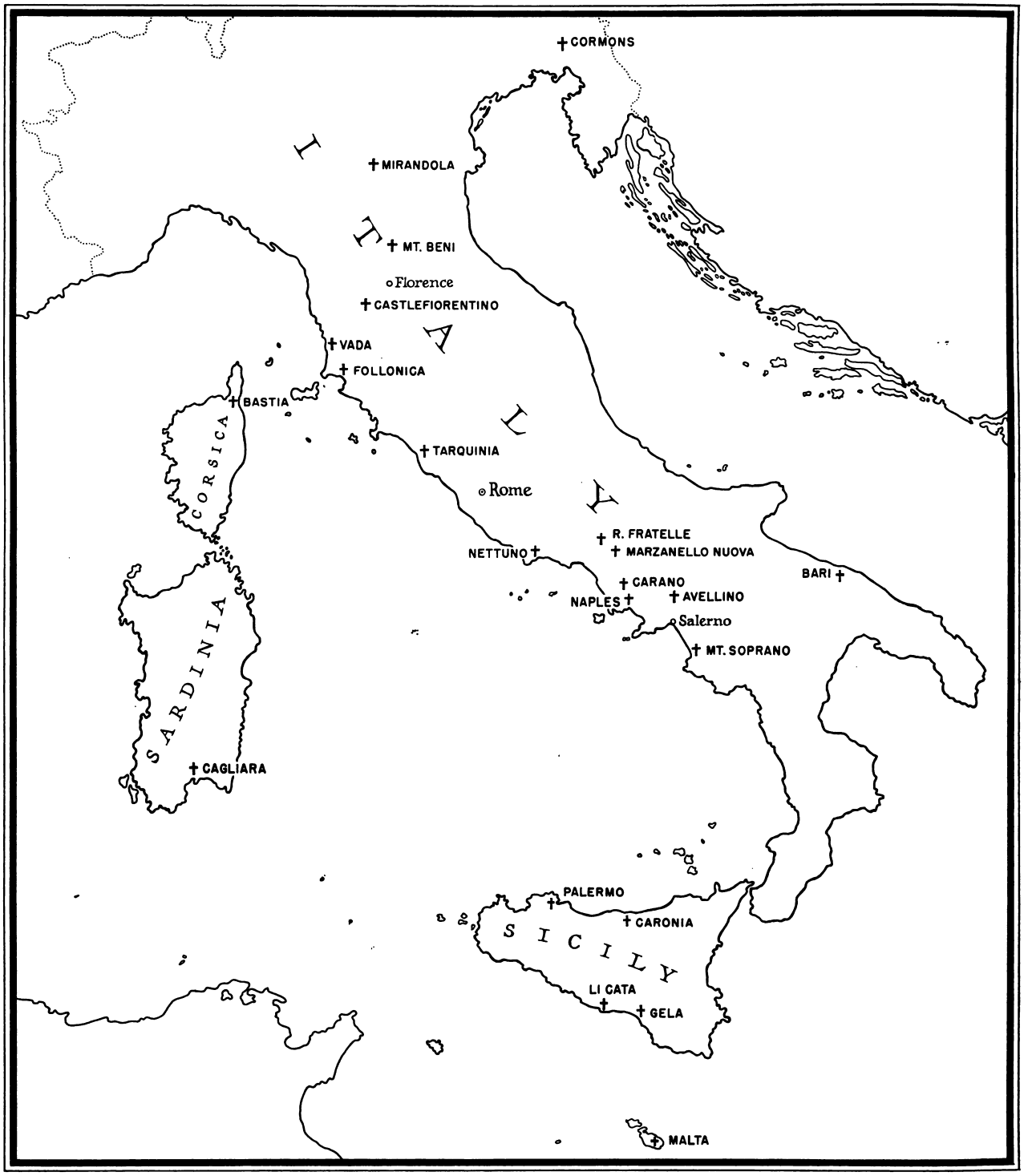
[70] Notes of Col Steele, CO, 6th Armored Inf, in AGF Board Rpt, NATC, A-127, 17 Apr 44, sub: Lessons from Cassino and Anzio. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, AGF Board Rpts.

[71] (1) T/O & E 10-297, 6 Nov 43. (2) T/O & E 10-298, 26 Sep 44, Sec 1, T/O & E 10-298 states, under *Function:* "Collects, evacuates and identifies battlefield dead . . .

* * * * *

"Maintains operational and administrative liaison with and provides technical assistance to the unit staff on graves registration matters. Recommends sites for division cemeteries and supervises the burial of division dead."

Digitized by Google



Map 1.—U. S. Military Cemeteries, Mediterranean Theater of Operations.

number of old units, however, required additional personnel. Since no increase in theater ceilings was permitted to facilitate this expansion, theater commanders were restricted to the choice of employing half the numbers of new-type company units in place of the old ones. The Commanding General of the Fifth Army, like those of the armies in the European Theater of Operations, preferred the existing organization on the ground that "the same number of new companies as there are old companies in this theater, would be required with

Digitized by Google

approximately twice the man-power now allocated to the old companies." [72]

In the meantime, a compromise had been worked out which avoided the most serious objections resulting from the assignment of men in areas occupied by their own units and, at the same time, utilized their special fitness for the work in hand. This was achieved by detailing the members of regimental collecting teams to areas other than those occupied by their battalions. It was then discovered that many limited service personnel made good records and, in some instances, became eligible for reassignment to combat duty.[73]

Despite evidence of improved performance in primary graves registration activities by selected combat personnel, arguments urging the substitution of Quartermaster Service troops persisted until the end of hostilities. In April 1945 the Fifth Army GRO offered his defense of established policy in the following terms:

> As the present procedure has been in operation during the entire Italian campaign, and its development was based on the experience of the campaigns in North Africa and Sicily (in which combat units made little or no effort to evacuate the dead, resulting in many isolated burials, and interments of unidentified bodies), any changeover . . . would disrupt the present smooth working organization, and the number of unidentified burials would tend to increase very highly.
>
> Division and Regimental collecting teams have been operating through many engagements and are experienced in the necessity of associating bodies with those of identified bodies removed from the same area, the necessity of associating the remains removed from tanks with the USA numbers of the tanks, position from which the remains are removed, the status of other crew members and other data having identification data. In addition, familiarity with the area, units, and personnel within the area, is invaluable in the establishing of identities.
>
> The efficiency of the present mode can be shown by the fact that of 19,598 dead buried by the Fifth Army, only 12 are isolated burials. In addition, the unidentified percentage is only 1.1%.[74]

[72] (1) Memo, Col J. B. Franks, Dep/OCQM, ETO, for G–3, 6 Nov 44, sub: New T/O & E 10–298, QM GR Co. RAC, EUCOM 322 QM Units, Vol IV. (2) AGF Board, NATOUSA, Rpt No. 555, 10 Jul 45, sub: Comment on T/O & E by Infantry Unit Commanders. RAC, Fifth Army File, GRS Policy Folders, 1943–44.

[73] Notes of Maj Wm. T. Brogan, S–4 180 Inf. in AGF Board Rpt AATC, A–127, 17 Apr 44, sub: Lessons from Cassino and Anzio. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, AGF Board Rpts.

[74] IRS, GRO to QM, 6 Apr 45, sub: Evacuation of Deceased. RAC, Fifth Army File, GRS Sec-GR Policy Folder, 1945.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI

Graves Registration in the European Theater

THE history of graves registration in the European Theater of Operations (ETOUSA) unfolds a single phase of a campaign that, in point of numbers engaged and losses sustained, surpassed any ever previously fought by the armed services of the United States. More than two-thirds of all Americans who met death on the battlefields of World War II fell in this theater.

Upon America's entry into the second world conflict, destruction of the military power of Nazi Germany became the primary purpose of the United Nations. Russia, of necessity, assumed the burden of containing a preponderant part of Germany's field armies, while the United States and Great Britain, aside from furnishing strategic materials in large quantities to the Soviet Union, apportioned a considerable part of their resources between an enormous expansion of air power and the preparation in the British Isles of a great offensive force for an eventual invasion of Central Europe. At the same time they undertook limited offensive operations in the Mediterranean and Pacific Ocean Areas.

Intended originally to redress the most menacing aspects of an unfavorable global situation, these operations had far-reaching consequences that are not ordinarily associated with diversionary campaigns. Italy was eliminated as a military partner of the Axis Powers; Japan was first deprived of the initiative and then driven to the inner lines of her ocean empire. Meantime, expenditures for sustaining the air bombardment of Europe and supporting limited offensive operations in other theaters retarded preparations for the main attack across the English Channel against Germany. Yet every delay in mounting the European invasion served only to enhance the importance originally attached to that enterprise. Then, as the United Nations won naval domination over the Mediterranean Sea, and gradually turned the tide of war in the Pacific Ocean and on the Russian steppe, plans for the cross-Channel assault were extended in scope and refined in detail. The hastily contrived makeshifts that had characterized the preparation for many bold counterstrokes in the secondary theaters now gave way to meticulous calculation in assembling and fitting together all the ground, air and naval components of a victorious striking force. Over three years in the making, Operation OVERLORD, the code name for this great adventure, suggests to professional soldiers a classic example of military planning and, in the judgment of history, may rival the ancient fame of Cannae as a masterpiece of tactical execution.

Graves Registration Operations in the United Kingdom

Despite a long-range point of view that pervaded all planning for OVERLORD, the European Theater Graves Registration Service underwent many of the early vicissitudes that afflicted its sister service in the Southwest Pacific. Both were established early in 1942 to meet the immediate needs of American troops quartered in friendly surroundings and, for the moment, enjoying the facilities of civilized communities. Due, however, to the absence at that time of regularly constituted graves registration units, neither the service in Australia nor the one in Great Britain could be built around cadres of qualified and available technicians. Then, deprived of mortuary supplies from their own country and denied by tonnage restrictions the advantage of shipping remains to the homeland, both services were confronted by the same problem, namely the acquisition of burial lands, the procurement of domestic mortuary supplies, and the enactment of agreements with local morticians for suitable burial services. That is, the problem pressing for solution in Great Britain, like the one in Australia, had no direct bearing on the organization of units and the development of procedures for care of the dead under field service conditions. Quite to the contrary, attention was necessarily centered on arrangements whereby the disposition of remains might be conducted along lines similar to those applying at home in time of peace.

Although the graves registration problem in the Australian and United Kingdom situations had much in

Digitized by Google

common, there were dissimilar elements which should not be overlooked. The menace presented to Australia and its sea-borne communications with North America by Japanese conquests in the South and Southwest Pacific during 1942 dictated the desperate expedient of premature offensive action in Papua and the southern Solomons. While an unfavorable turn of events in the Battle of the Atlantic would have been fatal to Great Britain, Germany's deep involvement in Russia, together with U-boat losses at a rate that foreshadowed failure of the submarine campaign, tended to secure the United Kingdom as a base of operations against the Continent. For these reasons, the decision to occupy French North Africa was urged by considerations which sought, even at the cost of postponing the decisive blow against Germany, the immediate advantage of inspiriting British morale with a victorious feat of arms and reopening the Mediterranean Sea as a link in the net of oceanic routes encircling the globe. Thus, despite the dispersion of forces assembled in Great Britain during 1942 for the cross-Channel attack, concentration of attention on the ultimate requirements of OVERLORD was never seriously distracted by transient emergencies. This point of view influenced graves registration planning in the European Theater from the first.

Action attending the adoption of burial procedures in Australia, it will be recalled, was hastened by the Chief Surgeon in the interests of evacuating remains from his hospitals.[1] A similar emergency was anticipated in Great Britain by the Special Army Observers Groups (SPOBS), a body of senior officers who had been acting largely as an American military mission at London since May 1941. On 9 December, immediately after Pearl Harbor, Lt. Col. John E. Dahlquist, representing SPOBS, consulted the British War Office with a view to securing the use of burial grounds and mortuary facilities for United States Army forces, the first contingent of which was expected to land in Northern Ireland during the latter part of January 1942.[2]

A prompt reply to SPOBS's inquiry disclosed that the Imperial War Graves Commission, the British counterpart of the American Graves Registration Service, had already developed policies and practices in connection with the burial of members of the British forces and Allied contingents, and that the United Kingdom Government appreciated the urgency of extending similar accommodations to the Americans. Although embalming was not practiced in the British Army, and only to a limited extent among the civil population, it was noted that "the Canadian Army make their own contracts for burials and deal principally with the London Necropolis Company . . . as so far as is possible they concentrate all their dead at Brookwood, under conditions at present obtaining." [3] Furthermore, the Commission had assumed the responsibility and costs incident to the temporary marking of all graves in Great Britain, and had developed a standard wooden cross for this purpose. In the case of Allied contingents, it was explained, the cross bore on the upright just below the crosspiece a small colored plaque of the national colors or other distinctive emblem. The Star of David was used instead of the cross where soldiers of Jewish faith were concerned. The Commission expressed its willingness to undertake the marking of American graves in the same manner.[4]

The American request for grave site reservations in different parts of the United Kingdom received careful attention. The Chief Inspector of the Imperial War Graves Commission, it was stated, had been instructed to examine and report as soon as practicable on available cemetery accommodations in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Midlands areas, and to assure Colonel Dahlquist, the SPOBS representative, that "it is the privilege of the United Kingdom Government, acting through the agency of the Imperial War Graves Commission, to bear any expenses that may arise in the acquisition of such grave spaces or burial grounds." Colonel Dahlquist was also informed that the Contracts Branch of the War Office had been asked to report on the cost and available supply of wooden coffins, and to inquire into the resources of the British Institute of Embalmers.

The first step toward setting up a staff agency for the supervision of graves registration activities was taken during the course of these negotiations. On 8 January 1942, Maj. Gen. J. E. Chaney, senior officer, SPOBS, notified Maj. Gen. Sir Fabian Ware, the Commissioner, that Lt. Col. (now Maj. Gen.) W. H. Middleswart, Chief Quartermaster designate of United States Army Forces in Great Britain (USAFBI), the activation of which was announced in orders of the same date, would henceforth conduct all negotiations with the Imperial War Graves Commission.[5] Formally assigned the responsibility on 21 April for staff super-

[1] Above, ch. III, Australia and the Southwest Pacific.

[2] Ltr, Lt Col John E. Dahlquist, SPOBS, to Brigadier E. H. A. J. O'Donnell, Dep Dir Organization (Liaison) War Office, 9 Dec 41, sub: Burials in the UK. RAC, EUCOM, Non-Current Permanent Record File 1942 ETO, AG—293, sub: Burials, Funerals etc., Papers, December 1941–42.

[3] Ltr, Col A. H. MacAllen, AAF, Director General, Graves Registration and Enquiries, to Lt Col John E. Dahlquist, SPOBS, 15 Dec 41, sub: Burials in the UK. *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Ltr, Maj Gen J. E. Chaney to Sir Fabian (Maj Gen Sir Fabian Ware, Imperial War Graves Commission, 8 Jan 42. *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

vision of graves registration in addition to his other duties as Chief Quartermaster, Colonel Middleswart delegated the function to Maj. Frazier Mackintosh, who served as Acting Chief, Graves Registration Service, USAFBI, until 2 August 1942 when, in consequence of the establishment of the European Theater of Operations, United States Army (ETOUSA) and the appointment of Brig. Gen. (later Maj. Gen.) Robert M. Littlejohn as Chief Quartermaster of the theater, Maj. Jean K. Stacey was appointed Chief of the Graves Registration Service Division in the office of the Chief Quartermaster.[6]

Meantime, negotiations with the Imperial War Graves Commission disclosed conditions not unlike those which determined the development of graves registration policy and organizational structure in Australia. Colonel Middleswart was advised on 9 January 1942 that, in addition to two plots already set aside for emergency burials in Northern Ireland—one within the Belfast City Cemetery, the other at Londonderry—three reservations would be made available to United States Army forces. One of these was in southern England, another in the Midlands and the third in Scotland. The first comprised a tract adjoining the United States Military Cemetery at Brookwood, Surrey; the other two included a plot in the Bedford Cemetery, Bedfordshire, and a reservation in the Dalziel Airables Cemetery near Glasgow, Scotland.[7]

No serious difficulty was anticipated in meeting American requirements as to wooden caskets. Although reported shortages of elm and other hardwoods had caused the Ministry of Supply to review the allocation of materials for coffins under War Office contracts, it was pointed out to Colonel Middleswart that the average death rate in the British Army during the past year was only 0.03 percent, and that additional deaths incident to the presence of American troops "will not affect the supply." The prices of coffins varied, ranging from £3.10.0 in London to £7.7.0 in the Glasgow district of Scotland. According to the tender form used by the British War Office in negotiating contracts for funerals the prices for incidental services varied widely, personal attendance running from 7/6 (7 shillings and 6 pence) to 30/–, pallbearers from 5/– to 10/6 each, a hearse from 15/– to 45/– and conveyance to railway station from 15/– to 45/–. Figures supplied by the British Institute of Embalmers put the average cost of embalming and preparing a body for burial at £10.10.0. It was stated, however, that "the necessary embalming supplies—especially glycerine—are difficult to obtain in this country." [8]

As already indicated, the American cemeterial systems in Great Britain and Australia were, so far as local circumstances permitted, modeled after the system of national cemeteries in the United States. Tracts best suited to such a purpose were obtained for temporary usage through the British Government and prepared as burial grounds in accordance with existing requirements. An agreement of 18 July 1942 with all members of the British Institute of Embalmers for burial of deceased soldiers of United States forces provided that each member would furnish a casket at £6.10.0. A transportation charge of two shillings per mile would be allowed in all cases where American ambulances were not available.[9] In August negotiations were in progress for the selection of eleven emergency cemeteries, in addition to those reserved during January. Upon recommendation of the British Imperial War Graves Commission, the War Office approved a list of 1343 public cemeteries throughout the United Kingdom in which emergency burials might be made.[10] By May 1943 a total of thirteen sites had been designated as exclusive burial places for American dead. These included the following: (1) Brookwood, Surrey; (2) Cambridge, Cambridge; (3) Bath, Wiltshire; (4) Chester, Cheshire; (5) Dover, Kent; (6) Portsmouth-Southampton, Hampshire; (7) Weymouth, Dorsetshire; (8) Oxford, Oxfordshire; (9) New Haven, Sussex; (10) Pode, Dorsetshire; (11) Plymouth, Devonshire; (12) Motherwell, Dumbarton, Scotland; (13) Belfast, Northern Ireland. Although all available reservations offered an estimated capacity of 230,000 graves, only three had been opened to burial prior to 21 May 1943. Brookwood held the remains of 431 Americans; Belfast was second with 43; Motherwell had 2.[11]

Limitations of the 1/6-acre plot in Belfast City Cemetery led to negotiations for use of a 10½-acre tract at Lisnabreeny, three miles distant from Belfast. The cemetery at this location was officially opened on 2 December 1943. Meantime, objections to a large ex-

[6] (1) USAFBI, GO No. 11, 21 Apr 42. (2) Memo, CQM for Chief Gr Reg Div, 1 Aug 42. RAC, Littlejohn Collection, Box 7–A. (3) OCQM, OO No. 9, 26 Aug 42. *Ibid.*

[7] Ltr, Col A. R. MacAllen, Director-General, Graves Registration and Enquiries, to Lt Col W. H. Middleswart, SPOBS, 9 Jan 42. RAC, EUCOM Non-Current Permanent File, 1942, ETO, AG–293, sub: Burials, Funerals etc., Papers, December 1941–42.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] Memo for file, OCQM, 31 Aug 42. Noted by J. K. Stacy, Maj, QMC. RAC, Littlejohn Collection, Box 7–A.

[10] (1) Ltr, Maj J. K. Stacy, Chief GRS, to Maj T. E. Mackintosh, QM Store, London, 4 Aug 42. RAC, Littlejohn Collection, Box 7–A. (2) Memo, Maj J. K. Stacy, Chief, GRS for Chief Plng Div, 4 Sep 42, sub: Cemeteries in the Bl. *Ibid.*

[11] Memo for file, OCQM, 21 May 43, sub: QM Plan, GR. *Ibid.*

964114—52——8

Digitized by Google

pansion program at Brookwood, together with the increasing number of fatalities in carrying the air offensive to Germany, focused attention on the selection of a site which would be centrally located with respect to the wide area covered by bases of the Eighth Air Force.

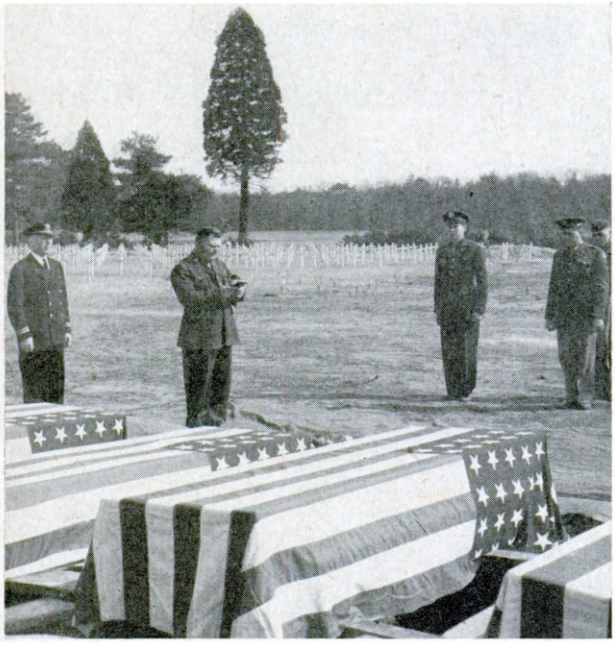


Figure 11.—Protestant and Catholic rites attend the burial of American fliers whose bomber crashed on return to base in England from a mission over Germany.

The tract originally designated on 2 December 1942 by the Lands Directorate of the British War Office at Madingley Hill, near Cambridge, "for use of the American Forces in case of emergency" met this requirement and, in accordance with a recommendation of the Chief Quartermaster, was activated as a temporary cemetery on 7 December 1943.[12]

After the closing of Brookwood to burials, 31 August 1944, Cambridge became the leading American cemetery in Great Britain. As of 30 April 1945, Cambridge, Brookwood and Lisnabreeny, the three active cemeteries of this system, held 9,151 American remains, of whom 5,386 lay in Cambridge, 3,633 in Brookwood (exclusive of 468 World War I burials) and 142 in Lisnabreeny. Incomplete figures of the same date for American, Allied and enemy burials in 56 temporary military cemeteries of the combat and communications zones of the ETO totaled 181,843.[13] On this basis the number of interments in Great Britain over a period of 3½ years comprised but 5 percent of those buried in a single year on the Continent.

The number of interments, of course, is hardly a safe guide in determining the historical significance of a particular system of burial. The one in Great Britain evolved from efforts to adapt domestic resources to traditional American practices of peacetime burial. The great majority of remains were evacuated from hospitals either to local mortuaries of approved members of the British Institute of Embalmers for treatment and then carried by rail or ambulance to the nearest open cemetery; or they were sent directly from the place of death to one of the three active cemeteries, where American mortuary units had been established to prepare all bodies delivered for burial.[14]

These methods of evacuation and preparation of remains for interment had little or no resemblance to procedures that normally apply in the battle zone. At the same time, the establishment and operation of three active cemeteries afforded an experience in matters of cemeterial administration that had some application in the field. The whole mortuary activity in Great Britain, however, tended toward forms of specialization, both as to organization and refinement of technical practices, that were peculiar to this situation alone and, aside from certain aspects of administration, did not produce the type of technical personnel best qualified to serve as a nucleus of expansion for service in the field. In this respect the trend of graves registration in Great Britain differed from that on the Australian Continent.

It will be recalled that development of the cemeterial system under conditions prevailing in Australia necessitated a selection of professional morticians from all combat and service organizations in the command, and that some of the personnel thus selected furnished the technical element of the provisional graves registration service which operated in New Guinea during the greater part of 1943. This expedient, however, was undertaken only after G–3, WDGS, had informed Headquarters, AFWESPAC, that the Quartermaster Graves Registration Service companies requisitioned in April 1942 for AFWESPAC could not be sent, "owing to the nonavailability of such units." [15]

No such emergency confronted the European command. The Central and Eastern Task Forces of the TORCH operation were dispatched from Great Britain

[12] Manuscript History of Cambridge U. S. Mil Cem, pp. 3–6. RAC, Littlejohn Collection.

[13] WD, Plan for Repatriation of the Dead of WW II and Establishment of Permanent U. S. Mil Cems at Home and Abroad (8 Sep 45) pp. 5–7.

[14] (1) Ltr, Lt Col J. R. Walker, QM, VII Bomber Command, to Lt Col L. C. Dill, QM 8th Air Service Command, 10 Jul 42, sub: Experience in handling deaths of members VIII Bomber Command, RAC, Littlejohn Collection Box 7–A. (2) Hq ETOUSA, Cir No. 18, 22 Jul 42, Sec II—Army Burials. (3) Memo for file, OCQM, 27 Jul 43, sub: QM Gr Reg Svc.

[15] Above, ch. III, Australia and the Southwest Pacific.

Digitized by Google

to North Africa without graves registration units, provisional or otherwise. Then delays in mounting OVERLORD enabled the augmentation program for Quartermaster Graves Registration Service companies to overcome the disparity between combat formations and graves registration units. As the gap closed, all planning with respect to care of the dead in the battle zone and rear areas traversed by lines of communications was firmly based on an assumption that Quartermaster graves registration companies would be available in sufficient number to permit the normal method of assignment, that is, one to a type corps of three combat divisions.

Planning for the Invasion of Europe

Progressive build-up of the invasion force in Great Britain, however, necessitated a considerable expansion of mortuary units and facilities available during May 1943. An analysis of this problem in July, when the fourth edition of the BOLERO Key Plan was published, reveals that a sharp distinction had already become drawn between prospective field service conditions on the Continent and those which would continue to prevail in Great Britain. The continental situation was viewed as "operational," the one in the United Kingdom was regarded as "static." Each had its characteristic unit: a cemetery operations unit was identified with the static phase, while the Quartermaster Graves Registration Service Company was associated with the operational phase. Composed of 3 officers and 28 enlisted men, and concerned primarily with embalming, the cemetery operations unit had an operating capacity of 60 cases per day. With a strength of 3 officers and 129 enlisted personnel, the Quartermaster Graves Registration Service Company (T/O & E, 21 January 1943) was designated to support a corps of 66,000 effectives. With elimination of embalming in the field, identification of bodies, registration of graves, and collection of personal effects became its primary functions. Ten companies were specified for the European invasion force. Three cemetery operations units, in addition to one presently active, were requested. "For full BOLERO," it was specified, "four such units would be in operation in the U. K." [16] At the same time, a revision of cemeterial plans provided that 4 of the 13 burial sites listed in May 1943 would be designated as "principal cemeteries," namely Brookwood, Cambridge, Bath, and Chester. The remainder (less Belfast) fell into the classification of emergency cemeteries. As already related, Lisnabreeny replaced Belfast, thereby acquiring a status identical to that of Cambridge, while disuse of Bath and Chester gave these two reservations a special sort of priority as reserve plots.[17]

Planning for build-up of the invasion force, as summarized in four editions of the BOLERO Key Plan,[18] merged during the latter half of 1943 in an examination of operational requirements for OVERLORD. Initiated by the Chief of Staff, Supreme Allied Commander (COSSAC), this work was carried on by Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), which succeeded COSSAC in January 1944, following the appointment of General Eisenhower as Supreme Allied Commander. In this connection the Commanding General, SOS, and the Chief Quartermaster, ETO, operating through the Plans and Training Division and the Graves Registration and Effects Division, OCQM, became directly concerned with the determination of policy, technical standards, and organizational requirements for graves registration on the Continent. While a responsibility of the Commanding General, First United States Army Group (FUSAG), the elaboration of plans for care of the dead during operation NEPTUNE, the assault phase of OVERLORD, actually devolved upon the Quartermaster Section of the First United States Army.[19]

The development of planning programs at these different levels did not follow the normal course of generalized instructions flowing from upper levels and detailed elaboration in the progress of transmission to lower levels. In many instances planning began simultaneously at different echelons, or by groups composed of representatives from several echelons. Concurrence—and sometimes correction—was occasionally expressed in terms of a directive that ordinarily would have initiated the detailed planning at lower levels. It is therefore difficult to trace the origin of basic concepts in graves registration planning for OVERLORD and NEPTUNE. Generally speaking, these concepts originated in the Office of the Chief Quartermaster and then, while awaiting the process of approval from above, were, subject to correction, translated into operating procedures by planning agencies of the subordinate commands responsible for execution.

The first attempt at prescribing standard burial pro-

[16] Memo for file, OCQM, 27 Jul 43, sub: QM Plan, Gr Reg Svc.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] The fourth edition of the BOLERO Key Plan was published on 12 July 1943.

[19] First United States Army, Rpt of Opns, 20 Oct 43–1 Aug 44, Book V, Annex No. 14, pp. 121 ff. In February 1944 the Quartermaster Plan was written under the title of Annex Number 7 to Operational Plan NEPTUNE, dated 28 February 1944. This plan was the embodiment of the Quartermaster planning for the operation and was "the foundation for all Quartermaster projects to be considered in connection with the entire operation." *Ibid.*, p. 127.

Digitized by Google

cedure on the Continent was made in the preparation and publication on 1 October 1943 of "The Handbook for Battlefield Burials and Graves Registration by Troops." This seven-page booklet offered a concise summary of practices that had been successfully applied elsewhere, notably in the Tunisian and Sicilian campaigns. While differing somewhat in arrangement, the Handbook adheres closely to the general principles and procedures set forth in Fifth Army Circular No. 29, "Battlefield Burials and Graves Registration by Troops," dated 14 July 1943.[20]

The next significant step in European graves registration planning was taken on 3 November 1943 when the Plans and Training Division, OCQM, submitted a paper entitled "Preliminary Study—Graves Registration Service for Continental Operations." After noting that "the Quartermaster Service is charged with organization and technical supervision . . . of Graves Registration in the theater," and that the handbook on battlefield burials "contains a complete guide which should be adopted as SOP," the study summarized current assumptions regarding the assignment of graves registration companies.

> Normal assignment is one platoon per combat division and one company per corps (consisting of three divisions). It is assumed that during the assault phase that some of those killed in action may be returned to the U. K. for burial. To provide for this emergency it is recommended that four Graves Companies be deployed at strategic points in the U. K. After a bridgehead is established all dead will be buried in cemeteries on the Continent. After D-days or upon the activation of Communication Zone on the Continent, these four companies to be moved to Continent to assume activities in the Communication Zone. Ten Graves Registration Companies, T/O 10-297, 21 January 1943, have been approved for the operating phase. On 2 Oct. 1943, six companies were relinquished by S. O. S. to be attached to the Ground Forces. Flow charts dated 27 October 1943, show one company phased for October, three for April [1944]—one additional company is shown for May.[21]

In accordance with standard practice in NATOUSA, the selection of burial sites was to be a divisional command function during the assault phase. After organization of the Communications Zone this function would be restricted to the battle zone. Care should be taken, in the battle zone, to avoid excessive burial places by holding the establishment of temporary cemeteries at the divisional level. It was noted that 2,240 temporary sites were used during World War I. The following policy was proposed in reference to rear areas: "Recommend location of semipermanent sites with outlook as to use after cessation of hostilities. Cemeteries in Communication Zone should be located near central hospitals, hospital centers or large concentration areas." Additional paragraphs contained suggestions of a conventional nature with regard to clearance of records, care of personal effects and government property, burial of allied, enemy and unknown dead, together with an observation to the effect that no definite plans as to the actual location of cemeteries could be set down. The concluding paragraph stated: "Further study is being made of this subject in conjunction with the Graves Registration Service . . . and progress reports will be made." [22]

The preliminary study was recast on 10 January 1944 in the form of a tentative plan for Continental operations. The assignment of Quartermaster Graves Registration Service companies was considerably increased, 12 being assigned to the field force and 7 to the SOS for service in the Communications Zone. Each graves registration company would embark with 15 days' supply, while division quartermasters would draw supplies for the same period prior to embarkation. The Handbook for Emergency Battlefield Burials and Graves Registration by Troops, as amended 1 December 1943, was prescribed as standard operating procedure.[23]

Provisions for evacuation of bodies to the United Kingdom were modified to the extent that only remains of those killed aboard ship would be returned to the near shore and "handled, insofar as possible, in accordance with instructions pertaining to U. K. dead." Only in the event that the number of bodies so returned should exceed the capacity of existing mortuary facilities in Great Britain would the emergency cemeteries designated for battlefield burials be utilized.

Policy governing the selection of temporary cemeteries in the battle zone was reaffirmed. While use of United States military cemeteries of World War I on the Continent was regarded as undesirable, the plan of 10 January 1944 contemplated the possibility of using peripheral areas of these cemeteries in extreme emergencies. Embalming was to be discontinued on the Continent and isolated burials were to be avoided. Under normal conditions cemeteries were to be located "so that the evacuation of bodies for burial will require transportation for no more than fifty miles." [24]

The draft of 10 January 1944 underwent many

[20] See above, ch. V, The Italian Campaign.

[21] Memo, Capt M. C. Feldman, Chief Svc Instl Br, for Lt Col R. L. Smith, Chief P & T Div, OCQM, 3 Nov 43, sub: Preliminary Study—Gr Reg Svc for Continental Opns, par. 2.

[22] *Ibid.*

[23] Memo, Chief, Instl Br, for Chief, Pers & Trng Div, OCQM, 10 Jan 44, sub: Gr Reg Plan for Continental Opns, Incl. RAC, Littlejohn Collections, Box 7-A.

[24] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

changes before final approval was given on 30 June to an amended version issued by the Office of the Chief Quartermaster on the 24th of that month. The approved plan stipulated that "Graves Registration companies will be attached to the Field Forces on the basis of one company to each Army in addition to the three which are organic with the Army. The balance will be used in the Communication Zone." Other significant changes written into the plan during months of revision included an absolute prohibition against burial in the permanent military cemeteries of World War I, a reduction from 15 to 7 days' supply to be issued to Graves Registration companies prior to embarkation, and replacement of the Handbook for Emergency Battlefield Burials by a more complete manual prepared under direction of the Theater Quartermaster and published 9 June as "Standard Operating Procedure No. 26, Army Burials, Graves Registration and Disposition of Effects (short title: ETO SOP No. 26)—Burials and Effects." Advance copies of this publication were made available to the assault troops for D Day.[25]

Changes in both the scheme of assigning graves registration companies to the field forces and in stating general matters of policy covering Continental operations reflect the influence of parallel planning at higher levels, notably G–1 Services Section, COSSAC, and G–3 and G–4 of the theater General Staff. The original assignment of graves registration companies as noted in the preliminary study of 3 November 1943 and in the first tentative graves registration plan of 10 January 1944, was limited to an approved troop basis of 10 companies. An effort to increase the over-all troop basis for graves registration companies to a total of 24 resulted in approval on the part of G–4, ETO, for 19 companies and a recommendation to the War Department for such an increase. On 15 February 1944 the War Department approved 18 companies as the theater troop basis, with an assumed breakdown of 12 to the field forces (3 per army and 6 to the SOS).

At this juncture Col. Andrew T. McNamara, Quartermaster, First Army, made strong representations to the Troops Branch, Plans and Training Division, OCQM, for a substantial increase in the assignment of graves registrations companies to the armies.

> . . . basing his contention on personal experience in the Mediterranean Theater, [he] has stated most emphatically that this [3 companies] is inadequate. It has been his experience that the collection of the dead which is supposed to be done by combat troops must, in fact, be done by Graves Registration Cos. It is his further contention that the number of Graves Registration Cos available to the field forces must be considered on the basis of the rear area over which they must operate rather than the number of troops to be served. He has proposed that, in addition to the 3 Cos normally assigned Army or attached to corps, 2 additional Cos be made available to be used in the clearing of the Army rear areas.[26]

In the event that the increase proposed by the First Army Quartermaster should be approved, the Troop Branch, OCQM, recommended the following method of assignment: [27]

3 Cos assigned per Army (4 Armies)	12	
1 Co attached to each Army (assigned to SOS)	4	
5 Cos assigned to SOS (1 per L of C & 1 Co in reserve) to support either Army or SOS Troops when needed.	5	Total 21

Revision of troop strength estimates in February 1944, it will be noted, called for an assignment of 21 companies—12 to the field forces and 9 to SOS. The final plan, as approved 30 June, was not specific as to the total number of companies, but stated that "Graves Registration Companies will be attached to the Field Forces on the basis of one company to each Army in addition to the three which are organic with the Army" and that "the balance will be used in the Communication Zone." [28]

The solution of graves registration policy and procedural problems reacted in similar manner to top level planning. Administrative Instructions No. 3, as issued 20 December 1943 by COSSAC and intended to define burial procedures which would be applicable alike to British, Canadian and United States forces, conflicted with provisions stated in the Handbook for Battlefield Burials as amended 1 December 1943. The COSSAC instructions required that "in the case of British and Canadian dead the green identity disc will be buried with the body and the red identity disc will be detached and forwarded in the package containing the personal effects." [29] The Handbook provided that "red identity disc (British) will be sent to the nearest Graves Registration Company Hq."

[25] Memo, Gr Reg & Effects Div to Instl Br, Pers & Trng Div, OCQM, 8 Jun 44, sub: Gr Reg Plan for Continental Opns.

[26] Ltr, Maj H. O. McGillin, Troops Br, Pers & Trng Div, OCQM, to C/QM, G–4 & G–3 in turn, 18 Mar 44, sub: QM Gr Reg Cos. RAC, Littlejohn Collection, Box 8–A.

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] Draft of the approved plan was submitted by Pers & Tng Div to Gr Reg & Effects Div, 24 Jun 44. The above quoted excerpt was carried over from a draft dated 26 May 1944. (1) Memo, Gr Reg & Effects Div for Pers & Tng Div, 8 Jun 44, sub: Gr Reg Plan for Continental Opns. (2) Memo, Pers & Tng Div for Gr Reg & Effects Div, 24 Jun 44, sub as above. RAC, Littlejohn Collection, Box 7–A.

[29] COSSAC, A/G–1 Services, Administrative Instructions No. 3 Opns, OVERLORD, 20 Dec 44, para 18. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, SHAEF Files; G–1 CALA. COSSAC papers were transferred to SHAEF when the latter superseded the former. SHAEF was constituted in large part by personnel drawn from COSSAC.

Digitized by Google

This conflict, along with other minor discrepancies and omission of any provision for the disposition of money recovered from bodies, was noted by COSSAC in a communication of 6 January 1944 to the Deputy Chief Quartermaster, ETO, with the suggestion that "the above discrepancies in the booklet be corrected in order that all instructions dealing with Graves Registration procedure may be in conformity." [30]

While touching on matters of no great importance, the procedure here was typical of the method of planning simultaneously at different echelons. Although different versions of the Quartermaster Graves Registration Plan for Continental Operations issued prior to D-day categorically stated that the handbook "will be used as standard operating procedure," no attempt was made to reissue the booklet in accordance with Administrative Instructions No. 3.

While the Graves Registration Plan for Continental Operations was under revision in the Office of the Chief Quartermaster, the Quartermaster Section, First Army, prepared Annex 7 to accompany the First Army Operations Plan NEPTUNE. The fifth part, or sub-annex 7e, presented the First Army Burial Graves Registration Plan for D Day to D plus 14. Completed 27 February 1944, this plan conformed to Administrative Instructions No. 3, 20 December 1943 and, in general, reflected policy considerations under study in the Office of the Chief Quartermaster.[31]

Following universal practice, the First Army Burial and Graves Registration Plan specified that recovery, evacuation, and initial identification of the dead was a responsibility of the echelons of command within their zones of action. For the rest, procedures intended to govern the participation of Quartermaster graves registration personnel in the operation of collecting points, and their other duties relating to positive identification of bodies, collection of personal effects, supervision of burials, registration of graves, and completion of burial reports, offered little or nothing that could be regarded as a departure from established operational doctrine.

Two notable qualifications were, nevertheless, put upon the responsibilities of various echelons of command in regard to evacuation and selection of cemeteries. One required that platoon leaders and company and battery commanders would, in addition to reporting the location of their dead, be responsible "for the *collection and evacuation* . . . of dead within their areas to the next higher echelon." [32] The other anticipated the possibility of shifting responsibility for the location of burial sites from the divisional to the corps level and, in the event of such a shift, limiting the responsibility of division commanders to the collection and evacuation of bodies. The plan stated:

> Where a separate cemetery is established for a division, division commanders are responsible for the collection, evacuation and burial of all dead within their areas; where a separate cemetery is operated by a corps Quartermaster for two or more divisions, then the responsibility of the division commanders is limited to the collection and evacuation of the dead within the division areas to the corps cemetery.[33]

The latter departure is highly significant in that it appreciated the administrative advantages of establishing and maintaining burial sites larger than the conventional division cemetery and, perhaps, that it foresaw trends which would facilitate direct evacuation to corps and even army cemeteries. Certainly this provision was consistent with developments that soon appeared in the field: the Fifth Army adopted the practice of direct evacuation to army cemeteries in Italy during the summer of 1944; the Seventh Army, in its swift advance up the Rhone Valley during August, operated a corps cemetery; two armies of the Allied Expeditionary Force, the First and Ninth, had occasion during September and October to evacuate their battlefield dead to Henri–Chapelle No. 2, thereby conferring on this cemetery the status of an army group cemetery.[34]

As already indicated, provisions of the First Army Burial and Graves Registration Plan relating to Quartermaster Graves Registration Service companies conformed to established practice, reproducing in substance, if not in direct phraseology, various publications of the Fifth and Seventh Armies and SOS, NATOUSA, in this respect. No clear distinction, however, was drawn between the functions of organic collecting teams and those of Quartermaster Graves Registration Service companies.

This apparent omission was repaired by ETO SOP No. 26—Burials and Effects, Section 5, which describes functions in terms practically identical to those of Technical Bulletin No. 46, SOS, NATOUSA, 1 August 1943. Briefly, the service on the Continent, like the one in North Africa, would operate "under the technical supervision of the Commanding General, Communications Zone and . . . under his command insofar as it pertains to Communications Zone Sections." The service was to consist of a Chief of Graves Registration Service,

[30] Ltr, QM COSSAC, to DCQM, ETO, 6 Jan 44, sub: Gr Reg Procedure. COSSAC/1553/A.

[31] Text of Annex 7e Burial and Graves Registration is found in First United States Army, Report of Operations, 20 October 1943–1 August 1944, Book III, pp. 100–107. Hereinafter cited as FUSA, Rpt of Opns, with appropriate period and book number.

[32] *Ibid.* Italics added.

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] See below, the Campaign in Europe.

Digitized by Google

Quartermaster Section, Communication Zone; graves registration officer of the army or highest administrative unit in the combat zone; Communications Zone graves registration officers, graves registration officers of those units within the Communications Zone not under command of Communications Zone, graves registration officers of combat and service units; and Quartermaster graves registration companies.[35]

After describing the functions of the Chief Graves Registration Officer, together with those of unit graves registration officers, in terms that might have been lifted bodily from Technical Bulletin No. 46, NATOUSA, ETO SOP No. 26 describes the cooperative function of organic collecting teams and Quartermaster Graves Registration Service personnel.

> In the zone of combat and harassed areas, unit graves registration officers will normally be charged with effecting evacuation of the dead from place of death to points of control operated by Quartermaster graves registration company personnel. From such collecting points the Quartermaster registration company will supervise the removal of the dead to cemeteries. It is essential that personnel engaged in the evacuation of the dead preserve evidence of identity. Identification tags and all effects will be left upon the body to be removed by the personnel supervising burial. An examination will be made by personnel engaged in evacuation, and in those instances where identifying data are not present upon the person of the deceased, such personnel will attempt, through such means as may be available to them to ascertain identity and place evidence thereof with the body. If a body is delivered to the collecting point unidentified, every effort will be made, prior to evacuation to burial plot, to have the body viewed by members of the command operating in the area wherein the casualty occurred. Early investigation will often result in identification otherwise unobtainable.
>
> * * * * *
>
> The functions of these [Graves Registration Service] companies, with attached labor, are the supervision of identification and burial of the dead, the preparation of burial reports, the collection and disposition of personal effects found upon the body of the deceased, the disposition of identification tags, and the plotting of location and registration of graves and cemeteries.[36]

Emanating from different headquarters, three additional documents completed the advance planning for graves registration operations on the Continent. The Commanding General, SOS, included in his so-called "Mounting Plan" of 19 April arrangements for the "prompt interment of dead from craft and/or other reasons." Eight temporary burial grounds were to be located in the vicinity of the Southern Base Section marshalling areas. Battlefield burial procedure was to be followed in the event that bodies returned from the far shore should require the use of these grounds. One Graves Registration Service company would be divided in such manner as to oversee interment operations and generally supervise two service companies which were to be specially trained for participation in the near-shore emergency burial program.[37]

On 19 April 1944, G–1, First United States Army Group (FUSAG), prescribed in its Joint Administrative Plan for OVERLORD general policies to govern burials. This plan combined the text of paragraph 18, Administrative Instructions No. 3, as issued by COSSAC on 20 December 1943, with provisions which were intended to have a general application to United States ground, air and naval assault forces in the marking of graves, the location of cemeteries, and hasty burials in isolated graves. These latter provisions conformed with policies and procedures formulated in the Office of the Chief Quartermaster, and written into the First Army Burial and Graves Registration Plan, 27 February 1944, and the Graves Registration Plan for Continental Operations, as finally approved 30 June 1944.[38]

Closely following issuance of the Joint Administrative Plan, U. S. Forces, G–1, First Army published its own Administrative Plan. Appearing as Annex 3 to accompany First Army Operations Plan NEPTUNE, it contained a sub-annex entitled "Burials and Graves Registration." This instrument paraphrased both COSSAC's and FUSAG's instructions pertaining to the general administrative aspects of graves registration and presented in outline form a synopsis of Annex 7*e*, the Quartermaster Burial and Graves Registration Plan for NEPTUNE.[39]

According to plans detailed in Annex 2 of the First Army Operations Plan NEPTUNE, 16 platoons from five Graves Registration Service companies were to be employed on the far shore during the first 14 days. These units would be grouped with the various assault, support and reserve echelons of the V, VII and XIX Corps, all of which were to be committed during this period.[40] The assault echelon consisted of two elements, Force O (1st Infantry Division, V Corps) and

---

[35] ETO SOP No. 26, Part I, Par. 5.

[36] *Ibid.*, Part I, Paragraphs 7 & 8. Elsewhere this manual states that the Gr Reg Svc Co "will be charged with the identification and interment of the dead and with preparation of QMC Form 1 GR, Report of Burial, QMC Form 2, Weekly Report of Burial Inventory of Effects and other records that may be required by the commander under whose jurisdiction these units are operating." *Ibid.*, Part 1, Paragraph 49.

[37] Hq SOS, ETOUSA, Mounting Plan, Quartermaster (Annex No. 10), 30 Mar 44, P I [Pre-Invasion] No. 136.

[38] Joint Administrative Plan for Operation OVERLORD to Accompany Joint Operation Plan—U. S. Forces (FUSAG—Ninth Air Force—Western Naval Task Force), 19 Apr 44, pp. 12–13. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 370.2 FUSAG Joint Administrative Plan No. 19.

[39] Text is found in FUSA, Rpt of Opns, 20 Oct 43–1 Aug 44. 200–201.

[40] FUSA, Rpt of Opns, 20 Oct 43—1 Aug 44, II, 138 ff.

Digitized by Google

Force U (4th Infantry Division, VII Corps). This echelon was to gain lodgments on Omaha and Utah Beaches, respectively, on D Day. One platoon of the 606th GR Company was attached to Force O; two platoons, one of the 603d and one of the 607th GR Company, were to accompany Force U. Force B. which was to reinforce Force O during D Day and D plus 1, comprised the 29th Infantry Division, with one attached platoon of the 607th GR Company. The buildup of forces at the two beach heads would be speeded by arrival on D plus 1, and D plus 2 of preloaded troops assembled in the Bristol Channel. Thereafter reinforcements would be carried across the English Channel by a shuttle service. The preloaded lift was to deliver one platoon of the 603d GR Company at Utah Beach on D plus 1 and another unidentified platoon on D plus 2. No graves registration units were included with preloaded troops for Omaha Beach. The shuttle service was to lift the remainder of graves registration units designated for service on the far shore during the D Day–D plus 14 period. The schedule may be summarized as follows: [41]

Day	Beach	
	Omaha	Utah
D Day	1 Plat 606th GR Co.	1 Plat, 603d GR Co. 1 Plat, 607th GR Co.
D+1	1 Plat 606th GR Co.	1 Plat, 603d GR Co.
D+2		1 Plat, unidentified.
D+3	1 Plat 608th GR Co.	1 Plat, unidentified.
D+5		1 Plat, 603d GR Co.
D+6	2 Plat 606th GR Co.	1 Plat, 603d GR Co.
D+8	2 Plat 608th GR Co.	
D+11	2 Plat 608th GR Co.	.....
D+12	1 Plat 3041st GR Co.	
D+13	.....	.....
D+14	.....	.....

The Campaign in Europe

First Army Graves Registration Operations

The operations plan, it will be noted, called for an allocation of 16 graves registration platoons to a force comprised of 11 divisions—8 infantry, 2 airborne and 1 armored. Assuming that the V, VII and XIX Corps were to be fully committed by D plus 14, the build-up of graves registration troops conformed to the approved scheme of assigning 4 companies to the army for purposes of retaining 1 in reserve and attaching the remainder to corps by companies, or to divisions by platoons. Actually, the scheduled build-up as summarized above was not accomplished until D plus 17.[42]

It appears, however, that 4 graves registration companies—the 603d, 606th, 607th and 609th—plus 2 platoons of the 3041st Company, were assigned to the First Army during the period D day—D plus 6 and that at least 10 out of the total of 18 assigned platoons landed in the assault area by D plus 6. In its periodic report covering this phase, the Quartermaster Section, First Army, lists the following: [43]

603d QM GR Co. attached to VII Corps.
606th QM GR Co. attached to V Corps.
609th QM GR Co. attached to XIX Corps.
607th QM GR Co. attached to First Army.
  2d Plat, 607th attached to 5th Engr Spc'l Brigade.
  3d Plat, 607th attached to 6th Engr Spc'l Brigade.
  4th Plat, 607th attached to 1st Engr Spc'l Brigade.
3041st QM GR Co. (less 2 plats) attached to First Army.
  1st and 2d platoons, 3041st attached to VII Corps for use with the 82d and 101st A/B Division.

The storming of Omaha Beach offers another example of the general proposition that complete graves registration support can be provided for an amphibious assault force only at the cost of hampering its tactical mission. In this instance, as at Salerno and the Sicilian landings, the number of technical personnel appears to have been inadequate. The inadequacy, however, was due not so much to insufficient strength as to inability on the part of combat units to perform the initial phase of graves registration—evacuation of bodies to unit collecting points. As a matter of fact, such a feat became all but impossible in the restricted battle zone. Bitterly contesting every foot of ground, the enemy prevented our two assault divisions, the 1st and 29th, from expanding the beachhead and including, according to schedule, the sites previously selected for division cemeteries.[44] Then the 5th and 6th Engineer Special Brigades, to whom the supporting graves registration units were temporarily attached, encountered unforeseen difficulties in opening exits and moving sup-

[41] *Ibid.*, pp. 142–72. The above table was compiled from platoon designations listed in Annex 2a, First United States Army Revised Consolidated Troop list Assault, Follow-up, Preloaded Build-up and Priority of Build-up thru D+14).

[42] *Ibid.*, VI Appendix 9, Quartermaster Units to Arrive on Far Shore, pp. 194–98.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 141. There is nothing to indicate the disposition of GR units in this listing during D Day—D plus 6. Authority for the statement that 10 platoons had landed in the assault area by D plus 6 is found in appendix 9, which is cited in footnote 42, above. This appendix shows 16 platoons representing 5 GR companies (603d, 606th, 607th, 608th and 3041st) on the far shore by D plus 17. *Ibid.*, pp. 194–98. Accuracy of appendix 9 as to disposition of GR units is open to doubt. It shows that the 607th GR company, less 3 platoons, arrived on D plus 17, and that these elements (presumable Company headquarters and one platoon) were the first of the company in question to reach the assault area. Various unit after action reports, notably those of 1st, 5th and 6th Engineer Special Brigades, state that 3 platoons of the 607th were operating in the assault area by D plus 6. These reports and other corroborative evidence are cited in the following pages.

[44] V Corps QM Sec, Opns Rpt, 13–25 Jun 44. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 205–30 (14704).

Digitized by Google

plies from the beach. Thus no effort was made during the first day and for several hours of the second to collect the dead at the front or in the congested rear area. The Engineers give a reasonable account of their difficulties in this situation.

> Three factors in the situation confronting the platoons of the 607th Graves Registration Company when they came ashore on D Day and D+2 forced a change in plans. First, the dead on and behind the beach were numerous, and, since the combat troops had not been able to move ahead as planned, it was doubly imperative that steps be taken at once to dispose of bodies. Second, the battalion groups were struggling to perform their essential priority task of opening exits and moving supplies off the beach. As a result, they were unable immediately to assign adequate labor to collect and bury the dead. Third, the enemy still occupied the two sites selected for cemeteries, and several days were to elapse before these areas were entirely free of sniper fire.[45]

In these circumstances the V Corps Quartermaster arranged with the Commanding General, Engineer Special Brigade Group, on the afternoon of D plus 2 to open two emergency burial grounds, one immediately in rear of the 5th, the other similarly located with respect to the 6th Brigade. The decision to establish two cemeteries in apparent violation of the policy urging avoidance of excessive burial sites was justified on the ground that the large number of bodies accumulated in the narrow stretch of beach required immediate attention, and that the congestion of traffic on the one lateral road traversing the beaches would not permit the evacuation of bodies from the area of the 6th Brigade to the cemetery established in the 5th Engineer Special Brigade area.[46]

Pending arrival of the 2d Platoon, 607th GR Company, 3d Platoon personnel undertook the supervision of identification and registration of graves at both cemeteries. At the same time, the 309th QM Railhead Company and the 3168th QM Service Company were detailed to assist in the collection of bodies and digging of graves. Immediately upon determination of the two burial locations, division quartermasters were instructed to evacuate their dead from forward areas to these points.[47]

At midnight 10 June the 6th Brigade notified Corps that all bodies had been cleared from the beach area, that 457 Americans and British had been buried in the emergency cemetery in its area, and that finger prints had been taken on 20 unidentified bodies, while 3 others could not be identified or finger printed. The beach cemetery was then closed and, according to the 6th Brigade report, "within the next week or 10 days all bodies were moved to American Cemetery No. 1 [St. Laurent No. 1] which had been located on the crest of the hill east of Exit E–1." After all bodies had been evacuated, the location of the beach cemetery was marked with a wooden plaque to identify the place as a historic site. The 6th Brigade, nevertheless, could not refrain from some expression of resentment over the inscription proclaiming that the St. Laurent cemetery was the first to be opened in France in World War II.[48]

The misunderstanding here is partially explained in the Quartermaster Section, First Army, periodic report on this period. It appears that the site of St. Laurent No. 1 was actually selected before conditions required the opening of the beach cemetery, so-called St. Laurent No. 2. No reference, however, is made to any emergency burial place in the area of the 5th Engineer Special Brigade. It seems reasonable to believe, then, that either such burials as may have been made here were concentrated to St. Laurent No. 1, or that, contrary to arrangements originally made on the afternoon of D plus 2. all bodies collected from the whole beach area were evacuated to St. Laurent No. 2 and subsequently reinterred in St. Laurent No. 1. At any rate, it is evident that the former cemetery was, as claimed by the 6th Engineer Special Brigade, the first to be opened in France and that St. Laurent No. 2 acquired its numerical designation only by virtue of its earlier selection. While admissible, perhaps, on technical grounds, the wording of the plaque is historically inaccurate.[49]

Operations at St. Laurent No. 1 began on 10 June (D plus 3), when 775 Allied and 200 enemy dead were delivered for burial. Five days later the 5th Engineer Special Brigade, in whose area this cemetery was located, reported that all bodies had been interred and that by midnight of 16 June (D plus 10) the 2d and 3d platoons, 607th GR Company, had completed the interment of 2,164 bodies—1,510 American, 48 Allied and 606 enemy dead. The report adds: "Much of the labor of collecting the bodies and preparing the ground to receive them was done by prisoners of war from the enclosure across the valley, several hundred of whom were engaged in this work daily." [50]

While the 2d and 3d Platoons, 607th GR Company, were operating in areas of the Engineer Special Brigade Group, the 2d Platoon, 606th GR Company, opened La Cambre on D plus 4 for the 29th Infantry Division, XIX Corps. In contrast to St. Laurent Nos. 1 and 2,

[45] Rpt, Prov Engr Spec Brig Gp, 30 Sep 44, sub: Opn Rpt "Neptune" (Prepared by Historical Section, ETOUSA).

[46] V Corps QM Sec, Opns Rpt, 13–25 Jun 44. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 205–30 (14704).

[47] *Ibid.*

[48] Rpt, Prov Engr Spec Brig Gp, 30 Sep 44.

[49] FUSA, Rpt of Opns, 20 Oct 43—1 Aug 44, VI, 144.

[50] Rpt, Prov Engr Spec Brig Gr, 30 Sep 44.

Digitized by Google

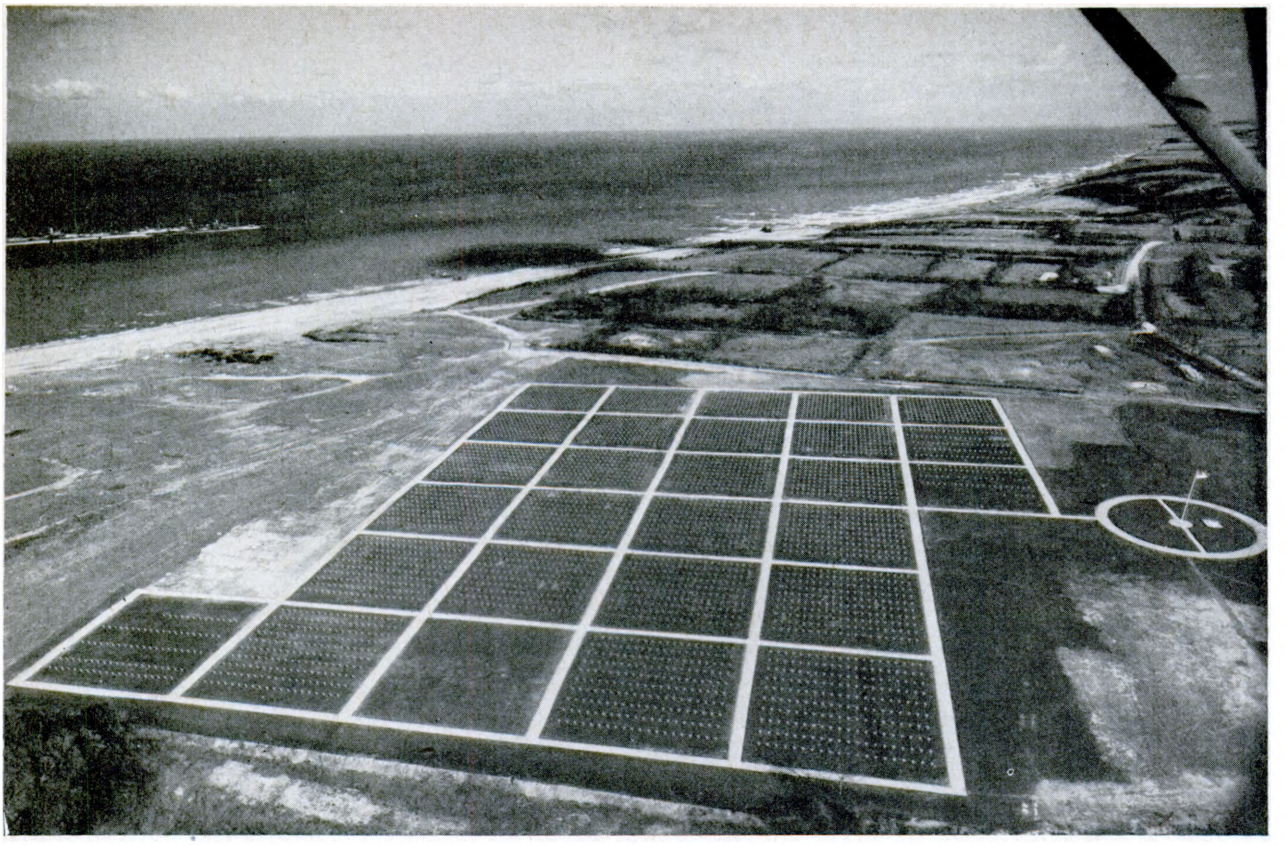


Figure 12.—U. S. Military Cemetery, St. Laurent, France. Wrecked shipping still litters the Normandy coastline.

which were designated by the V Corps Quartermaster for burial of the 1st and 29th Division dead and, therefore, may be regarded as corps cemeteries, La Cambre was a division cemetery established in the conventional manner and operated by the attached graves registration platoon. On D plus 9, however, La Cambre was transferred to XIX Corps and operated by the 2d Platoon, 608th GR Company, until arrival of Company Headquarters and the 1st Platoon. Thenceforth the 2d Platoon undertook the operation of collecting points for the 29th Division. Thus the first ten days on Omaha Beach witnessed a definite trend toward the establishment of cemeteries at corps level.[51]

Utah Beach offers a more confused and varied theme, but tending, nevertheless, away from divisional cemeteries. After 356 emergency burials had been made by the 4th Platoon, 607th GR Company, at Pouppeville in the beach area of the 1st Engineer Special Brigade, the 1st Platoon, 603d GR Company, opened a cemetery at St. Martin on D plus 3 for the 4th Infantry Division, while the 2d Platoon, 603d, established another on the same day at St. Mere Eglise for the 9th Division. The latter site was taken over by VII Corps on D plus 10. At the same time, all 603d Company platoons were detached from VII Corps divisions and put under their company headquarters to operate the corps cemetery and collecting points behind the divisions. These adjustments followed the course witnessed on Omaha Beach in the shift from divisional to corps control of evacuation and burial.[52]

A variation, however, appears in the method of graves registration support afforded the 82d and 101st Airborne Division, which landed at H–5 hours in rear of the beach. Both units detailed combat personnel to collecting and burial teams and established sites for emergency battlefield burials, the 101st opening one at Heisville, the 82d another in the vicinity of Blosville. Burials at the latter place were reinterred in the VIII Corps cemetery opened nearby on D plus 18. Heisville's dead were subsequently evacuated to St. Mere Eglise.[53]

Before passing on to graves registration operations in support of the VII Corps' advance on Cherbourg,

[51] FUSA, Rpt of Opns, 20 Oct 43—1 Aug 44, VI, 145.

[52] *Ibid.*

[53] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

and those which accompanied expansion of the lodgement area toward St. Lo, it seems advisable to examine in some detail the techniques of evacuation and burial practiced by airborne troops in Normandy. The development of these techniques introduces a new chapter in graves registration history, the importance of which is limited only by the extent to which such troops may be employed in warfare of the future.

Operational plans of the 101st Airborne Division specified that evacuation and burial of the dead would be accomplished by organic teams, acting under direct supervision of the division Quartermaster Section. Burial, however, was considered an emergency affair and would be conducted in accordance with procedures pertaining alone to hasty battlefield burials. Graves were to be no more than three feet in depth. It was assumed, of course, that all such hasty burials would be reinterred by the attached graves registration platoon after contact had been established with elements of the front of attack and the division had reverted to corps or army command.[54]

The 82d Airborne Division assigned responsibility for evacuation and burial to a divisional graves registration officer, who would act under direction of the division chaplain. Each unit was to evacuate its own dead to an emergency cemetery. A noncommissioned officer of the 603d GR Company was detailed to assist the division graves registration officer in technical matters. Accordingly, 1st Lieut. James M. Fraim, division GRO, and Sgt. Elbert E. Flagg, 603d GR Company, came in with the Glider Force and landed at 2115 hours on D Day. On D plus 1 a cemetery site was selected near Blosville, where 530 bodies were interred in the course of a few days. Lieutenant Fraim relates in his report to the 82d Division historical officer that several enlisted men "were assigned for the purpose of digging graves," and that "due to the volume of work entailed and lack of service troops, arrangements were made on D plus 2 (8 June) to obtain labor from the local French population." [55] Organic personnel, according to Lieutenant Fraim, continued operations until D plus 12, when the attached graves registration platoon (1st Plat. 3041st GR Co.) joined the Division and took over the work of evacuation and burial.[56]

Experimental methods of the two airborne divisions are both interesting and instructive, largely because of their dissimilarities. Where the 82d attempted a scheme of technical supervision that recalls the one first improvised during the Buna-Gona campaign in northern New Guinea by attaching noncommissioned officers of the Provisional Platoon, 46th GR Company, to combat units, the 101st Airborne Division sought the same ends by relying on administrative personnel of the Quartermaster Section. Although it would be difficult to assess the merits of these two systems, the difference itself suggests that both were immature and that serious study was required before a sound procedure might be expected.

As a matter of fact, the air drop, like the amphibious assault, imposed new problems in affording adequate technical support to combat formations. The experience of North Africa, Sicily, and Salerno had demonstrated the difficulty of striking a nice balance between tactical and administrative requirements of an amphibious task force during the critical phase of a landing assault. Although there had been a tendency at first to minimize the importance of many administrative services on the ground that immediate attainment of the tactical decision overruled all other considerations, the depressing effect produced by corpse-strewn beachheads on successive waves of reinforcements compelled recognition that provision must be made at the beginning for disposition of the dead and that, logistical difficulties notwithstanding, more graves registration should be included with the first assault echelons. The experience of Utah Beach introduced this problem in its primitive form to the logistics of assault by air.

In advancing from the American right on Cherbourg, the VII Corps evacuated its dead to St. Mere Eglise until that cemetery was closed to burial on 25 June and thereafter to the new Corps cemetery opened in the same vicinity and designated as St. Mere Eglise No. 2. During this operation the VII Corps perfected methods in the employment of its graves registration units which definitely mark a departure from the accepted practice of conducting the complete process of evacuation and burial at the divisional level. Although this departure had been anticipated in the First Army Quartermaster plan for NEPTUNE, and, as a matter of fact, had at least one precedent in the II Corps Cemetery in Tunisia,[57] it remained for the VII Corps to translate the new concept into an operating scheme that afforded a marked economy of effort.[58]

As already indicated, the three VII Corps graves registration platoons that had previously supported divi-

[54] (1) Annex to FO No. 1 (Revised), 325th Glider Regt, 29 May 44, sub: OPN NEPTUNE. Hist Rec Sec, AGO 382-INE (375)-3.9 (28520). (2) Sec VII & VIII, "Standard Operational Procedures," Hq, 82d A/B Div, 13 Apr 44.

[55] Rpt, 1st Lt J. M. Fraim, QMC, to Division Historian, 14 Aug 44, sub: History of Unit (407th A/B QM Co, 82d A/B Div) 6 Jun-18 Jul 44. Dept Rec Br, AGO 382-QM 0.3 (14712).

[56] (1) *Ibid.* (2) FUSA, Rpt of Opns, 20 Oct 43-1 Aug 44, VI, 145.

[57] See above, ch. III, The Tunisian Campaign.

[58] See below, p. 106.

Digitized by Google

sions were recalled from their attachment and concentrated at the Corps cemetery with Headquarters, 603d GR Company, and the remaining platoon. Details of four men were then detached from the company to operate collecting points. Depending upon the tactical situation and the actual number of casualties, one to four collecting points were assigned to each division. The only function performed at these division collecting points was a check for identification as bodies were transferred to company vehicles for delivery to the Corps cemetery. Company transportation was supplemented by eight 2½-ton trucks from Corps.[59]

After the fall of Cherbourg on 25 June the VII Corps turned south and took position on the right of the First Army facing St. Lo. During the operations which crushed the German left and opened the St. Lo-Avranches corridor into Brittany the V, VII, VIII, and XIX Corps evacuated their dead to the various cemeteries they had established in the lodgement area, the V to St. Laurent No. 1, the VII to St. Mere Eglise No. 2 and, during the final stage of this operation, to Marigny No. 1 and No. 2, the VIII to Blosville and the XIX to La Cambre.[60]

The employment of graves registration units differed within each corps. The VII Corps continued the system it had originally adopted on D plus 10 and refined during the advance on Cherbourg. No precise information is available concerning the VIII Corps other than its continued use of the cemetery at Blosville. The V and XIX Corps developed methods that differed somewhat from one another and from those of the VII Corps. All, however, had one aspect in common—disuse of the division cemetery.

After turning over its cemetery at St. Laurent to Army on D plus 10, the V Corps preferred to evacuate its dead to that location. The 606th GR Company, however, was broken down, three of its platoons being attached to divisions and the one released from cemeterial duties employed as a reserve to search the corps area for isolated bodies. The attached platoons operated collecting points on a divisional basis and, in addition, furnished technicians to supervise the work of organic collecting teams within the division areas. The Report of Burial (GR Form No. 1) was initiated at division collecting points and accompanied the body for completion at the corps cemetery. Personal effects were removed, inventoried and shipped from collecting points to the Effects Quartermaster.[61]

After retaining Headquarters, 607th GR Company, together with one platoon and all clerical personnel of the company, at its cemetery, the XIX Corps detached three platoons, less clerical personnel, to the divisions. For this reason procedures relating to burial reports (GR Form No. 1) and disposition of personal effects were both initiated and completed at the cemetery.[62]

According to the First Army Quartermaster Section periodic report, the VII Corps scheme of graves registration organization was regarded as a model for future operations.

> It is believed that the method employed by VII Corps will constitute the basis of a final recommendation on the use of GR companies by Corps. An analysis shows that with this method this Corps successfully evacuated and buried the dead from as many as seven divisions without requiring additional personnel against requests from other corps as additional divisions were added.[63]

Methods perfected by the VII Corps on the battlefields of Normandy set standards for the First Army during subsequent phases of the campaign. These battle-tested procedures also served in large measure as a model for the Third and Ninth Armies, which were composed of forces assembled and trained in Great Britain and then sent to reinforce the Allied Expeditionary Force on the Continent. A product of the Mediterranean Theater, the veteran Seventh Army brought its own doctrines and procedures from the battlefields of Tunisia, Sicily and Italy. But before examining such variations as appear in these commands, and attempting to account for those influences that tended to produce an over-all uniformity of administration and method, it is proposed to follow the march of the First Army to the Elbe and trace the graves registration story of this organization as a continuous theme.

The campaign under review falls into three major periods: (1) the Battle of Normandy, which raged almost without pause in its flaming violence from 6 June to 1 August; (2) the Battle of France, which began with the debouchment of allied forces from the Normandy peninsula and continued in a swift pursuit of the enemy across France to the German frontier; (3) the Battle of Germany, the events of which logically group themselves into four distinct phases, namely: the assault on the fortified frontier, the German attack and the allied counter-stroke in so-called "Battle of the Bulge," the allied advance to the Rhine, and the Rhine crossing and pursuit to the Elbe.[64]

[59] FUSA, Rpt of Opns, 20 Oct 43—1 Aug 44, VI, pp. 145, 147
[60] *Ibid.*
[61] *Ibid.*, pp. 145–46.
[62] *Ibid.*, p. 147.
[63] *Ibid.*
[64] The First Army History arbitrarily divides the campaign into three chronological periods: 20 Oct 43–1 Aug 44; 1 Aug 44–22 Feb 45; 22 Feb–8 May 45. The first ends with the battle of Normandy; the second includes the pursuit across France, the first phase of assault on the German frontier, and

Digitized by Google

Logistical and tactical problems varied during these movements, each in turn imposing conditions which modified graves registration practices. The variations, however, fit into three general classifications. First were those peculiar to sanguinary and prolonged contests of attrition, as witnessed in the Battle of Normandy and the first costly thrusts against strong points of the Siegfried Line, notably Aachen. Second were those involved in the situation of warfare of movement, as instanced in the Battle of France and the pursuit from the Rhine to the Elbe. Finally, a novel set of circumstances were imposed by the Battle of the Bulge. In giving ground to Von Rundstedt's assault columns, American troops were compelled for the first time since the Bataan campaign to adapt graves registration procedures to the tactics and logistics of retreat.[65]

A successful application of processes developed in Normandy to conditions encountered during the pursuit across France attests the soundness of graves registration doctrine as formulated by the Quartermaster Section, ETO, and written into the First Army Operations Plan NEPTUNE. In the abrupt shift from a situation which may be described as warfare of position to one of rapid movement, this doctrine not only stood the test of altered circumstances but saw a continuation of trends which made for operational control of evacuation and burial at higher command echelons. The hammer blow at St. Lo shattered German hopes of bottling up the Allied Expeditionary Force in Normandy. Pivoting on the 21st British Army Group before Caen, the First and Third United States Armies, now comprising the 12th Army Group (TUSAG), enveloped the enemy's left and closed toward Falaise. Remnants of two hostile armies, the Seventh and Fifteenth, escaped across the Seine while Allied forces pressed in pursuit, the British and Canadians holding the left and advancing along the Channel Coast, the First United States Army, in the center, crossing the Meuse River and striking toward Aachen, the Third United States Army, on the right, racing across central France to the gates of Metz. Meantime the Seventh United States Army, with a contingent of French forces, landed on the Mediterranean coast and, after brushing aside negligible resistance and pushing rapidly up the Rhone Valley, formed on the right of the Allied line. Due to stiffening resistance as the Allied armies outran their services of supply, the running battle came to a standstill along the fortified German frontier.

Although the combats at Avranches and Falaise were as violent as any in the lodgement area, the continuous fighting that characterizes warfare of position was absent during the pursuit beyond the Seine. Thus the number of dead delivered for burial at cemeteries established along the lines of advance diminished in number, while the distance from point of recovery to place of burial increased in proportion to the speed of advance and, it may be added, inversely to the diminishing casualty rate. Despite these new factors, the practice of evacuating remains through a system of collecting points to an established corps cemetery continued in effect.[66] A graves registration company was attached to each corps for evacuation purposes, while one was retained to operate cemeteries under army jurisdiction. The allocation was as follows:

VII Corps	603
X Corps	606
XIX Corps	608
Army	607
Army (Until 1 Aug)[67]	3041

The rapid pace of advance, however, induced several changes in the organization and operation of collection point systems. These adjustments had the effect of dividing responsibility for evacuation between army and the corps commands. Insistence on the policy of keeping the number of cemeteries to a minimum compelled army to supplement corps collecting points with a system of relay points. "At these relay points," it is reported, "trailer loads of remains were transferred from corps vehicles to vehicles of the graves registration companies operating the cemetery, and thus evacuated to the cemetery for burial."[68] Furthermore, the increased burden of longer hauls was accommodated by adding to organic graves registration transportation a column of twenty ¾-ton weapons carriers, which were procured on loan from the Ordnance motor pool.[69]

Additional transportation and a supplementary relay point system did not entirely solve the problem of evacuation. Here again army took action with a view to speeding up search and recovery operations in rear of the battleline. In contrast to the conventional method of "area sweeping," when lulls in combat permitted the diversion of attached graves registration personnel from evacuation and burial activities, the

the Battle of the Bulge; the third treats all remaining phases of the campaign—the Roer crossing, advance to the Rhine, exploitation of the Remagen bridgehead and the pursuit to the Elbe. While such a division may have been a logical one for purposes of tactical narration, it is thought that graves registration requires a different method, namely, one which separates slow moving operations from warfare of movement. According to this scheme the third period—the Battle of Germany—included both.

[65] See above, ch. III, The Philippine Campaign.

[66] FUSA, Rpt of Opns, 1 Aug 44–22 Feb 45, IV, 53.

[67] *Ibid.*

[68] *Ibid.*

[69] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

Figure 13.—Evacuation and Burial—I. Processing of remains begins at a First Army collecting point. Attached Medical Corpsman prepares Emergency Medical Tag while Graves Registration technicians initiate Report of Interment (QMC–GR No. 1) by listing identifying media and personal effects.

new one may be described as a secondary phase of battlefield evacuation. Organized by the Army Graves Registration Officer for this specific purpose, collecting teams were deployed to recover bodies which had been overlooked during the primary phase. Search was restricted to localized areas in which unburied bodies had been seen and reported by Military Police and Civil Affairs detachments. Insofar as reports were available during this period, there were 147 isolated burials, of which 75 were American, 25 Allied, and 47 enemy dead.[70]

During August and early September the three corps opened five cemeteries:

Le Chene Guerin, France	8 Aug.
Gerron, France	15 Aug.
St. Andre, France	27 Aug.
Soliers, France	30 Aug.
Fosse, France	8 Sept.

Deceased army troops, as well as corps and division troops, were buried in these cemeteries. All five passed to army control before 15 September, while two—Le Chene-Guerin and Gerron—together with four

[70] *Ibid.*

Figure 14.—Evacuation and Burial—II. Clothing and personal effects of potential unknown dead are minutely examined at collecting point for possible identifying clues.

Digitized by Google

Figure 15.—Evacuation and Burial—III. Potential unknowns are fingerprinted before evacuation by organic Graves Registration Company transportation to Army cemetery.

in Normandy—Orglandes, La Cambre, St. Laurent, and Marigny—were taken over by the Advanced Section, Communications Zone (ASCZ).[71]

A First Army Quartermaster Section summary of over-all achievement in graves registration during the 1 August–15 September period offers the following:

> It is believed that most casualties were and can be evacuated through graves registration collection point system to established cemeteries, but unit commanders, especially of smaller units, must be impressed with the responsibility in the disposition of the dead both American and enemy.[72]

The reference to weakness of small-unit participation in the graves registration activity has a familiar ring, emphasizing again that efficient performance depends upon the immediate collection of bodies in company and battalion areas, and that the ultimate solution of this phase of the problem can be solved only by a clear-cut choice of two alternatives: either provide in the basic training of all troops for a competent performance of acts involved in the initial phase of evacuation, or reorganize the graves registration company along lines proposed in T/O and E 10–298 to do the whole job from battleline to cemetery.[73]

The opening phase of the Battle of Germany, that is, the attack on the fortified frontier, was characterized by a shift from the rapid pace of pursuit to a slow-moving operation. The collecting point system, as first developed in Normandy and modified during the advance across France, was now adapted to a new scheme of evacuation. A relatively static battlefront, together with an organization and transport facilities for the movement of bodies over considerable distances, suggested the economy of evacuation to a single army cemetery. The site for such a purpose, it was reasoned, should be as far forward as possible and enjoy the combined advantages of suitable soil and a good road net converging from the front. Then, aside from logistical considerations, there were motives prompted by a conviction that "it would be the last and probably largest cemetery of the campaign." [74]

[71] *Ibid.*, pp. 53–54.
[72] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

[73] See above, ch. V, The Italian Campaign, for discussion of the manpower problem, as affecting both MTO and ETO, in the activation of GR companies according to T/O & E–298.
[74] FUSA, Rpt of Opns, 1 Aug 44—22 Feb 45, IV, 63.

Digitized by Google

Figure 16.—Evacuation and Burial—IV. Bodies from collecting point are delivered at prepared grave sites in First Army Cemetery near Fosse, Belgium.

A site in the vicinity of Henri-Chapelle, Belgium, met all practical requirements and was opened for burial on 25 September 1944. Although falling short of its intended destiny as the last cemetery of the war, Henri-Chapelle more than fulfilled the expectation of its founders in other respects. It attained the melancholy distinction of becoming one of the greatest military cemeteries in point of burials ever established by the

Figure 17.—Evacuation and Burial—V. Completed Plot "A" at Fosse, Belgium, containing 200 graves.

armed forces of the nation. Moreover, it marked the high point of graves registration development in Europe, serving the First Army until its forces debouched from the Remagen bridgehead and took up the pursuit from the Rhine to the Elbe.

During the slow-moving operation on the German frontier, the Allied Expeditionary Force completed its deployment by placing the Ninth United States Army in line on the left of the First and creating the 6th Army Group by incorporation of the Seventh United States Army and various French contingents which comprised the First French Army. With the increase of manpower, however, came a difficult graves registration problem. The solution is described in the First Army Quartermaster Section Report.

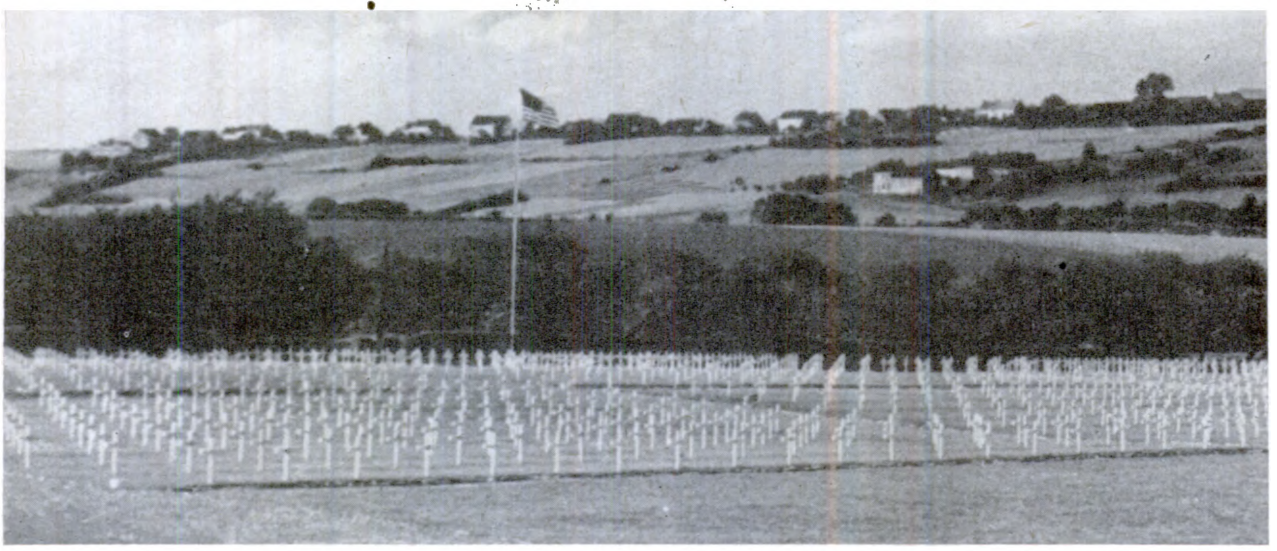


Figure 18.—Evacuation and Burial—VI. U. S. Military Cemetery, Fosse, Belgium, at a later stage of development.

Digitized by Google

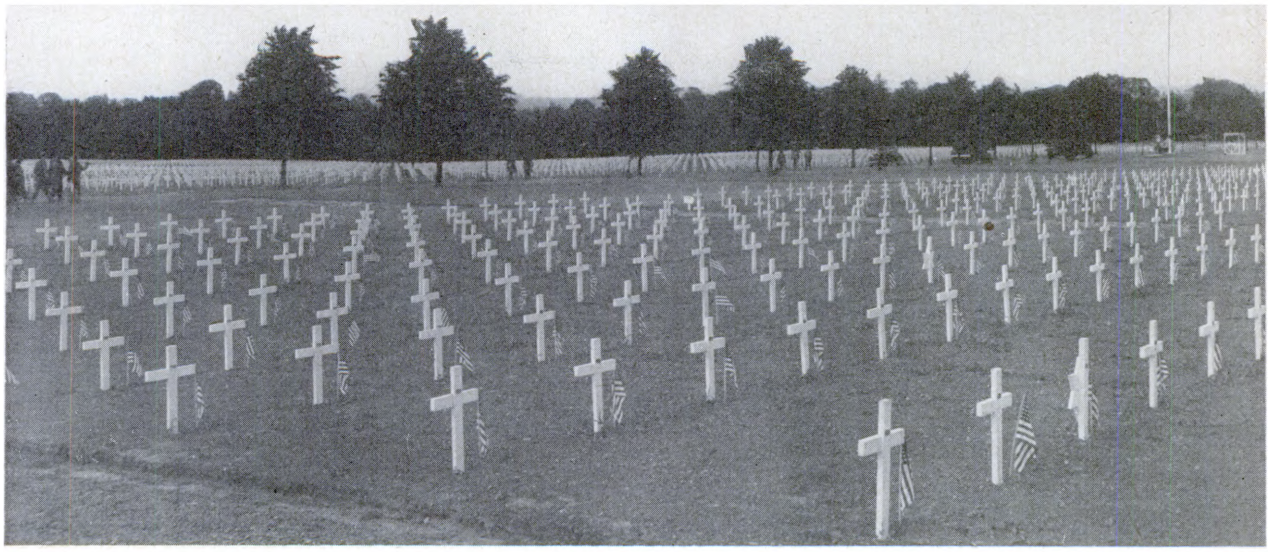


Figure 19.—U. S. Military Cemetery, Henri-Chapelle, Belgium, served as an army group cemetery to which dead of the First and Ninth Armies were evacuated simultaneously through their collecting point systems.

At the time, Ninth Army had only one GR company which was insufficient to effectively operate an evacuation system and a cemetery. To aid in this situation a First U. S. Army collecting point was established in Ninth Army territory. The remains in Ninth Army area were evacuated to the cemetery in the vicinity of Henri-Chapelle and buried by First U. S. Army personnel.[75]

In serving two armies with a common evacuation system, Henri-Chapelle acquired something of the status of an army group cemetery. The allocation of GR companies was as follows: [76]

VII Corps	603
V Corps	606
XIX Corps (until 22 October)	608
VIII Corps (commencing 22 October)	3,042
Army	607

New problems of evacuation arose during the Ardennes breakthrough and the Allied counterattack. Although there was a marked increase in the number of casualties, the additional load on collecting points was offset by a diminishing distance from the front to Henri-Chapelle. Then, as the Allies struck back and reduced the enemy salient, the distance of evacuation increased. Moreover, a deep blanket of snow impeded collection. Many bodies which had been left as they fell during the German advance could not be recovered until the snow melted and a force composed of two graves registration platoons of the 606th and 3060th GR Companies was detailed to sweep the area. Bodies recovered in this operation were evacuated to Henri-Chapelle.[77]

During the crossing of the Roer and the drive to the Rhine, the 607th GR Company continued to operate Henri-Chapelle, while an army collecting point was established at Euskirchen to supplement corps evacuation systems. Although ADSEC took over Henri-Chapelle No. 2, a section of the cemetery being allotted to prisoners of war, the First Army preferred to evacuate its dead to No. 1 until expansion of the Remagen bridgehead required an army cemetery on German soil.

After having served the First Army as its only cemetery for 6 months, Henri-Chapelle gave way to United States Military Cemeteries Nos. 1 and 2, which were established on 29 March 1945 at Ittenbach, Germany. Then, owing to the extensive area of operations, First Army opened another cemetery at Breuna. Both Ittenbach and Breuna continued in operation until 20 April, when the 607th GR Company took over the Third Army Cemetery near Eisenach and reopened it three days later to replace Ittenbach. Breuna was then closed, leaving Eisenach as the only active cemetery in the First Army area. With the addition of army collecting points at Polneck and Overfurt, this situation continued until V-E Day. On 8 May Eisenach Nos. 1 and 2 were closed but continued to function as army

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 64.
[76] *Ibid.*

[77] *Ibid.*, p. 77.

Digitized by Google

TABLE 1.—*Status of cemeteries opened by First U. S. Army*

[Figures include cumulative total burials at time of transfer to ADSEC]

	Interments												
	U. S. troops				Allied troops				Enemy troops				Total
	Total	Identified	Unidentified	Percent unknown	Total	Identified	Unidentified	Percent unknown	Total	Identified	Unidentified	Percent unknown	
Battle of Normandy	21, 705	21, 360	345	1. 2	131	105	26	18. 8	11, 722	9, 384	2, 338	19. 9	33, 558
Battle of France	3, 742	3, 659	83	2. 2	38	28	10	26. 3	2, 394	1, 885	509	21. 3	6, 174
Battle of Germany	20, 681	20, 381	300	1. 4	424	234	190	38. 2	11, 277	9, 242	2, 035	18. 0	32, 382
Total	46, 128	45, 400	728	1. 6	593	367	226	38. 1	25, 393	20, 511	4, 882	19. 2	72, 114

NOTE.—Based on FUSA, Rpt of Opns, 28 Feb–8 May 45, III, 94.

collecting points for the evacuation of remains to Henri-Chapelle.[78]

Some measure of the First Army's achievement in graves registration may be made by figures which reveal the cumulative number of burials in each of its cemeteries at the time of transfer to ADSEC. A total of 72,114 bodies (46,128 American, 593 Allied, and 25,393 enemy) were evacuated and interred by organic teams and attached graves registration units. A consolidated table grouping these burials by the three major periods of the campaign accompanies the text.[79]

It will be noted that 46,128 American dead were interred during the three periods. This figure, to be sure, includes only bodies that were actually delivered for burial through corps collecting point systems and such supplementary relay and collecting points as were operated by army. It therefore falls short of the aggregate number of interments at the end of hostilities in all cemeteries originally established by First Army. The difference between the total American cemeterial population as of V-E Day and the cumulative number of burials at time of transfer represents the number of burials accomplished by COMZONE graves registration forces. The latter figure, however, includes only a portion of the bodies that might be classified as "recoverables" and as such chargeable to the field forces for purposes of evacuation. For the rest, there was a large number of deaths from wounds; evacuated directly from hospital centers in rear areas, this category of bodies cannot be regarded as "recoverables" in the sense that they should have been evacuated by the army collecting point systems.[80]

Conceivably, a reliable figure for battlefield recoverables might be derived from the cumulative total reported as killed in action at the termination of a given period. Such a figure would offer the basis for calculating percentages of unrecovered dead that were incidental to the operation of army collecting point systems over the stated period. For present purposes, however, AGO casualty statistics are not available in the form that would facilitate this calculation. Thus the use for interpretative purposes of statistical data in the accompanying table is necessarily restricted to problems of identification, as conditioned by varying circumstances of the campaign. While, during the first period, the number of burials exceeded that of any later period, the percentage of unknowns was the lowest, being 1.2, as compared to 2.2 for the second period and 1.4 for the third period.

It is hardly reasonable to suppose that the techniques of identification were highly efficient during the Battle of Normandy and then underwent a sudden decline after the First Army launched its pursuit across France. There is even less reason to assume that, after having gone into eclipse during the second period, the application of identification techniques should have suddenly revived and, according to a diminished percentage of unknowns during the third period, actually managed to approach the high achievement of Normandy.

Any rational explanation of these apparent contradictions no doubt will be found in the fact that, given

[78] FUSA, Rpt of Opns, 23 Feb–8 May 45, III, Annex No. 10, QM Sec Rpt, 45, 46, 55.

[79] FUSA, Rpt of Opns, 28 Feb–8 May 45, III, 94.

[80] This discussion is necessarily limited to American dead. The enemy, even in retreat, recovers as many of his dead as circumstances permit. Allied dead in a U. S. sector present individual and exceptional cases. Again, the standards of identification, as applied to American, Allied and enemy dead vary.

Digitized by Google

the same level of efficiency in identification, the proportional number of positive identifications (or the percentage of unknowns) is relative to tactical and logistical conditions that apply in any given situation. Within certain limits, it would appear that warfare of position, with its continuous fighting and relatively short lines of evacuation to established cemeteries, contributes to a higher rate of identification than a campaign of continuous and rapid movement, when organic teams have little time or opportunity during brief but savage encounters to collect the dead, and when supporting graves registration units are dispersed over wide areas of deployment and, because of the fast-moving battle front, are obliged to overcome greater distances in the evacuation of bodies. Furthermore, this accumulation of difficulties imposes delay between time of death and recovery of the body—a circumstance which has always been regarded as a hindrance to identification. Finally, distance to the battlefront precludes many possibilities of ready communication between collecting points and combat units for purposes of confirming tentative identifications.

The various phases of the third period offer a combination of tactical and logistical conditions that characterized the two preceding periods. In addition to this combination, there was the situation of retreat during the Battle of the Bulge, when the scope of graves registration was at first prescribed by the pace of the enemy's advance and then complicated in the matter of identification by considerable delay between time of death and recovery of remains. In consideration of the fact that the actual achievement in identification, as indicated by the low percentage of unknowns (1.4), closely approximates that of the first period, differing by 0.2 in the percentage of unknowns, it seems reasonable to conclude that only an improvement in the techniques of identification can account for this achievement.

The analysis of a typical case tends to strengthen the foregoing assumption. It will be recalled that all dead evacuated through First Army collecting points from 25 September 1944 to 29 March 1945 were interred at Henri-Chapelle. While much of the fighting during this six-month period was similar in tactical and logistical aspects to that of Normandy, it also included the Battle of the Bulge, which presented the most difficult of all tactical situations insofar as the conduct of effective graves registration is concerned. Yet the percentage of unknown American dead in Henri-Chapelle No. 1 at the time of transfer to ADSEC was 1.2. This is identical to the percentage of unknown for the Normandy period. It would therefore follow that, given similar conditions of combat, the First Army achievement in identification underwent steady improvement during the course of the campaign in Europe.

There are a number of qualifications which should be considered in connection with these broad generalizations. While there is no way at the present of computing a percentage for unrecovered battlefield dead, it goes without saying that if the rate of casualties in any tactical situation exceeds the capabilities of organic and attached graves registration units, the collecting point system can evacuate only a portion of the dead, leaving the remainder to subsequent sweeping operations. In a congested combat like Normandy, ADSEC attempts to undertake this work in time to anticipate the use of army graves registration troops for such duties. This is precisely what happened when, on 29 June 1944, the Graves Registration and Effects Branch of ADSEC was assigned the task of evacuating all American and enemy dead from Cherbourg to established cemeteries.[81]

Undertaken with an improvised force of four enlisted men and a borrowed truck, and originally restricted to clearing American and enemy dead from pillboxes, hospitals and ruins of the city, this project was extended upon arrival of the 610th GR Company on 10 July to the Cherbourg Peninsula and prosecuted vigorously throughout the month. Meantime collecting teams were organized from personnel of the Graves Registration companies attached to ADSEC and assigned the mission of sweeping the dead from territory in rear of the advancing armies. Then as ADSEC moved forward new cemeteries were taken over from the armies and old ones were turned over to appropriate base sections. This cycle of turn-over was continued throughout the campaign. There is only one instance of a cemetery—Neuville-en-Condroz, near Liege—being established and opened by ADSEC.

While not related directly to battlefield evacuation, it is interesting to note that ADSEC shifted responsibility for the evacuation of hospital dead from individual hospitals to the hospital group, thus following the trend already established by the field forces in transferring this function from divisions to higher echelons of command. After noting that each hospital evacuated its own dead to the nearest established cemetery, ADSEC records that "it was soon evidenced that a centrally controlled collection and evacuation point

[81] History of the Quartermaster Section, Headquarters, Advanced Section, Communications Zone, European Theater of Operations, 28 Dec 43 to 25 Jun 45 (C. 1945. Typescript with preface by Col. S. W. Smithers, QMC), p. 37. Hereinafter cited as Hist of QM, ADSEC.

Digitized by Google

should be set up, so a new system was inaugurated by each hospital center whereby bodies from all hospitals under its control were collected in one point and evacuated once daily from there to the cemeteries for burial." [82]

Perhaps the closest coordination of effort between First Army and ADSEC graves registration forces occurred in the Ardennes region after the Battle of the Bulge. Here a collecting point system similar to the one developed for hospital evacuation was established and operated by ADSEC in conjunction with the First and Third Armies. In reality three collecting systems supplemented one another, the only essential difference being that each one evacuated recovered bodies to its own cemetery, First Army to Henri-Chapelle, ADSEC to Neuville-en-Condroz, and the Third Army to Grande Failly. This is recorded in the following statement:

> During the German break-through in December 1944, Advance Section Graves Registration personnel were confronted with the problem of helping the armies collect the dead in the "bulge" area. To cope with this situation, the area was divided into 4 sections with a collecting point established at Liege, Fosses, Bar-Le-Duc and Marche, Belgium. From past experiences the collecting points were organized with sweeping teams who went out each day to bring in the bodies to a specific point, where vehicles from the cemeteries came to collect the bodies for transportation back to the cemeteries. In this way, contrary to the usual procedure of each team evacuating the bodies it picked to the cemetery itself, much time was saved and the sweeping teams were uninterrupted in their work. Bodies were evacuated from all collecting points to Neuville-en-Condroz Cemetery with the exception of those from Bar-Le-Duc which were evacuated to the Grande Failly Cemetery which was in the southern area. A total of 126 U. S., 16 Allied and 674 enemy dead (816 grand total) were collected and buried by Advance Section from the "bulge area." [83]

Ninth Army

Variants in graves registration principles and operating procedures as developed by First Army during the early months of the invasion of the Continent appear in operations of the other United States armies. Differing tactical and logistical conditions seem, in large measure, to have been productive of these variants. At any rate, similarity of such conditions goes hand in hand with uniformity of graves registration procedures in the First and Ninth Armies, while a dissimilar situation in regard to tactical and logistical aspects undoubtedly influenced wider variation in the Third Army. Composed of veteran divisions from the battlefields of Tunisia, Sicily and Italy, the Seventh Army presents a special case; it faced the problem of adapting methods perfected in the Mediterranean region to the large-scale warfare projected on the Continental theater.

The Ninth Army might be described as a ward of the First in graves registration matters. The first active service performed by this command was in Brittany, where it relieved troops of the Third Army. Aside from containing hostile garrisons in the larger seaports of western France, the Ninth was concerned with normal occupation duties. In this connection its only graves registration company, the 3046th, took over the Third Army cemetery at St. James and opened another near Les Nevins for enemy dead.[84] During September 1944 the Ninth moved through Belgium and took position on the left of the First Army. In anticipation of future operations, the Army Quartermaster requested an additional graves registration company.[85]

Pending approval of the allotment, arrangements were made with First Army for the burial of Ninth Army dead in Henri-Chapelle and the use of such First Army graves registration units as were required to operate an effective collecting point system. An average of six collecting points were jointly operated by the 607th and 608th GR Companies, First Army, and the 3042d Company, Ninth Army. On 22 October 1944 Ninth Army took over the army collecting point previously operated by the 608th Company. On the same day this unit was assigned to Ninth Army, while the 3042d went in exchange to First Army.[86]

Meantime a shift of the boundary separating British and American operational areas caused the suspension of preparations looking to the establishment of an army cemetery at Sittard. Attention was then directed to a site near the village of Margraten, in the southeast corner of Holland.[87] The same logic dictating selection of Henri-Chapelle applied in the case of Margraten, namely the establishment of a cemetery which would adequately serve all troops in the army area.[88] Opened

[82] *Ibid.*, p. 39.
[83] *Ibid.*

[84] G–1, NUSA, A/A Rpt, 3–9 Sep 44. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, L–196: 2.
[85] (1) G–4, NUSA, A/A Rpt, Sep 44, Hist Rec Sec, AGO, L–196: 1. (2) NUSA, Adm Order No. 1, 5 Oct 44.
[86] (1) NUSA, Adm O No. 2, 22 Oct 44. In supporting papers to G–4, NUSA A/A Rpt, 1–31 Oct 44. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, L–216. (2) FUSA History, 1 Aug 44 to 22 Feb 45, IV, 63.
[87] (1) G–4, NUSA, A/A Rpt, 31 Oct–11 Nov 44, QM Sec Segment. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, L–334 Envelope 2. (2) Joseph James Shomon (Capt, cmdg 611th Gr Co) *Crosses in the Wind* (New York: Stafford House Inc., 1947), pp. 61–63. (3) Ms History of Margraten, U. S. Military Cemetery, pp. 3–5, RAC, Littlejohn Collection, Box 7. Hereinafter cited as Margraten Ms History. "It was during the Ninth Army drive into Germany that the site for Margraten temporary U. S. Military Cemetery was selected by Captain Joseph J. Shomon, Commanding Officer, of the 611th QM Grave Registration Company. . . . and on 10 November, Margraten . . . was officially opened by Ninth Army with the assignment of 611th Co and the 3136th QM Service Company . . . to jointly operate the burial site. *Ibid.*
[88] G–4, NUSA, A/A Rpt, 31 Oct–11 Nov 44, QM Sec Segment. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, L–344 Envelope 2.

Digitized by Google

10 November 1944, while First and Ninth Army troops were heavily engaged along the Roer River, Margraten fulfilled every purpose for which it was established. Indeed, the Ninth Army cemetery realized expectations attending the establishment of Henri-Chapelle. Although the First Army Quartermaster Section ascribes distance alone as the cause for suspending evacuation of bodies from the Remagen bridgehead to Henri-Chapelle, it also appears that this site had reached its natural limits of expansion—a circumstance which raises a question as to the real reason for establishing First Army cemeteries on German soil.[89]

Distance notwithstanding, Ninth Army preferred to evacuate its dead to Margraten during the advance beyond the Rhine. According to G–1, "a decision was reached to continue operating the Ninth Army Allied Cemetery at its present location rather than to establish a new cemetery on German soil. Any advantage which might be gained in saving transportation as a result of moving the cemetery would be outweighed by the fact that: "Bodies would eventually have to be disinterred; there is strong feeling against burial on enemy soil; the present fast-moving situation is indicative of light casualties; and evacuation has been handled satisfactorily without having to augment present transportation." [90]

Whatever justification there may have been in thinking that American dead would somehow suffer contamination by burial in German soil, logistical realities were consulted in opening a Ninth Army cemetery for enemy dead at Hardt, Germany.[91]

Increased combat strength allotted Ninth Army during the Roer River operations led to requests for three additional graves registration companies. One, according to recommendation of the Army Quartermaster, should be assigned on 20 November, another on 5 December, and the third five days later.[92] Only two companies, the 605th and 3046th, were obtained by these representations, the latter unit being assigned in February as the result of a renewed request.[93]

There can be little doubt that joint action on the part of First and Ninth Armies in operating the collecting point system that evacuated their dead to Henri-Chapelle contributed to uniformity of method. This is reflected in Ninth Army Administrative Instructions No. 1 of 30 November 1944, which published the following procedural requirements in reference to evacuation of the dead:

> Location of collecting points will be announced in Corps Administrative Orders for Corps troops; Division Administrative Orders for Divisions and attached units. Division quartermasters will be responsible to furnish Army quartermasters . . . coordinates of the newly established collecting points. Corps quartermasters will be responsible to furnish coordinates of Corps collecting points.[94]

Additional evidence is furnished by Ninth Army Standard Operating Procedure No. 3—Graves Registration, dated 7 December 1944 and prescribing in Section I that "when available, one graves registration company will be attached to each corps but will remain assigned to Army," and that the company officer of such graves registration companies "will be directly responsible to the Corps Quartermaster." It was further provided that "the Corps Quartermaster will maintain technical supervision of the Graves Registration Company to ensure effective control of evacuation from Division collecting points through the Corps collecting points to Army Cemetery, and will be responsible to the Army Quartermaster for such evacuation." Section II prescribed that the quartermaster would exercise operational control over one of the graves registration companies, the function of which "will be to operate and maintain the Army cemetery but the Army Graves Registration officer may release platoons operating the cemetery to supplement Graves Registration personnel at Division collecting points, should he deem such action necessary." [95]

With arrival of the 3046th GR Company in February, the Ninth Army was able to allocate platoons in such manner as to provide adequate technical service for all major units under its command. Two platoons of the 605th Co. were used in support of XVI Corps. Two platoons of the 611th and two of the 3046th were allocated to XIII Corps. The 608th continued to operate with XIX Corps, while the remaining two platoons of the 3046th were held as the Army reserve. A conference of corps graves registration units formulated plans at this time with a view to furnishing graves registration support in any type of operation. While taking into consideration the fact that the increasing distance between front line elements and the army cemetery complicated the problem of evacuation, the conference

[89] FUSA, Rpt of Opns, 23 Feb–8 May 45, IV, pp. 45, 50.

[90] G–1, NUSA, A/A Rpt, 16–31 Mar 45. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 109–11.2 (10855).

[91] G–4, NUSA, A/A Rpt, 1–15 Mar 45. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, L–577: 17.

[92] Ltr, Ex Off, OQM, NUSA to QM TUSAC, 17 Nov 44 sub: QM troops. In supporting documents to NUSA, A/A Rpt, 25–30 Nov 44. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, L–268: 6.

[93] (1) QM Sec, XIII Corps, NUSA, A/A Rpts, Nov–Dec 1944 & Jan–Feb 1945. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 213–11.7 (15991). (2) Reinforcement Sub Sec, G–1, NUSA, Operational Extract, 1–2 Feb 45, from G–1 Journal, 1–15 Feb 45. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, L–490, Envelope 3. (3) G–4, NUSA, A/A Rpt, 1–15 Feb 45. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, L–490: 11 & 12.

[94] NUSA Adn Instructions No. 1, 30 Nov 44, p. 18. In supporting documents to G–4 A/A Rpt, 25–30 Nov 44. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, L–268: 6.

[95] AGF Board Report No. 756, sub: Employment of QM Troops and Methods of Opn in Ninth Army. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 4–3, 756/45 (12293).

Digitized by Google

sought to maintain as far as practicable the method of allocation established during February 1945. In brief, the method was as follows:

> All available Graves Registration personnel was used in support of the active divisions. A total of three companies consisting of twelve platoons were attached to the various Corps based upon the strength of the Corps and the type of engagement. In each case it was necessary to set up a Corps collecting point to which bodies which were evacuated from division areas were brought. . . .[96]

The proportional allocation of graves registration companies to the field forces underwent some modification as the progressive deployment of combat formations exceeded the available number of graves registration units. A study of the Quartermaster Section, Ninth Army, observes that the allocation of four graves registration companies to an army meets only minimum requirements and should be maintained, despite the fact that "this is in excess of the present allocation of three to an army." [97] The study insists, moreover, that graves registration work is too important a function to be handled by other than trained men, and that if adequate personnel is provided for the field forces, "the cleanup job by the Communication Zone after taking over the army area is much simpler." It is concluded that "with four companies one can be attached to each corps and the remaining one can be used for the Army Cemetery and to supplement the heaviest corps." This means, of course, that the balance of February 1945 between combat forces and supporting graves registration units was disturbed during the final three months of hostilities, and that under these limitations company headquarters and two platoons of the 611th GR Company, assisted by two Quartermaster Service companies, operated Margraten. An additional service company was used at the army cemetery for enemy dead at Hardt, Germany. Only the "heavy" corps were serviced by full graves registration companies, the others, according to their strength and mission, being supported by one or more platoons.[98]

Despite deficiencies in technical support, the Ninth Army collecting point system operated over a greater range than did the corresponding system of First Army. There is reason to believe, however, that a superlative feat in this aspect of graves registration imposed hardships on other phases of the activity. While it is admittedly difficult to assemble burial statistics from which reliable indices might be derived for purposes of measuring accomplishment of the various armies in different phases of graves registration, there is, nevertheless, a startling discrepancy between the reported percentages of unknown dead in Margraten and in Henri-Chapelle, as well as in other First Army cemeteries, during the period November 1944–May 1945.[99] Yet the methods of identification in both armies were practically identical. Indeed, a comparison between First and Ninth Army identification techniques, on the one hand, with those involved and practiced by the Fifth United States Army in Italy, on the other hand, lends support to the thesis that fundamentals of European Theater graves registration were largely borrowed from the Mediterranean. The account of identification procedures at a Fifth Army collecting point which appears above in the account of the Italian campaign could, with only minor modifications, be substituted for the following description of Ninth Army practices in this respect.

> Every possible effort is exerted in the attempt to keep the percentage of unknowns to a minimum. As unknowns pass through collecting points the GR personnel operating the points exhaust all avenues leading toward possible identification. Any information which might possibly assist in identification is recorded on a form and attached to the body. Certificates of identification are obtained where possible. When the completed GR–1 form is sent to Army QM office, all details pertaining to the unknown are filed in a separate folder and correspondence is initiated in an effort to obtain clues to possible identity. It has been found that often the return of correspondence to unit requesting added details brings forth additional information. Units have a tendency to overlook minor details which do not seem important on the surface, but which may be instrumental in leading to identity. It is only after all possible means have been utilized that GR–1 form and correspondence is forwarded to CZ requesting WD to establish identity from fingerprints when available.[100]

Before drawing any final conclusion to the effect that distance of evacuation seriously militated against good performance in identification, the calculation which established the discrepancy between First and Ninth Army percentages of unknowns should be examined. According to the Ms History of Margraten U. S. Military Cemetery, a total of 10,328 American dead were interred by personnel of the 611th GR Company between 10 October 1944 and 2 June 1945. Of this total 822 remain unidentified, giving 7.79 percent for unknown dead.[101] The cumulative total for burials of American dead at Henri-Chapelle at time of transfer to ADSEC is 17,321, of which 224 are unknown. Thus

[96] G–4, NUSA, A/A Rpt, Feb 44. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, L–490: 12.
[97] Orgn and Opn of the QM Sec, Ninth Army, 4 Sep 45. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 8–5.0409/45 (17153).
[98] *Ibid.*
[99] These percentages were: First Army 2.2; Ninth Army 7.97.
[100] Orgn and Opn of the QM Sec, Ninth Army, 4 Sep 45.
[101] Margraten Ms History, p. 11.

Digitized by Google

the percentage of unknowns is 1.2. As previously stated, the percentage of First Army unknowns for the period covering the Battle of Germany, is 1.4.[102] It should be borne in mind that these figures include only burials and identification of bodies evacuated through the army collecting point system, together with those recovered by sweeps of army graves registration personnel. In the case of Margraten some allowance must be made for a considerable number of unknown dead from the 82d and 101st Airborne Divisions who were originally buried in emergency battlefield cemeteries during operation MARKET and subsequently evacuated to Margraten by graves registration forces of the Communications Zone.[103] These unknowns, of course, cannot be charged against Ninth Army; deduction of the actual number would appreciably lower its percentage of unknowns. But only in the event that a careful tabulation of individual burial reports should establish that the total number of unknowns in Margraten (822) included 595 Airborne troops, would it be permissible to assume that the discrepancy is negligible.[104]

Thus the question of permitting sentimental objections against the burial of American dead in enemy soil should be referred to another set of sentimental standards. Since the historic burial policy of the nation has, since the Civil War, been motivated by a sense of obligation to the relatives of the dead in its care and final disposition of remains, it follows that the program in question is without justification, unless, of course, the next of kin are disposed to agree with army commanders and graves registration officers that the recovery and return of remains contaminated by enemy soil would afford less consolation than burial in an unknown grave.

Third Army

Tactical and logistical determinants of Third Army operations during the European campaign were unique. Between 2 August 1944 and 8 May 1945 this force advanced from St. Lo to Pilzen, an air distance of some 700 miles. The epic quality of its march, however, cannot be measured by the shortest distance between the two points; in breaking out of the Normandy Peninsula the Third pivoted on the First U. S. Army, swinging on a wide outer arc toward Falaise, while its right elements raced along an even wider circumference in the sweep through Brittany. Then, in the advance to the German frontier, the Third rolled across central France to Metz, establishing a new record for the movement of mechanized forces, while the First advanced on a shorter line from the lower crossings of the Seine to Aachen. Again, in disengaging to regroup and hit Von Rundstedt's left in the Ardennes, the Third moved over a greater distance than did the First in closing on the German right. The same observation holds true during the drive to the Rhine, the Third fighting a battle of rapid maneuver in the Palatinate while the First pressed its stubborn frontal assault across the Roer. Finally, after crossing the Rhine, the Third struck southeastward and swept down the valley of the Danube into Czechoslovakia, while the First made a shorter march eastward toward the lower reaches of the River Elbe. In all, the Forward Echelon of Third Army Headquarters traveled 1,225 miles in making 19 moves from Normandy to its V-E Day destination.[105]

Measured in terms of American dead in their cemeteries, the First Army fought bloodier battles, burying 46,128, as compared to 27,047 for the Third. If, however, allowance is made for the fact that approximately half (21,705) of the First's battle casualties fell in Normandy between D Day and 1 August 1944, when the Third Army became operational, it appears that there was no great disparity during the second and third periods of the campaign in the casualty lists of these two armies. Again, during these periods, the First established 11 army cemeteries, while the Third opened 16—a difference of five in favor of the Third, and compensating somewhat for its greater distance of movement.

Lacking an accurate measurement for accomplishment in the recovery of remains, the only basis for comparing the total graves registration performance of the two armies rests on percentages of identification. On this score the palm goes to the Third, its percentage being 0.58 as compared to 1.6 of the First Army.[106]

If fluctuations in the rate of First Army identifications under differing tactical and logistical conditions

[102] See above, p. 112.

[103] Margraten Ms History, p. 20.

[104] A computation of this nature would involve unknowns who could not even be identified by units. Since this clue frequently led to identification, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to determine the number of unknown airborne troops in Margraten.

[105] After Action Report, Third U. S. Army, 1 August 1944–9 May 1945 (Hq TUSA, Regensburg, Germany, 15 May 1945) I, 412. Hereinafter cited as TUSA Rpt of Opns.

[106] The following table presents statistics on burials of American unknowns for the period 1 August 1944 to 8 May 1945 inclusive:

	Number of burials	Number of unknowns	Percent of unknowns
AGF Personnel	26,700	122	0.46
AAF Personnel	347	35	10.00
Total burials	27,047	157	0.58

(1) TUSA, Rpt of Opns, II, QM Sec, p. 30. (2) For percentage of First Army unknowns see above, Table 1, p. 112.

Digitized by Google

prove that rapidity of maneuver and dispersal of supporting graves registration units diminish the opportunity for effective identification, it would follow that the Third Army, given equality of performance in its application of techniques, should scarcely have been able to equal the identification score of First Army. The difference in score, then, would indicate that Third Army somehow managed to achieve superiority in the development of technical methods. But this obvious explanation encounters two difficulties, one being the fairly rapid interchange of corps and divisions between the various armies, the other the fact that First Army's four graves registration companies acquired considerable battlefield experience before the Third went into action with three untried companies—the 3042d, the 3043d, and the 609th.[107]

It follows that the underlying reason may be attributed to superiority in the application of techniques only insofar as a superior doctrine gave greater scope to the improvement of method.

The original Third Army graves registration plan was prepared in England and was included among the appendices of a document entitled "Outline of Procedure of G–1 in Preparation of an Amphibious Operation of the Army, 20 December 1943." [108] In substance and tone this document strongly emphasized the fact that graves registration is a coordinate enterprise, and can be successfully accomplished only by the combined efforts of Quartermaster Graves Registration Service units and organic collecting details. Where the First Army in Sub-Annex 7e, Burial and Graves Registration, to its Operation Plan "NEPTUNE," formally states that collection and evacuation of bodies is a command responsibility and implies that adequate provision will be made for execution of this responsibility in ETO SOP No. 26, Burials and Effects, the Third Army plan spells out the elements which will constitute an effective collecting point system. First, the Outline of Procedure specifies that "normally, sufficient Quartermaster Graves Registration Companies will be assigned to an Army so that one GR platoon can be attached to each Division or Sub Task Force," and that, "the Unit Burial Officer of the DIVISION will see that sections of the platoon are allocated to elements of the division as needed to insure functioning of the collecting Point System." Secondly, the outline states that since sections of the graves registration platoon are of insufficient strength to clear the battlefield of its dead, "it is required that, during the campaign, all necessary removals to the collecting point shall be made by organic collecting details," and that such details operating under supervision of the unit (company, battalion, regiment, etc.) burial officer, "will remove all dead within their area to predetermined collecting points." [109]

An emphatic tone pervades the whole document; it has the ring of command and avoids the vagaries of a synthetic directive built up by the industrious process of compiling related precedents. The plans of both armies, to be sure, had their origins in the graves registration literature of the Mediterranean. Where the First, as already indicated, borrowed heavily, from SOS NATOUSA Circular No. 46, 1 August 1943, the Third looked to sources which are not so readily recognized. There are two documents, however, which reveal a kinship when one looks for identity in expressions of purpose rather than similarities in phraseology. One is the Graves Registration Directive of HUSKY Operation Plan, as annexed to Administrative Order No. 1 on 15 June 1943, which not only stipulated in unmistakable terms the sphere of responsibility which would be assumed by organic graves registration teams, but prescribed the type of organization for such units. The other is the 3d Infantry Division (Fifth Army) Memorandum No. 82, Burial and Graves Registration, 6 December 1943, which was prepared in the field with a view toward incorporating in a standard operating procedure the lessons of Tunisia, Sicily and Salerno. Perhaps the attitude of Third Army headquarters is best revealed in its decision to set up a division in the office of the Army Quartermaster to administer graves registration matters. "The Graves Registration Division," it is stated, "was organized on 15 April. The decision to create a separate division . . . resulted from a study of the reports from other theaters, particularly North Africa and Sicily." [110]

In further comparison of First and Third Army graves registration plans, it should be noted that First Army considered the possibility of shifting the complete responsibility of evacuation and burial from divisions to the corps. Third Army, on the other hand, prescribed evacuation to an army cemetery as the nor-

[107] (1) The 609th completed its training at Fort Francis E. Warren, Wyo., in May 1944 and sailed for Liverpool. After spending approximately two months in England, this unit reached Transit Area B, France, on 7 August 1944. Orgn & Dir Sec, Opn Br, AGO. (2) According to report of the GR Division, TUSA, the 3042d and 3043d were assigned to the Army on 25 May. "Both organizations lacked experience. The personnel were sent to the Cambridge Military Cemetery on 1 June to gain practical experience until moved to the Marshalling Area." TUSA Rpt of Opns, II, QM Sec, p. 2. (3) Memo, Capt Fred W. Kuhn, Hq FWD ECH COMZ, for Troop Div COMZ, 28 Jul 44, sub: Availability of GR Companies. RAC, Littlejohn Collection, Bx 18, Pers.

[108] G–1, TUSA, Outline Plan Material, 1944, Third Army. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, L–279, Envelope 1.

[109] *Ibid.*

[110] TUSA, Rpt of Opns II, QM Sec, p. 2.

Digitized by Google

mal procedure and regarded the establishment of divisional cemeteries only as an exceptional and temporary expedient.

> The Division or Sub Task Force "Unit Burial Officer" is responsible through command channels for the planning, operation, and coordination of all Graves Registration functions within that unit and attached units. He will supervise the evacuations of all dead to an Army cemetery or if an Army cemetery is not accessible, he will establish a cemetery, make proper burials, and maintain necessary records.[111]

If Third Army planners foresaw with greater accuracy as early as December 1943 the ultimate solution of the burial problem in Europe, going all the way in this respect while First Army merely proposed a halfway measure, they also evinced a more realistic grasp of conditions that limit graves registration operations during the assault phase of an amphibious landing. An application of the Third Army plan would have avoided the paralysis of graves registration activity during the first two days on Omaha Beach.

> In landing operations (upon the presumption that penetration of enemy territory will be rapid and a beachhead of sufficient depth gained during the initial effort) the fallen are to be evacuated directly to the cemetery for burial. Should the presumption fail and sufficient depth not gained, then, although isolated and hasty burials are not normally desired such burials will be made with a view toward subsequent disinterment to a cemetery.[112]

None of the planning features embodied in the outline of procedure were applied by Third Army as an original element of the Allied Expeditionary Force. During May 1944, after the First Army Burial and Graves Registration Plan had been incorporated in Operations Plan NEPTUNE, Third Army modified its graves registration plan with a view, possibly, to accord with First Army planning trends. These modifications appeared in Circular No. 9 of 25 May 1944.[113] The emphasis formerly put on the coordinate responsibility of organic and Quartermaster graves registration units was preserved in the amended plan, it being specified that commanding officers of regiments, battalions and similar units "will designate a graves registration officer and, when necessary, organize a detail for the evacuation of the dead." It was also stipulated that "the responsibility of the unit graves registration officer ends when bodies together with necessary information concerning identity are delivered to high echelon graves registration personnel." In insisting that primary identification must be accomplished by organic personnel, Third Army gave renewed expression to a cardinal point of its doctrine. This requirement was reinforced by the statement that "if possible all dead should be identified before evacuation." The establishment of corps cemeteries was prescribed: "Corps will normally establish only one cemetery except when distance and transportation problems necessitate the establishment of additional ones." [114]

After landing on the Continent during July, Third Army became closely associated with the First in matters of supply and evacuation. Personnel of the two Third Army graves registration companies were temporarily placed in First Army cemeteries for orientation training.[115] On 30 July the Assistant Chief of Staff, G–4, submitted to Commanding General, Third Army, a revised General Plan for Supply and Evacuation which, in view of the change in operational plans, was intended to replace the one formulated during May in Great Britain.[116] While provisions for burial did not amend those prescribed in Circular No. 9, the General Plan of 30 July emphasized that uniformity of procedure in the establishment of corps cemeteries would be observed and that one graves registration company would, "depending upon units available at the time," be attached to each corps.[117]

On 1 August Third Army took over the First Army Cemetery at Blosville and evacuated its battle dead to this point until 8 May, when the installation was closed to burial. German dead were evacuated to Orglandes during the same period.[118] Then, on 7 August, one day before the closing of Blosville, St. James was established as a Third Army cemetery. Although it had been announced in Circular No. 9 of 25 May, and again in the General Plan (Revised) of 30 July, that each corps would operate its own cemetery, and the Third Army Graves Registration Division had accordingly planned "to operate one cemetery for each corps, under corps supervision," this abrupt departure from the twice-stated plan is justified on the ground that "it was discovered that this was not a workable plan." Furthermore, it is related, "cemeteries, from the start had been under Army supervision," and "except for very brief periods not more than one cemetery had been in operation at the same time." [119] Thus Third

[111] G–1 TUSA, Outline Plan Material 1944, Third Army. Hist Rec Sec, AGO. L–279, Envelope I.

[112] *Ibid.*

[113] Hq TUSA, Cir No. 9, Burial and Graves Registration, 25 May 1944, Hist Rec Sec, AGO, No. A3–720613 (SHAEF FILES), Graves Registration.

[114] *Ibid.*

[115] TUSA, Rpt of Opns, II QM Sec, p. 2.

[116] Memo, Col Walter J. Muller, ACofS, G–4, for CG, TUSA, 30 Jul 44, sub: General Plan of Supply and Evacuation—Third Army (Revised). Quoted in TUSA, Rpt of Opns, II, G–4 Sec, p. 9.

[117] *Ibid.*

[118] TUSA, Rpt of Opns, II, QM Sec, p. 4.

[119] *Ibid.*, p. 7. Actually, Blosville was operated during the first 8 days of August as an army cemetery. The Graves Registration Division does not state just when and to what extent the system of corps-operated cemeteries was tried and found wanting. It seems doubtful if any such effort was really made.

964114—52——9

Digitized by Google

Army preceded the First in successfully operating a single army cemetery to which bodies were evacuated from the battlefield.

It has been previously remarked, in discussing the First Army collecting point system, that no reliable method can be readily devised to measure the relative efficiency of two different armies in evacuation of the dead. While a careful computation of corrected battle casualties might disclose the possibility of establishing a hypothetical figure which could be accepted as the total of "recoverables" and, in turn, permit the calculation of percentages of unrecovered dead, the only available measure of accomplishment in the graves registration activity as a whole must necessarily rest on the percentage of unknowns. A low percentage here, of course, does not necessarily imply a high performance in evacuation. There are many exceptional cases which would disprove any such assumption. Nevertheless, creditable work in identification over an extended period is relative to efficiency in all other phases of the activity. On this basis a running comparison between First and Third Army identification achievement, as measured by percentages of unknowns, is, to say the least, highly suggestive.

Between D Day and 1 August 1944, when Third Army became operational, First Army's percentage of unknowns stood at 1.2. During the Battle of France (1 August–15 September 1944) its percentage increased to 2.2. The comparable figure for Third Army during August was 4.0.[120] No figure is given for September. Furthermore, total burials in Third Army cemeteries, as listed in a consolidated table which accompanies the Graves Registration Division's monthly reports, are those of V-E Day.[121] Hence, it is impossible to estimate accurately the number of bodies delivered at any given cemetery during a stated period of Third Army's administration. Nor can the number of identifications for the same period be determined. However, Third Army reports 1.0 percent of unknowns for October.[122] After omitting again in November to report its percentage of unknowns, the reported figures for December 1944 and January 1945 are 0.8 and 0.5, respectively. During the same period First Army's percentage averaged at 1.4. Unless the quality of Third Army's work in identification departed radically during September and November from that of the other three months, it would follow that the Third's achievement underwent steady improvement, despite various tactical and logistical conditions that tended adversely to affect performance in this activity, while the rate of improvement in First Army's achievement was just sufficient to balance the adverse consequences of changing conditions.

The extent to which distinctive methods of identification may have contributed to such favorable results is difficult to determine. Third Army reports indicate that the Graves Registration Division was dissatisfied with the high percentage of unknowns during August and September, stating that "the most difficult problems are those incident to identification and paper work." [123] The first step toward improvement of identification practices involved a change in evacuation procedures. Originally trailers conveyed remains from the battlefield to the Army cemetery. Only a brief pause was made at corps collecting points, where motive power was unhooked from cemetery-bound trailers and attached to empties returning from the cemetery to the front. Efficient as a method of transportation in that it avoided the trouble of breaking bulk in transit, the old system proved unsatisfactory from the standpoint of identification. "The bodies," it is related, "were later unloaded at the corps collecting points and identifications were carefully checked. This materially added to the labor involved, but it reduced the number unidentified to a low figure." [124] In other words, verification of identification was divorced from burial and associated with evacuation.

This same procedure, it will be noted, had been adopted by the VII Corps in Normandy, while institution of the same method at Fifth Army collecting points in Italy during July 1944 had contributed materially to improvement of identification.[125] It is also interesting to note in this same connection that the VIII Corps, which had been transferred from the First to the Third Army early in August, evacuated its dead through the corps collecting point without reloading and checking for identification. Despite the example set by this veteran corps, the Third Army Graves Registration Division was quick to realize that its method was faulty and lost no time in revising the system.

In the improvement of Third Army's evacuation system particular attention was given to the armored

[120] GR Div, TUSA, does not give the percentage of unknowns for August. However, it reports 4,291 burials which include 102 unknowns. On this basis there was 4.0 percent of unknown dead. TUSA, Rpt of Opns, II QM Sec, p. 4.

[121] *Ibid.*, p. 32. This table is entitled BURIALS IN CEMETERIES ESTABLISHED BY THIRD U. S. ARMY, 011200 B August 1944 to 082400 B May 1945. An explanatory note states: "It should be noted that in cases of discrepancy between figures in the above table and those presented in the monthly chapters the differences are the result of adjustment made after continued investigation and research in connection with the identification of unknowns."

[122] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[123] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

[124] *Ibid.*

[125] (1) *Ibid.* (2) As explained in the section on the Italian campaign, the Fifth Army collecting points were actually corps collecting points under Army supervision. See rpt, Lt Col W. J. Ryan, IV Corps GRO, to ACofS, IV Corps, 2 Aug 44, sub: Gr Reg Procedure. RAC, ORB, Fifth Army, IV Corps.

Digitized by Google

divisions. This aspect of the problem was not entirely new to the army command; nor is the emphasis put upon its fast-moving elements difficult to understand. According to the military historian Cole, the Third Army staff, as well as most of its combat formations, was by this time [September 1944] "experienced and battlewise." General Patton's immediate headquarters was largely composed of men who had served as his staff officers in Morocco and Sicily. "Many of them," adds this authority, "had come from the cavalry arm as had Patton, and were thoroughly imbued with cavalry traditions of speed and audacity." [126] This attitude is clearly reflected in a special report of the Assistant Graves Registration Officer, 6th Armored Division, who covers in some detail the evacuation methods that were developed during August–October, 1944.[127] Close study of his report reveals that success in conducting the whole graves registration activity by a division not only hinges on the performance of organic personnel at the battalion level but depends in large measure on close cooperation between the Graves Registration and Adjutant General's sections at division headquarters in the keeping of casualty and burial records.

When the 6th Armored Division first went into battle each battalion and separate task force had an appointed graves registration officer who was responsible for the evacuation of bodies to a division collecting point. Customarily termed the "rear collecting point," this point was located as a rule in the rear trains area, preferably within the truck park area. The plan worked well enough until the accelerated pace of operations in Brittany interposed a distance of nearly two hundred miles between the rear collecting point and the Army cemetery and, according to the assistant graves registration officer, created a situation in which "it was necessary to use double the trucks and men because of the time element involved in going and coming from the rear GR point to the cemetery and back." [128]

Operating at this time without an attached Quartermaster graves registration unit, the division was obliged to meet the excessive demands for transportation and find personnel who were capable of performing the work of primary identification. These difficulties were promptly resolved, the trains commanders providing trucks in sufficient numbers and G–1 assigning a specialist with experience in civil life as a mortician to the rear collecting point section. The latter arrangement not only solved the hitherto difficult problem of finding men who were willing to handle corpses in quest of identifying media, but saved time and avoided mischance by establishing a tentative identification before sending bodies on to the cemetery.[129]

Advantages of close liaison with the Adjutant General's Section strengthened a determination to identify as far as possible all bodies before evacuation and to forward name lists of identifications and unknowns to the Adjutant General's Section. The following procedure was followed.

> In order to overcome this difficulty we attempted to identify every man before he left the rear collecting point for the cemetery. Then the enlisted man in charge of the truck evacuating the bodies was instructed that upon arrival at the cemetery he was to get the name, rank, and army serial number of every man evacuated (then compare it with the information we obtained at the rear collecting point); and then stop by the administration center on the way back to the front lines and give to the division AG a list of dead taken back to the cemetery. Whenever it was impossible for our men to take the information back to the AG we passed it on [to] the division postal officer who made daily trips, or at least every other day, up to the front and back to the administration center. This plan was used all the way through the Brittany Peninsula up to Brest. It was only moderately successful and . . . difficulties were encountered.[130]

Briefly, the difficulties enumerated included an incomplete sense of responsibility on the part of battalion graves registration officers and a consequent want of effort in collecting bodies and clearing their areas after action. A characteristic of all unseasoned troops, and due, no doubt, to defects in the basic training of all arms, the correction of this fault was left to the process of becoming battlewise. Like the 45th Infantry Division in Sicily, the 6th Armored learned the hard way in France. "However," it is recorded, "by the time each and every battalion had been thru Brittany the realization of the job of evacuating promptly and as soon as possible had been accomplished." [131]

Other noted deficiencies were related to organizational defects. Rapidity of the advance and a wide deployment of numerous task forces, pushing forward simultaneously on as many as nine different roads, so stretched the distance between combat units and the rear collecting point that it became necessary to leave many bodies along the axis of advance or in villages,

[126] H. M. Cole, *The Lorraine Campaign*, in THE UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II (Washington, D. C.: 1950), p. 13.

[127] Rpt, Capt Harold F. Keller, Asst GRO, 6th Armored Div, 19 Jul 44–1 Nov 44, incl to AGF Rpt No. 496, Gr Reg, Col A. G. Wing, WD Observers Board, to Hq ETOUSA, 1 Jan 45.

[128] *Ibid.*

[129] "This," it is stated, "would take time and later on when we started to evacuate bodies a distance of 185–200 miles, and when GR officers were miles away from the AG Section, it would be considerable trouble for the division to determine whether to list a man as KIA or as MIA." *Ibid.*

[130] *Ibid.*

[131] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

with a request that local authorities defer interment pending arrival of an American graves registration detachment. Then, due to the scattered disposition of these bodies, and the fact that enemy forces frequently cut between the division trains and combat units, personnel of the rear collecting point section were unable to complete the job of collection. While it became apparent that the trains park area was not a logical location for the division collecting point, no definite decision as to a more appropriate location could be made before Lorient. Here, according to the assistant graves registration officer, the following plan of evacuation was devised.

> Since the units were not moving forward in combat but were in a stationary position, it was very easy for the units to bring bodies back to the rear collecting point, in the division quartermaster subarea.
>
> The division GR section was made self-sustaining so that they could operate by themselves whenever necessary. Tentage, office equipment, and transportation was provided.
>
> Army provided a collecting point for us to turn over the bodies, and this was the biggest improvement of all. We were now able to identify bodies, evacuate them, and notify the division AG section all within a matter of a few hours. The administration center had moved within the same area of the division and our immediate contact with the AG was of utmost value.
>
> It was not difficult for the battalion GR officers to get the dead as most of them were killed in the units own areas and under cover of darkness could be recovered.
>
> The evacuation of the dead in front of Lorient was excellent and during this time the assistant division GR officer was able to go back over the Brittany peninsula and check on all of the men known to be KIA but whose bodies had not been found or removed to cemeteries. Out of some 74 cases all but three were found and disinterred. Only one man was unidentified and by process of elimination it was determined who this person might possibly be.[132]

Lessons learned during the Brittany and Lorient phases of the campaign were consulted when the 6th Armored Division was committed in the Nancy area. Each task force and combat command organized its own graves registration team and operated local collecting points at the advanced service park of the combat command. Bodies were evacuated through these points to the rear, or division collecting point, which was now located at some convenient spot on the main road of axis and supply. Two requirements determined the selection of this point. One was the availability of a building which would offer both shelter and concealment; the other was a position on the axis and so located with respect to the Army cemetery "that there was no unnecessary traveling back and forth on the same road with bodies."

[132] *Ibid.*

Reorganization of the collecting point system did not overlook the problem of identification. As a matter of fact, this was the primary purpose of reorganization; the advanced, or local, collecting point teams initiated identification, while personnel operating the rear point rechecked all identifications before evacuation to the rear. Again, improved liaison with the Adjutant General's Section accompanied these changes. A card record was maintained of every body passed through the collecting points and listed such items as name of the deceased, rank, army serial number, organization, place of death, date of evacuation, and place of burial. Then a daily report was compiled from such data and forwarded to the division G–1 officer and the Adjutant General's Section. G–1 also received a weekly report which gave the total number of bodies, American and German, evacuated during the week.[133]

Several useful lessons for future reference were embodied in the report under discussion, namely that: (1) bodies found on the battlefield should be dragged by rope a distance of two hundred feet as a precaution against booby traps; (2) bodies delivered at the division collecting point without identification tags or other certificates of identity should be held until such certification is procured; (3) in keeping with the rule that "the more times the bodies change hands the less chance there is for identity," every effort should be made to establish identity on the battlefield; (4) whenever it becomes impossible to find identification tags among remains in a burnt out tank information as to the name, number and type of vehicle, names of the crew members, location and date of the action, together with additional data concerning the known or probable fate of crew members, should be forwarded to the Graves Registration Section of the division, which in cooperation with G–1 and the Adjutant General's Section may determine identification by the process of elimination.

The assistant graves registration officer terminates his report with a confident expression of belief that the 6th Armored Division had learned the business of caring for its dead.

> In conclusion as of this date [6 November 1944] the division GR Section has had less difficulty in evacuation of the dead than any previous time. The battalion GR Officers are doing a much better job and by getting assistance from army the work had become much easier. As of 1 November, Army has forwarded a five man team to take the bodies back to the cemetery and to establish identity of each individual. They also have their transportation which means one or two trucks the division furnished can now be used for other purposes.[134]

[133] *Ibid.* Presumably Allied dead were shown as well, although the report omits mention of this category.

[134] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

Similar developments took place in other Third Army divisions during the same period. As stated by the Army Graves Registration Division in its November report, "The localizing of collecting points simplified identification processes and proved to be much more efficient than the previous system." [135] While the scheme of localization had something of the appearance of a shift back to the divisional basis insofar as evacuation was concerned, the verification of identification was moved forward from the corps collecting point to one established for the purpose of operating with the division. Moreover, these new divisional points were manned by army graves registration personnel who worked in conjunction with the division graves registration officer. Finally, all such points within a corps area were coordinated by the corps graves registration officer. Then 12 teams, each consisting of three men, a driver, and a weapons carrier, were placed in a central pool at the cemetery for emergency assistance wherever needed.[136] Actually, identification was associated with the process of evacuation in divisional areas and accomplished as far as possible with the aid of attached army graves registration technicians. It is now apparent that the policy reflected in these changes guided the 6th Armored Division in carrying out the reforms which are described in greater detail by the assistant graves registration officer of this unit.

The Third Army did not restrict its efforts in improvement of identification to perfecting the evacuation system. The Graves Registration Division report for October 1944 states that "a number of specialists had, by this time, developed great skill in the identification of unknowns . . . [and] were justly proud of their accomplishments." [137] The report for November is somewhat more explicit as to the nature of new techniques, stating that recognition of charred bodies in burnt-out tanks was obtained from members of the unit involved after all pertinent data as to position of the bodies in the tank, the personal effects of members of the crew, and other circumstances of the action had been assembled, verified and reviewed.[138]

Third Army's most conspicuous achievement in the field of identification came in December when arrangements were made with the Army Signal Section to photograph the remains of unknown dead for purposes of personal recognition by former friends and associates. Success of the device encouraged great elaboration in the preparation of mutilated remains for giving recognizable pictures.[139] This method, however, was regarded as only one of many useful techniques in the establishment of positive identifications. Contending that certificates of personal recognition and, indeed, even identification tags had in many cases been misleading, the Third Army Graves Registration Officer noted in connection with the use of photographs that "no one basis of identification was found to be positive." [140] At the same time he admitted that "a combination of tags, laundry marks, paybook, identification cards, rings or bracelets, all in agreement, generally furnish the correct identity." Profile and full-face portraits of the unknown frequently added personal testimony to a chain of circumstantial evidence. While figures are not available to establish the efficacy of the photographic method as a single technique, the Third Army Graves Registration Officer offers the following evaluation.

> These pictures were readily recognized by former friends and identification was quickly and positively established. Morticians spent many hours reconstructing the face and removing battle scars to make remains recognizable before pictures were taken by Army Signal Corps photographers. The value of these pictures was definitely established by the large number of identifications made through their use. Morticians were found to be indispensable in the process of establishing identity. Their knowledge of the human body enabled them to make estimates of physical characteristics that would have been impossible for a layman. Through the use of materials such as cosmetic wax, needles, and instruments or field expedients, they prepared the bodies for pictures and secured clues which would have been overlooked by inexperienced personnel. They took great pride in their work and, despite advanced decomposition and sickening odors in many cases, recorded all possible clues upon which identity might be based.[141]

Perfection of Third Army's evacuation system and identification techniques did not entirely overcome the adverse effects of difficult tactical and logistical conditions. After establishing the photographic method in

[135] TUSA, Rpt of Opns, II, QM Sec, p. 11. This innovation was accompanied by efforts to control the problem of isolated burials. The GR Division reports: "a marked increase in the number of isolated burials had become apparent by 1 November . . . There was instituted . . . a comprehensive check list for the identification of bodies interred in isolated localities. Upon locating a body, graves registration personnel consulted the civil authorities of the nearest village and other local civilian and military personnel prior to disinterment . . . All available circumstances were noted—for example, whether the body was buried by the enemy or by civilians, on what date the burial occurred, who handled the personal effects, and what records were available. It was found by following this system that absence of identification tags or other positive identification was no barrier to definite identification in ninety-five percent of the cases." *Ibid.*

[136] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[137] *Ibid.*

[138] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[139] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[140] Report of the General Board, United States Forces, European Theater, Quartermaster Section, Study Number 107, p. 16. Hereinafter cited as Gen Brd Study No. 107-QRS.

[141] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Digitized by Google

December, the percentage of unknowns was reduced to 0.5 during January.[142] In February the figure increased to 1.0. This increase was attributed, in part, to the fact that approximately 20 percent of the deceased delivered to cemeteries were without identification tags. Then the melting snows in the Ardennes revealed many bodies in the vicinity of Bastogne, while Third Army sweeping teams recovered numerous unburied remains in the areas of Metz and Saarlautern.[143]

Although the total number of Americans interred during March fell short of the figure for February (3,585 as compared to 3,699) and included a considerable number of unknowns from the neighborhood of St. Vith, no percentage of unknowns for this month is given. The Graves Registration Division, nevertheless, continued to improve identification techniques, establishing the identity of 100 unknowns by 2 March and "by the end of the month the number identified had reached 143." [144]

After the Rhine crossing two army collecting points were established in order to control the transportation of bodies over increasingly long distances of haul to army cemeteries. This innovation appears to have been restricted to the shuttle service between division collecting points and the cemetery, and did not alter the procedure of evacuation through these points.[145]

During the final thrust down the valley of the Danube into Czechoslovakia the percentage of unknowns seems to have increased appreciably. A terse statement reveals the situation: "Burials for the month, which because of the speed of advance and lessening resistance were fewer than in the past 5 months of Third U. S. Army operations included 1,690 Americans of which 41 were unidentified." [146]

If these figures are complete. it would follow that the percentage of unknowns was 2.4—one that greatly exceeds the campaign average of 0.58 and is surpassed only by that of August 1944. It seems pertinent to note that the figure for May dropped to 0.4.[147] If, however, burial figures are taken from the four army cemeteries opened in Germany between 26 March and 19 April 1945, we have a total of 2,538 American interments, of which only 14 were unidentified. On this basis the April percentage of unknowns was 0.55. Certainly the wide discrepancy between total burials, as originally given in the monthly report and then as recorded in the consolidated table, would indicate that the first figure was incomplete and scarcely reliable as a basis of calculation.

The distinguishing features of Third Army graves registration achievement were the localization of collecting points and the photographic method of identification. The latter technique, as already indicated, proved to be a valuable aid to circumstantial evidence; reorganization of the collecting point system was nothing short of a revolution in graves registration doctrine. Indeed, this radical step was taken in recognition that the organization of the Quartermaster Graves Registration Service company and platoon was ill-adapted to the type of warfare waged between the landing beaches of Normandy and the River Elbe. Theoretically, the four-platoon company was designed to serve a corps of three divisions by attaching a platoon to each division and holding one in reserve. According to this theory, each platoon was equally competent to operate a division cemetery and perform all duties relating to evacuation and identification of the dead. But just as soon as the cluster of division cemeteries gave way to a single army cemetery, the graves registration platoon became unsuitable from the point of view of training and acquired experience for large-scale cemetery operations. Moreover, the same unit could not, without loss of its organizational integrity, conduct long-range evacuation with any required degree of success. Third Army's adaptation of an antiquated type of organization to new operational requirements was fully appreciated by the General Board of the European Theater in its critical study of the Graves Registration Service. The statement of the Graves Registration Officer, Third United States Army, that the Graves Registration platoon, as organized and used in the European Theater of operations, was inadequately trained, staffed and equipped to operate a cemetery was concurred in. The system used by Third United States Army of employing a small team from army graves registration personnel to operate a division collecting point and other small teams to evacuate from such points was believed sound and workable and better than employing an entire platoon for this work. "It stands to reason that where one cemetery is operated for an army, it will be a large cemetery and one that will require all graves registration personnel available." At least two companies, it was noted, were used to operate some of the large cemeteries established during the European campaign. "The use of a plan as adopted by Third United States Army tends not only to save personnel and equipment, but also to localize identification procedures and avoids excess handling of the bodies." [148]

[142] TUSA, Rpt of Opns, II, QM Sec, p. 18.
[143] *Ibid.*, p. 21.
[144] *Ibid.*, p. 24.
[145] *Ibid.*
[146] *Ibid.*, p. 27.
[147] (1) *Ibid.*, p. 30. (2) See above, footnote 121.
[148] Gen Bd Study No. 107—GRS, p. 12.

Digitized by Google

Seventh Army

The Seventh United States Army occupied a rather special position as an element of the Allied Expeditionary Force. Like the Fifth Army in Italy, the Seventh was a polyglot aggregation, including Americans, Poles, Frenchmen and warlike tribesmen from Morocco and Algeria. Hardened on the battlefields of Tunisia, Sicily and Italy, these veterans brought to their task in Continental Europe the habits and traditions of Mediterranean warfare. There was no problem of making good in the tough school of war the defects and oversights of theoretical training for combat against an imaginary foe. There was, nonetheless, a real problem—one of unlearning old ways and forgetting fixed attitudes that lose their usefulness in a new situation. Graves registration was a case in point. As originally organized for the assault phase of operation DRAGOON, the Seventh Army comprised the VI United States Corps and French Armee "B." The former element included a corps of infantry divisions—the 3d, 36th and 45th. Army Headquarters had at its disposal an airborne task force and various technical troops, including three platoons of the 46th GR Company.[149]

These graves registration platoons were attached in the conventional manner to divisions, and each one was expected to accomplish the evacuation of bodies through independent collecting point systems to a division cemetery. Three such cemeteries were established during the first few days of the operation—one at Cogolin by the 3d Division, another at Valauris by the 45th, and a third on the outskirts of Draguinan by the 36th.[150] After easy success overrunning an extensive lodgement area on the Cote d'Azur and seizing the great seaport of Marseilles, the Seventh Army struck northward up the valley of the Rhone. Enemy resistance was negligible; there were no encounters comparable to the savage actions fought by the First and Third armies in breaking out from the Normandy peninsula and harassing the German retreat at Falaise. Aside from momentary halts to disperse hostile rearguard formations, logistical limitations alone impeded the push to the Vosges foothills. For the first time these Mediterranean veterans experienced the difficulty of evacuating their dead from a front that outdistanced its cemeteries within the week of opening for burial.

In driving westward to maintain contact with French armored elements on the extreme left, the 3d Division opened a cemetery at Aix-en-Provence, 70 miles from Coglin. Another 3d Division cemetery was established 100 miles to the north at Montelimar. Then, during the continued northward movement, the 3d and 36th Divisions pooled their graves registration forces and opened a consolidated cemetery at Besancon, on the Doubs River. Landing on D plus 10, Company Headquarters and the 5th Platoon of the 46th GR Company moved up to Besancon and began operations at the two-division cemetery. Meantime, the 45th Division, on the right, selected Saint Juan, 20 miles east of Besancon, as the site for another cemetery. Then a sudden shift in the tactical center of gravity to the right detracted from the importance originally attached to Besancon and, at the same time, enhanced the value of Saint Juan as a consolidated burial place. Before any considerable development had taken place at Besancon, the 46th Company headquarters detachment and the 5th Platoon moved to Saint Juan, where preparations were made to develop a corps cemetery.[151]

It should be noted that the classic Mediterranean concept of graves registration prevailed until circumstances dictated the establishment of a corps cemetery. That is, the platoon operated largely as an independent and self-contained organization in supporting the division to which it was attached while company headquarters, together with a reserve platoon, supervised cemeterial operations and completion of burial records. Unlike the First and Third Armies, the Seventh did not accomplish in a single step the shift of complete responsibility for both evacuation and burial from the divisions to corps. Only after the distance from division to collecting points to Saint Juan had greatly exceeded 60 miles did VI Corps headquarters see the urgency of exercising some control over evacuation. Then a corps collecting point was centrally located with respect to the divisions and some 60 miles distant from Saint Juan. Established at Luxeuil, this point came into full operation on 27 September, approximately 1 month after the landing in southern France. Although regarded as a "shuttle point" by the 46th company commander, it served the additional purpose of checking identifications. At any rate, the development brought VI Corps graves registration to a state somewhat similar

[149] (1) Report of Operations of the Seventh United States Army in France and Germany, 1944–1945. (Heidelburg, Germany: Aloys Gräf, 1946), III, Annex A, D Day troop list. Hereinafter cited as Rpt of Opns, SUSA. (2) Opn plan. G–3, Allied Force Hq 15 Feb 44, sub: OPNANVIL. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, Microfilm Reel 246–D.

[150] (1) *Ibid.* (2) Opn Plan, Seventh Army, 8 Aug 44, sub: Opn ANVIL (TS), Annex 2a (Revised) and Annex 3. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, Microfilm Reel 246–D. (3) Opn Rpt, (Jnl), 7 Inf, 3d Div, 7–31 Aug 44. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, Vault. (4) A/A Rpt, Seventh Army, 15 Aug–31 Oct, Annex No. 256. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, L–1139 (110).

[151] (1) Rpts, Capt. M. J. De Korp, CO 46th GR Co to CG Seventh Army, 18 Sep 44–17 Oct 44, sub: Unit History. Monthly installments of this unit history are contained in Box No. 8 of the Littlejohn Collection, presently filed at RAC.

Digitized by Google

to that achieved by the VII Corps during the Battle of Normandy.[152]

Since the VI Corps included at this time all American combat elements, excepting the Airborne Task Force, of the Seventh Army, the problem of direct army control of burial and graves registration did not arise until a junction had been effected with the Third Army and steps were taken to organize the American and French elements of the Seventh into two separate army commands.

In anticipation of this event, the Sixth Army group had been activated on 1 August 1944 and on 15 September operational control of DRAGOON was, in principle, transferred from Allied Force Headquarters, NATOUSA, to Supreme Allied Headquarters at Versailles. Then, on 19 September, Armee "B" was redesignated the First French Army and passed to Sixth Army Group control.[153]

For the time being this reorganization reduced the Seventh Army to a single corps of three infantry divisions. As such it crossed the Moselle River and struck toward the Vosges mountain barrier, while the XV Corps, Third Army, relieved the French II Corps in order to permit the regroupment of all First French Army elements on the extreme right of the Allied line. On 29 September the XV Corps, with the attached 3041st GR Company, was assigned to the Seventh Army for operations.[154]

Meantime, the battlefront beyond the Moselle advanced beyond range of evacuation to Saint Juan. According to Capt. M. J. De Korp, commanding the 46th GR Company, "this headquarters moved [on 5 October] to Epinal, France, for the purpose of establishing an army cemetery in the vicinity thereof." [155] A small detachment was left behind to complete disinterments in the Besancon Cemetery and reburial at Saint Juan. The "shuttle point" at Luxeuil was closed and forward collecting points were instructed to evacuate bodies to Epinal. Four such points were in operation by 7 October and, "commencing on or about the 9th of the month, the 3041st QM GR Co. began evacuating bodies from the Luneville Sector to the cemetery at Epinal." [156]

It is now quite evident that an unforeseen combination of tactical and logistical circumstances brought an army cemetery into existence. There is also reason to believe that the VI Corps shuttle point was discontinued after closing of the one at Luxeuil and, unless the length of haul justified such an intermediate point, the method of direct evacuation from division collection points seems to have been preferred. At any rate, final verification of identification was done at the army cemetery. Captain De Korp describes this procedure.

> Throughout operations the important theme was to properly identify every American deceased brought into the cemetery. Laundry marks, shoe sizes, fingerprints, physical characteristics, precise location of death with regard to units operating in the area at the time, were but several of the numerous clues which were used to advantage in a determined and successful effort to identify those fallen in battle. By the end of the month 3,159 Americans and 1,499 enemy were interred by members of this Co. in the U. S. Military Cemetery at Epinal. Every American has been identified with the exception of one, and fingerprints of him have been taken.[157]

The conclusion that Epinal came into existence under stress of circumstances that had not been anticipated is supported by four obvious facts. First, the location was suitable only to the VI Corps. Secondly, the greater distance between Epinal and the XV Corps sector, together with the different experiences of the VI and XV Corps in graves registration matters, prevented the immediate adoption of a uniform system of evacuation. Having served with the Third Army, and familiar with its evacuation practices, the 3041st established a corps collecting point at Charmes and, after detailing parties aggregating 1 officer and 42 enlisted men to cemeterial operations at Epinal, broke up the remaining platoons into detachments of 5 to 11 each for the purpose of operating division collecting points.[158] Finally, the original assignment of one platoon to each VI Corps division continued in sharp contrast to the smaller detachments assigned to division collecting points within the XV Corps.

In other words, the VI Corps retained the platoon organization for purposes of evacuation and, at the same time, participated on a platoon basis in the oper-

---

[152] Insofar as evacuation was concerned, some difference should be noted. As described above, three VII Corps GR platoons were recalled from their attachment to divisions and concentrated at the corps cemetery with Hq, 603d Company, and the remaining platoon. Details of four men were then detached from the company to operate division collecting points. By this method collecting points for as many as seven divisions were successfully operated. VI Corps retained the scheme of attaching GR platoons to assault divisions until the increased number of divisions caused the breakup of platoons into small details in order to operate a greater number of collecting points.

[153] (1) Rpt of Opns, SUSA, I, 283, (2) *Ibid.*, p. 286.

[154] (1) SUSA, Rpt of Opns, III, order of Battle XV Corps, 29 Sep–15 May, p. 918. (2) 3041st QM GR Co, Company History. Dept Rec Br, AGO, Opns Rpts, AGO, QMCO–3041–0.1 (45937) M, Jan 45. Entry of 20 Sep 44 states: "Organization released from attachment to Third United States Army and XII Corps . . . Organization attached to Seventh Army and further attached to XV Corps per VO. Captain Sekowski, Headquarters XV Corps, Seventh United States Army." *Ibid.*

[155] Rpt, Capt M. J. De Korp, 46th GR Co. to Hist Sec, SUSA, 8 Nov 44, sub: 46th QM GR Co. Hist Rec Sec, AGO.

[156] *Ibid.*

[157] *Ibid.*

[158] 3041st QM GR Co, Company History, entries of 1, 2, and 30 Oct; 10, 21, and 22 Nov; and 4 Dec 44.

Digitized by Google

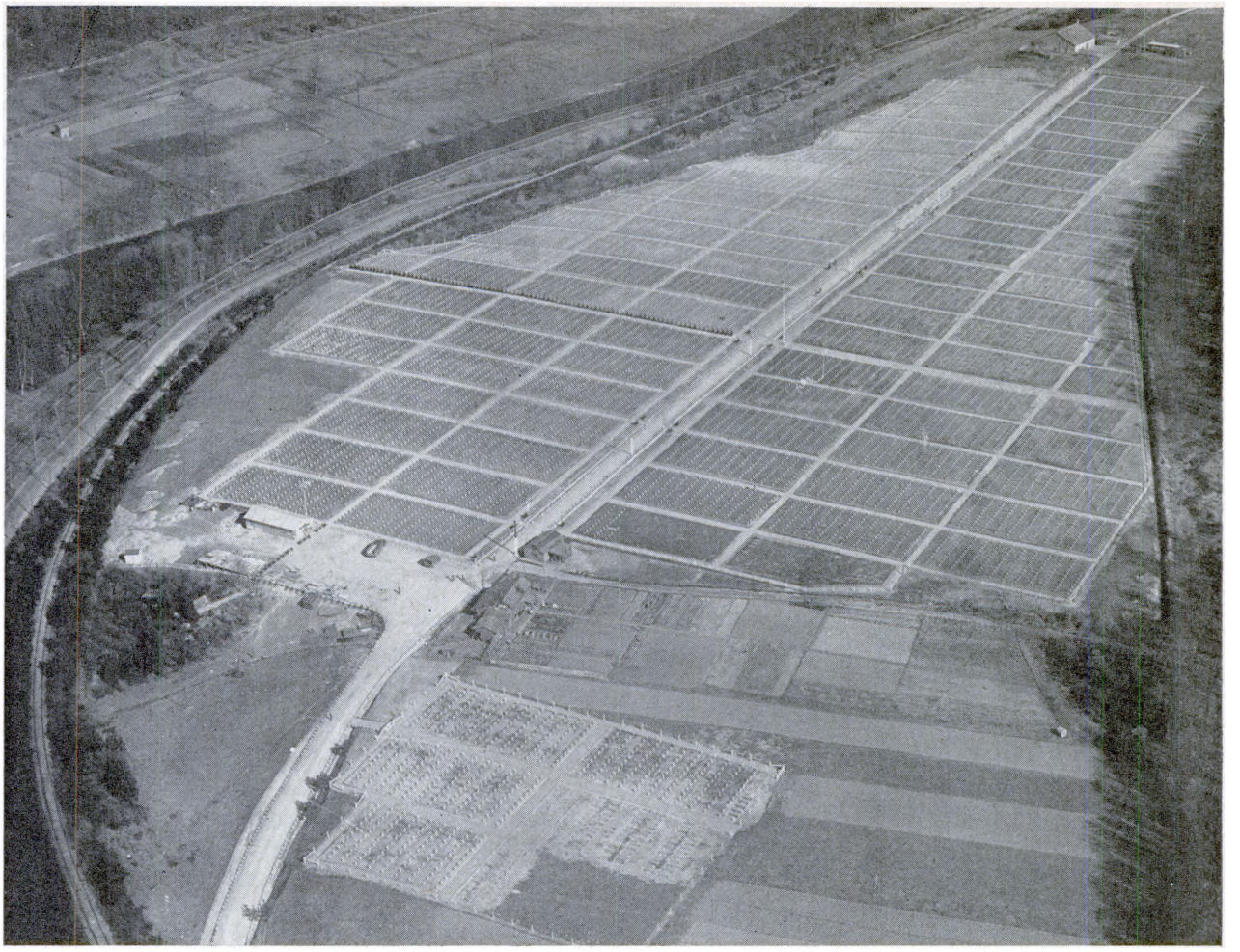


Figure 20.—U. S. Military Cemetery, Epinal, France, established as an army cemetery to which all elements of the Seventh Army evacuated their dead.

ation of an army cemetery. The XV Corps, however, followed an organizational policy somewhat similar to that of the Third Army in breaking up its platoons into small units and assigning these elements to evacuation, while reserving a relatively large detachment for cemeterial activities. Here, indeed, is a differentiation of graves registration organization within two corps of the Seventh Army as fundamental in nature as the differences presented by the First and Third Armies during October and November of 1944.

Although Epinal achieved the status of an army cemetery by 9 October, receiving bodies from both the VI and XV Corps, headquarters of the newly constituted Seventh Army had not as yet formally recognized the operational development as a matter of approved policy. In fact, practice had outdistanced policy. Steps were taken on 5 November to overcome the lag when Colonel Clyde Massey, the Army Quartermaster, recommended that "as early as possible the [GR] company should be consolidated under Army control and a common cemetery selected by Army GRS officer." Colonel Massey indorsed the scheme of attaching platoons to assault divisions, but was emphatic on the point that maintenance of an army cemetery "eliminates the many small division cemeteries, too often selected without proper reconnaissance." [159]

The Army Quartermaster actually gave his indorsement to opposing principles of organization. While he pointed to the economies effected by concentrating burials in a single army cemetery and, at the same time, foresaw the advantage of bringing graves registration units under a measure of army control "as soon as possible," he was reluctant to abandon completely the organizational scheme which had been associated with

[159] Ltr, Col. Clyde Massey, QMC, to G–4, SUSA, 5 Nov 44 sub: Lessons learned in Opn DRAGOON, 15 Aug to 15 Oct 44. Annex No. 256 to After Action Rpt, Seventh Army 15 Aug–15 Oct 1944. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, L 1139 (110).

964114—52——10

Digitized by Google

decentralized operations at the divisional level. Despite his advocacy of a basic revision of organizational concepts, he continued to regard the platoon as the operating unit of the Seventh Army Graves Registration Service and, therefore, recommended that the practice of attaching this unit to assault divisions should be continued.[160]

Reluctance to abandon the platoon system was, as a matter of fact, restricted to the veteran divisions from Sicily and Italy, where evacuation and burial had always been an affair of the division and its attached platoon.

Comprising the VI Corps, these divisions had only recently encountered the tactical and logistical conditions which were instrumental in centralizing burial and graves registration during the summer of 1944 in all armies of the European and Mediterranean Theaters. While accepting consolidated burial as a necessary adjustment to this new situation, the VI Corps preferred its conventional method of evacuation by platoons working under divisional control. On the other hand, the XV Corps began splitting up its platoons and assigning small detachments to a collecting point system which became identified with the corps sector rather than the individual divisions operating in that sector. Then the turn-over of divisions within the corps of a single army, together with the practice of transferring corps between armies of the Sixth and Twelfth Army Groups, arrested the development of individual corps characteristics and, quite to the contrary, brought all to a general level of uniformity. Again, the type corps of three divisions was, in many instances, increased to five and even six divisional units, while the original allotment of four graves registration companies, or 16 platoons, to the army, diminished by four to six platoons.[161] When, for instance, the VI Corps was reenforced by three divisions and the XV by four, the increased graves registration load was carried by eight platoons. Any attempt to understand the distinctive aspects of Seventh Army graves registration operations in Europe must first consider the fact that this element, in contrast to other United States armies of the Allied Expeditionary Force, entered the European campaign with a firm organization and battle-tested procedures. As already indicated, the adaptation of old organizational principles and tactical methods to a new situation was not so much a question of learning just how theory should be put into practice, but rather one of devising new principles and discarding procedures that had lost their utility. The process of associating Mediterranean and European divisions in the same corps organization contributed much in overcoming attitudes engendered by routine. Objective thinking did the rest.

After pushing up into the forest-clad defiles of the high Vosges, the Seventh Army encountered tactical conditions that had no counterpart in the European Theater of Operations and, indeed, fairly well reproduced those of the Winter Line in Italy. In other words, it experienced a reversal of the trends that brought the consolidated army cemetery into existence and that now urged the restoration of divisional or corps control over evacuation and burial as a quick solution to existing difficulties. Any such solution, however, would only have deferred and complicated the problem when the Seventh debouched on the Alsatian plain and formed in line for the Rhine crossing and pursuit across central Europe.

Actually, there was little freedom of choice in the adoption of alternatives. Just as the Fifth Army in Italy had been compelled by a reduction in the number of supporting graves registration platoons to adopt the centralized system,[162] so the Seventh in Europe was obliged to retain the advantages of this system after an increase in the Army's combat strength became disproportionate to the available number of graves registration units. Solution of the problem, then, was to be found in such a modification of centralized graves registration as would preserve its economies and, at the same time, function effectively in a campaign of mountain warfare. The measure of success attained in this endeavor denotes the Seventh Army's most conspicuous contribution to graves registration development in the European Theater.

Passage of the high Vosges involved turning movements though the Severin Pass on the north and the Belfort Gap or "Burgundian Gateway" of historic fame on the south. To the east, however, the narrow Rhine corridor could not be cleared by a junction of enveloping forces until enemy units guarding the intervening defiles of the mountains had been dislodged. Progress through the northern pass toward Strasbourg on the Rhine went at a relatively rapid rate; advance through the center of the mountain line was slow, the infantry slugging its way foot by foot with little air cover or armored support.[163]

[160] *Ibid.*

[161] See above, footnote 97. A study on the organization and operations of the Quartermaster Section, Ninth Army, dated 4 September 1945, observes that the allocation of four graves registration companies to an army meets only minimum requirements and should be maintained despite the fact that "this is in excess of the present allocation of three to any army."

[162] This occurred after the 46th GR Company was withdrawn from Italy. See section above on the Italian campaign.

[163] SUSA, Rpt of Opns, II, 389–91.

Digitized by Google

Epinal met all requirements of a consolidated army cemetery until the left took Strasbourg and, while reaching northward to cover its flank, sent a considerable force up the Rhine to effect a junction with elements of the First French Army, which had stormed through the Belfort Gap. By the end of November the Seventh Army on the left had passed beyond evacuation range of Epinal. Steps were therefore taken to open an army cemetery in the vicinity of Strasbourg.

"On the 24th and for a number of days thereafter," reports the commanding officer, 46th GR Company, "the C. O. this organization, made reconnaissance trips in the forward areas in search of a new and suitable cemetery site." [164] A satisfactory location having been found near Hochfelden, an Alsatian village some 15 miles northwest of Strasbourg, the headquarters detachment, 46th GR Company, proceeded from Epinal to Hochfelden and collecting point detachments, excepting those operated by the 4th Platoon, were instructed to evacuate bodies to the new cemetery, "commencing 4 Dec. 44." [165] Supporting the 36th Division, 4th Platoon personnel were directed "to continue evacuation to Epinal cemetery in view of proximity of that particular point to Epinal." [166] By 15 December 790 Americans, 11 allied and 386 enemy dead were interred at Hochfelden, while 3,609 American and 1,703 enemy dead rested at Epinal.[167]

The dual army cemetery system sufficed until 15 December, when Captain De Korp, 46th GR Company, received instructions "to select a new cemetery and to discontinue Hochfelden as soon as possible." After consideration of several sites, one was selected at Niederbroon and "several collecting points were notified to bring bodies to Niederbroon." Administrative and operating personnel, including the headquarters detachment, 46th Company, the 2d Platoon, 48th GR Co, and clerical members of the 46th together with six clerks from the 3041st GR Company, were moved from Hochfelden to Niederbroon. Burial commenced on 18 December and continued until 2 January 1945, by which date 421 American and 235 enemy dead had been interred.[168]

The composition of collecting point detachments during this period would indicate that the platoon was ceasing to serve as the unit of evacuation and that parties, similar to those detailed by the XV Corps in September 1944, were operating division collecting points. Monthly installments of the 46th GR Company history, it is true, habitually mentions 1st, 3d or 4th Platoon collecting points, thus creating the impression that single points were identified with a particular platoon. But inspection of the 46th Company's daily record reveals that details of varying strength from these platoons were operating single points and that there was considerable fluctuation in the location of points. The November record, for instance, states that the "3d platoon established an additional point at Baccarat; 4th platoon established an additional point at L'Aveline devant Bruyers," and that on 18 November "the 3d platoon collecting points at Baccarat and Rambervillers were turned over to members of the 3041st GR Co. for operation." [169]

The 3041st GR Company states, under "Record of Events" in its January 1945 historical report, the following:

> Organization operating Graves Registration Collecting Points for the 79th Infantry Division at Severne, France; 12th Armored Division at Marlenbeir, France; 44th Infantry Division at Herbitzheim, France; 100th Infantry Division at Domfessel, France; 103d Infantry Division at Severne, France; 28th Infantry Division at Ribeauville, France; also assisting the 46th Quartermaster Graves Registration Company in the operating and maintenance of a U. S. Cemetery at Epinal, France.[170]

Von Runstedt's offensive of December 1944 in the Ardennes was accompanied by local counter-actions in the south, one of which threatened the Niederbroon area. In accordance with a decision to close this cemetery, 46th Company headquarters detachment and technical personnel went back to Epinal, where plans were developed to expand its capacity to 13,525 graves.[171]

Epinal continued its active role as the principal army cemetery during February. By the end of the month a total of 11,582 bodies had been interred—7,151 American, 4,407 enemy and 24 Allied dead. Of the 7,151 American deceased, only 8 were unidentified, giving 0.18 as the percentage of unknowns.[172]

Due to the available form of Seventh Army original statistics, no attempt has been made to compare its graves registration achievement with that of other armies on a basis of percentages of unknowns. Inso-

---

[164] Rpt, Capt M. J. De Korp, CO 46th GR Co, to CG Seventh Army 12 Dec 44, sub: Unit History. RAC, Littlejohn Collection, Bx 8.

[165] (1) Rpt, Capt M. J. De Korp, to CG SUSA, 13 Jan 44, sub: Unit History. Dept Rec Br, AGO, QMCO 46-0.2 3145 QM. (2) Ms Historical sketch of Hochfelden U. S. Mil Cem. RAC, Littlejohn Collection, Box 8.

[166] *Ibid.*

[167] *Ibid.*

[168] *Ibid.*

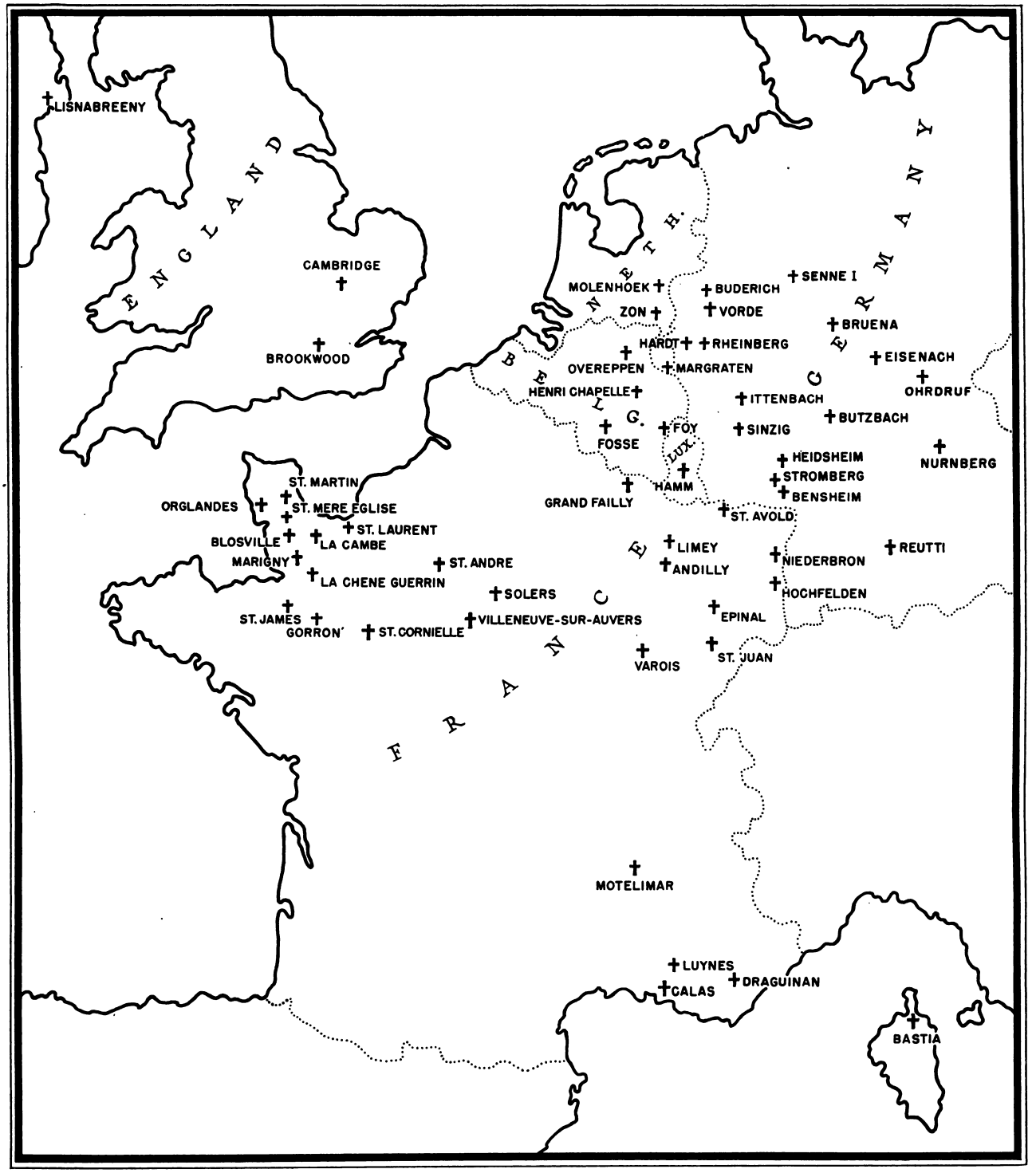
[169] (1) Rpt Capt M. J. De Korp, CO 46th GR Co, to CG Seventh Army. (2) Rpt, Capt M. J. De Korp, CO 46th GR Co, to Army QM, 15 Dec 44, sub: Daily Record. RAC, Littlejohn Collection, Bx 8.

[170] 3041st GR Co, Company His, entry of 30 Jan 44.

[171] Rpt, Capt M. J. De Korp, CO 46th GR Co, to CG Seventh Army, 13 Feb 44, sub: Unit History, RAC, Littlejohn Collection, Bx 8.

[172] Rpt, Capt M. J. De Korp, CO 46th GR Co, to CG Seventh Army, 10 Mar 44, sub: Unit History.

Digitized by Google



Map 2.—U. S. Military Cemeteries, European Theater of Operations.

far as occasional sampling of the percentage at Epinal can be accepted as a general indication of performance, it would appear that Seventh Army's work in identification was highly efficient.

The decision to employ Seventh Army troops in a thrust northward through the Siegfried Line toward the middle reaches of the Rhine required replacement of Epinal by a cemetery within the proposed operational area. After consideration of various locations, one at St. Avold was selected late in February. The 46th

Digitized by Google

Company then furnished a detachment to supervise preliminary developments at the new site.[173]

Difficulties in securing adequate labor retarded preparations for burial as the battle front went rapidly forward. Graves Registration headquarters moved from Epinal to St. Avold on 14 March and the cemetery was officially opened the following day. By 25 March, according to the 46th company commander, "the distance of evacuation of bodies from collecting points to the St. Avold Cemetery ranged from 80 to 100 miles." [174]

In establishing St. Avold the Seventh Army returned to the operation of a consolidated cemetery to which the dead of all combat units within the army sector were evacuated through divisional collecting points. The allocation of functions to supporting graves registration units is roughly indicated in a passage taken from the 46th Company historical report for March 1945.

> Successful operations during the month as in past months, was facilitated by the attachment for operations of additional GRS and service personnel. The 3041st QM GR Co., for example, maintained collecting points in support of operations and assisted in cemetery work and the preparation of clerical forms; the 606th QM GR Co. was assigned the duty of searching for and evacuating deceased from the Colmar and Haguenau Sectors and of maintaining two collecting points. Upon relief of that company from Seventh Army, at the end of the month, the 1st platoon 610th QM GR Co. took over the operation of these collecting points. Further search of the areas mentioned was discontinued by reason of the resulting shortage of GRS personnel. The 2d and 4th platoons, 48th QM GR Co., were attached for operational purposes and maintained collecting points during the month, and assisted in the preparation of clerical forms and cemetery maintenance. . . .
>
> * * * * *
>
> As of 31 March 1945 a total of 1560 Americans, 1128 enemy and 14 Allied had been interred in the U. S. Military Cemetery, St. Avold, France. Of the total American buried, six (6) are unidentified.[175]

There are no distinctive features of Seventh Army graves registration operations beyond the Rhine that offer instructive comparisons with those of the First, Third, or Ninth Armies. All accomplished the evacuation of bodies over distances greatly in excess of the theoretical maximum of the Graves Registration and Effects Division, ETO, in January 1944.[176] Bensheim, the first Seventh Army cemetery to be established in the trans-Rhine area, remained in operation until the distance of evacuation from the forward collecting points averaged 200 miles.[177]

The Seventh Army's contribution in developing an effective graves registration service is restricted to the modifications that were applied in its passage of the high Vosges. Here the rapid rate of movement on the left, and a relatively static situation at the center and on the right of the line of development, precluded continued use of Epinal as a consolidated army cemetery. At the same time, Epinal fulfilled the function of what may be described as the principal cemetery, receiving bodies from the static front, while Hochfelden was established as a sort of subsidiary or auxiliary cemetery to accommodate the moving flank. Niederbroon was then put in operation to meet the needs of elements that had pushed through to the Rhine corridor, and served this purpose until a temporary reversal of the tactical situation shifted the burden back on Epinal. For a brief period Epinal, Hochfelden and Niederbroon operated simultaneously as army cemeteries serving different sectors of the active front. In short, the consolidated graves registration system under army control was modified only to the extent that a sort of subsidiary army cemetery was established and operated whenever a large element of the deployed line advanced beyond evacuation range of the principal cemetery.

In the last analysis, this adjustment preserved many of the economies which would have been lost by a return to divisional control over burial and cemeterial operations. Given a limited number of Quartermaster graves registration units, a less economical method of employing these units would necessarily have imposed a heavier burden on organic details and, to this extent, have diminished the combat effectiveness of small units. Combat potential was also conserved by avoidance of a return to the system of corps cemeteries. Such a course would have saddled the corps headquarters with administrative responsibilities which are incompatible with its primary mission of giving tactical direction to divisional elements.

---

[173] *Ibid.*

[174] Rpt, Capt M. J. De Korp, CO 46 GR Co, to CG Seventh Army, 15 Apr 44, sub: Unit History.

[175] *Ibid.*

[176] Memo, Chief, Instl Br for Chief, Plans and Trng Div, OCQM, ETO, 10 Jan 44, sub: Gr Reg Plan for Continental Opns. RAC, Littlejohn Collection, Box 7–A.

[177] Rpt, Capt M. J. De Korp, CO 46th GR Co, to CG Seventh Army, 6 May 45, sub: Unit History.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII

Graves Registration in the Later Pacific Campaigns

The Central Pacific

The Gilbert Islands

During the grand campaign that swept the Pacific Ocean from Midway and Australia to the Inland Sea of Japan, many orthodox concepts of land warfare, to say nothing of the classic doctrine of the fleet in being, went into the discard. Conservative experts were startled by such innovations; a school of radical theorists clamored for a revolution in the conduct of hostilities.

These transitions, to be sure, came in recognition of new capabilities given land and sea armaments by recent developments in the design and adaptation of many mechanized facilities for military purposes. Although hitting power both in offense and defense was greatly enhanced, the complex nature of these new instruments required a far wider distribution of bases and more elaborate provisions for the maintenance and protection of communications by land and sea. The possibilities previously enjoyed by naval adversaries in concentrating their battle fleets for a single decisive encounter were considerably reduced. The Japanese, it is true, attempted such concentrations—once at Midway, again in the Philippine Sea off Saipan Island, and finally in the Gulf of Leyte. On each occasion, however, the new artillery of the air prohibited the gun power of rival fleets from determining, in the traditional and decisive manner, the issue of battle at sea.

This combination of strategic and tactical factors tended to transform naval warfare into a struggle for possession of supporting air and fleet bases. Amphibious task forces, which included capital ships with the gun power of their main batteries and carriers with their swarms of planes, became the spearheads of attack, reducing the enemy's positions and restricting his area of sea domination. The Japanese fleet perished in a battle of attrition attending the unsuccessful defense of its far-flung system of island bases.

In the Southwest Pacific Area, where a limited naval force was assigned to General MacArthur's command, the range of amphibious action was normally limited by the distance that land-based fighter planes and fighter-bombers could cover a forward movement. An accompanying carrier force might, as in the case of Hollandia, extend the range of attack. In the Central Pacific Area, which included under Admiral Nimitz's command the principal concentration of United States naval power and several army divisions, both the radius and intensity of action were enormously increased by use of heavy land-based bombers, carrier planes and the fleet gun power as components of an amphibious assault team. Working singly or in combination, these elements first isolated and battered the enemy's position, then subjected his defenses to the devastation of close-range bombardment and, finally, supported landing groups composed of Marine and Army units.

Prior commitments to the European and Mediterranean areas, together with the diversion of available forces in the Central and South Pacific commands during 1942 to the drive toward Rabaul, delayed until late in 1943 the accumulation of power for sustained offensive action against supporting points of Japanese naval strength in the Central Pacific. But as this flow of reinforcements grew in volume, attention turned to the Gilbert and Marshall Islands, two groups of atolls straddling the Equator and flanking the direct sea route from Oahu to territories marked for occupation in New Guinea and the Bismarck Archipelago. Since their seizure by the Japanese in 1942, it had been considered that dislodgement of the enemy was not only a preliminary step to the conquest of the Central Pacific, but one which would lend assistance to operations in the South and Southwest Pacific theaters.[1]

Coldly calculated on the basis of striking with such power as to win immediate success, the planning for operation GALVANIC, occupation of the Gilberts,

[1] The Army Air Forces in World War II, Vol. IV, *Guadalcanal to Saipan*, pp. 134–35, 284, 290–293.

Digitized by Google

avoided much of the haste and improvisation that had characterized preparations for the thrust at Guadalcanal. Nevertheless, graves registration presented something of an exception.

After detailed study of logistical requirements, steps were taken to organize a detachment of 5 officers and 159 men capable of handling all special Quartermaster services except graves registration. Since there were no graves registration companies in the Central Pacific Area, or any personnel under the jurisdiction of the Area Quartermaster trained in this activity, "personnel were selected from the 27th Infantry Division to form a Graves Registration Detachment." In August 1943 a Task Force School was established to present courses ranging from combat loading of supplies aboard ship, to servicing troops in the field. According to report, "a total of 59 officers and 40 key enlisted men were thus given instruction in the basic technique and fundamental principles involved in the operation of Quartermaster services peculiar to task forces in the Central Pacific." [2]

The graves registration detachment underwent a 2-week course of introductory instruction at the Army Morgue in Honolulu, including "a study of pertinent forms, standard plot plan for temporary cemeteries, manuals, regulations and circulars; fingerprinting of deceased military personnel; attending military funerals . . ." This introductory phase was supplemented by exercises designed to relate theory and practice. To this end, "the 27th Division Graves Registration officer, in cooperation with the Theater Graves Registration Officer, formulated specific plans for further training of men and the actual operation of the detachment." [3]

In view of the fact that unit training for Quartermaster Graves Registration Service companies was still in its infancy in the Zone of the Interior, only six companies having completed the comprehensive course originally set up in March 1943 by the end of this year,[4] it seems doubtful that any great loss was suffered in the Central Pacific for want of a regularly constituted graves registration company. Two important considerations differentiate this situation from the one originally faced in the South Pacific during August of the previous year. The Gilbert Islands campaign was planned as an all-out offensive operation, with ample allowance for a heavy preponderance of striking power. Furthermore, the graves registration detachment was organized and trained in anticipation of the event, rather than after the commitment of combat forces, as on Guadalcanal, to a desperate counteroffensive campaign.

Planning for control of burial and graves registration during the assault phase of GALVANIC was directed to using most effectively the available organization under conditions imposed by the tactical situation and terrain features. Indeed, the influence of terrain was a dominating factor; the flat surface of tiny midocean atolls replaced the rugged topography found in New Guinea and the Solomons. Firm open ground with occasional palm groves and other fruit-bearing trees presented few of the obstacles to movement that were encountered in the fetid jungles and forbidding mountain ranges of Melanesia. In contrast, however, was the congestion of numbers and tremendous concentration of firepower within a restricted space. The death toll would be taken in a few hours of furious combat that determined the issue of the campaign. Then the victor must settle down amid the wreckage wrought by battle. Any indifference toward prompt removal of the dead, friend and foe alike, would be hazardous to health. Where formerly the price of victory had precluded adequate provision for care of the dead, now the menace of disease to a victorious force determined the sort of graves registration program which should be addressed to this situation.

Collection and evacuation of remains was planned with a view to expediting recovery and, at the same time, avoiding serious distraction from combat. The commanding officer in each front line battalion would designate a "Graves Registration Station," or collecting point, which was not to be located in the vicinity of medical installations, and to which all deceased personnel would be evacuated.[5]

Two steps were specified in the movement of bodies from place of death to the station. First, company aid men would direct combat personnel and members

[2] (1) History of Quartermaster Operations, U. S. Army Forces, Middle Pacific, During the War with Japan (App to Historical Subsection, G-2 HUSAFMIDPAC, History United States Army Forces Middle Pacific and Predecessor Commands), pp. 105–106, 109–110. In O/C Mil His. Hereinafter cited as Hist of QM Opns, USAF, MIDPAC. (2) USAFCPA, Office of CG (Richardson), Report of Participation of U. S. Army Forces in the Central Pacific Area in GALVANIC Operation, 17 Jun 1944. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, P & O File Drawer 1235: 29.

[3] (1) *Ibid*, p. 110. (2) Rpt, Hq, USAFCPA, 17 Jun 44, sub: Participation of United States Army Forces in the Central Pacific Area in GALVANIC Operation. RAC, USAF POA (folder, Participation of USAF in GALVANIC Opn).

[4] (1) Unit training of QMGR Companies under provisions of MID 10-3, 1943 was initiated on 26 Apr 1943 when the 604th GR Company was activated at Vancouver Barracks Unit Training Center. See Rpt, Mil Tng Div OQMG, n. d. sub: The Training of Units, Par I, 1 Jul 39 to 1 Dec 44, Vancouver Section, pp. 18–20. After completing its training at Vancouver, the 604th was sent to the Central Pacific, arriving just before the task force embarked for the Marshall Islands assault. Hist of QM Opns, USAF, MIDPAC, p. 124. (2) Cf. Chapter II, above, footnote 13.

[5] Adm O No. 11, 27th Div, 26 Oct 43. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, P & O File Drawer 1235: 30.

Digitized by Google

of the 105th Infantry Band in moving bodies to a nearby trail. Then labor troops, if available, or members of a unit held in reserve would complete the transfer of bodies from front line sectors to designated graves registration stations. Removal of remains from these stations to the established cemetery, as well as burial in the cemetery, was to be accomplished by details working under the supervision of graves registration service personnel. Responsibility for the marking and registration of graves within the established cemetery, together with the registration of isolated burials, was to be an exclusive responsibility of the provisional graves registration service.[6]

Assuming that these somewhat indefinite arrangements for evacuation during the assault phase might prove ineffective, precise measures were prescribed for emergency burials on the battlefield. This practice, it was stated, would be admissible "when the removal of bodies to Graves Registration Stations is not feasible." In such cases, the graves were to be distinctly marked and the procedure of one identification tag buried with the remains and the other fastened to the grave marker would be observed. If a tag should be missing, the information as to name, grade and serial number was to be scratched on a mess kit cover, while the one found would remain with the body. In the absence of both tags, an effort would be made to identify the body. Failure in identification required that "any pertinent data which might be a guide to identification will be placed in an empty canteen and buried with the remains," and that "such action will be marked on the grave marker." The exact location of all battlefield graves was to be recorded on a sketch, copies of which would be furnished by the unit commander to the division graves registration officer. It was emphasized that these graves "will be kept well off established trails in order to prevent their obliteration by road-building equipment."[7]

The unit commander's responsibility regarding battlefield burials was apparently limited to the interment of known dead. A provision of the graves registration plan stipulated: "No one but qualified Graves Registration Service personnel will inter (bury) unknown, or unidentifiable dead. All cases involving the disposition of 'unknown dead' will be reported to the Division Graves Registration Officer for action." At the same time, a measure of responsibility devolved upon unit commanders for recovery and disposition of personal effects. They were instructed to receive and inventory all personal effects found on those killed in action. The effects of each individual were then to be "wrapped in a handkerchief or placed in a sock" and forwarded to the officer in charge of the Graves Registration Service. A receipted copy would be returned to the unit commander. The effects of those who died under care of the Medical Department were to be handled by officers of that department.[8]

The graves registration plan for GALVANIC disclosed two important flaws in execution. The number of labor troops assigned to assist graves registration details was insufficient. A critique of the operation estimated that a minimum of 80 men should have been provided to do the job within the time dictated by requirements of the tactical situation. Progress in the collection and evacuation of remains did not meet expectations. The Graves Registration Service detail which accompanied the garrison force was, upon landing at Makin, "charged with the collecting, preparing and burying of dead." It is reported in this connection that the Tropic heat and swarms of insects hastened the decomposition of bodies, thus requiring burial in the interests of both health and morale with greater promptitude than the organization devised for this purpose was able to accomplish.[9]

An even more serious problem from the viewpoint of health was encountered in the disposition of enemy dead. Here, as in the Solomons and later in the Admiralty Islands, this activity did not become a concern of the Graves Registration Service, at least in the technical sense of affording equal treatment to remains of friend and foe alike. An assistant G–4 of the division took over the grisly chore and directed in its performance 165th Infantry bandsmen, together with a labor force of some 50 men.[10]

Recommendations looking to corrective action were justified by the dominant considerations of small island warfare.

> Burial of the dead became a serious problem because of the difficulties connected with it in this terrain and the early decomposition of bodies. The seriousness of this problem was increased inasmuch as the troops had to live in the same area which several hours before was a battlefield.[11]

The Marshall Islands

Insofar as time permitted, graves registration planning for FLINTLOCK, the occupation of the Marshall Islands, was based on a close evaluation of experience

[6] *Ibid.*
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] *Ibid.*
[9] Rpt, Hq, USAF CPA, 17 Jun 44, sub: Participation of United States Army Forces in the Central Pacific Area in GALVANIC Operation, pp. 3–4.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 77.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 95.

Digitized by Google

in the Gilbert Islands. A vivid realization that increased speed in clearing remains from the battlefield must be achieved influenced three important decisions in training and operational planning. One called for an increase of personnel assigned to the graves registration function; another provided for burial at sea if interment proceedings on land did not move with requisite speed; the third looked to improved training methods which would stress greater technical proficiency in the preparation of burial reports and in the selection and plotting of cemetery sites.[12]

Since no Quartermaster Graves Registration Service companies were available for assignment to the assault and garrison forces, it again became necessary to organize a provisional service. One officer and 60 enlisted men with previous experience in graves registration work at Attu were selected from the 7th Infantry Division for a course of special training. An additional group comprising 1 commissioned officer and 300 enlisted men were furnished by the garrison force commander for instruction in the activity. Then 2 teams of 1 officer and 18 enlisted men each from the defense battalions underwent a course of specialized instruction at the Army Morgue in Honolulu. Shortly before departure of the assault force, the 604th GR Company arrived at Honolulu. Upon request of the assault force commander, two details of 1 officer and 18 men each were attached to the 7th Division, while 9 enlisted men reinforced the party attached to the 27th Division 106th RCT.[13]

In addition to the more liberal allotment of graves registration personnel, a solution of sodium arsenite was provided for spraying remains in order to disinfect putrefied flesh and arrest the germination of flies, as well as allaying nauseous odors.[14]

Neither technical improvements nor augmentation of supporting personnel offered a completely satisfactory solution to the problem of speedy evacuation and burial. Although two detachments from the 604th GR Company, together with a considerable number of especially trained combat personnel, were available to the 7th Division for this work, little progress was made in clearing bodies from the combat area on Kwajalein. Detachments could not be withdrawn from the attack. Then, due to some oversight in the supply of sandbags for weighting bodies, burial at sea was not used to any extent. This situation was in no way improved by an amended burial plan which provided that the task force cemetery would be located on Carlos Island, some distance from the scene of action, and that evacuation of remains would be accomplished by boat.[15]

The impasse was broken by transfer of responsibility for graves registration to the garrison force commander, who assumed control on D plus 2. The day following, graves registration teams of Defense Battalion No. 4 landed on Kwajalein and took over the transportation of bodies to Carlos Island.[16] Transfer and burial of remains was, according to report, conducted with appropriate honors, each body being wrapped in a blanket and covered with a United States flag during the movement. Chaplains held graveside ceremonies for all faiths. Interment reports "were forwarded directly to the office [Quartermaster?] of the Central Pacific Area." Only 14 of the dead buried at the Carlos Island cemetery were unknown. This total included the remains of 7 natives.[17]

Despite the fact that location of the task force cemetery on Carlos Island necessitated a movement of 9 miles over water, and thus contributed to delay in evacuation, this novel arrangement was justified on grounds that the cemeterial details were enabled to accomplish their work without interference. Furthermore, it is explained, "this site was selected because it had not been destroyed." [18]

By D plus 5 most American dead had been removed from the battle area and ferried to Carlos Island. After departure of the assault troops on D plus 6 provisional collecting teams were organized by the garrison force commander to assist the graves registration details which remained on Kwajalein to complete their mission. After D plus 6 efforts were concentrated on the removal and burial of some 4,000 Japanese dead. This "work was complicated by tons of explosives, debris and stench of badly decomposed bodies." [19]

Similar evacuation and burial procedures were followed at Eniwetok, where the 106th RCT retained responsibility for graves registration. This assault force was supported by a graves registration detail of

[12] Hist of QM Opns, USAF, MIDPAC, pp. 122–24.

[13] (1) *Ibid.*, pp. 124, 130–31. (2) Hq USAF POA, Participation in the Kwajalein and Eniwetok Operations by the United States Army Forces in the Central Pacific, Annex No. 1 Rpt (to CofS, USA) Lt Gen Robt. C. Richardson for CG USAFIPA, 9 Feb 44, sub: Visit to Marshall Islands. RAC USAF POA—FLINTLOCK Opn. Hereinafter cited as Richardson, Rpt on Marshall Is.

[14] (1) Hist of QM Opns USAF, MIDPAC, p. 137. (2) Field Orders and Rpt of Opns, 7th Inf Div, 6 Jan 44. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, P & O Files, Drawer 1235: 28.

[15] (1) *Ibid.* (2) Group Operation Order No. 1–44: Phase III, V Amphibious Corps, 5 Jan 44. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, P & O File Drawer 1231: 1–44. (3) Richardson, Rpt on Marshall Is.

[16] Rpt of Opns, 7th Inf Div, U. S. Army, 31 Jan–6 Feb 44, sub: Supply and Evacuation Rpt, Opn FLINTLOCK, Annex, "F." Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 307–4 (3485).

[17] (1) Hist of QM Opns, USAF, MIDPAC, p. 133. (2) Richardson, Rpt on Marshall Is, p. 6.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

[19] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

1 officer and 16 men together with 9 members of the 604th GR company. A temporary cemetery was established on Ladyslett Island, a tiny atoll 6 miles from the battle area. Marine Corps losses approximated those of army forces on Eniwetok and Marines assisted army teams in graves registration work. Only 6 unidentified bodies were interred in the island cemetery. The officer in charge of this operation received the Bronze Star in recognition of the creditable record made by his units.[20]

A critical evaluation of the graves registration performance in Kwajalein and Eniwetok held that the disposition of enemy dead was not accomplished with the dispatch originally intended, and that the troops assigned to this task were insufficient in strength and inadequately trained for the work. On Kwajalein, it was noted, burial parties located enemy dead and dragged them to the edge of the road, where they were picked up by trucks detailed for this purpose. Remains were sprayed with sodium arsenite to prevent germination of flies and arrest the nauseous odors that had retarded clearance operations in the Gilbert Islands. Little progress, it was noted, had been made in the removal of enemy dead prior to D plus 6, when the assault forces were withdrawn. The critique therefore concluded that the time required to do this work was "excessive" and "although completed, resulted in delay in the establishment of some defense installations." [21]

The fault found with an inadequate arrangement for removal of enemy dead can hardly be construed as a valid criticism of the work performed by provisional graves registration units in the Marshall Islands. Strictly speaking, disposition of enemy remains was not a function of the Graves Registration Service in any of the Pacific Ocean areas. The fact remains, nevertheless, that the time taken on Kwajalein in clearing the combat area did retard the establishment of defense installations. "Additional personnel," insisted General Richardson, "must be assigned, for the collecting and other necessary labor." He added: "a comprehensive CPA directive covering the subject of disposition of the dead has been issued." [22]

Conquest of the Marianas

Plans for operation FORAGER, conquest of the Marianas Archipelago, contemplated attack on an enemy entrenched some 3,500 miles from the main American base at Oahu and within comparatively close supporting distance of his battle fleet. The assault plan called for two landing forces totalling four Marine and two Army divisions. The Northern Force, composed of three divisions—the 2d and 4th Marine and the 27th Infantry—was to occupy Saipan and Tinian, while the Southern Force, aggregating about two Marine divisions, would open an attack on Guam 2 weeks after the initial landing at Saipan. The 77th Division was to be held in reserve at Oahu until D Day (15 June 1944), when it would sail for Guam. The allotment of Quartermaster Graves Registration Service proposed that one platoon of the 604th GR Company would be attached to the Saipan assault force and two platoons to the Saipan garrison force. No provision was made for attachment of a graves registration unit to the 77th Division.[23]

The Graves Registration Annex to Administrative Orders No. 2, as issued 9 May 1944 by Headquarters, 27th Infantry Division, prescribed procedures for the Saipan operation. In general, these followed provisions of General Orders No. 5, 17 January 1944, which included the Division "SOP for Burials and Graves Registration." After noting that one platoon of the 604th GR Company had been attached to the division for this operation and that sections for the present had been attached to each regimental combat team, it was stated that "every effort will be made to minimize the number of cemeteries established." [24]

Regimental cemeteries were to be established only in the event that RCTs should land on separate beaches. If, however, two RCTs landed on adjoining beaches, G–1 would select the site for a consolidated division cemetery. In such circumstances the graves registration sections were to be relieved from their attachment to RCTs and, after consolidation under the platoon commander, would operate the division cemetery. Collection and evacuation of bodies continued to be a function of tactical commanders, the annex stating: "responsibility of companies, battalions and regiments to evacuate dead to the Division Cemetery as set forth in Section III, General Orders No. 5, will remain." [25]

Several innovations appear in the annex. One was intended to simplify the method of recovering personal

[20] (1) Hist of QM Opns, USAF, MDPAC, p. 139. (2) Richardson, Rpt on Marshall Is, p. 6.

[21] (1) *Ibid.* (2) Rpt of Opns, 7th Inf Div, U. S. Army, 31 Jan-6 Feb 44, sub: Supply and Evacuation Rpt, Opn FLINTLOCK. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 307–4 (3485).

[22] Richardson, Rpt on Marshall Is., p. 7. The directive mentioned here was published as USAF, CPA Circular No. 93, 5 June 1944. See below, Conquest of the Marianas.

[23] (1) Hist of QM Opns, USAF, MIDPAC, pp. 145–147, 152. (2) Annex 2 to Adm O. No. 2, 9 May 44, in Report, 27th Div G–4, 26 Jul 44, sub: Report of the Supply and Evacuation Phase of the Saipan Operation. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, P & O File Drawer 1232: G–4.

[24] *Ibid.* (2) FO No. 7, 27th Div, 16 May 44, sub: Opn FORAGER. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, P & O File, Drawer 1232: FO.

[25] Annex 2 to Adm O No 2, 9 May 44, in rpt, 27th Div G–4, 26 Jul 44.

Digitized by Google

effects by relieving unit commanders of direct responsibility in this complicated matter. Henceforth, each RCT commander was to designate a summary court officer who would "function as personal effects officer and . . . set up to receive personal effects in the vicinity of the cemetery serving his RCT as soon as established." Personal effects and identification tags were to be removed from American bodies only by graves registration personnel. Procedures were established whereby bulldozers might be obtained through S–1 of RCTs for clearing cemetery sites. Provisions for burial of enemy dead were based on the assumption that this problem was not a concern of attached graves registration units. The annex states specifically that the activity "is a responsibility of commanders within their zones of action," and that "personnel of the 604th Graves Registration Company may *not* be utilized for this purpose." [26]

Spraying of remains with sodium arsenite was to be assigned to an RCT sanitary detail "consisting of 1 MAC officer, and 10 specially trained enlisted men . . . each selected from the Medical Collecting Company." According to the stated procedure, each collecting company sanitary officer was to report upon landing to the RCT cemetery where bodies would, under normal conditions, be sprayed "after identification and preparation for burial had been completed by graves registration personnel." Use of the sanitary detail for other purposes would be controlled by the RCT surgeon. Departures from the procedure were covered by reference to General Orders No. 5 and amendment stating: "If it is necessary to spray an isolated group of bodies, they will be suitably marked as having been treated with sodium arsenite, as will any foodstuffs sprayed by these details." [27]

The Quartermaster Annex to G–4's report on supply and evacuation phases of FORAGER aptly summarizes the graves registration plan.

> The plan for Graves Registration called for the attachment of a Graves Registration Platoon to the Division. This platoon was divided into RCT's in the event they had to operate separately and were also prepared to serve the division as a whole. In addition to this, each Infantry Regiment had trained personnel in graves registration service; trained by this office from experience gained in the Makin and Eniwetok operations.[28]

The general concepts of graves registration planning for FORAGER stood the test of action without serious dislocation. While unforeseen emergencies and a certain amount of muddling which seems inevitable during the preliminary stages of an assault landing threatened at times to bring matters to the breaking point, the planned operation was, on the whole, successfully executed. With consolidation on D plus 2 (17 June 1944) of a lodgement on the west coast of Saipan, G–1 selected a site for the 27th Division cemetery. Headquarters of the 2d platoon, 604th GR Company, and an available section then attempted to clear the ground and prepare a plot for the first burials.[29]

Pending completion of these preparations the 105th and 106th RCTs retained their attached graves registration sections. Due, however, to some mishap in unloading schedules, graves registration personnel and equipment were not put ashore in the proper sequence. Then arrangements by which bulldozers should have been furnished by the shore engineers broke down. Requests that the RCTs supply transportation went unanswered. Meantime, the 105th and 165th Regiments acted under instructions to evacuate their dead to the 4th Marine Division Cemetery.[30]

Exaggerated reports of bodies awaiting burial at the 27th Division cemetery caused the Chief of Staff to direct that G–1 clear up the situation. This action had the desired effect; two bulldozers rolled in, cleared the site and cut an initial trench, while graves registration supplies arrived in sufficient quantity to permit opening of the cemetery on D plus 4. Combat units were then instructed to discontinue use of the Marine cemetery and evacuate the dead to their own cemetery. Three days later the 105th and 165th RCTs received instructions to release their attached graves registration sections for service at the division cemetery. Acknowledgment by the 105th regimental commander disclosed that his supporting section was still aboard ship.[31]

Deficiencies in graves registration supplies caused additional aggravations. Discovery of several bales of white wool blankets among abandoned enemy stores bridged a gap in the flow of Quartermaster materials for wrapping the dead. The Christian Crosses and Stars of David shipped from Oahu, though adequate in quantity, were so poorly painted that their use without retouching would have presented an unsightly appearance. Since neither paint nor labor was available at the time, temporary grave markers were used during

[26] *Ibid.*
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] QM Annex 5 to rpt, 27th Div G–4, 26 Jul 44.

[29] G–1 Rpt, 27th Inf Div, 1944, sub: FORAGER Opn, p. 3. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, P & O Files Drawer 1232. Hereinafter cited as G–1 Rpt, 27th Div, FORAGER.
[30] (1) *Ibid.* (2) G–1 Journal, 27th Division, n. d., sub: FORAGER Opn, pp. 2–3. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, P & O File Drawer 1232. Hereinafter cited as G–1 Journal, 27th Div.
[31] (1) *Ibid.*, pp. 3–5. (2) G–1, Rpt, 27th Div, FORAGER.

Digitized by Google

the assault phase. Satisfactory progress, nevertheless, was made in the grim business of keeping pace with the death toll of battle. The cemetery opened on D plus 4 served the division throughout the campaign. A total of 1,033 bodies were interred at this site. Of these remains, 41 were Marines and nondivisional army troops. Forty-four remains of the 27th Division were buried in Marine Corps cemeteries.[32]

The experience in preliminary cemeterial construction indicated that two large bulldozers were normally required for clearing the ground and digging the first trench. Thereafter, the excavation of additional trenches, and filling in over remains, would keep one machine in constant operation.[33]

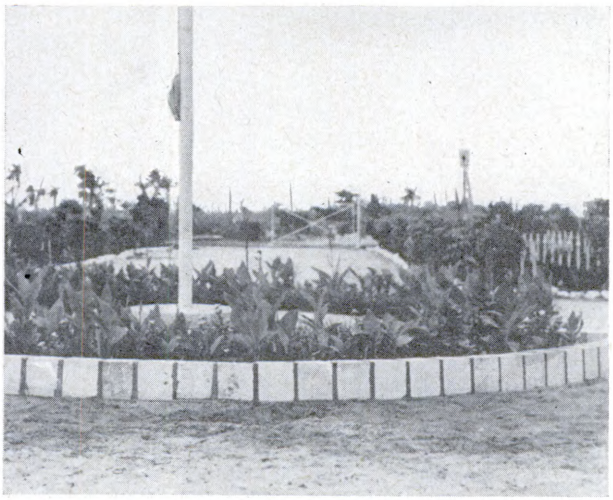


Figure 21.—U. S. Cemetery, 27th Division, Saipan, Mariana Islands.

No engineer troops were available during the assault phase for purposes of cemeterial beautification. Following active hostilities this project was assigned to the 134th Engineer Combat Battalion, an element of the shore party engineer group attached to the 27th Division. This unit, according to report, did an excellent job. "The site was graded, crosses were repainted and erected, a metal flagpole was procured, painted and erected in a concrete base in the cemetery, a white coral driveway laid out through the cemetery and the entire cemetery enclosed by a wire fence with white painted fence posts." [34]

Whatever the problems encountered and overcome in establishing a division cemetery, those relating to operation of the collecting point system were never satisfactorily solved. Shortcomings here were, in the main, attributed to a paucity of transportation. Standard operating procedure of the division called for evacuation by battalion to RCT collecting points and by regiments from RCT collecting points to the division cemetery.[35] Actually, the system was geared to the carrying capacity of available transportation; it worked well enough in a slow operation but sagged under the strain of rapid advances and heavy casualties. Insistence on the part of Division Headquarters that unit commanders give more attention to evacuation of the dead was expressed in a message of 23 June (D plus 7), stating: "All commanders are reminded that recovery of friendly dead from the zone of action . . . is a responsibility of RCT commands and commanding officers controlling rear areas. If there is insufficient transportation available to remove friendly dead, it will be requisitioned through G–4 in the normal manner. . . ." [36]

Evacuation of bodies by organic details broke down completely when the savage Japanese counterattack of 7 July left 406 American dead and countless Japanese remains within a square mile of the 105th RCT area. Concern for the preservation of morale required extraordinary measures.

> In this situation a company from a battalion of the attached engineer group was assigned the mission. Ten trucks shuttled between the battlefield and an LVT landing point, where the bodies were transferred to 30 amphibious tractors and carried by water to Yellow Beach 3, where the tractors come ashore and went directly to the cemetery. The difficulties of locating bodies among thousands of Japanese dead, of recovering bodies from shell holes which had filled with water, and the collection of bodies which had been badly shattered by mortar fire made it impossible to complete collection of these dead in less than 4½ days, notwithstanding the amount of personnel and transportation involved. This delay in evacuating our dead is believed to have had a depressing effect on the morale of troops in the area, and was the subject of adverse comment by individual Marines.[37]

This experience, no doubt, influenced the G–1 Section of the 27th Division in recommending that the graves registration officer should have sufficient personnel and transportation from a source other than combat troops at his disposal for evacuation of friendly dead directly from battalion areas, "and not leave the responsibility for securing labor and transportation in the hands of RCT commanders." [38]

[32] *Ibid.*
[33] *Ibid.*
[34] *Ibid.*

[35] The G–1 report states: "The method of evacuation of friendly dead was never performed to complete satisfaction, due to the paucity of transportation. The standing operating procedure for the division calls for evacuation by battalion to RCT collecting points, and by regiment from RCT collecting points to the division cemetery." *Ibid.*
[36] G–1 Journal, 27th Div., p. 7.
[37] G–1 Rpt, 27th Div., p. 4.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Digitized by Google

Here, indeed, is another variation of the endless conflict concerning a just division of labor between organic and attached personnel in meeting all requirements of collection, evacuation and burial of the dead. It goes without saying that the handling of mutilated remains, particularly those of comrades, has a demoralizing effect on combat troops and should, in the interests of maintaining combat efficiency, be held to a minimum. At the same time, supporting graves registration units cannot possibly be maintained at a strength which would provide for all such emergencies. Nor can large combat units hope to preserve a high state of morale under all conditions of war without endangering the battle fitness of a few. Sight of the dead is by no means the only depressive factor in war. The consciousness of fighting for a lost cause is, perhaps, the most damaging of all. As a matter of cold logic, the arithmetic of war calculates gains and losses in terms of human lives. Despite some evidence of lowered morale, the 105th survived as a battle-worthy regiment.

Sanitary considerations continued to govern procedures in the Marianas regarding burial of enemy dead. Assigned as a responsibility of RCT commanders and commanding officers of units controlling rear areas, the activity was conducted in a manner that seldom if ever involved attached graves registration personnel. Generally speaking, these dead were buried as quickly as possible on the battlefield. A total of 7,247 Japanese remains were interred by 27th Division units during the Saipan phase of FORAGER. This figure is described as "undoubtedly conservative" since it included only those officially counted and reported through S–1 channels after mass burial. Innumerable other Japanese, it is pointed out, "were entombed in caves by sealing the entrances with blasting charges, while others were buried individually when found in the vicinity of command posts and bivouac areas." The method of mass burial is briefly described.

> The maximum utilization was made of civilian internees, as many as 200 in a day being utilized for this purpose. The method followed generally was to dig a deep trench with a bulldozer, in which the Japanese bodies were laid and counted. The bodies were sprayed with sodium arsenite solution, and the trench filled by the bulldozer. A suitable marker was then placed on the surface of the ground, indicating the number of enemy dead buried at that point.[39]

If evacuation of bodies during critical phases of FORAGER invited some adverse comment, criticism concerning the organization set up for spraying sodium arsenite seems to have been unanimous. Spraying squads varying from four to six men were drawn from a pool furnished by the 102d Medical Battalion and operated under supervision of the medical director. Two squads were used to spray enemy dead, while a squad served continuously at the division cemetery. Here, according to report, the spray squad stood by until graves registration personnel completed the identification and prepared each body for burial. The actual working time of the spray squad was thus reduced to about 2 hours a day. The medical inspector objected to such waste of manpower, contending that sodium arsenite "could be carried by the burying detail or engineer unit supplying the bulldozer, and could be used when needed; rather than have four to six men and one officer stand by 6 out of 8 hours." [40]

Medical opinion generally condemned the diversion of personnel from collecting companies to an activity that required only a modicum of training—no more, in fact, than an enterprising salesman would offer a housewife in demonstrating the mechanical properties of his garbage-disposal unit. It was stoutly maintained that the work performed by sodium arsenite squads could very well be entrusted to musicians or other such folk who "can easily be trained for this duty and allow the trained officers and EM of collecting companies to work at their appointed duties." No doubt this reasoning had some force in emphasizing the thesis that men versed in methods of easing the lot of the wounded misapplied their talents while busied with the decontamination of dead bodies.

A recommendation from Collecting Company A stated the question in terms which foreshadowed a practical solution:

> The use of Medical Personnel for a sanitary detail is a waste of trained men. Besides this, the apparatus in use for that purpose is definitely unsuitable, dangerous and a waste of time. It is suggested that other men must be trained for this detail and that a vehicle with a 250-gal. tank and spray attachments be used for this purpose.[41]

As a matter of fact, such a scheme was under consideration when the assault force sailed for Saipan. Already mentioned by General Richardson in his report on the Marshall Islands, USAF CPA Circular No. 93, 5 June 1944, provided for the establishment of provisional field salvage units which would assist in evacuation and burial of remains during the assault phase and take over the job of spraying all bodies with sodium arsenite. Employment of this multipurpose unit in forward areas promised a threefold advantage. In the first place, medical collecting companies would be re-

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[40] *Ibid.*, Annex I, Par 3, Shore Activities.

[41] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

lieved of a duty which could not be reconciled with their primary function. Again, assistance in the removal of remains from the battlefield would be afforded combat units at a time when the tumult of battle incites an urge to pursue and kill. Finally, the salvage of equipment would, after abatement of the assault and disposal of the dead, proceed in its proper sequence, first priority having been given to bodies because a reverential attitude derived from primordial superstition and religious teachings assigns to human remains an importance that transcends any material value attached to reconditioned items of equipment.

In setting up this provisional service a solution was sought in the Central Pacific Area to one phase of the graves registration problem that had never been solved elsewhere with any degree of success. After various expedients had been tried in the theaters, a War Department proposal had taken the form of increasing the authorized establishment of the Quartermaster Graves Registration Service Company (T/O & E 10–297) and adding the function of battlefield collection. Yet, as discussed in connection with the Mediterranean and European theaters, anticipated difficulties in expanding a given number of operating units in the field without receiving a corresponding increase in personnel ceiling prevented any practical consideration of this proposal. The scheme outlined in Circular 93 had the virtue of utilizing limited service personnel in a borderline activity which could not very well claim the services of other categories, particularly combat troops, without doing violence to a basic principle of economy in personnel utilization. In effect, then, this circular has an important place in the policy papers of World War II graves registration.

In its practical bearing, the document clearly defined relationships between organic collecting and burial teams, on the one hand, and units of the attached services—graves registration and battlefield salvage collection—on the other. An introductory paragraph stated the following purpose:

> In order to insure proper disposition of American, Allied, civilian, and enemy dead in advanced areas, to insure prompt recovery of all salvageable material, and to insure that all necessary sanitary precautions are taken to make captured ground habitable, the following instructions are published.[42]

Unit commanders were instructed that, "except for troops actually engaged in the assault," combat personnel would remove all bodies to readily distinguishable collecting points near trails or roads. In the event of unavoidable hasty and isolated burials, precautions were to be taken in preparing and submitting at the earliest opportunity the necessary burial reports, together with identifying media and map locations of such graves. With a restricted assignment to combat troops and those phases of the activity which would be undertaken by provisional salvage units, Quartermaster Graves Registration Service personnel would confine itself to technical aspects, namely: (1) selection of temporary cemetery sites with concurrence of task force and other appropriate commanders; (2) reception and preparation of bodies for burial; (3) collection of personal effects and delivery to division or task force headquarters; (4) identification of unknowns by securing prints of all 10 fingers, recording laundry marks, construction of tooth charts (by dentists whenever available) and preservation of assembled identifying media. All such procedures, it was specified, would be conducted in strict compliance with Section IV (Identification and Burial of Deceased) of War Department Circular No. 79, 1943, and Section III (Identification of Unknowns) of War Department Circular No. 235, 1943.[43]

The "Provisional Field Salvage Unit" would, "as a first priority task after landing," undertake the following duties: (1) collection of all bodies from local collecting points, covering and transporting them to the proper sections in temporary cemeteries and guarding against looting and removal of identifying tags; (2) digging of graves; (3) spraying of remains with sodium arsenite; (4) filling in graves after burial ceremony and observing the requirement that 4 feet of earth or sand, together with a normal mound, covers each body; (5) sweeping conquered territory for unburied dead. After completing these allotted tasks, the provisional salvage unit would, pending arrival of the permanent garrison force, recover from combat and operational areas "all items of material, equipment and supplies of any type having any salvageable value." [44]

Authorization for the establishment of provisional field salvage units was supplemented in July by activation of the Provisional Graves Registration Company.[45] These two projects were but a minor phase of preparations which had been initiated "even before the troops were fully mounted for the Marianas operation" and which looked to invasion of the Palaus group and Leyte. Comprising the 7th and 96th Infantry Divisions, the XXIV Corps would seize Yap, while the III Amphibious

[42] USAF CPA Cir No. 93, 5 Jun 44, sub: Gr Reg Service and Supplementary Labor Units in Advanced Areas, Par 1. RAC, AGF, APO 961, Maui Dist. 314.6–A GR.

[43] *Ibid.*, Pars 2–3.

[44] *Ibid.*, Par. 3.

[45] Rpt, 1st Lt Edward H. Bell, CO, Prov GR Co, 31 Dec 44, sub: Hist of QM Gr Reg Co. RAC, AGF, APO 235, XXIV Corps GR.

Digitized by Google

Corps, to be composed of the 81st Infantry and the 1st Marine Divisions, would occupy Angaur and Peleliu.[46] Then conditions in the Central and Southwest Pacific Areas imposed burdens on their graves registration services that were peculiar to amphibious warfare and, according to standards applying elsewhere, might be described as abnormal. That is, graves registration units originally attached to some task force were generally left in support to relieving garrison troops and, in consequence, were seldom available when a new task force was mounted for another forward movement. In the course of several months, these units might be dispersed among islands dotting a thousand miles of ocean space. During the operations immediately preceding the Leyte campaign, detachments of the 601st GR Company, for example, were scattered from Hollandia to Morotai.[47]

Built around the cadre placed on detached service from the 604th GR Company, the Provisional Graves Registration Company was organized by four infantry lieutenants working under direction of a Quartermaster officer, 1st Lt. Edward H. Bell, who assumed command. Thanks to training methods developed on Oahu since August 1943, the Provisional Graves Registration Company was readied for the Palau operation. As described in connection with its operations on Leyte, this unit consisted of only three platoons and lacked the complete company and platoon headquarters establishment allowed the regularly constituted Quartermaster Graves Registration Company.[48]

The general policies laid down in Circular 93 were embodied in planning instructions of the newly created XXIV Corps. In the assault landing on Yap, Section II of these instructions announced that corps headquarters "will attach to each division, when available, appropriate GRS personnel who will receive bodies at temporary cemeteries and execute technical duties of graves registration as prescribed in TM 10–630, aided by Field Salvage Units attached to Division."[49] Accordingly, the Provisional Graves Registration Company was made available to the XXIV Corps and subsequently attached to components on the following basis: the headquarters unit to corps troops; the 2d Platoon to the 7th Infantry Division; the 3d Platoon to the 96th Division; and the 1st Platoon to the Army Garrison Force.[50]

Commanding generals of divisions and commanding officers of regiments, battalions, companies and other separate units were instructed to provide "the necessary labor troops for the prompt removal of all bodies to readily distinguishable collecting points near roads and trails, taking care to remove bodies found in pill boxes or covered by debris and rubble." After paraphrasing Circular 93 in regard to hasty and isolated burials, the instructions specified those technical functions that would be performed by graves registration personnel in connection with identification, burial, disposition of personal effects and preparation of burial reports.[51]

The circular's text was closely followed in stating functions of the attached field salvage unit, it being emphasized that it would assist graves registration personnel in the collection and burial of remains and that "no other duties would be assigned to this unit until its mission had been completed." Operations were to begin as soon as the situation warranted "preferably on D-day or D-plus-1 . . ." Provisions for burial of enemy dead were brief, avoiding all pretense that they would be accorded the same treatment as "friendly" dead.

> Enemy dead will be sprayed with sodium arsenite and buried as soon as possible by the most expeditious means. Burial sites should be so located that future construction or excavation will not expose the remains. No reports are desired except the numbers which are buried.[52]

The detailed planning of divisions—the 7th and 96th—reveals the proposed execution. The 7th Division directed that each battalion commander would evacuate all deceased in his zone to a regimental collecting point, which was not to be placed in the immediate vicinity of any medical installation. The Division Quartermaster was to be apprised of collecting point locations and the approximate number of friendly and enemy deceased to be evacuated. He would then assume responsibility for evacuation of all deceased, employing personnel of the 3260th Quartermaster Service Company for this purpose.[53] The 1st Platoon would spray, collect and evacuate deceased to the

[46] Hist of QM Opns, USAF, MIDPAC, pp. 196–97.

[47] (1) Sixth Army Rpts on Wakde-Biak (STRAIGHT LINE), Noemfoor (TABLE TENNIS), Sansapor (GLOBE TROTTER), and Morotai (INTERLUDE) Operations, 11 May to 4 Oct 44. (2) 41st Inf Div, HURRICANE (Biak) TF Opns Rpt, 27 May–19 Aug 44. Hist Rec Sec, AGO.

[48] See below, Conquest of the Philippines: Leyte Opn Rpt, G–4, 7th Inf Div, 26 Dec 44–10 Feb 45, states that no allowance had been made for a platoon headquarters and that want of trained personnel required in the administration of a separate unit acting alone prompted the recommendation that a T/O GRS platoon should be substituted for the provisional platoon used in KING II (Leyte) Operation.

[49] Annex Mike to Adm O 1, XXIV Corps, 11 Aug 44, in Field Orders 2A, 2B, 2C, XXIV Corps (Eastern Landing Force TG 36.2), 12 Aug 44, with Revision, 1 Sep 44, sub: STALEMATE. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, P & O File 1230: 38.

[50] *Ibid.*, Annex Able to FO 2A, FO 2B and FO 2C.

[51] *Ibid.*, Annex Mike to Adm O 1. Cf. USAF CPA Cir 93, 1944, Par 2, b.

[52] Annex Mike to Adm O 1, XXIV Corps, 12 Aug 44, sub: STALEMATE II, Sec II, 1. h. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, P & O File Drawer 1230: 38.

[53] Annex 2 (Adm O'S) to FO 8A, 8B, 8C, 8D, Operation Order, 7th Div, 28 Aug 44, sub: STALEMATE II, Par. 2, Evacuation. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, P & O Drawer 1230: 35.

Digitized by Google

cemetery collecting point. This sequence, it is interesting to note, reversed the order preferred by graves registration personnel, who had insisted in the Marianas that spraying should follow identification and final preparation for burial.[54]

Whenever evacuation of bodies became impossible over a protracted period, combat troops were to bury their own dead in shallow trenches pending transfer to the division cemetery. This, in a sense, may be regarded as a temporary halt in the process of evacuation, the shallow trench being a more substantial protection than wrapping in blankets or shelter halves. Burial of enemy dead would, in such circumstances, be performed by combat troops. Under normal conditions, however, the areas for burial of enemy remains, as well as sites for division cemetery, would be selected by G–1, after clearance with the Shore Party commander.[55]

The 96th Division plan differs from that of its sister division in certain points of detail. While neither organization served in the Marianas campaign, it seems reasonable to believe that both units should have given some study to experiences of the 27th Division on Saipan. The 96th was more literal in this respect, writing into its plan for the Yap operation provisions for the attachment of graves registration sections to RCTs. It specified: "Burial by BLT's and RCT's, initially, later by divisions." [56]

With the decision to bypass Yap, Army troops played a subordinate role in occupation of the Palau Islands. Whatever merit the graves registration program devised for Yap might have had in execution, it was reproduced when the XXIV Corps was transferred to the Southwest for participation in the conquest of Leyte.[57] One consideration, nevertheless, should be noted at this juncture. The policy announced in USAF CPA Circular No. 93 of 5 June 1944 was based on experiences gained in storming atolls of the Gilbert and Marshall groups. Its date of publication precluded any consideration of conclusions that might have been derived from study of the limited experience in mobile operations on Saipan. While the Yap plan may have approached perfection as one intended for small island warfare, its reproduction with the tactical situation of Leyte in mind suggests that, either the rapidity with which these operations were launched prevented any possibility of revision, or that the higher echelons seemed to be satisfied that plans approved for one situation should, by sheer force of approval, suffice for a different situation. The latter alternative, to be sure, indicates something of a tendency toward an arrested state of thought.

Certain limitations of graves registration operations during the conquest of Leyte and subsequently in the battle on Okinawa suggest that the latter of these two alternatives is not entirely a matter of conjecture. While notable improvements were made, and while Army forces in the Central Pacific worked out a satisfactory solution to the problem of relieving combat units in assault from the distracting obligation of evacuating their dead to the rear, the very necessity of rapid evacuation during the atoll phase of Central Pacific warfare seems to have put so great an emphasis on this aspect that other phases of the whole problem suffered neglect when campaigns of maneuver replaced the battles of position in the Gilbert and Marshall Islands. Little thought appears to have been given to economies that might have been realized by shifting responsibility for the establishment and operation of temporary cemeteries from divisional units to a higher echelon of command.

New Guinea Operations, 1944

In returning to the graves registration story of the Southwest Pacific Area, it becomes necessary to review briefly the tactical and logistic methods that came into play during the process of breaching the outer perimeter of Japan's oceanic empire. Here, as in the Mediterranean and European theaters, initial attacks were delivered by Army-Navy teams which stormed ashore and secured bases for future operations. But in reducing the extensive German land empire amphibious assaults were only a prelude to the occupation of large islands or peninsulas, such as Sicily and Italy, or to the penetration of continental areas, as illustrated by the invasions of North Africa and Central Europe. Once ashore, Army forces pushed inland, while the Navy maintained command of the sea and policed waterborne communications. In contrast, amphibious operations in the Pacific Ocean areas during 1943 and the greater part of 1944 formed the basic pattern of attack in advancing the frontier of naval and air domination over the seaways toward the seat of Japanese power in its island home.

All aspects of warfare in the Pacific are thus seen against a background of continuous amphibious action. Individually of no great magnitude when compared with the land battles waged by massive forces in

[54] *Ibid.*, Par. 4, Service Troops.

[55] *Ibid.*, Par. 2.

[56] (1) Annex Able to FO's No. 1A, 1B, 1C, 96th Inf Div (Task Unit 36.2.2), 27 Aug 44, sub: STALEMATE II. (2) Adm O No. 2, Annex Love to FO 1A, 96th Div, 27 Aug 44, sub: STALEMATE II.

[57] Hist QM Opns, USAF, MIDPAC, p. 197.

Digitized by Google

Europe, this type of operation, nevertheless, exerted an accumulative influence in extending the area of command westward over the ocean expanse. Beginning with a violent assault landing and followed by extermination or "mopping up" of the defense force, the typical Pacific operation culminated in a vast construction program, creating with incredible speed air fields, docking and storage facilities, and all other appointments of a base from which another amphibious attack might be launched.

Strategically, the objective sought by Southwest Pacific Area forces in securing widely separated points along the northern coastline of New Guinea and its offshore islands was identical to the one pursued by forces of the Central Pacific in gaining lodgements on many island groups and atolls beyond the Coral and Bismarck Seas. The New Guinea jungle was an all but impenetrable waste, protecting these points even more effectively than did the broad ocean shield the archipelagoes that dot its surface. Owing, then, to restrictions of space imposed by jungle or sea on each lodgement area, together with the assumption that these areas would be occupied for some time, it became a consideration of primary importance in graves registration operations that efforts should be made as early as possible to select one or more cemetery sites which would not only serve as convenient burial places during the assault and mopping-up phases, but meet all requirements of economical maintenance throughout the period of occupation. For similar reasons, it is apparent that no serious problem arose in connection with the organization of a collecting point system designed to stand the continuous strain of evacuating bodies from widely deployed battle fronts to corps or Army cemeteries at distant points in the rear.

Since the scope of graves registration activity was largely determined by the size of the task force committed to action and the area of the battle zone involved in each successive operation, the story of this activity in the Southwest Pacific from the beginning of 1944 to the end of hostilities falls into two periods. The first includes the step-by-step progress up the New Guinea coastline to Sansapor and seizure of Morotai, midway on the sea route between New Guinea and the Philippines. The second embraces large-scale operations of the Sixth Army in the invasions of Leyte and Luzon, together with numerous assault landings delivered by Eighth Army forces in completing the conquest of the Philippines.

In the Luzon campaign we witness graves registration operations conducted on a scale that suggests comparison to the early phase of OVERLORD and DRAGOON. Those which accompanied secondary movements in other islands of the archipelago perpetuated, in the main, practices that had been perfected during the latter phases of the New Guinea campaign and, while furnishing numerous variations to the problem of providing graves registration support for small task forces on limited missions, offer little or nothing by way of rewarding a detailed study.

In tracing the development of graves registration organization through different phases of the global war, it has been observed that improvised methods generally give way to an application of standard techniques only when Quartermaster service troops appear in the field and make possible a logical division of labor between organic collecting teams and attached graves registration units. Such a transition in the war against Germany appeared during the Tunisian campaign. With acquired battle experience, supporting graves registration platoons attained a relatively high point of effectiveness in Sicily. Maintenance of high technical standards, however, was often impaired by the appearance of new divisional formations whose training was deficient in the most elementary aspects of caring for the dead in battle.[58]

A similar transition took place in the Southwest Pacific during the latter part of 1943. A fundamental difference, however, should be noted in conditions which influenced these changes. During the build-up period in Australia, a cemeterial system was established and operated along lines which were more suggestive of conditions applying in the Zone of the Interior than in an active operational theater. Then, in accordance with the strategic policy which designated Germany as the principal enemy, and the consequent practice of giving prior consideration to requirements of the European theater in manpower and supplies, the assignment of Quartermaster Graves Registration Service companies to the Southwest Pacific was withheld until November of 1943.[59]

Meantime the burial service which had been built up in connection with the theater cemeterial system supplied technical personnel for supervision of graves, registration operations in the field. In North Africa, on the other hand, an emergency graves registration service

[58] Reference is made to the 45th Infantry Division, which sailed from the United States to participate in operation HUSKY. See report of Col. R. G. Hamilton, AGF Board, recounting interview with Major Gricius, GRO 45th Division, as cited above in Chapter V.

[59] (1) See above, ch. III. (2) SWPA QM History, II, 86–87. On 30 August 1942, G–3, WDGS, in reply to USAFIA request of 26 April 1942 for one QMC GR company, replied: "Present indications are that few of recently approved additions will be available for shipment during remainder of calendar year." *Ibid.* The 601st GR Company arrived in SWPA on 10 November 1943. Orgn & Dir Sec, AGO, Unit Files.

Digitized by Google

Figure 22.—Transportation of remains by land and sea in the Southwest Pacific. Bodies evacuated from the battle zone in New Britain are loaded at Talasea for shipment to U. S. A. F. Cemetery at Cape Gloucester.

was first improvised for the combat zone and then extended rearward as the battle front advanced. This emergency service was largely taken over by Quartermaster Graves Registration companies within 4 months after the North African landings, while the burial organization which had been established in the Australian base commands and subsequently extended to advanced bases in New Guinea, shared with organic teams the burden of combat for a year following the first offensive action at Buna.[60]

Utilization of Quartermaster Graves Registration Service units in the series of operations which secured command of Vitiaz Straits between New Guinea and New Britain during November and December 1943 did not alter previously established practices in any perceptible manner. Small parties of the 601st GR Company were merely substituted for personnel of the 48th Provisional GR Platoon which had heretofore been detailed to various task forces that had carried the advance toward Finschhafen. Although precise evidence is lacking to justify a positive statement, it seems reasonable to believe that the new technicians required some practical experience in battle before they became fully capable of replacing veterans of a year's schooling in the practice of jungle warfare. The first recorded appearance of personnel from the 601st GR Company in active support of combat was at Arawe in southern New Britain, in December. Attached to Director Task Force, a section of the 601st established USAF Cemetery Arawe No. 1.[61]

The Admiralty Islands

Operation BREWER, occupation of the Admiralty Islands, illustrates perhaps better than any other event the transition that was taking place in graves registration at the turn of the year. While looking forward to

[60] The 47th GR Co. landed at Oran on 27 January 1943; the 46th reached Casablanca on 12 February 1943. See above, ch. III.

[61] (1) Hq 601st GR Co, Historical Rpt, DEXTERITY Operation. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, QMCO-601-0.3 (6773).

Digitized by Google

those large movements which were planned during 1944 on a basis of ample means and greater certainty as to command of the sea and air, this operation was, in many respects, reminiscent of those which had been impelled during 1943 by the strategic advantage of keeping permanently off balance an enemy who had been temporarily staggered by the fortuitous blow at Buna. Originally planned for execution in April 1944, and intended to cork the bottle of the Bismarck Sea at its western entrance, BREWER was actually launched on the last day of February in order to forestall Japanese reaction to the recently acquired lodgements on both shores of Vitiaz Straits. Belief in the wisdom of precipitate action was strengthened by a conviction that Los Negros, easternmost island of the group, was lightly defended. In these altered circumstances, General MacArthur decided personally to supervise a reconnaissance in force and, on 24 February, ordered the Alamo Force to make the assault not later than 29 February.[62]

Built around the 1st Cavalry Division, Brewer Task Force was actually organized within 2 days. The 1st Brigade Combat team landed in Hyane Harbor on the target date and, after receiving large reinforcements on D plus 2, broke the back of enemy resistance by 5 March. Landings were made a week later on Marcus Island, the largest land mass of the Admiralty group.[63]

The haste in which operation BREWER was planned is reflected in provisions for graves registration support. Only an understrength section of the 1st Platoon, 604th GR Company, was assigned to the entire task force. With an aggregate strength of more than a division, this force would, in ordinary circumstances, have been entitled to at least a graves registration platoon. Composed of one sergeant and five privates, the section landed on D plus 9 at Red Beach, a point on the west shore of Los Negros which had been occupied 2 days previously by an overland column from Hyane Harbor.

After crossing to the east shore, the section supervised burials at an armed forces cemetery established near Hyane Harbor on D plus 1 by the 1st Cavalry Brigade Graves Registration Officer.[64] Difficulties of evacuation from combat areas were overcome by employing detachments of litter bearers across unbroken ground and operating a truck service along completed road sections. Coastal barges carried bodies from the 603d clearing hospital at Red Beach, on the west coast of the island.[65]

Some progress had been made in clearing up Los Negros by 20 March, when four members of the section were attached to the 2nd Cavalry Brigade on nearby Marcus Island. Working under direction of the brigade graves registration officer, this group established the United States Armed Forces Lorengau Cemetery, Marcus Island, and, according to the unit historical sketch, "made suggestions and coordinated our ideas pertaining to the beautification and maintenance of this cemetery with Second Brigade Headquarters." After assisting in arrangements "for the dedication and Easter Day and other services," the party returned to Los Negros where assistance was required in developing the cemetery on that island.[66]

After consolidation of the section, graves registration headquarters was established at the Base Quartermaster Office. Emphasis was then given to the disinterment and reburial of remains from isolated graves. By 18 May, the official date for completion of operation BREWER, the section had interred a total of 341 bodies in both the Los Negros and Lorengau cemeteries. Its members performed "the actual preparation of bodies for burial including the identification and disposition of personal effects." [67]

This record, however, was achieved only in the face of natural difficulties which were aggravated by deficient equipment and a shortage of competent technical personnel. A critique accompanying the section's historical report offers an interesting commentary on the conduct of graves registration operations in the Southwest Pacific during this period of the war. While some allowance should be made for the haste in which operation BREWER was mounted, the criticism, nevertheless, reflects a want of training on the part of both organic and attached graves registration personnel to cope with many technical aspects of problems relating to care of the dead.

> Lessons learned from this operation were that previous training of personnel was inadequate. Also that graves registration personnel attached to a task force should never be less than two sections and if possible one full platoon. It is also imperative that a trained clerk and recorder accompany this detail. It is also our opinion that an officer who has been trained in Graves Registration Service should accompany this type of unit in order to administer proper functioning. At least two men should accompany the first wave or be present during the first day of combat so that they may note temporary burials and aid individual units in mapping these

[62] *SWPA Engineers*, I, 149.
[63] *Ibid.*, pp. 149–50.
[64] Hq 1st Sec, 1st Plat, 604th GR Co, Historical Sketch of operations, 9 Mar–28 May 44, QM Co–604–PI–(1)–0.3 (11525) M.
[65] *Ibid.*
[66] *Ibid.*
[67] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

graves to be used after termination of combat for the reinterment of said graves. An office should be set up immediately in order to accommodate the necessary requests, inquiries, or any other details pertaining to our type of work.[68]

Faulty preparation hampered graves registration activities throughout the campaign. Aware, no doubt, of these difficulties, the Sixth Army Quartermaster dispatched an officer to investigate and report on conditions in the Admiralties. Conduct of the investigation, as well as the form and content of the report, reflects the workings of a theater policy which kept rear echelons in direct touch with operating conditions at the front. After conceding that the tactical situation of D plus 1 dictated the location of USAF Cemetery Los Negros No. 1 at the southern end of Hyane Bay, and in a formation of hard slate coral, the inspecting officer described the site as "far from ideal." [69] The average grave depth was no more than 5 feet. Vigorous efforts, nevertheless, were being taken to improve matters by levelling the uneven surface and superimposing a thick layer of rich black loam. A white board fence enclosed the area. "It was noted," he reported, "that although bodies will be buried near the water, the ground will not be subject to washing away as an abutment is under construction. Drainage of the cemetery is excellent." [70]

Despite these considerable efforts, a number of deficiencies were noted, namely that identification tags were attached to grave markers by wire or string, that no information was painted on the face of markers, that there were no Allied or enemy sections, no flagpole or entrance sign bearing the name of the cemetery and finally, that no action had as yet been taken to identify seven unknown bodies in the cemetery.

After listing deficiencies at Los Negros No. 1, the reporting officer admitted in his "Remarks" that lack of graves supplies, notably screws and lettering brushes, was largely accountable for the unsatisfactory appearance of grave markers. Delay in clearing up the problem of unknowns, he observed, could be attributed to the fact that organic personnel had buried these dead and that no notes of identifying characteristics were made at the time. "In general," it was stated, "deficiencies existed because either needed materials were not available, or other jobs more important to accomplish at the time." The report added: "It is felt that the Graves Registration Personnel have made a creditable showing under handicaps; i. e. not being brought forward until a late date to supervise Graves Registration activities; being confronted with developing a cemetery where terrain features were unfavorable and having insufficient materials with which to work." [71]

Established and developed with the assistance of attached graves registration personnel, USAF Cemetery Lorengau No. 1, Marcus Island, invited less criticism than the one on Los Negros. The location is described as "very favorable," with excellent drainage, picturesque surroundings and distant only 200 yards from the beach—a circumstance which would greatly facilitate final evacuation. Shrubbery had been planted around the outer border and enclosed by a barbed wire fence. Although noting that identification tags had not been affixed to grave markers as required, that

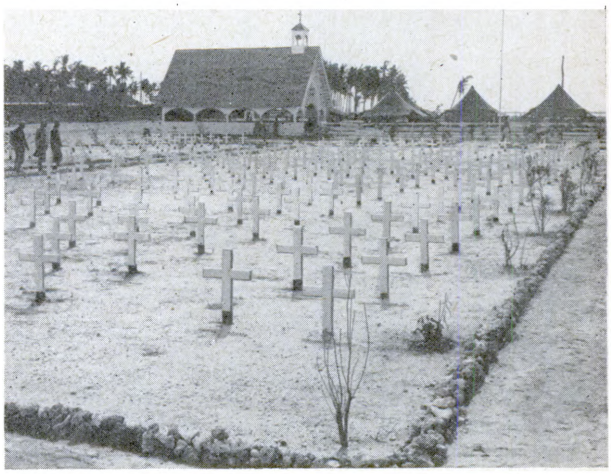


Figure 23.—U. S. Armed Forces Cemetery, Los Negros No. 1, Admiralty Islands, established by the 1st Cavalry Division near Hyane Harbor.

information painted on the markers was incomplete, and that there was no enemy dead section in the cemetery, the reporting officer added: "Care and respect had been shown in the disposition of remains; and in the maintenance and development of the cemetery. The cemetery is a credit to the 1st Cavalry Division." [72]

Three important graves registration problems—isolated burials, the burial of enemy dead, and the completion of burial reports—were separately treated. There was no record of unreported isolated burials on Los Negros Island, nor had a comprehensive check against such burials been made prior to the date of inspection. While a small number of isolated burials existed on Marcus Island, the locations had been

[68] *Ibid.*

[69] Rpt of Inspection, Capt James C. MacFarland, Hq, Sixth Army, QM Sec, 8 May 44, sub: Graves Registration Activities in the Admiralty Islands. Date of Inspection: 16–18 Apr 44. RAC, 1st Cav Div 293, Funerals & Burials, Division Files, 1944. Folder No. 1. Hereinafter cited as MacFarland GR Inspection Rpt, Admiralties.

[70] *Ibid.*

[71] *Ibid.*

[72] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

sketched and plans were under consideration for reinterring these remains in Lorengau as soon as the tactical situation permitted.

Generally speaking, the preparation of burial reports on both islands left much to be desired. Information concerning "Cause of Death" was insufficient. Many reports were not verified by responsible graves registration officers and, as a rule, enlisted personnel betrayed a want of familiarity with Sixth Army instructions in the preparation of these reports. There was no listing of items under "Personal Effects Found on Body." Disposition of the items was not indicated. Another difficulty arose from failure in conforming with the standard Sixth Army cemetery layout plan, which required that graves in each plot should be numbered from left to right.[73] Since the graves in these two cemeteries were numbered in the reverse order, the report item "Body Buried on the Right" was assigned the higher number.

Perhaps the widest departure from required procedure was found in the burial of enemy dead. In addition to failure in establishing separate enemy plots, no attempt had been made to prepare reports of interment for such dead. Explanation for this apparent oversight amounted to a confession that the stark realities of jungle warfare in the tropics overruled any display of humanitarian sentiment toward remains of the enemy.

> Due to the tactical situation at the outset of the operation it was impossible to bury each enemy dead separately, and to make Reports of Interment. Enemy dead were in front of allied forward elements and it would have been impracticable to risk lives in order to bury enemy dead. When the initial objectives were taken it was necessary to bury the enemy dead immediately in a number of common graves as the bodies had begun to decompose and were a serious menace to the health of the Allied Forces.[74]

The inspecting officer, nevertheless, recommended that either separate cemeteries for enemy dead be established on Los Negros and Marcus Islands, or that the division graves registration officer set aside plots in each cemetery for the same purpose. He also furnished instructions as to procedures governing the burial of enemy dead—a phase of graves registration in which organic personnel were unversed and, perhaps, disinclined to learn.[75]

Immediate steps were taken by the Commanding General, 1st Cavalry Division, toward correction of all deficiencies noted in the report of inspection. The Division Quartermaster received instructions to supervise corrective measures and report upon completion of the program at the earliest practicable date.[76] The First Section of the 1st Platoon, 604th GR Company, on 6 June, apprised the Division Quartermaster that rectification of many noted deficiencies, including work of construction on an enemy dead section in the Los Negros Cemetery, was being pushed to completion.[77] Three days later Headquarters, 16th Cavalry Squadron, reported similar progress.[78] A full report on completion of the program was submitted to the Commanding General, Sixth Army, on 14 June. It was noted that identification tags had been attached to markers with screws and that information had been painted on grave markers. Corrections at the Los Negros Cemetery included the erection of a flag pole, display of an entrance sign and establishment of an Allied section. Due, however, to a request of Commonwealth officials that Australian dead be returned to their homeland, no burials were made in the Allied plot. Efforts to identify the seven unknowns in this cemetery led to discovery of two additional unidentified remains. Interment reports of these nine bodies indicated "a total lack of means to assist in identification." Furthermore, decomposition or crushing and severing injuries had in all nine cases prevented finger printing or the construction of tooth charts. Then a check of missing in action reports furnished no evidence that related any of this latter category to recovered unknowns. A plot was set aside at Lorengau for the burial of enemy dead and, according to report, progress had been made in the correction in interment reports which "due to inexperience of Graves Registration personnel . . . contained frequent errors." [79]

Considerable attention has been given to graves registration operations in the Admiralty Islands for a number of reasons, not the least important of which is that the availability of records makes it possible to reconstruct a documented story. Apart, however, from considerations of documentary evidence, BREWER set the pattern for future amphibious operations in regard to the employment of larger task forces, increased range of action, and greater complexity in the function and

[73] See pamphlet, Hq Alamo Force, Standing Operating Procedure for Burials and Establishment of Cemeteries, 27 February 1944. Since this regulation was published just 2 days before the assault landing on Negros and only a "Special Distribution" was made at the time, there seems reason to doubt that graves registration officers of Brewer Task Force were aware of its existence when establishing the USAF Cemeteries in the Admiralties.

[74] MacFarland, Gr Inspection Rpt, Admiralties.

[75] *Ibid.*

[76] 1st ind to *ibid.*, Hq, 1st Cav Div, to Div QM, 21 May 44.

[77] 2nd ind to *ibid.*, Hq, 1st Sec, 1st Plat, 604th QMGR Co, to Div QM, 6 Jun 44.

[78] Ltr, Hq, 16th Cav Sqdn, to Div QM, 9 Jun 44, sub: Gr Reg Svc, RAC, 1st Cav Div 293 Files, Folder No. 1.

[79] Ltr, Capt Geo. W. Johnson, AAG, 1st Cav Div, to CG Sixth Army, 14 Jun 44, sub: Gr Reg Svc, RAC, 1st Cav Div, 293 Files 1944, Folder No. 1.

Digitized by Google

mission of all technical services. If the role of attached graves registration personnel appears to have been relatively insignificant, it should be remembered that the development of this service had been retarded by postponement in the assignment of regularly constituted Quartermaster Graves Registration Service companies to the Southwest Pacific theater establishment and that inadequate support in its restricted battle areas was largely compensated by a closer participation on the part of rear echelons in forward graves registration operations than was customary in the extended battle fronts of Europe.

Utilization of attached Quartermaster graves registration personnel in support to combat during BREWER did not materially alter previously established practices. Difficulties encountered by the 1st Section, 604th GR Company, only emphasized the fact that Southwest Pacific task forces had never been adequately supported by graves registration technicians. But now technicians appeared in units of a specialized service. Experience showed that such a unit, however small, could not properly function unless commanded by an officer of commissioned rank and that, lacking a leader of proper rank, the unit lost its integrity, becoming a collection of individuals whose specialized skills might not be fully enlisted by inexperienced unit graves registration officers.

Several old lessons were relearned under new conditions. While the experience at Buna had emphasized that a piecemeal commitment of graves registration forces invited serious difficulties, BREWER plainly demonstrated the cost of withholding an attached unit during the assault phase of a landing operation. Again, the report of inspection clearly reveals in its criticism of Los Negros Cemetery No. 1 that the presence of highly trained technicians is essential in establishing and developing a military cemetery. Although enlisted men of the 604th GR Company detailed on Marcus Island were limited to offering suggestions and "coordinating" their ideas regarding maintenance and beautification of Lorengau No. 1, the errors made at Los Negros were avoided in development of the Marcus Island establishment. Finally, the presence of attached graves registration personnel on Marcus Island shortly after beginning of combat does not seem to have been entirely coincidental with the fact that interment reports and location sketches were made of all isolated burials on the island.

Hollandia

In mounting the great amphibious blow at Hollandia, care was taken to provide graves registration support on a scale never before contemplated in the Southwest Pacific. With the entire 604th GR Company available for action, it became possible for the first time since Buna to plan on the basis of attaching one platoon to a division.[80] The ultimate purpose of this venture was the creation of a base designed to serve 140,000 troops and, according to estimates, requiring the construction of three airdromes, 3,000,000 square feet of covered facilities for storage, and 1,200,000 square feet of housing for other purposes.[81]

After staging at points some 700 miles from Hollandia, the expedition steamed under naval escort toward the Admiralty Islands in order to disguise its real objective. The armada presented a vivid demonstration of the power now at hand for striking massive blows and exploiting the breaches already driven into the outer defenses of Japan's ocean frontier.

> For the Nassau Bay mission we had 30 landing craft, including two captured Jap boats, and an escort of only two PT boats. For the Hollandia mission we had 280 landing craft, including buffalos, rocket and flack boats, LCM's, LCVD's and navigation control boats. Our escort consisted of battleships, cruisers, destroyers, rocket and personnel LCT's, subchasers, tugs, transport vessels and, for the first time in the southwest Pacific, escort carriers with their fighters and bombers ready to protect the convoy when it was beyond the reach of land-based planes. . . .
>
> Off Manus Island in the Admiralties the two convoys, one from Goodenough and the other from Cape Cretin, united to form one immense convoy that seemed to stretch in all directions to the distant horizon.[82]

Composed of two I Corps divisions of the Sixth Army—the 24th and 41st—Reckless Task Force was organized into three separate landing forces—Letterpress, Noiseless, and Persecution. Letterpress and Noiseless, after securing beachheads in Humboldt and Tanahmerah Bays, were to converge on the airfields and other installations which covered a considerable area between Sentani Lake and a high coastal range known as the Cyclops Mountains. Responsible for securing the east flank of Reckless against interference by strong Japanese garrisons posted along the coast from Wewak to Astrolabe Bay, Persecution would land at Aitape and establish a forward bastion in that vicinity. This element was made up of a reinforced regimental combat team, the 163d of the 41st Division.[83]

---

[80] Historical Rpt, Tanahmerah Bay Landing Force, Hollandia—Tanahmerah Campaign, 22 Apr 44–6 Jun 44, Annex 4, Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 342–0.3. (2) Annex 3b to F O 1, Reckless Task Force, quoted by Reckless T F History of the Hollandia Operation, 27 Mar–3 May 44, Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 99–TF–0.3.

[81] *SWPA Engineers*, I, 158.

[82] *History of the Second Engineer Special Brigade* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1946), quoted in *ibid*, 158–59.

[83] (1) Rpt, Hq Sixth Army to TAG, 13 Oct 44, sub: Rpt on the RECKLESS (Hollandia) Operation, 22 Apr 44–25 Aug 44. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 98–TF1C–0.3. (2) *SWPA Engineers*, I, 164.

Digitized by Google

The Quartermaster plan for graves registration support specified that cemeteries were to be located and designated by commanders of the landing forces for their respective areas, and that such locations be reported to the Commanding General, Reckless Task Force. Isolated burials were to be avoided and required reports, including GR Form No. 1, were to be transmitted through the Quartermaster, Reckless Task Force.[84] The scheme of allocating graves registration troops to the three landing forces gave a seven-man section to Persecution (163d RCT, reinforced), one platoon to Noiseless (24th Division), and the 601st Company, less these detachments, to Letterpress (41st Division, less the 163d RCT).[85]

Landing schedules avoided the error committed at Los Negros in withholding graves registration personnel during critical phases of the assault. According to the loading plan, five enlisted men were to land on D Day, three with the 162d and two with the 186th Infantry Regiment. A total of 2 officers and 44 men were to land on D plus 1, with the balance attached to Noiseless and Letterpress coming ashore on subsequent days.[86]

In contrast to the bitter resistance encountered at Los Negros in the Admiralties, the landings at Humboldt and Tanahmerah Bays were virtually unopposed. Owing to a complete misconception of General MacArthur's strategic purpose, the enemy had concentrated his principal force at Wewak and in so doing had left the Hollandia area at the mercy of a powerful attack. The feeble opposition in these circumstances imposed no real test on the plans for graves registration support, however well they may have been devised. A G–1 annex to the historical report of the 41st Division indicates that beneficial results were obtained by offering training courses in graves registration procedure at the staging area to all chaplains and to at least one officer or noncommissioned officer in each unit down to and including companies and batteries. Evidently impressed by the satisfactory outcome of this experiment, G–1 recommended that the practice should be continued as "an additional precaution" in future operations. At the same time, pointed criticism was made of two faulty procedures which, according to G–1, obstructed effective liaison between combat commanders and headquarters units of attached graves registration elements. Two recommendations were offered by way of correction: one urged that "Graves Registration Service personnel should at all times accompany the headquarters of the unit to which attached;" the other insisted that "Graves Registration detachments from the platoon must be attached to each combat team since the areas of greatest casualty density may be widely separated, particularly when a landing is made on more than one beach, as occurred in this operation."[87]

Other sources of evidence indicate that the first experiment in what might be termed large scale graves registration in the Southwest Pacific was disappointing. Although each division of Reckless Task Force had the support of one graves registration platoon, with additional elements in reserve, Headquarters, Intermediate Section, USASOS, found the situation at Hollandia during July, over 2 months after the landings, in a state that scarcely bears favorable comparison with the one existing in the Admiralties during April, less than 2 months following D Day of BREWER. The unfavorable aspects of this comparison are heightened by the consideration that only one understrength section had supported a reinforced division during the Admiralty Islands operation. Criticisms brought to the attention of the Commanding General, Base G (Hollandia) confirm the view expressed by G–1, 24th Division, in its historical report that liaison between supporting graves registration detachments and combat units could have been more effective. Intermediate Section advised that "in view of the number of small cemeteries and isolated burials in the Hollandia, Tanahmerah Bay areas, it is desired that a suitable area be selected and designated as United States Armed Forces Cemetery Hollandia No. 1, Dutch New Guinea."[88]

No immediate action appears to have been taken in compliance with Intermediate Section's request of 20 July. In August the Commanding General, USASOS, intervened, notifying Base G that "It has come to the attention of this Headquarters that four cemeteries are in existence within your base," and that "it is desired that one base cemetery be established and all burials . . . be consolidated therein with the least practicable delay."[89]

Three indorsements urging action emanated successively from Headquarters, Sixth Army, the Rear Echelon, USASOS, and the Intermediate Section, USASOS,

[84] Reckless TF, History of the Hollandia Operation, 27 Mar–3 May 44. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 98–TF7–0.3.

[85] Rpt, Hq Sixth Army to TAG, 13 Oct 44, sub: Report on the RECKLESS (Hollandia) Operation, 22 Apr–25 Aug 44. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 98–TF1C–0.3.

[86] 41st Inf Div (Letterpress Landing Force), Historical Rpt, Hollandia Campaign, 22 Apr–5 May 44. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 341–0.3.

[87] 24th Inf Div, Historical Rpt, Hollandia Operation, Tanahmerah Landing Force, Hollandia-Tanahmerah Campaign, 22 Apr–22 June 44. Annex 4. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 342–0.3.

[88] Ltr, 1st Lt Donald Werner, Asst AAG, to CG Base G, 20 Jul 44, sub: Cemeteries. RAC, New Guinea Base Sec 687, INT.

[89] Ltr, Maj Lester W. Teter, AAG, USASOS, to CG Base G, 11 Aug 44, sub: Establishment of Cemeteries. RAC, New Guinea Base Sec 687, INT.

Digitized by Google

between 5 and 23 September.[90] Sixth Army noted that the lack of a suitable cemetery in the Hollandia area had been a cause of much concern, that after the matter had been discussed informally with the Commanding General, Base G, a formal request was made on 26 August urgently recommending immediate action. The letter stated:

> It is understood that there are approximately 221 deceased United States armed forces personnel buried in various places in the vicinity of the Hollandia area, Dutch New Guinea. A majority of the deceased were Sixth Army personnel who met death during the first month of the Allied invasion of the same area. To date, deceased personnel in this area have not been consolidated into a suitable United States armed forces cemetery.[91]

Whatever the justification for use of such pressure in bringing about the establishment of a base cemetery, there is one aspect of the Hollandia graves registration situation that cannot be justly charged to the base section commander. Base G became operational on 7 June, some 6 weeks after the landings of 22 April. It therefore seems unreasonable to hold this officer accountable for a state of affairs he inherited upon assuming command. If, indeed, it is difficult to account for the fact that some 5 months elapsed before active measures were taken toward reinterment of the dead in a consolidated cemetery, a similar difficulty is encountered in understanding why the landing force commanders failed during the assault phase to designate suitable sites for consolidated cemeteries in their respective areas, as required by the Quartermaster Annex to Administrative Order No. 1. It seems impossible to avoid a conclusion that the original difficulty arose from a lapse of command responsibility.

Wakde to Morotai

Occupation of Hollandia and establishment of base facilities second in magnitude only to those at Finschhafen [92] necessitated the seizure of additional points along the coast of northwestern Dutch New Guinea. In planning the operation it became apparent that a stretch of coast line at Toem and the offshore island of Wakde, westward some 135 miles from Humboldt Bay, must be included in the defense system of Hollandia.[93] Then Biak Island, 195 miles farther west, was deemed necessary for the purpose of providing air and naval warning facilities, as well as bomber fields, in order to intensify long-range bombardment of Japanese air bases, notably those at Halmahera, which lay athwart the sea route to Mindanao. Furthermore, fighter escorts were required for the heavy bombers based on Hollandia and Biak. Noemfoor Island, distant 90 miles westward, answered this purpose. Finally, the strategic requirement of securing the left flank of Allied movement toward the Philippines by interdicting enemy air power operating from bases in the Dutch Indies

Figure 24.—U. S. Armed Forces Cemetery, Toem No. 1, a typical New Guinea cemetery.

called for the occupation of a coastal strip and adjoining islands in the vicinity of Cape Sansapor, near the extreme northwestern tip of New Guinea. These various objectives were successfully secured by four amphibious task forces—Tornado, Hurricane, Cyclone, and Typhoon—between 17 May and 3 August, when a fighter strip at Sansapor became operational.[94]

Graves registration support for the Wakde-Sansapor series of operations presented problems which could be solved only by shifting elements of the 601st GR Company from one task force to another while fighting

[90] (1) Hq Sixth Army to CG Base G, 5 Sep 44, 1st ind to above cited basic. (2) Hq Rear Echelon, USASOS, to CG Base G, 14 Sep 44, 2nd ind to above cited basic. (3) Hq, Intermediate Sec, USASOS to CG Base G, 22 Sep 44, 3d ind to above cited basic.

[91] Ltr, Capt C. G. Erlandson, AAG, Sixth Army to CG Base G, 26 Aug 44, sub: Gr Reg. RAC, New Guinea Base Sec 687, INT.

[92] (1) *SWPA Engineers*, I, 196–97. (2) OCE GHG, SWPA, Annual Rpt, cited in *Ibid.*

[93] (1) *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, IV, 617. (2) *SWPA Engineers*, I, 173.

[94] (1) *Ibid.*, p. 177, 181, 185. (2) *AAF in World War II*, IV, 631, 652–661.

964114—52——11

Digitized by Google

Figure 25.—U. S. Armed Forces Cemetery, Bosnek No. 1, Biak Island, off the north coast of New Guinea.

in a particular area was still in progress and little headway had been made toward completing the concentration of isolated burials. D Day for Wakde and Biak (17 May and 27 May, respectively) came before the Hollandia campaign terminated. Quelling Japanese resistance on Biak took 3 weeks of sustained effort, together with strong reinforcements and a complete reorganization of Hurricane Task Force. Cyclone Task Force stormed ashore at Noemfoor on 2 July and overran the island before Biak had been securely occupied. The Sansapor (GLOBETROTTER) operation began on 30 July. Tornado and Cyclone Task Forces were built around reinforced regimental combat teams. Typhoon included all elements of the 6th Division less the 20th RCT. Hurricane, as finally reorganized, consisted of the 41st Division, reinforced.

Biak alone of these four operations compares in the magnitude of forces engaged and losses sustained with the assault on the Admiralty Islands.[95] But where Brewer Task Force had been supported by a graves registration detachment of 6 men, 1 officer and 30 enlisted men were attached to Hurricane. An officer and 2 enlisted men landed on D Day and established an Armed Forces cemetery near Bosnek village. Field Order No. 5, 15 August 1944, prescribed that bodies be evacuated to this cemetery.[96]

A subsequent inspection report states:

> The Base cemetery, Base H [Biak] appears to be in a most satisfactory condition. The crosses are all painted white and properly aligned. The cemetery itself has been graded and levelled. It is enclosed by a fence made of native posts 8 inches in diameter. The posts are joined by a 1″ rope, which presents a very pleasing effect. The flag pole is in the center of the cemetery. At this base it is difficult to find an area for a cemetery because of the solid coral. The attached report by the Base Quartermaster covers the difficulties involved in securing caskets.[97]

Graves registration units from the 601st Company accompanied the smaller task forces, Tornado (Wakde)

[95] Casualties at Biak included 432 US and 4,824 enemy killed in action. Rpt, Hq Sixth Army to TAG, 28 Feb 45, sub: Rpt on the Wakde-Biak Opn, 11 May–2 Sep 44. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 98-TFID-0.3.

[96] (1) Annex 7 to FO No. 1, Landing Plan, Hurricane Task Force, 15 May 44, quoted in Opns Rpt, Hurricane (Biak) TF, 27 May–19 Aug 44. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 341-0.3. (2) Hq 601st QM Co, (GR), Historical Record, Biak Opn, 24 Aug 44. According to this record, "the 3d Platoon, less one section, this organization was recalled to Company Headquarters and attached to the Hurricane Task Force." (3) FO No. 5, Hurricane TF, quoted in *ibid.*

[97] Rpt on Cemetery, Base H (Biak), n. d., title or address. RAC, NUGSEC, QM Sec 319 Misc Rpts, 1944–45. The Base QM's report does not appear with the above cited document.

Digitized by Google

and Cyclone (Noemfoor), the 1st Section, 3d Platoon, numbering seven men, supporting the former, while the 1st Section, 4th Platoon, numbering eight men, was attached to the latter. Two sections of the 2d Platoon supported Typhoon Task Force in the Sansapor (GLOBETROTTER) operation. USAF cemeteries were established in the three areas.[98]

The gigantic effort put forth in extending the basis of air and sea control from Hollandia to Cape Sansapor generated the energy for a rapid advance toward the Philippines. The first blow was aimed at Morotai, midway between New Guinea and Mindanao, and so situated that its occupation would isolate a garrison of some 30,000 Japanese on Halmahera. Built around Headquarters, XI Corps, Sixth Army, and including the 31st Infantry Division, together with the 126th RCT of the 32d Division and the 4th Engineer Special Brigade, Tradewind Task Force aggregated some 40,000 effectives. Considerably larger than Typhoon, Tradewind had only two attached graves registration sections—the 4th Platoon (less one section) of the 601st GR Company.[99]

This meager provision for graves support of a force approximately twice the size of a regular type division may be attributed to the fact that rapid growth of Southwest Pacific combat strength had outstripped available graves registration units. A similar disproportion continued throughout the Leyte campaign and was only partially redressed in subsequent operations in the Philippines. No serious difficulties, however, occurred in the occupation of Morotai. The initial landings were effected on 17 September with comparative ease. There was little jungle growth in the general beach area; the ground was dry and "seemingly well drained." It is recalled that "for the first time in the memory of most of the service unit engineers, no surfacing activities were necessary and vehicles moved directly from their landing to dispersal areas. . . . By 4 October, the target date of operations on Morotai, the first strip was operational for fighter planes and 7,000 feet had been cleared on the second." [100] Graves registration personnel enjoyed similar advantages.

[98] (1) Rpt, Hq Sixth Army to TAG, 25 Feb 45, sub: Rpt on the Wakde-Biak (STICKATNAUGHT-HORLICKS Operation), 11 May–2 Sep. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 98 TFID–0.3. (2) Rpt, Hq Sixth Army to TAG, 7 Dec 44, sub: Rpt on TABLETENNIS Operation (Noemfoor), 2 Jul–31 Aug 44. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 98–TFIE–0.2.

[99] Hq Tradewind T F, History of the INTERLUDE (Morotai Islands) Opn, 4 Aug–4 Oct 44. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 98–TFIE–0.3.

[100] (1) Hq Sixth Army, Engineer Activities Report, Morotai Operation, quoted in *SWPA Engineers*, I, 188. (2) Rpt, CG Sixth Army to TAG, 16 Feb 45, sub: Rpt on the Morotai (INTERLUDE) Operation. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 98–TF1G–0.3.

Conquest of the Philippines

Leyte

Operation KING II, the Leyte-Samar campaign which began the conquest of the Philippines, introduced new strategic factors, with accompanying tactical and logistic requirements, which profoundly modified established graves registration practices in the Southwest Pacific Area. During the Battle of Leyte the combat zone was limited only by the area of a relatively large island. The ground force originally committed on D Day, 20 October 1944, was twice the size of any heretofore employed in the advance from Buna to Sansapor. Comprising two army corps, the X and XXIV, of two divisions each, this force was augmented during November by two infantry divisions—the 32d and 77th—and the 11th Airborne Division, together with the 112th RCT. Moreover, the Japanese challenged Allied naval supremacy by attacking with the principal elements of their battle fleet. Failing by only a narrow margin of chance in this bold venture, and recognizing that loss of Leyte would imperil their position in the entire archipelago, they then hastened reinforcements from the garrisons of adjoining islands. The battle raged without intermission for 9 weeks, ending on Christmas Day with extirpation of hostile remnants at Palompon.

Only two graves registration platoons of Southwest Pacific theater forces were earmarked for KING II. These were the 1st Platoon, 48th GR Company, and the 101st GR Platoon, a provisional organization activated at Base F (Finschhafen) on 1 August 1944.[101] Both units were to be placed under X Corps control during movement from the staging area at Hollandia. Upon arrival in the objective area, the 1st Platoon, 48th GR Company, was to be attached to the 1st Cavalry Division, while the 101st GR Platoon would support the 24th Infantry Division. The Sixth Army pamphlet entitled "Burials and Establishment of Cemeteries, 25 September 1944," prescribed the details for graves registration procedures. Briefly, cemeteries were to be located and designated by division commanders for their respective areas and the customary injunction against isolated burials would be observed. Whenever such burials became unavoidable, precautions would be taken to prepare interment reports and record the location. Corps troops were to be buried in the nearest division cemetery.[102] With both evacuation and burial

[101] Hq, 101st QM GR Platoon, Historical Summary, 30 Aug 44. Dept Rec Br, AGO, QMPL–101–0.2 (45902) Master Hist, 101st QM GR Plat, Aug 1944.

[102] (1) FO No. 1, X Corps, 30 Sep 44, sub: Leyte-Samar (S). Hist Rec Sec, AGO, P & O Files 1244: 122. (2) Adm O No. 2 to accompany FO No. 1, X Corps, 30 Sep 44 (S). Hist Rec Sec, AGO, P & O Files 1244: 123.

Digitized by Google

Figure 26.—Supporting the 1st Cavalry Division, men of the 1st Platoon, 48th Graves Registration Company, contend with evacuation difficulties during the Leyte campaign.

assigned as primary responsibilities of the division, these provisions were, in a general sense, similar to those made for the invasion of Sicily and the initial landings at Salerno, in southern Italy.

The allotment of graves registration units to the X Corps, however, was noticeably below standard. While each of the two combat divisions had one supporting platoon, there was no reserve at the disposal of corps or army headquarters. Owing to these defects, care of the dead devolved entirely upon division units, with possibilities of little supervision and no assistance from higher echelons. In such circumstances, there was bound to be a considerable want of uniformity.

Arrangements of the XXIV Corps for care of the dead were scarcely calculated to improve the general situation. Transferred to Sixth Army from the Central Pacific for participation in KING II, this Corps employed a scheme of organization quite foreign to practices of the Southwest Pacific. What may be described as a three-point system was to be utilized in the collection, evacuation and burial of bodies. Collection would be accomplished by combat personnel, while one section of a Quartermaster Service Company (T/O & E 10–67) evacuated "friendly deceased," to the division cemetery and performed the additional office of spraying remains of enemy dead with sodium arsenite to prevent putrefaction pending burial on the spot. Members of a provisional graves registration platoon were to supervise burial at the division cemetery and perform related services, such as collecting, listing and forwarding personal effects and completing prescribed interment reports.[103]

In setting up this scheme within the two XXIV Corps divisions, the 2d and 3d Platoons of the Provisional GR Company were to be attached to the 7th and 96th Divisions, respectively. In the 7th Division the 2d Section of the 2d Platoon, 3260th Quartermaster Service Company, would be teamed with the 2d Platoon, Provisional GR Company, while in the 96th Division the 2d Section of the 2d Platoon, 3240th Quartermaster Service Company, would work with the 3d Platoon, Provisional GR Company. The 1st Platoon of this company was to be retained by Corps Headquarters.

[103] (1) Adm O No. 2 to accompany FO No. 3, XXIV Corps, 30 Sep 44 (S). Hist Rec Sec, AGO, P & O Files 1244: 133. (2) Opn Rpt, G–4, 7th Inf Div, 26 Dec 44–10 Feb 45. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 307–4 (3485).

Digitized by Google

The provisional graves registration platoons had an average strength of 19 men.[104]

The only available narrative of graves registration activities during KING II appears in the Quartermaster Annex to the G–4, 7th Division, report of operations. The 2d Platoon, Provisional GR Company, was called ashore on D plus 1 to operate the division cemetery established earlier that day near Dulag. Continued operations are summarized in the following:

> The Graves Registration Service continued in effect at DULAG as originally set up on D plus 1. Units collected the American dead in their areas and evacuated them to a unit collecting point in the vicinity of the unit supply point. From these collecting points, the portion of the 3260th Quartermaster Service Company which was assigned the mission of evacuating the deceased, moved the bodies to the cemetery for burial by the Graves Registration Platoon. When the assault moved to the West Coast, a cemetery was established at BAYBAY and all American dead were evacuated to that location in the same manner. Later, another cemetery of a temporary nature was established at DAMULAN. This cemetery was closed after 43 bodies had been interred therein, and the burial of all American dead was executed at the BAYBAY Cemetery. It was decided to disinter the bodies in the DAMULAN Cemetery and reinter them in the BAYBAY Cemetery. While this mission was in the process of execution, one-half of the provisional platoon was ordered to the Seventy-seventh Division. The remaining portion of the platoon continued to complete the movement of bodies from the DAMULAN Cemetery, and at the same time, continued to operate the BAYBAY Cemetery. Upon the completion of its mission with the Seventy-seventh Division, one section of the platoon was retained, and the balance was returned to the Seventh Division, making a total of two sections plus the platoon headquarters. Burial of enemy dead throughout the operation was accomplished by the evacuation group of the 3260th Quartermaster Service Company, assisted when possible by the Divisional Units. Enemy dead were sprayed with sodium arsenite, as were the surrounding areas, and were buried where found. No attempts were made to assemble them into a central area as the great numbers of them prohibited doing so.[105]

In parallel comment on graves registration operations, G–4 qualified its praise of the total accomplishment with pointed criticism of organization for care of the dead. While conceding that the provisional graves registration platoon "was the satisfactory answer to a definite need for such a unit," and that "it provided effective and efficient service to the Division in duties for which absolutely no personnel could have been spared from the organic Division Quartermaster Company," G–4 candidly admitted that the arrangement had one serious defect. In setting up the provisional unit, no allowance had been made for a platoon headquarters.[106] Want of trained personnel required in the administration of a separate unit acting alone prompted the recommendation that "a T/O Graves Registration Platoon should be substituted for the Provisional Platoon used in KING II Operation."[107]

Fragmentary evidence concerning other divisional units would indicate that the 7th Division's experience was by no means typical. Operational plans of the 96th Infantry Division required that the 1st and 2d Sections of the 3d Provisional GR Platoon should be attached to RCTs 2 and 3, respectively, while Division Headquarters retained the 3d Section. According to a Divisional Memorandum of 9 August 1944, burial would be accomplished "by BLT's and RCT's initially; later by Division."[108] Since, as already stated, the 2d Section of the 2d Platoon, 3240th Quartermaster Service Company, was attached to the 96th Division for collection of salvage and evacuation of bodies, it may be presumed that personnel of these elements assisted the graves registration sections in transportation of remains to burial places designated by the RCT or division commander.

No information is available concerning activities of the 1st Platoon, 48th Provisional GR Company, or those of the 101st GR Platoon in operating collecting points and cemeteries of the 1st Cavalry Division and the 24th Infantry Division.

In statistical terms, the total achievement of five graves registration platoons supporting the Sixth Army may be measured by the recovery of over a thousand remains and interment in 12 temporary cemeteries. But the quality of this performance, as reflected in deficient burial reports and an incomplete record of isolated burials, left much to be desired. Upon occupation of Leyte early in January 1945 by Eighth Army forces,

---

[104] (1) FO No. 3, XXIV Corps, 28 Sep 44, sub: King II (S). Hist Rec Sec, AGO, P & O Files 1244: 132. (2) Opn Rpt, G–4, 7th Inf Div, 26 Dec 44–10 Feb 45. AG HRS 307–4 (3485). G–4 offers the following comment on this novel arrangement: "It is felt that the original disposition of the personnel of the attached 3260th Quartermaster Service Company, wherein approximately 100 men were utilized for the collection and evacuation of salvage and 100 men were used to evacuate American dead to cemeteries, and to spray enemy dead, is the most desirable for any combat operation. It is, however, felt that insufficient supervisory personnel is provided in the T/O Quartermaster Service Company to execute these required duties, and it is felt that a Quartermaster Salvage Collecting Company (T/O & E 10–187) would be more readily adaptable to these missions." *Ibid.* From the foregoing quotation it would appear that the QM Company section originally assigned to evacuation of bodies was considerably increased in the field. According to G–4, 100 men were actually employed in this activity.

[105] *Ibid.*, Appendix "E," Quartermaster Report.

[106] It should be noted that the QM report, as quoted above, mentions a headquarters establishment of the 2d Provisional Platoon. This apparent discrepancy may be reconciled by the fact that cooks, drivers, and other such personnel were assigned to the unit. However, the specially trained clerks and draftsmen who were indispensable to the setup were not available. Opn Rpt, G–4, 7th Inf Div, 26 Dec 44–10 Feb 45. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 307–4 (93485).

[107] *Ibid.*

[108] (1) FO No. 2, 96th Inf Div, 10 Oct 44, sub: Opn KING II (S). Hist Rec Sec, AGO, P & O Files 1235: 19. (2) Appendix 5 to above cited FO.

Digitized by Google

and assumption of responsibility for these 12 cemeteries by the Quartermaster Section of that army's headquarters, many bodies were recovered from isolated graves. When, on 13 April, all 12 cemeteries were transferred to Section K, USASOS, the total number of interments stood at 1,829.[109]

Eighth Army's report on its sweeping activities in Leyte included severe criticism of graves registration operations during the conquest, noting in particular that "there were many dead still unburied and many isolated burials which either had not been reported at all or incorrectly reported." The commanding general attributed this state of affairs to three principal causes—lack of sufficient graves registration personnel, shortage of supplies, and a difficult terrain. These conditioning factors were amplified.

> Eight divisions [were] committed at one time with a total of only one graves registration company, less one platoon. . . . In order to locate the unburied dead and isolated graves, it was necessary to have combat patrols, familiar with the terrain, detailed to accompany the 1st Section, 4th Platoon of the 601st Quartermaster Graves Registration Company. Areas where fighting had taken place were then combed. Due to the rugged terrain, in many cases, it was impossible for this searching party to carry any necessary equipment to accomplish the mission. In many cases, also, they were compelled to subsist on native vegetables and fruits.[110]

Luzon

While the battle for Leyte still raged, plans were perfected for the conquest of Luzon and capture of Manila. In order that an ample margin of forward air support might be provided, a task force comprising two regimental combat teams landed on Mindoro Island and secured sites for several airfields. Meantime, a study of hydrographic conditions disclosed that commodious landing beaches for the huge forces destined to complete the march from Port Moresby to Manila were found only in the Gulf of Lingayen. With D Day set for 19 January 1945, the 700-ship armada steamed up through the Straits of San Bernardino into the China Sea and, passing almost within sight of Corregidor, sailed on northward along the west coast of Luzon to its destination in the Gulf. The Sixth Army in this operation mustered three corps with a striking force of 188,400 men and an Army reserve of three divisions.[111]

According to standards applying to NEPTUNE, the assault phase of OVERLORD, a force so constituted should have been entitled to an allotment of three graves registration companies, one for each corps, and an additional company in the army reserve.[112] No such lavish allowance was possible at this time in the Southwest Pacific; a staff study of estimated troop requirements for MIKE I, the Luzon campaign, concluded that two graves registration companies, less one platoon, would suffice.[113]

This conclusion, to be sure, was not based on a close calculation of probable requirements in the field. Nor did it consult the lessons of experience gained in every operation from the Admiralties to Leyte and summarized in critiques which unanimously agreed that, aside from reserves in a force of more than one corps, efficient performance and long-range economy in the evacuation and burial of the dead required the attachment of at least one graves registration platoon to each combat division. Quite to the contrary, estimates were derived by balancing present and future needs against a deficient force of available graves registration units.

The complex nature of this calculation is indicated by the distribution of various units earmarked during November 1944 for the Luzon campaign. The 1st and 2d Platoons of the 601st GR Company, which were to be attached to the I Corps, were scattered along the New Guinea coast from Aitape to Sansapor. The 1st Platoon, 48th GR Company, and the 101st GR Platoon were supporting the X Corps in Leyte. Scheduled to accompany the XIV Corps, a formation which would be borrowed from the Central Pacific theater, the 1st Platoon, 49th GR Company was then stationed at Bougainville in the Solomon Islands.[114]

Procedures governing evacuation of the dead were to be conducted in conformance with Regulation 30–30, as issued by Headquarters, SWPA, on 25 January 1944.[115] Formulated at a time when such large-scale operations as Hollandia were contemplated, this regulation was, in theory at least, adaptable to the Luzon campaign. In practice, however, no regulation intended to govern procedures on a particular mission can have an effective application to another when the

---

[109] (1) Rpt, CG Eighth U. S. Army on the Leyte-Samar Operation (including Clearance of the Visayan Passages), 26 Dec 44–8 May 45, p. 68. Hist Rec Sec, AGO. (2) Memo, Col Harry L. Hart, OAQM, for CofS, 13 Apr 44, no sub. RAC, Eighth Army 687, 1944–Jun 45.

[110] Rpt, CG Eighth U. S. Army on the Leyte-Samar Operation (including Clearance of the Visayan Passages), p. 68. Hist Rec Sec, AGO.

[111] *SWPA Engineers*, I, 228.

[112] See above, ch. VI. Sixteen platoons, representing five GR companies, were committed in Normandy by D plus 17 and attached to various elements of the V, VII, and XIX Corps of the First Army.

[113] Staff Study Operations, GHQ, SWPA, 7 Oct 44, sub: Opn MIKE ONE. Annex 3.C. (2). (R). Hist Rec Sec, AGO, GHQ File Opn Rpt Op.

[114] (1) Adm O No. 16 to accompany F O No. 34, Sixth Army, 23 Nov 44, sub: Opn MIKE I (S). Hist Rec Sec, AGO, P & O Files 1244: 39. (2) Annexes Nos. 2–4 to F O No. 1, Hq I Corps, 25 Nov 44 (S). Hist Rec Sec, AGO, P & O Files 1244: 89. (3) Staff Study, GHQ SWPA, 8 Dec 44, sub: Reinforcement of MIKE ONE Operation: Five Division Plan (TS). Hist Rec Sec, AGO, P & O Files, Drawer 1252.

[115] Annex 4 (Logistical) to Operations Instructions No. 73, GHQ SWPA, 12 Oct 44. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 98-GHQ-3.17.

Digitized by Google

Figure 27.—U. S. Armed Forces Cemetery, Manila No. 2, Luzon, Philippine Islands.

allotment of units responsible for attainment of that mission falls below the minimum established by experience. Efforts toward the adaptation of inadequate means to required ends leads only to improvisation.

As a matter of fact, SWPA forces began the last stage of their march to Manila, just as they had undertaken the first perilous steps, with inadequate means for care of the dead. Now in Luzon, as in Papua 2 years before, rear echelons were called upon to supplement deficiencies at the front. During the Lingayen landings, the Administrative Division of the Army Quartermaster's Office supervised the establishment of cemeteries and the recording of burials.[116] Then, as combat troops advanced from the landing beaches, rate of movement became a governing factor in the selection of burial sites. According to the Army Quartermaster, "corps and divisions established cemeteries where combat troops were evacuated for burial." [117] These makeshift expedients could scarcely cope with the tactical and logistic conditions of a large-scale land campaign. Sixth Army's swift progress through the central valley of Luzon produced problems practically identical to those which confronted the First Army in breaking out from the Normandy lodgement area and the Seventh during its rapid advance up the Valley of the Rhone.[118] Then, it will be recalled, economy of effort in the disposition of bodies evacuated from extended battlelines dictated a shift to larger units of control, the corps, and eventually the army, assuming responsibility for burial, while the function of divisions was limited to evacuation.

Adaptation of the Sixth Army to these conditions was characteristic; it enlisted resources of the Advanced Section, Communications Zone (ASCOM). This solution, however, was limited in scope, applying originally to only one corps and extended later in the campaign to other corps units. As described by the Amy Quartermaster,

> On S plus 17 (25 January 1945) [sic] ASCOM established a cemetery to which the deceased of one corps were evacuated for burial. Graves Registration units serving divisions of this particular Corps established Division Collecting Points on the main routes where bodies of those killed were received. Here the bodies were properly processed, prepared for burial, and evacuated to the ASCOM where interment was accomplished by ASCOM personnel.[119]

In those sectors where no centralized ASCOM cemetery existed corps and divisions established temporary cemeteries to which bodies were delivered in accordance with the original plan of evacuation. "Here," according to the Army Quartermaster, "burial was accomplished by attached corps and division graves registration personnel." [120]

Graves registration activities of ASCOM were supplemented by the Luzon Base Section (LUBSEC) upon activation of this command. During the course of the campaign LUBSEC established a centralized cemetery to which remains originally interred in the so-called temporary cemeteries of the I and X Corps

[116] Luzon (M–I) Opn, Sixth Army Rpt on Luzon Operations, Rpt of the QM.
[117] *Ibid.*
[118] See above, ch. VI, First Army Graves Registration Operations, and Seventh Army Graves Registration Operations.
[119] Luzon (M–1) Opn, Sixth Army Rpt on Luzon Operations, Rpt of the QM RAC.
[120] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

were concentrated. Finally, during the last stages of the operation, remains of the dead previously buried in isolated graves and battlefield cemeteries were exhumed and reinterred in one of the two "semi-permanent" cemeteries established by the Philippine Island Base Section. The total achievement is briefly summarized:

> Sixth Army Graves Registration personnel processed for burial approximately 10,370 fatalities during the operation. In addition, prior to assumption of responsibility for USAF cemeteries by AFWESPAC, Sixth Army graves registration personnel accomplished 5,877 burials.[121]

The Ryukyus Campaign

Operation ICEBERG, the conquest of Okinawa, key island in the Ryukyus, came as the climax to a long series of amphibious assaults that carried American and Allied arms to the shores of North Africa, Western Europe and the islands of the Japanese Empire. Two veteran units of Pacific Ocean warfare—the III Marine Amphibious Corps and the XXIV Army Corps—were selected for this assault and organized as the Tenth Army. Comprising seven divisional units, three Marine and four Army, with supporting troops, this striking force aggregated some 183,000 effectives.[122] Tenth Army Headquarters was first established at Honolulu; two Army divisions and elements of the III Marine Amphibious Corps were withdrawn from many islands in the mid-Pacific; the XXIV Corps, as originally constituted, was refitted by the Southwest Pacific command and, after loading in combat order across the eastern beaches of Leyte, sailed northward to rendezous with convoys steaming westward from Saipan, Espiritu Santo, and Oahu.[123]

Considerable progress had been made in the planning of amphibious expeditions since 1942. Precautions then intended to shroud the North African landings in absolute secrecy prevented any reasonable method of disseminating to lower echelons the information that was vital to effective execution. It will be recalled that criticism of these restrictions led to suggestions that personnel of subordinate echelons be given an opportunity to assimilate on shipboard those aspects of the over-all plan relating to their various missions.[124] All this was accepted as a matter of course when the XXIV Corps embarked for Leyte.

> Troops enroute were given detailed briefing for the landings. Maps, relief models of the target, printed orientation brochures and lectures by officers on enemy dispositions, health conditions, native population and weather, were made available to all personnel. Exercise to maintain physical fitness was scheduled insofar as limitations of space aboard shipping [sic] permitted. Recordings of a speech by the Tenth Army Commander, Lt. Gen. S. B. Buckner, Jr., were played over public address systems on all ships. Army personnel detailed to man ships' antiaircraft guns and lookout posts received special training by Navy instructors, and conducted firing on towed sleeve targets daily after sortie from Leyte Gulf until L-1 Day.

Planning for care of the dead in battle had made similar progress over the same period. This rate of progress, however, should be measured in terms of understanding on the part of those who became responsible for the execution of directives from higher headquarters, rather than the precise wording in which these instructions were couched. Identical directives did not necessarily guarantee uniform results. One might be addressed to a battle-worthy division supported by experienced graves registration personnel; another could have little effect on a recruit formation, however well supported.[125] All aspects of the graves registration planning for ICEBERG were addressed to divisions and attached services who had learned their craft in the hard school of war.

The allotment of Quartermaster Graves Registration Service platoons to combat elements was the most generous yet achieved in the Pacific Ocean Areas. During February 1945, the Provisional Graves Registration Company was reconstituted as the 3008th GR Company, with platoon headquarters establishments as prescribed by T/O & E, 10–297, and a fourth platoon.[126] Then the 3063d GR Company, which had been assigned by the War Department to the Central Pacific theater, during November 1944, arrived at Honolulu on 11 December.[127] With the 604th GR Company allotted to garrison forces on recently conquered islands, and one platoon of the 3008th attached to the 81st Division, which served in the Palau Islands campaign, there remained seven platoons available to the Tenth Army. The headquarters detachments of both companies, together with the 3d and 4th Platoons of the 3063d, were

---

[121] *Ibid.*

[122] Roy E. Appleman, *et al.*, *Okinawa: The Last Battle*, in U. S. ARMY IN WORLD WAR II (Washington, 1948), pp. 25–26.

[123] Ryukyus, XXIV Corps Action Rpt, 1 Apr–30 Jun 45, pp. 13, 19. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 224–0.3 (11658).

[124] See above, ch. III, The North African Landings.

[125] The case of the 45th Infantry Division in the Sicilian landing is again cited. See below, ch. V, The Sicilian Campaign. Although supported by a veteran GR Platoon, this inexperienced division was unable for some time to meet the command responsibility regarding care of the dead. Pleas of the division GRO, Major Gricius, for instruction in certain fundamentals of graves registration as a part of basic military training should not be overlooked.

[126] (1) Hist of QM Opns, USAF, MIDPAC, pp. 256–257. (2) Ltr, Lt Col L. Duenweg, Asst AG, USAT, POA, to CG's Tenth Army and CPBC, 22 Feb 45, sub: Disbandment of 1st Provisional QM Gr Reg Co and Activation of 3008th QM Gr Reg Co.

[127] Station list, 3063d GR Co, Orgn & Dir Sec, Opn Br, AGO.

Digitized by Google

attached to the XXIV Corps. The remaining five platoons were attached to Army divisions—the 1st and 2d Platoon, 3063d GR Company, to the 27th and 77th Divisions respectively, the 2d, 3d and 4th Platoons, 3008th Company, to the 7th, 96th and 77th Divisions in the order mentioned.[128] It will be noted that three platoons of the reconstituted Provisional Graves Registration Company (the 3008th) continued to serve with the XXIV Corps, as organized for the assault phase of ICEBERG,[129] and that the 77th Division, because of the special nature of its mission, claimed the support of two graves registration platoons—one from the 3008th, another from the recently arrived 3063d.[130]

Along with a liberal allocation of Quartermaster Graves Registration Service Platoons, the scheme of associating provisional field salvage units with graves registration personnel in the work of evacuation and burial was retained. A subsequent opinion offered in justification of this arrangement was that "an undue burden is imposed upon a combat unit if it is required to evacuate and bury its own dead." [131]

According to Operational Directive Logistics No. 5, Army, Navy and Marine Corps units were to be governed by the publications and directives of their respective services. The Tenth Army Graves Registration Service would operate under technical direction of the Staff Quartermaster at Army Headquarters and would consist of the Army Graves Registration Officer and the organic graves registration units assigned to the operational control of Army Headquarters. Aside from this basic definition, the directive contained a set of planning instructions to lower echelons concerning location of cemeteries (specifying "inland sites where practicable"), identification, burial, handling of effects and the preparation and dissemination of burial reports. In this reference, the following was prescribed: (1) Report of Interment, GRS Form No. 1; (2) Weekly Report of Interment, GRS Form No. 2; (3) Plot Plans of cemeteries, which were to be submitted to Army Headquarters upon commencement of burial; (4) reports of isolated burials, including sketch maps showing geographical location and references to permanent landmarks.[132]

[128] (1) Action Rpt, Island Command, Okinawa, 13 Dec 44–30 Jun 45 (dated 30 Jun 45), p. 8-XV-28. (2) Cf. 77th Inf Div Opn Rpt, ICEBERG, Phase I, p. 3. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 377–0.3 (7005). Only one attached GR platoon—4th Plat, 3008th GR Co—is shown attached between 25 Apr and 30 Jun 45.

[129] See Troop List, XXIV Corps, Ryukyus Campaign, Incl I to Action Rpt.

[130] XXIV Corps Action Rpt, 1 Apr–30 Jun 45, p. 85. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 224.3 (11658) Ryukyus. Cf. 77th Div Opn Rpt, ICEBERG, p. 3. Only one GR platoon—the 4th, 3008th GR Co—is shown attached between 25 April and 30 June 1945.

[131] Tenth Army Action Rpt, 26 Mar–30 Jun 45 (dated 3 Sep 45), p. 11-I-38. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 110–0.3 (17865).

[132] Operational Directive Logistics No. 5, Tenth Army, 1 Jan 45. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, P & O File Drawer 1238: 33.

964114—52——12

Although concealed in ready-made phrases and passages borrowed from old orders, the Corps and divisional annexes reveal some improvement in the art of relating estimated possibilities of a given tactical situation to announced policy requirements. The XXIV Corps specified that commanding generals of divisions and commanding officers of regiments, battalions, companies and other separate units "will provide the necessary labor troops for the prompt removal of all bodies to readily distinguishable collecting points near trails or roads, taking care to remove bodies found in pill boxes or covered by debris and rubble." It was further specified that the dead "will be evacuated, if practicable to the nearest cemetery of the service concerned." [133]

After invoking the customary injunction against isolated burials and indicating the standard procedures that would be followed in establishing positive identifications, including, of course, due precautions as to proper disposition of identification tags, it was stated that "divisions will organize appropriate Field Service Salvage Units from organic or attached service personnel for the purpose of evacuating deceased from collecting points to established cemeteries." These units were to commence operations, "as soon as the situation warrants," preferably on L or L plus 1, and would accomplish graves registration activities in the following order:

a. Promptly collect all bodies from local collecting points.
b. Supervise the digging of graves, filling of same. All graves will be so dug that there will be a minimum of 5 feet of soil, sand, or gravel over each body. Graves will not be mounded unless necessary to provide minimum cover.
c. Cover and transport remains to proper section in temporary cemeteries.
d. Guard against looting and removal of identification.[134]

Explicit details of procedures for collection and evacuation of remains are set forth in the 27th Division plan. Regimental commanders were responsible for evacuation of friendly dead from their zones to a division collecting point which was to be located, if possible, in close proximity to the supply dump. A provisional or "Combat Salvage Collecting" platoon was to operate in the zone of each infantry regiment "for the purpose of locating friendly remains and moving them to the nearest roadside." All empty trucks returning for supplies were to pick up remains so placed and carry them to the division collecting point. Delivery would be made direct to the cemetery whenever

[133] Annex Love to Adm O 10, 10 Feb 45, Par 2, Fld & Adm Orders, XXIV Corps, 1945, sub: Opn ICEBERG. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, P & O File Drawer 1238: 33.

[134] *Ibid.*, Par. 5.

Digitized by Google

the site was so far removed from the dump as to necessitate unnecessary travel by supply vehicles. Otherwise the division commander would be responsible for the movement of bodies to the cemetery, utilizing transportation under his control for this haul.[135]

Location of the division cemetery would be made by G–1, and operated by the attached graves registration platoon under direction of the division Quartermaster. Bulldozers for grave digging were to be furnished by shore party engineers on request of the Quartermaster, through G–4. The Salvage Collecting Company would supply labor at the cemetery until civilian internees became available.[136]

In the event that RCTs or regiments should operate separately, provision was made for the attachment of supporting graves registration and combat salvage collecting details. This phase of the plan stipulated that a graves registration squad composed of two enlisted men from a platoon of the 3065th GR Company and five members of the 27th Combat Salvage Collecting Company would be attached to each BLT. The stated mission of such squads would be "to establish, if necessary, an island cemetery at a point designated by the Battalion Commander and to perform necessary identification registration and preparation of bodies for burial." [137]

Burial of enemy dead continued to be a responsibility of combat commanders in their respective zones of action; they were to be assisted, "insofar as possible," by the Combat Salvage Collecting Company. The 27th Division's operation report would indicate that the disposition of enemy remains continued to be a sanitary undertaking. It is related that salvage squads were equipped with a pressure-type decontaminating apparatus for application of sodium arsenite solution and "specially constructed dragging hooks and hook poles to facilitate removal of enemy dead." It is also noted that "surgical face masks were issued to the men, and when saturated with hair tonic, were found to be beneficial in preventing nausea." [138]

The 96th Infantry Division plan for evacuation of remains outlines an organizational scheme somewhat similar to the one published by 3d Division Headquarters during an early phase of the Italian campaign. This similarity is not entirely a matter of coincidence. The 96th prepared its plan for ICEBERG after a brief but strenuous experience in mobile warfare during the conquest of Leyte. The plan itself was written on Leyte. At any rate a unit "Burial and Graves Registration Officer" was to be appointed in all tactical elements of the command—companies, batteries and similar organizations, battalions, regiments and the division. The burial and graves registration officer of battalions and higher echelons was to be assisted by a "Burial and Graves Registration Section." These sections would operate a collecting point system which, with one notable exception, was similar in general features of organization to those prevailing among Fifth Army divisions in Italy prior to the shift of evacuation and burial from divisional to Army control.[139]

While battalion sections were to be composed entirely of combat personnel—the GRO, one noncommissioned officer, and two enlisted men—the regimental section would, aside from the burial and graves registration officer, consist of three enlisted men detached from the graves registration platoon serving the division and 12 "laborers" from the 3240th Quartermaster Service Company who were to assist in evacuation and burial and undertake salvage collection as a secondary mission. The Division Burial and Graves Registration Section would include the attached graves registration platoon, less individuals on detached duty with the regimental sections and 14 enlisted men from the service company, together with one ¾-ton truck and a 1-ton cargo trailer. So organized, the division section would, under direction of the unit burial and graves registration officer, become responsible for assisting regiments, battalions and companies in evacuation of the dead, operation of the division collecting point and evacuation therefrom "to the division or corps, cemetery," and the supervision and coordination of all burial and graves registration activities within the division.[140]

Graves registration operations of the Okinawa campaign began on L–3 (28 March 1945) when an organic burial unit of the 305th Infantry Regiment, 77th Division, opened a United States Armed Forces Cemetery on Zamami Shima, an island of the Kerama group which lies off the west coast of Okinawa and which, according to plan, was to be used as a fleet anchorage. This cemetery remained a responsibility of the 77th Division until 10 April, when transfer of Kerama to the Island Command was effected.[141]

[135] Appendix to Annex Love, Tentative Opn Plans, 27th Inf Div, 10 Feb 45 (including correction through 16 Mar 45), Par 1. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, P & O File Drawer A1237: 29.

[136] *Ibid.*

[137] *Ibid.*

[138] Opn Rpt, 27th Inf Div, 1 Jan–30 Jun 45, Phase One, Nansei Shoto, p. 89. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, Opn Rpts, Red Vault.

[139] Appendix 6 to Annex No. 11, FO No. 12, 96th Inf Div, 5 Mar 45, sub: ICEBERG. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, P & O Drawer A1237: 25.

[140] *Ibid.*

[141] (1) Tenth Army Action Rpt, RYUKYUS, p. 7–II–1. (2) Action Rpt, Island Command, Okinawa, 13 Dec 44–30 Jun 45 (dated 30 Jun 45), p. 7–11–4.

Digitized by Google

Meantime the XXIV and III Amphibious Corps (Marine) had stormed ashore on the West Coast of Okinawa, near the narrow waist of the island, and after encountering little serious resistance in establishing a lodgement area, pushed inland, the Marines turning north, while the XXIV Corps (7th and 96th Divisions with the 27th in floating reserve) struck southward toward the main concentration of Japanese garrison troops. Favored by these circumstances, both Army divisions avoided the distraction of beachhead burials and proceeded methodically with the establishment of inland cemeteries at points near highways traversing the zone of communications.[142]

During the afternoon of L plus 1 the 7th Division Cemetery site was selected jointly by G–1, the shore commander and the Division Quartermaster. Then the 2d Platoon, 3008th GR Company, moved immediately to the location and began preparations for burial. The units, according to report, "evacuated friendly dead from their respective zones to central collecting points, from which personnel of the attached Quartermaster Service Company moved bodies to the division cemetery." Despite torrential rains and expanding seas of mud, evacuation continued without serious interruption to this cemetery as the corps fought its way over some 20 miles of rugged terrain into the southern reaches of the island. The added burden incurred by lengthening the distance of evacuation was preferred to "the difficulty of establishing separate temporary burial plots which would have to be evacuated later." [143]

Other XXIV Corps division cemeteries were established under similar conditions. On L plus 3 the 96th Division opened its first cemetery at a point some 2 miles south of the 7th Division cemetery. After landing on 10 April to reinforce the XXIV Corps the 27th Division selected a cemetery site near Chiyunna, 2 miles southward from the 96th Division cemetery. The 77th Division, after having completed its mission of clearing up the Kerama Islands and Ie Shima to the north, landed on Okinawa late in April to relieve the 96th Division. The 77th "located its cemetery adjacent to that of the 96th Division, which had been in place since L plus 3." [144] These four division cemeteries, it should be noted, were located within a narrow area, about 4 miles in length and skirting the landing beaches.[145]

On 16 April the Island Command, after rejecting as unsuitable an area previously allotted for burial purposes, selected one adjoining the 27th Division Cemetery. Two plots were reserved for the 27th while another was set aside for the 96th Division when this unit returned to the front.[146]

The standard cemetery plan prescribed by The Quartermaster General was followed in developing the Island Command Cemetery, as well as those established and operated by the divisions. The trench method of interment was generally adopted, bulldozers being used for the excavation of trenches to a depth of four feet. Hand labor was then employed for the additional foot in completing individual graves. Better results were attained when a ditch digging machine was substituted for the customary bulldozer.

> A Barber-Green ditch digger was borrowed from the Engineer Depot for use in the Island Cemetery. In this cemetery, individual graves of prescribed dimensions were opened and closed in a minimum of time. This eliminated movement of large amounts of earth required by the trench method.[147]

During the final stage of Japanese resistance, "along a rigid defense line of hill and ravines," considerable difficulty was encountered in collecting and evacuating the dead. A tactical situation reminiscent of bloody Biak endured for some time. At many points along this desperately contested front bodies of friend and foe alike lay for days between the lines.[148] Any deterioration of morale in consequence of the corpse-strewn battlefield was, no doubt, more than compensated by knowledge that the enemy was slowly giving ground toward the brink of sheer cliffs that fell into the sea.

Disposition of enemy remains was conducted along planned lines as a sanitary undertaking. "Enemy dead," it is stated, "were generally buried on the spot." Improved apparatus for spraying sodium arsenite and such new contrivances as dragging hooks and pole hooks lent efficiency to the conduct of this gruesome task.[149]

One aspect of the Okinawa campaign was unique in American graves registration history. A considerable

---

[142] (1) Tenth Army Action Rpt, RYUKYUS, p. 7–III–3. (2) 27th Div Opn Rpt, p. 24. One RCT, 27th Div, landed on the Eastern Islands; the Division, less that RCT, would land on OKINAWA, over secured beaches, in support of the XXIV Corps. A cemetery containing 12 bodies was established by the detached RCT on Tsugen Shima. *Ibid.*, p. 90. (3) XXIV Corps Action Rpt, pp. 24–25.

[143] 7th Div Opn Rpt, Ryukyus Campaign, p. 67. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, 307–0.3 (1037).

[144] (1) Tenth Army Action Rpt, p. 11–I–38. (2) The 77th Division passed to control of XXIV on 27 Apr, unloaded on the 28th "and relief of the 96th Infantry Division was begun on 29 Apr 1945." 77th Div Opn Rpt, p. 35.

[145] For geographical location of these four cemeteries see map, U. S. Armed Forces Cemeteries, Okinawa, p. 163.

[146] Island Command Action Rpt, p. 8–XV–29.

[147] *Ibid.*

[148] *Ibid.*

[149] (1) *Ibid.*, p. 8–XV–30. (2) 27th Div Opn Rpt, p. 89.

Digitized by Google

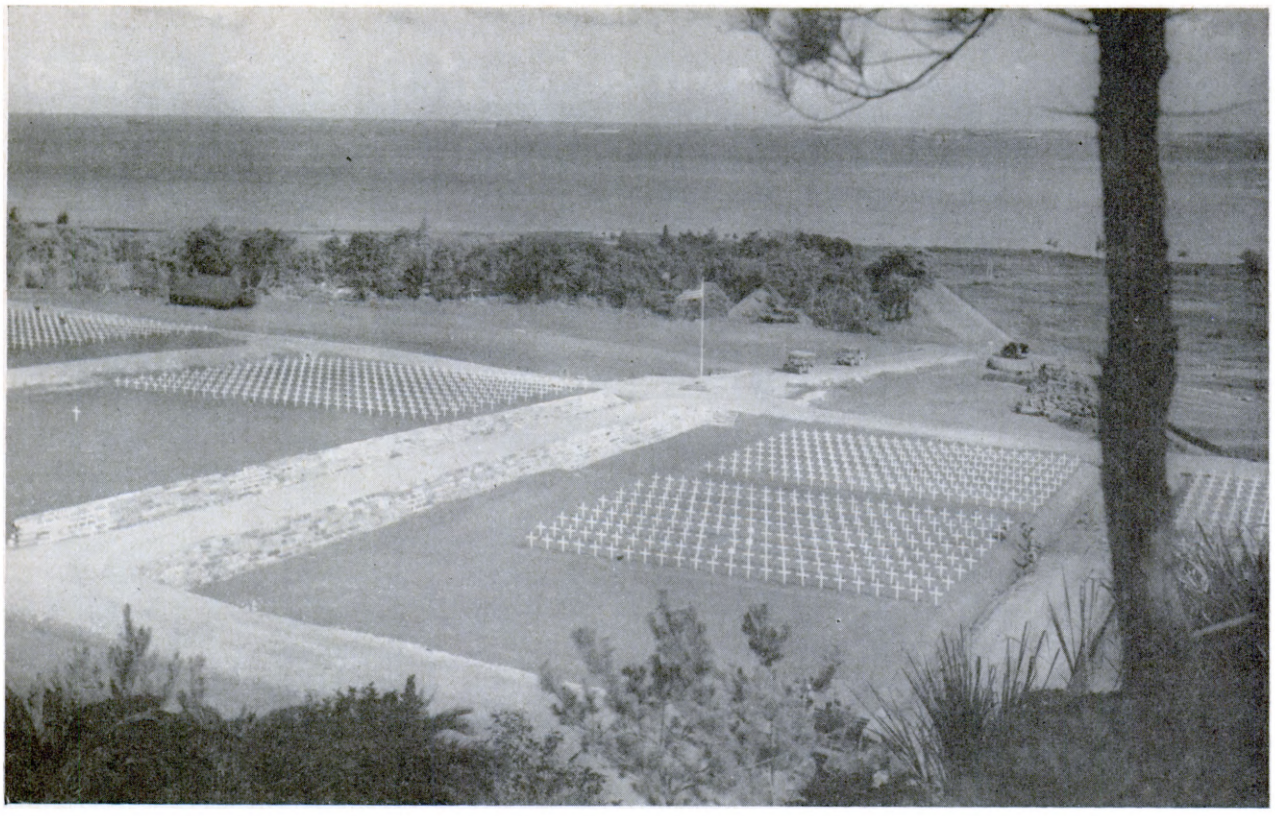


Figure 28.—U. S. Armed Forces Cemetery, Island Command, Okinawa, Ryukyu Islands.

number of deaths caused by incessant Kamikaze (suicide plane) attacks against naval craft on station in coastal waters necessitated the adoption of extraordinary methods to cope with this unprecedented situation. A beach was designated as a sort of central collecting point, where charred and mutilated remains from the stricken ships were received by a special Army detail and evacuated in motor trucks to the Island Cemetery.[150]

In all, eight temporary cemeteries were established during the Ryukyus campaign. These included the 96th Division Cemetery No. 2 and that of the 27th Division, which were incorporated in the Island Command Cemetery:

Name	*Date of Opening*
USAF Cemetery, Zamami Shima	28 March
1st Marine Division Cemetery, Okinawa	2 April
6th Marine Division Cemetery, Okinawa	2 April
7th Division Cemetery, Okinawa	2 April
96th Division Cemetery, Okinawa	3 April
77th Division Cemetery, Okinawa	5 May
Island Command Cemetery, Ie Shima	17 April
Island Command Cemetery, Okinawa	16 April [151]

[151] *Ibid.*

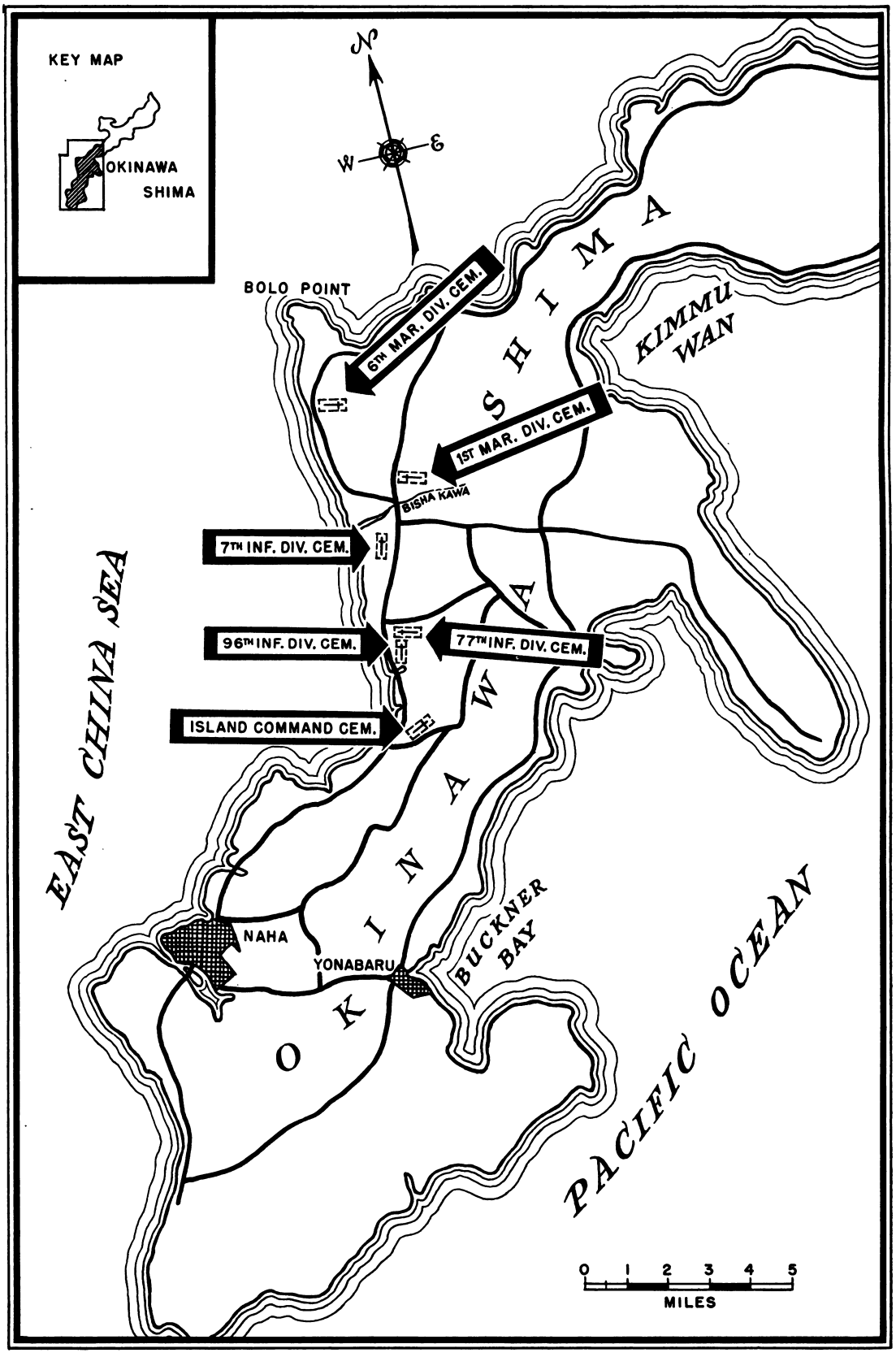
A summary of burials by units gives the following tabulation:

	Identified				*Unidentified*			
Unit	*Army*	*Navy*	*Marine*	*Others*	*Army*	*Navy*	*Marine*	*Others*
7th Inf Div	1,174	212	4	2	34	16	0	0
27th Inf Div	658	2	5	0	30	0	0	0
77th Inf Div	1,127	413	5	6	38	35	3	20
96th Inf Div	1,572	21	19	0	29	1	0	1
1st Marine Div	16	79	1,322	1	0	3	35	0
6th Marine Div	11	91	1,523	0	1	3	48	3
AGT 331	90	169	48	1	0	3	0	19
AGT 245	254	58	11	3	1	4	0	[152] 1

[150] Island Command Action Rpt, p. 8-XV-29.

[152] Tenth Army Action Rpt., p. 11-I-38.

Digitized by Google



Map 3.—U. S. Armed Forces Cemeteries, Okinawa.

Digitized by Google

Mention in the 96th Division graves registration operations plan of a contingency which might require divisions to evacuate their dead to a corps cemetery[153] suggests that such a possibility had been contemplated but, for one reason or another, found expression only in the plan of this division. Then the fact that the 77th and 96th Divisions selected adjoining sites for their cemeteries, and that the 27th and 96th Divisions subsequently evacuated their dead to plots within the Island Command Cemetery, may be construed as additional evidence of a trend toward consolidated burial and in a corps or army cemetery. All the facts of this situation, however, establish beyond much doubt that provisions in the Tenth Army Operations Directive Logistics No. 5, assigning division commanders full responsibility for establishment and operation of cemeteries, was never seriously modified during the campaign. Appearances to the contrary can only be regarded as evidence of an incomplete or incipient transition. In the first place, the divisions retained their attached platoons. Again, the chance selection of adjacent sites for cemeteries of two different divisions induced no changes in the organization or procedures of organic and attached graves registration units. In other words, units supporting divisions with cemeteries physically remote from one another operated in much the same manner as those serving divisions whose cemeteries happened to occupy adjoining sites.

As a matter of fact, no strong inducement arose during the fighting in Okinawa to seek economies that might have been realized by shifting control of evacuation and burial from the division to a higher echelon. A review of graves registration experience in all the theaters will establish that every situation which witnessed such a shift was conditioned by circumstances that imposed more economical methods in utilizing the available number of graves registration units. This was certainly the case in Italy during August 1944 when a single Quartermaster Graves Registration Company, the 47th, was left to support the Fifth Army.[154] As anticipated in preinvasion planning, the conventional system of evacuation and burial on a divisional basis became inoperative during the tremendous battles for the Normandy lodgement area.[155]

Swift advances created a different but equally unbearable sort of strain, as demonstrated by the Seventh Army's rapid push up the Rhone Valley, and the Sixth Army's precipitate progress through the Central Valley of Luzon toward Manila. On Okinawa, however, the distance of evacuation never exceeded 20 miles, nor did the rate of advance outrun the services of supply. The conventional system of graves registration survived, not because it was the most economical that might have been devised, but rather for the reason that conditions of the tactical situation did not bring a system of limited capabilities to the breaking point. Such, at any rate, appears to have been the final judgment at Island Command Headquarters.

> Terrain and tactical conditions on Okinawa warranted a larger consolidation of burials than occurred. When an operation occurs with a tactical condition and terrain similar to Okinawa, burials should be consolidated.[156]

Here, indeed, is a solemn warning against implicit faith in the time-honored aphorism that "nothing succeeds like success." It implies that those who, as a matter of course, insist on applying old methods to new situations may undergo the painful experience of learning that nothing fails like success.

---

[153] Appendix 6 to Annex No. 11, FO No. 12, 96th Inf Div, 5 Mar 45, sub: ICEBERG. Hist Rec Sec, AGO, P & O file drawer A 1237: 25. Under Par 3 (Duties), Appendix 6, it is stated that the "Regimental Burial and Graves Registration Officers . . . will . . . Evacuate bodies to Division Collecting Point or to Division or Corps Cemetery." *Ibid.*

[154] See Chapter V, above.

[155] As narrated in chapter VI, above, the transitions from division to corps controlled cemeteries, together with recall of attached graves registration platoons from divisions, began before the Utah and Omaha beachheads had been fully consolidated.

[156] Island Command Action Rpt, p. 8-XV-30.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII

Reorganization of Memorial Division as Staff of the Chief, AGRS

DESIGNATION of The Quartermaster General as Chief, American Graves Registration Service, was not sufficient in itself to abolish those administrative impediments that had accumulated since March 1941 when, in consequence of relegating the Memorial Division to the status of a branch, additional levels of authority had been interposed between The Quartermaster General and his executive assistant in graves registration matters. Complete realization of the intent behind this designation awaited two separate developments. In the first place, the procedural barrier that must be penetrated every time the chief of the Memorial Branch sought counsel with The Quartermaster General would endure so long as the Memorial organization remained a branch. In the second place, this agency, although required to operate under personnel ceilings pertaining to a branch of the Office of The Quartermaster General, must somehow contrive to meet the increasing demands of war in order that its chief might properly discharge his responsibilities as executive assistant and policy advisor to the Chief of the American Graves Registration Service.

Establishment of the Overseas Branch in the Memorial Division on 22 December 1941, with the assignment of handling burial records of the overseas dead, including the classification, recording, and carding of all mortalities, imposed a personnel requirement over and above those applying to the permanent branches of the division. It was to be expected, of course, that augmentation of the forces from some 1,500,000 effectives to an estimated peak of over 8,000,000 would greatly increase the workload of these branches in the continued performance of their function of caring for military dead in the United States. An estimate of this increased workload and the consequent determination of personnel requirements could have been calculated with a reasonable degree of accuracy on the basis of death rates pertaining to given age levels. Insurance statistics furnished ample data for any such calculation. But any attempt to forecast the rate of death in battle invaded the realm of prophecy. While the gift of prophecy is not included among the qualifications of an administrator, it is generally conceded that a wise forecast of administrative requirements would have precluded the curtailment of an agency in the act of assuming increased responsibilities and obligations. Reorganization of the division as a branch and assignment to Service Installations some 3 months after Pearl Harbor was accomplished in disregard of such considerations. The legacy of this short-sighted policy was far reaching; by 1 January 1943 the number of civilian employees, both supervisory and clerical, had fallen from 54 to 44, and on 14 August of that year the total civilian strength had declined to 33.[1] In the meantime, the six branches of the division, as organized on 24 December 1941, had become sections of the branch established on 31 March 1942, while the former sections were relegated to the status of subsections.

Inadequacy of Branch Organization

Change in designation of the component elements cannot, of course, be assigned as a cause for decline in efficiency. Increase in the workload and inability to replace vacancies, together with the fact that a branch chief could not plead his cause as effectively as a divisional director did, however, have serious consequences. It should be realized in this connection that the Director, Service Installations Division, who became responsible for the performance of the Memorial Branch, faced the peculiar difficulty of employing a ready-made administrative device in directing the affairs of several unrelated activities—Remount, Salvage and Surplus Property, Laundry, C. C. C., and Memorial—each one of which had less in common with its divisional bedfellows than the other and fairly

[1] Ltr, Col R. P. Harbold through TQMG to Dir of Opns, ASF, 14 Aug 44, sub: Determination of the Disposal of the Dead, Proposed Plan, Sec A, Part II, p. 5. This document was listed by the Special Planning Division, WDGS, as Policy Study No. 34. See below, footnote 36.

Digitized by Google

homogeneous divisions of the Office of The Quartermaster General had with one another.[2] Col. C. S. Hamilton, who took over the Service Installations Division when it was set up as a sort of catch-all for these miscellaneous functions, does not appear on the record as either unmindful of or unsympathetic to the problems of his Memorial Branch. Some attention has already been given to his efforts during July 1943 in bringing the Northwest Service Command into proper subordination to the requirements of graves registration policy. As early as March of that year he became fully aware that the branch was undermanned and gave his approval to recommendations seeking immediate relief. It was urged in support of this request that the work of the National Cemetery Section had increased by 33⅓ percent on account of the augmented strength of the Army and, unless an addition to the clerical forces of this section was authorized, it would be impossible to keep abreast of current demands; that a 400-percent increase in the work of the Overseas Section within the last month justified a request for 62 additional employees in that section.[3] After recommending a substantial increase for the Overseas Section, Colonel Hamilton submitted a revised schedule for the coming fiscal year. This schedule included a request for the immediate addition of 14 clerks, 5 of whom were to be assigned to the Overseas Section. A total of 78 clerks comprised the estimated additional force required by June 30, 1944; 14 were to be added during April–May 1943, with monthly increases aggregating 64 spread through the fiscal year 1944.[4]

It was apparent by April 1943 that the Overseas Section was not serving the purpose for which it was established in December 1941. Intended then to function as a central office of mortuary records, the section was confronted from the start with opposition to such augmentation of operating strength as became necessary in carrying the increased burden of expanding battle casualties. This want of balance not only prevented orderly procedures in the development of a vital function but also pointed to the false economy of supporting by half measures an activity caught in the drift of conflicting policies.

Data flowed to the Overseas Section in two main streams. First there were death and missing in action reports, which were transmitted daily through The Adjutant General's Office. Then there was an intermittent flow from various graves registration headquarters in the overseas theaters, including notices of original interment and weekly burial reports. The Card and File Subsection transformed this flow into two separate card files, identical in content but different in the method of arrangement. One, the "master file," followed the alphabetical sequence of names of decedents; the other, known as the "cemetery file," was arranged in accordance with location of burial. The Statistical Subsection classified the statistical information in all reports and included it in cumulative tables. The Correspondence Subsection employed data assembled in both the card files and statistical tables for corresponding with the general public and relatives of the deceased.[5]

Upon receipt of a death report by the Card and File Subsection, two identical cards were separately typed, giving the name, serial number, rank, organization of the decedent, and emergency address of the next of kin. These cards were then checked by the Statistical Subsection and filed, one in the master file, the other in the cemetery file. Subsequent receipt of interment reports caused search of the master and cemetery files for death report cards of the decedents reported buried. When these were withdrawn from their files, the burial data were typed upon both cards. The cards were then sent to the Statistical Subsection for check against the burial report. Any discrepancies that brought the accuracy of either report into question were noted and corrected by contacting the proper agency. If no death report cards were found, the burial report was held in suspense. The completed cards, that is, the death report cards with the burial information added, were sent to the Administrative Assistant for signature. After final verification by that officer they were returned to the Card and File Subsection for placement in their proper files.

The weekly burial reports were, upon arrival in the Card and Files Subsection, checked against the incomplete death report cards and those to which burial information had been added. If no evidence of death or burial was revealed by these steps, the check was extended to the burial reports held in suspense. Missing in action reports occasioned a similar checking process

[2] OQMG OO 84, 31 Mar 42, Appendix B, par. 13, Svc Instls: "Preparation of policies for the operation of all Remount activities of the Army of the United States (except Procurement); the operation of Quartermaster Remount Depots, Remount Areas and Army Horse Breeding Programs . . .; maintenance, repair and salvage of supplies and equipment; formulates policies, plans and directs the operation of all C. C. C. activities charged to the Quartermaster Corps; operation of Quartermaster laundries . . .; direction and supervision of national military parks, monuments, national posts and cemeteries in the United States, Alaska and Mexico City; disposition of remains of the Army of the United States."

[3] IRS, Svc Instls Div (Hamilton), to Fiscal Div OQMG, 17 Mar. 43.

[4] "Schedule of Additional Personnel Required in Memorial Branch" was prepared by the branch and submitted to the Director, Service Installations Division, as an attachment to an intraoffice memorandum from the Memorial Branch (Bussche) to Director, Service Installations, 16 April 1943.

[5] Description of these procedures is based on the Process Charts, Summary of Recommendations (Overseas Section), Personnel Survey—Memorial Branch, 1 July 1943. See note 9, below.

Digitized by Google

in order to eliminate any possibility that a burial report held in suspense might disclose the name and serial number of the individual reported missing, or that this individual might have been previously listed as dead and subsequently buried. No provision, however, had as yet been made to establish an agency responsible for the identification of unknowns. Nor had the master and cemetery files been supplemented by a cartographical scheme of recording burials by placing names of the dead on detailed plots of the cemeteries in which they had been buried.

A steadily increasing volume of correspondence with relatives of the dead, Government agencies, and the general public, as conducted by the Correspondence Subsection, presented a unique problem, any satisfactory solution of which involved a choice of conflicting requirements. The composition of letters to bereaved kinsfolk of the dead required patience, tact, and in many instances an ability to express a personal note of sympathy. There can be no denial, of course, that dispatch in handling all types of correspondence is a rule that no responsible administrator can ignore. Here the choice of conflicting requirements consisted of balancing the cost of securing additional employees to maintain established standards of excellence in an increasing volume of correspondence against the consequences of using form letters and ready-made paragraphs for accelerating production by the original force. So far the Memorial Branch had refused to compromise its policy of individual excellence by the adoption of methods making for stereotyped efficiency. It held that the Government of the United States could not afford to disregard the feelings of one related by blood or marriage to a soldier who had given his life in defense of the Nation. Proper observance of such an obligation certainly forbade the practice of using synthetic messages, even in the interests of protecting a fixed personnel ceiling.[6]

In considering the evolution of the graves registration function since 7 December 1941, it becomes apparent that the problems attending policy development before the war and those accompanying the growth of administrative devices for the implementation of policy during hostilities present a curious sort of parallelism. The prewar tendency to ignore graves registration matters persisted into the period of hostilities to the extent of delaying action on vital aspects until pressure of circumstances forbade further delay. It will be recalled that much of the delay in promulgating the War Department directive of 18 February 1941, requiring establishment of graves registration services in the overseas commands, was caused by dissatisfaction on the part of the Chief of Staff, General Headquarters, with the status of planning for recovery of personal effects, to say nothing of strong opposition to the proposal that joint responsibility be assigned The Quartermaster General and The Adjutant General in disseminating burial information.[7] It will also be recalled that the embarrassing situation produced by exercise of this joint authority, together with the chaotic state of affairs resulting from disregard by the Northwest Service Command of specified procedures governing return of remains to the United States, precipitated in July 1943 the action which led to formal designation on 11 September 1943, of The Quartermaster General as Chief, American Graves Registration Service, along with authority deemed adequate to discharge responsibilities associated with the office.[8]

Personnel Utilization Survey

The month of July 1943 is notable in graves registration affairs for another reason: Colonel Hamilton's representations of 17 March led to a personnel utilization survey of the Memorial Branch, the findings of which were submitted on 1 July.[9] Conducted under authority of the Director, Organization Planning and Control Division, this report offered a summary recommendation "that the organizational structure of the Branch be refined by merging the Planning and Requirements Section in with the National Cemetery Section, and the Fiscal with the Administrative Section." [10] In addition to consolidating 6 sections into 4, 22 subsections were to be reduced to 5 in accordance with the belief that the branch was "too finely divided

[6] Objections to the use of form letters, as suggested in various recommendations of the survey, are presented in the pages immediately following.

[7] *Cf.* Memo, GHQ (Graham. QMC) for TQMG, 19 Jan 42. GHQ insisted that "information to relatives and friends concerning graves location, disposal of remains and effects, and other burial matters should be given only by The Quartermaster General." As narrated in chapter II, the original draft for restricted WD Circular (unnumbered) of 18 February 1942, was submitted by TQMG on 16 January 1942.

[8] Reference is made to the communication signed by Brig. Gen. Pope, Director, General Administrative Services Division, conveying on 15 July 1943, the original draft for WD Circular No. 206, 11 September 1943, designating TQMG as Chief, AGRS.

[9] These findings were embodied in a report entitled "Better Utilization of Personnel Survey, OQMG—Service Installation Division, Memorial Branch," dated 1 July 1943. The report consists of two parts and an appendix of Exhibits, A–F. The first part consists of a summary of recommendations (48 in number), resulting from separate studies of the branch as a whole and of the separate sections. These recommendations are presented on form sheets and numbered consecutively in accordance with the office to which they refer, that is, Memorial Branch, 1–11, Overseas Section 1–9, etc. The sheets have no paging. The second part offers a supplement to the report, including general comments on the 48 recommendations, and is paged continuously 1–8. This document is hereinafter cited as Personnel Survey-Memorial Branch, 1 July 1943.

[10] Summary of Recommendations (Memorial Branch, No. 11), Personnel Survey-Memorial Branch, 1 July 1943.

Digitized by Google

for the number of employees, volume of work and functions performed." [11] By means of this rearrangement of organizational elements and the adoption of new procedures calculated to enhance the productivity of each transposed element, it was predicted that all backlogs could be dissipated and additional responsibilities assumed with an increase of only two employees. The Overseas Section which now staggered under the heaviest backlog of all and which must assume an augmented workload of unpredictable proportions in the near future, was given the assurance that it could get along with one less employee than it already had.[12]

Of the 48 recommendations offered in the report of 1 July 1943, 9 were devoted to the Overseas Section. It was thought that the existing subdivision of the Overseas Section into 3 subsections typified the faulty organization of the branch as a whole and it was recommended that the organizational setup be refined by eliminating all subsections.[13] This was to be accomplished by combining the Card and Filing Subsection with the Statistical Subsection and consolidating all correspondence of the branch in the Administrative Section. A reallocation of functions along these lines, it was predicted, would not only achieve the simplification of a structure that suffered the disability of being "too finely divided" but offered prospects of solving the difficult problem of conducting correspondence with relatives of the dead "by the use of form letters or form paragraphs" for enumerated subjects, including "Return of remains . . . Place of Burial . . . Burial Flags . . .," etc.[14]

The survey report could find no justification for the practice of checking the weekly report of burials, insisting that this report "is a listing of the various interment reports that have been sent in by the theaters" and that "the extra work caused in his connection is not offset by the benefit (rarely realized) of having a name appear on the list for which no report has been received." [15] In addition to the elimination of an activity deemed superfluous, the report proposed a time-saving device that, according to detailed calculations, would permit a redirection of misapplied productivity in the Overseas Section to the dissipation of current backlogs. A careful search for needless duplication of work disclosed that identical death report cards for the master (or alphabetical) and the cemetery files were separately typed. Duplication in this operation could be eliminated by the simple process of making one carbon copy. It was pointed out that the selection of suitable card stock and carbon paper would give the desired results and thus "reduce by one-half the time now required to prepare and check these cards." Acceptance of these suggestions, the report concluded, would lead to happy results.[16]

This optimism was not shared by Col. R. P. Harbold, recently appointed chief of the Memorial Branch. The contention that the organizational structure was too finely divided for the number of employees, volume of work, and functions performed was challenged by the observation that the existence of pronounced lines of demarcation between the various sections of the branch forbade consolidation of their functions and duties with those of other sections.[17]

Historical precedent was then invoked to expose the false economy of maintaining excessively low personnel ceilings. It was noted that after World War I the office force of the Graves Registration Service Division in Washington consisted of more than 400 civilian personnel, while the American Graves Registration Service in Tours, and later in Paris, was in excess of that number. "This large increase," according to Colonel Harbold, "was necessary because preparation for the tremendous task . . . had not been made during the period of hostilities." He added: "In this World War we have a skeleton organization, the key personnel of which is most thoroughly informed on their present duties, can plan and train present and additional personnel to meet the demands as they constantly increase . . . I can emphatically state that my visualization based on personal estimates of present and future battle fronts and areas, probable casualties, length of the duration and complexity of transportation problems, is stupendous and overawing." [18]

The proposal to consolidate all correspondence in the Administrative Section aroused stiff opposition. The

[11] Supplement, p. 1, *ibid.*

[12] Summary of Recommendations (Overseas Section), *ibid.* The "Strength Recommended" is shown as 7; the "Strength Before" (as of 9 May 1943) is 8.

[13] Summary Recommendations, (Overseas Section, No. 9), Personnel Survey-Memorial Branch, 1 July 1943.

[14] *Ibid.*, No. 5.

[15] *Ibid.*, No. 8.

[16] (1) *Ibid.*, No. 1. (2) Supplement, p. 5, Personnel Survey-Memorial Branch, 1 July 1943.

[17] Memo, Mem Br (Harbold) to Organization Planning and Control Division, 24 July 1943, p. 3. This division is hereinafter cited as OP&C. The document cited here comprises a 14-page commentary on Personnel Survey-Memorial Branch, 1 July 1943. It consists of three parts: (1) an analysis of eight distinctive aspects of the memorial function which, in the opinion of the writer, were not properly appreciated by the survey staff, such as "(a) Inevitability of an increase in the work-load and staffing, not only during the emergency, but after the close of hostilities," and "(g) The non-military character of the functions, duties and responsibilities of the Branch;" (2) the bearing of these dstinctive aspects on the 11 general recommendations offered by the survey report; (3) comments of the section chiefs regarding the specific recommendations for each section. The latter two parts appear as inclosures to the memorandum.

Paging is indicated by reference to the parts mentioned above, that is, inclosure 1, and inclosure 2. Citation of material in inclosure 2 must also be indicated by the Section heading, as the paging in this inclosure is not continuous.

[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 1–2.

Digitized by Google

branch chief was adamant in his stand against the use of form letters and blunt in his condemnation of a device that, in the words of its sponsors, "will standardize replies, will make the handling of correspondence an automatic process and will permit any correspondence clerk to handle this kind of work." [19] Nor was he mollified by the additional promise that "the training of correspondents will be facilitated and a greater flexibility in the use of correspondents will be possible." [20] Even if obtainable, the objectives of such standardization were, in the opinion of the Memorial chief, incompatible with the specialized requirements of the correspondence for which the Overseas Section was responsible. In his opinion letters to relatives and next of kin of the dead demanded the utmost of care in composition; they must be tactful and sympathetic in expression and avoid any suggestion of stereotyped phraseology.[21]

In an inclosure to the branch chief's memorandum of 24 July the various chiefs of sections set forth reasons for concurrence or disagreement with the particular recommendations affecting their respective sections. The chief of the Overseas Section exposed the idea that use of suitable card stock and carbon paper in the production of cemetery cards would solve all his problems. He had tried the scheme a year before and found it wanting.[22]

The proposal that the organizational setup of the Overseas Section "be refined to eliminate all Sub-sections" [23] on the ground that the existing structure was "too finely divided" [24] and that "the preparation of elaborate and detailed statistics not be accomplished until a definite and vital need for them develops," [25] evoked from Lieutenant Colonel Darling, chief of the section, a reply similar in content to the one offered by Colonel Harbold in reference to these points.

> It is of paramount importance that the statistics pertaining to the overseas dead be maintained in this Branch in connection with preparation of plans and estimates for the return of remains at the cessation of hostilities. . . . These statistics represent actual bodies each of which must be treated as an individual case for return to the United States, and unless these statistics are maintained accurately and currently it will not be possible to plan for the return of remains or submit estimates for the same. Furthermore, at the time of the evacuation of cemeteries they will be the only figures available to see that the cemeteries are cleared of all remains as in many instances the physical grave markers placed at individual graves may be destroyed or lost. The failure to compile such statistics during hostilities in the last war greatly hampered the plans for the return of remains and necessitated more clerical help than would otherwise have been necessary had these statistics been compiled and maintained currently during hostilities. It was the experience of the last war, which led to the organization of this section as it is now organized.[26]

Having in mind an enormous increase in the casualty rate during 1944, the chief of the branch and chief of the section tenaciously maintained that the importance of listing all current burial reports and compiling related statistical data could not be minimized. Both rejected the reasoning, urged on grounds of economical office procedure, that the preparation of elaborate and detailed statistics should be deferred "until a vital need for them developed." In opposition to this view they held that, while the value of such data might not be presently apparent, the neglect of any phase of the whole process of recording and classifying burial information as it accumulated in the field diminished the possibilities of assembling these same data at a future date and, therefore, defeated in exact proportion to the amount of time wasted the very purpose which the Overseas Section was intended to serve. To men who had learned their craft in the school of experience, the "vital need" was now or never. They plainly implied that requirements for recording burial data were determined by rows of the dead lying in hundreds of military cemeteries beyond the seas—not by conclusions based on a folio of tentative organizational charts and procedural diagrams in the Office of The Quartermaster General.

These considerations had little weight in the determination of final action on the survey report. Replying to the objections offered by Colonel Harbold and his section chiefs to many of the recommendations framed for their benefit, Brig. Gen. H. A. Barnes, Director, Organization Planning and Control Division, stated that "the purpose of these surveys is to, through the use of outside practioners, bring a fresh viewpoint to this office so that possible improvement in procedure and organization might be developed for the benefit of the operating divisions." [27] After observing that the suggestions developed by this survey were not expected to be infallible, and that "a review of the Survey Report and reply would indicate that 23 of 48 recommendations can be put to use in the Memorial Branch," the general expressed a conviction that "emphasis should

[19] Summary of Recommendations, No. 5 (Overseas Section), Personnel Survey-Memorial Branch, 1 July 1943.
[20] *Ibid.*
[21] Memo, Mem Br to OP&C Div, 24 Jul 43, p. 3.
[22] *Ibid.*, incl 2, Overseas Section, p. 1.
[23] Summary of Recommendations (Overseas Section, No. 9), Personnel Survey-Memorial Branch, 1 July 1943.
[24] Supplement, p. 1, *ibid.*
[25] Summary of Recommendations (Overseas Section, No. 8), *ibid.*
[26] Memo, Mem Br. to OP&C Div, 24 Jul 43, incl 2, Overseas Section, pp. 2–3.
[27] OP&C Div (Brig. Gen. H. A. Barnes) to Dir Svc Instls Div, 3 Aug 43.

Digitized by Google

be placed on the future rather than the present operations," [28] and that this vital consideration was presented in Exhibit F, which, incidentally, allowed an over-all increase of only two employees.[29] For the rest General Barnes urged reconsideration by the branch and section chiefs of several rejected suggestions which appeared "to offer excellent opportunities of improvement." [30] Among these were two which applied to the Overseas Section and which had excited the most strenuous opposition, one being the proposal to manufacture cemetery cards by the carbon process, the other having to do with the solution of correspondence difficulties by using form letters and paragraphs.

In the last analysis this survey contributed little or nothing toward a satisfactory solution of the problem under review. The problem itself was ignored. Granting the assumption that any increase of future workloads would be compensated by restricting the process of checking and compiling burial statistics and that all the proposed efficiency measures would accomplish predicted results, there may have been some logic in sustaining the thesis that no estimate of future obligations, even though envisioned by veteran officers of the Graves Registration Service of World War I as "stupendous and overawing," could justify the existence of 22 subsections in the Memorial Branch. If, however, it should eventuate that promise concerning the suggested efficiency measures were over-sanguine and that proposed curtailment in compiling burial data was manifestly unwise, then the case which had been built up against an allegedly excessive number of small subsections fell to the ground. Since this is precisely what happened, it appears that attention was diverted from the crux of the problem by a disinclination or an inability to appreciate the view of Colonel Harbold and his associates that, aside from a complex diversification of function which required a greater degree of subdivision within the Memorial Branch than encountered elsewhere in the Office of The Quartermaster General, the 22 subsections in question served a useful purpose as the cells of future sections in an intelligently designed divisional organization.[31]

Proposals for Restoration of Divisional Status

As will be seen in subsequent treatment of this theme, a costly experience in relearning the lessons of World War I by trial and error during World War II eventually established the validity of this view. It was not, however, until the reorganization effected on 14 June 1945, several weeks following the end of hostilities in Europe, that the Memorial Division was finally established along lines sketched by the branch chief in July 1943.[32]

Efforts to secure for the Memorial Branch a status commensurate with its growing responsibilities become merged at this juncture in a program of preliminary planning for return of the war dead. In addition to giving a preview of the magnitude of operations that would be required in returning the remains of American dead from every quarter of the globe, this survey emphasized the pleas already made that detailed planning for such operations imposed demands that could not be met so long as the Memorial unit continued to function within the restrictive limitations of a branch. By August 1943 the point had been passed when progressive mobilization of the forces required some consideration of methods whereby the formations presently assembled and those earmarked for future service would eventually be disbanded. In fact, this problem had engaged the attention of the Chief of Staff during April, when he charged the Commanding General, Army Service Forces, "with the duty of preparing plans for the demobilization of our military organization." [33] To this end the Project Planning Division had been set up in the office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Service Commands, and on 22 June 1943 The Quartermaster General was instructed "to study and draw up a body of recommendations in reference to the problem of disposal of the dead." [34] Three phases of this study were stipulated in the instructions: (1) determination of a policy relating to burial overseas and return of the dead to the homeland; (2) the plan of operation, both in the United States and overseas; (3) the possible necessity for expansion of national cemeteries in the United States and the acquisition of sites for cemeteries in foreign countries.[35]

The study assigned to Quartermaster General Gregory and susequently delegated to the chief of the Memorial Branch, presupposed the availability of much of the burial information hidden in backlogs, together

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] Exhibit F, Personnel Survey-Memorial Branch, 1 July 43.

[30] OP&C Div (Barnes) to Dir, Svc Instls Div, 4 Aug 43.

[31] Memo, Mem Br to Dir OP&C Div, 24 July 43, p. 1.

[32] The Overseas Section, excepting for its brief existence from 22 December 1941 to 31 March 1942 as a branch, did not again attain the status of a branch unit until after the conclusion of hostilities in Europe. When on 6 May 1944, Memorial was reorganized on a divisional basis, the Overseas Section was combined with the Planning and Requirements Section in a hybrid agency designated as the Registration, Planning, and Requirements Branch.

[33] Ltr, Brig Gen Wm. F. Tompkins, Deputy CofS, ASF, to TQMG, 22 Jun 43.

[34] Brig Gen Wm. F. Tompkins, Special Planning Division, WDGS, Report on the Status of Demobilization Planning as of 31 December 1943, pp. 66–67. The Project Planning Division, predecessor to the Special Planning Division, WDGS, "submitted on June 18, 1943, the survey of Demobilization Planning in broad outlines, exploring the field of basic policy and broad planning to be followed for demobilization of our forces after the war." *Ibid.* Hereinafter cited as Tompkins, Demobilization Planning.

[35] Tompkins to TQMG, 22 Jun 43.

Digitized by Google

with such statistical data as the survey report of 1 July had deemed superfluous and which, according to the advice then given, should be assembled only in the event of some extraordinary demand. Correction of this unsatisfactory state of affairs was regarded by key personnel of the branch as a prerequisite to any intelligent method of studying policies and plans for final disposition of the war dead. As finally submitted on 14 August 1943, the study was developed in accordance with the three-part break-down suggested in the directive of 22 June, the subtitles being: "Part I, Determination of the Policy Relative to Burials Overseas and the Return of the Dead;" "Part II, The Plan of Operation, Both in the United States and Overseas, Including the Organization Required and the Personnel by Types;" "Part III, The Possible Necessity for the Expansion of National Cemeteries and the Acquisition of Sites for Cemeteries in Foreign Countries." [36]

The apportionment of space among these three parts gives some indication of the relative importance assigned to each in preparing the paper. Part I has 4 pages. Part II comprises 59 pages, 44 of which present in Section A of this part a detailed plan for reorganization of the Memorial Branch. Part III contains only two pages. This apparent disproportion is justified on the following grounds:

> Much of the allowed time for preparation of this report has been used in preparing Plan of Organization of the American Graves Registration Service and Memorial Division. It is the opinion of the undersigned that the expansion of the present Memorial Branch to the proposed American Graves Registration Service and Memorial Division is the most essential step in preparing for the comprehensive plans for return of the dead. It is the foundation upon which all other plans must be built. Its need is immediate and imperative. Consequently the elaboration of this particular plan has been made to bring to the attention of higher authority its present inadequacy to properly process current work from the United States and overseas: its lack of personnel to initiate and maintain records, maps and charts which will be of vital importance when repatriation of the dead becomes a fact.[37]

Briefly, the reorganization detailed in Section A of Part II looked to the double objective of simplification of the chain of authority between The Quartermaster General and his executive assistant in the Memorial unit, and physical expansion of the unit. The latter consideration involved a personnel increase from the "Present Strength" of 33 employes to a "Reorganization Strength" of 80, which amounted to a theoretical increase of 26 above the authorized ceiling (54) of the branch.[38] The former required a number of adjustments, the first of which presupposed favorable action on the proposal to designate The Quartermaster General as Chief, American Graves Registration Service.[39]

The authority and responsibilities assigned by the tentative draft of War Department Circular No. 206, 11 September 1943, to The Quartermaster General as Chief, American Graves Registration Service, did not, in the opinion of Colonel Harbold, completely visualize the range of activities that would eventually come within the competence of this new office. In addition to those broad responsibilities indicated in the circular, such as the formulation of policies for operation of the Graves Registration Service beyond the seas, he thought that certain responsibilities of a specific nature, although implied in both the AR 30–series and in the proposed circular. should, nevertheless, be given greater emphasis. These were enumerated as: "(1) That he [Chief, AGRS] maintain records of all casualties and burials outside the continental limits of the United States; (2) that he be charged with organization, formulation of policies, and promulgation of regulations for return of overseas dead and their concentration in national cemeteries, should they be established in foreign countries." [40]

The first step, that of simplifying the chain of authority, involved complete divorcement of the Memorial organization from the Service Installations Division. Five cogent reasons supported this plea: (1) the Memorial Branch's functions are nonmilitary; (2) its functions, responsibilities and duties are directly under The Quartermaster General and the Under Secretary of War; (3) its activities are only hampered by an intermediate chain of organization; (4) its functions and activities embrace specialized operations and decisions foreign in character to pronounced and accepted Quartermaster procedures and activities. Sound knowledge of the latter does not necessarily qualify for supervision of the former; (5) the potential scope of its functions and activities, the certain great expansion in personnel requirements and overseas operations, the increasing supervisory duties thus imposed and the formulation of essential policies to secure uniformity of practice, method and policy, in all theaters of operations and defense commands demand an entity of

[36] Tompkins, Demobilization Planning, p. 66. The paper submitted by TQMG on 14 August 1943, was listed by the Special Planning Division as Study No. 34—Determination of the Disposal of the Dead, Proposed Plan. This document is hereinafter cited as Policy Study No. 34.

[37] Policy Study No. 34, Part II, Section A, introductory page, unnumbered.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[39] The original draft of WD Circular No. 206, 11 September 1943, was submitted on 15 July. Delay in approval has been discussed in chapter III.

[40] Policy Study No. 34, Part II, Sec. A, p. 2.

Digitized by Google

organization responsible only to The Quartermaster General.[41]

After sketching the evolution of this office from its origin as a Cemeterial Division during the Civil War epoch to disestablishment of the Memorial Division during the first year of World War II, Colonel Harbold noted that at no time in its history had the work of this organization been so voluminous in quantity as at present. "In addition," he stated, "the special production functions of the Sections show such rapid increase in requirements such as requests for headstones, burials in national cemeteries, claims for burial expenses, that these activities have increased some 300 percent in the past 2 years. It must also be borne in mind that the functions of the present overseas section (in the organization chart known as the Graves Registration Service Branch) are entirely in addition to the work of this organization prior to our entry into World War II. These functions need no elaboration as to quantity of work thus imposed upon the organization, and it should be evident that this load will rapidly increase as the War continues." [42]

A parallel justification for increased personnel allotments called attention to an unprecedented expansion of the military forces during the period following disestablishment of the Memorial Division.

> When it is considered that the strength of the Army has increased from 1,431,000 in 1941 to 2,842,000 in 1942 and 8,227,400 in 1943, it can be seen that the work in this Division has increased proportionally approximately 600 percent in some instances and 300 percent in others. The deaths in the continental limits of the United States jumped from approximately 4,000 in 1941 to 24,000 in 1943; applications for headstones for graves of veterans in private cemeteries increase accordingly; burials in national cemeteries increased approximately 100 percent; the work incident to disposition of remains has increased at least 200 percent and the work in the Overseas Branch, which was the result of the war, has increased steadily until the present force is able to handle only about one-sixth of the work per day, which is steadily increasing.[43]

A topical outline of reasons that would justify the divorce from Service Installations and an appeal to history for regeneration of the Memorial Division served only as an introductory statement of the case. The case was argued in a brief submitting detailed evidence to establish that administrative incompatability urged prompt dissolution of the unnatural bond. Fundamentally, the argument ran, an office engaged in activities of a nonmilitary nature could not be effectively coordinated with another whose role was essentially military; nor could the sort of overhead supervision intended to bring into administrative harmony a group of agencies performing interrelated military functions exercise suitable direction over the nonmilitary agency. The distinction here was that Memorial, the nonmilitary agency, executed an extraordinary responsibility of The Quartermaster General which had less in common with his ordinary duties than with the nonmilitary functions of the Chief of Engineers. For this reason, both the Deputy Quartermaster General who supervised the group of operational divisions and the Director, Service Installations Division, who was nominally responsible for the Memorial Branch, served no useful purpose in the chain of authority extending down to the official who actually ran the Memorial Branch and who, in reality, should be regarded as a deputy to The Quartermaster General in his extraordinary capacity as Chief, American Graves Registration Service.

The system of overhead supervision had an additional objection in that it brought about an anomalous relationship between the Memorial Branch and several divisions and branches whose concern with graves registration matters hinged only on procedures that reflected in lower echelons the workings of top management. Aware of the friction developed by such procedures and that his branch was the principal victim of this friction, Colonel Harbold questioned any assumption to the effect that the machine was operating with smooth efficiency because all of its parts appeared to be in motion. He illustrated his views by means of a diagram in which conventional symbols for these agencies and the Memorial Branch were arranged in suitable juxtaposition and labeled in the order: "# 1—Service Installations Div.," "# 2—Mail & Records Branch," "# 3—Congressional Branch," "# 4—Civilian Personnel Div.," "# 5—Military Planning Div.," "# 6—Org. Planning & Control Div." The key to this exhibit was its title—"BARNACLES." A detailed analysis of each so-called "barnacles" followed.[44]

The marriage of convenience with the Service Installations Division was regarded as the immediate cause of most administrative confusion and a conditioning factor in the hesitant process of formulating graves registration policies.

> To have this Division under an intermediate office and not under the direct supervision of The Quartermaster General necessitates all questions of policy and important questions pertaining to this Division being taken up first with the intermediate office then taking case up with the next higher echelon and finally the matter may or may not reach The Quarter-

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 3.
[42] *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.
[43] *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.
[44] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

Digitized by Google

master General at the discretion of intermediaries who do not have full knowledge of the working or functions of the Division.[45]

A few sample causes of such friction should be mentioned in passing. Strict observance of regulations which charged the Mail and Records Branch of the Office of The Quartermaster General with custody of records constantly required for reference purposes in the Memorial Branch caused an incalculable waste of time.[46] A similar situation resulted from the strict control exercised by Military Planning Division over secret and confidential papers pertaining to overseas operations of the Graves Registration Service. The following example was offered in evidence.

> I have here on my desk a secret file charged out from the Military Planning Division. It consists of 51 sheets of burials, reported and processed, and 9 sheets of drawings of cemeteries. This record is charged to me personally and I am cautioned to handle it with care and dispatch. It is also stated that "this record must be returned to the Military Planning Division for file." . . . As a matter of fact this particular file constitutes our working basis for present American Graves Registration Service activities and interments in one of our theaters of operations. Its contents should be filed in this office and available to our personnel at all times. This information will be used as reference for months to come and subsequent notations, deletions, etc., would be made on these lists in order to maintain up-to-date record. Copies of the lists and maps will be most essential to our operations. Yet because of the classification none of these can be done. There is neither guise [sic] nor reason for the classification and to file it elsewhere than in this Division is without justification or excuse . . .[47]

The Congressional Branch, which handled official correspondence between the Office of The Quartermaster General and the Congress, acted more as a deterrent than as an efficient instrument in the transmission of data sought by Senators and Representatives regarding the burial of individual soldiers or the sort of information required by committees of either Chamber in reference to legislation on cemeterial matters. The interest of the Army in supplying all such intelligence with the greatest possible dispatch from the most reliable and responsible authority needs no comment. Yet the Congressional Branch, according to Colonel Harbold, impeded this particular procedure in much the same manner that the presence of intermediate authorities prevented the establishment of a direct relationship between The Quartermaster General and his executive aide in the Memorial organization.

This arrangement, it was contended, involved much unnecessary duplication of effort, as the substance of such letters must be furnished by personnel of the Memorial Branch. Then, due to the fact that clerks of the Congressional Branch might have little or no knowledge of the subject matter sought in a particular request, it frequently became necessary for Memorial Branch specialists to answer phone calls for incidental information.

The analysis of relations between Memorial and Organization Planning and Control Division can hardly be regarded as a model of tactfulness even if factually correct. Since the chief of this division, Brig. Gen. H. A. Barnes, was also the Deputy Quartermaster General for Operations and would, in this latter capacity, take initial action in transmitting Policy Study No. 34 through channels, the listing of his division under the heading of "Barnacles" was not calculated to enlist much support in that quarter. Concerning General Barnes' division, Colonel Harbold offered the following:

> The number of reports and special reports requested by the Organization Planning and Control Division has been and are a continual increasing load on the personnel of this Division. The number of special reports submitted to that Division to date would seem to cover every phase of the work of this Division and should suffice for the answering of any questions that Division may be called on to answer, and to continue to demand production records for individual clerks on the output of the Division only tends to retard production of the much overworked and insufficient employees of this Division.[48]

The table of organization of the proposed division was largely developed by expanding sections of the old table to branches and subsections to sections.[49] The old Administrative Section was merged in the Office of the Director, which consisted of an Administrative Assistant and a staff of five clerks.[50] Fiscal was combined with the Planning and Requirements Section in a single branch and a new Policies Branch was added.[51] The remaining sections—National Cemeteries, Headstones, and Overseas—appear in the new table as branches.[52]

The Graves Registration Service Branch comprised three sections—Records and Statistical, Identification, and Effects. This structure contemplated both an extension and a diversification of function; added to three subsections carried over from the old Overseas Section and embodied in the Records and Statistical Section

[45] *Ibid.*
[46] *Ibid.*, pp. 41–42.
[47] *Ibid.*, pp. 43–44.
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 44.
[49] See table of organization attached as inclosure No. 1 to Policy Study No. 34 and entitled "American Graves Registration Service and Memorial Division."
[50] *Ibid.* and Part II, Sec. A, p. 12.
[51] *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 27–29.
[52] *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15, 18–19, 31–33.

Digitized by Google

was Maps and Plots, making four in all—Card, Files, Correspondence, and Maps and Plots. The Identification and Effects Sections were intended for new activities.[53]

Designed to cover all aspects of record keeping in connection with graves registration operations, the proposed branch could aspire to serve as a special staff of the Chief, American Graves Registration Service. It was assigned 30 employees of a total personnel allotment of 80 for the proposed division. While described elsewhere as a branch, its organizational entity within the division was recognized in the title head of the table of organization drawn up by Colonel Harbold—"American Graves Registration Service and the Memorial Division." [54]

Aside from its prescribed purpose of exploring problems related to eventual disposition of the war dead, Policy Study No. 34 was employed as a vehicle to carry convincing evidence to higher authority that any intelligent consideration of these problems demanded an immediate restoration of the Memorial organization to its former divisional status, together with the establishment of an autonomous Graves Registration Service Branch within the reconstructed division. Since Section A of Part II was ignored by General Gregory in transmitting the paper through channels, none of the higher reviewing authorities took occasion to comment on a phase of the problem that stood entirely within the jurisdiction of The Quartermaster General. Thereafter efforts on the part of the Memorial Branch Chief toward reorganization on a divisional basis took the difficult form of representing a cause that had invoked the cold frown of official disfavor. A period of 9 months was yet to elapse before any measure of recognition was accorded these persistent representations.

Decline of Operational Efficiency

Upon designation of The Quartermaster General as Chief, American Graves Registration Service, in September 1943, Colonel Harbold examined the problem in a communication to the Civilian Personnel Division, noting that "the Memorial Branch is in a critical situation reference the number of civilian personnel to satisfactorily perform the efficient maintenance of files and records; the necessary correspondence with relatives of overseas casualties . . . and the completion of maps, plans, etc., of our national cemeteries and overseas cemeteries with required plotting of burials as reported to this office on Graves Registration Form No. 1." [55] In general, he emphasized that "the peacetime work of this Branch has increased tremendously and the additional load imposed by war has further swamped this office and its depleted personnel." [56] He pointed out, too, that in addition to its routine duties, "the current accomplishment of which should be considered as mandatory," War Department Circular No. 206 imposed an additional burden on the Overseas Section.

In accordance with Paragraphs 5 and 6 of this directive the Chief, American Graves Registration Service, was required to furnish information on the location of graves to next of kin as cemeteries were progressively released by Military Intelligence from security restrictions. It was estimated that the prospective release of cemeteries in North Africa and Sicily alone would require the preparation of 12,000 letters by the Overseas Section. Although ill-equipped to cope even with inquiries seeking burial information which could not as yet be disclosed, the chief of the Memorial Branch was, by reason of public demand, persuaded "to recommend clearance on all cemeteries situated in overseas areas which are beyond the combat zone and can be assumed as the final temporary burial sites until operations are begun after the war to return our dead to the United States." This policy, it was explained, "would mean additional cemeteries to be recommended for clearance to the Military Intelligence as the invasion moves forward and reoccupied areas [become] stabilized so that the graves locations furnished to the nearest of kin will possess no military value to the enemy." [57] These current and prospective obligations were offered in justification of a request that "the Overseas Section be considered as a new installation incident to our entry into the war and that due allotment of civilian personnel necessary for the efficient operation of this section be authorized over and above the existing allotment of 54 for the Memorial Branch, and the existing ceiling for the OQMG." [58]

These representations led to a survey for the purpose of establishing a scientific estimate of personnel requirements of the Overseas Section. On 27 October the chief of the Organization Planning and Control Division survey staff reported six general recommendations that were calculated to increase the productive capacity of the section: (1) adoption of the "Photo-

[53] *Ibid.*, pp. 33–34.

[54] Policy Study No. 34, inclosure No. 1. The proposed branch for overseas affairs is labelled "A. G. R. S. Branch."

[55] Ltr, Col Harbold, Mem Br, to Personnel Authorization Officer (through Dir Svc Instls Div), 28 Sep 43.

[56] *Ibid.*

[57] *Ibid.*

[58] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

graphic Process" in the creation of basic records (A. G. O. "Report of Death" and Graves Registration Service "Burial Report"); (2) the substitution of a "standard folder filing system" for the one in use; (3) the installation of a "file indexing system based on national nomenclature;" (4) the establishment of higher standards in the selection of employees for the Correspondence Subsection and the consideration of means whereby "selected correspondents be given a brief course of special training by an expert in this type of correspondence"; (5) the adoption of an office layout to facilitate "a straight line flow of work"; and (6) the employment of mobile tables in all filing operations.[59]

Assuming acceptance of the proposed recommendations, and allowing for a 60-day transitional period for change-over from the old system to full operation under the new one, the investigators estimated that 13 employees, or 5 less than the existing strength, would be sufficient to handle the work of the Overseas Section and also allow for personnel in training, while 22 could handle a projected increase of 100 percent.[60] While these estimates, like those derived from the July survey, implied that the performance of the Overseas Section in achieving a satisfactory utilization of its personnel left much to be desired, and that the steady accumulation of huge backlogs was an index of administrative incapacity rather than the consequence of understaffing, any thought of releasing personnel that would, presumably, become surplus after the change-over was disavowed.

> Although it would seem that, upon completion of the change-over a staff of 13 clerks would be adequate to handle a 30 percent to 35 percent increase in work over the present volume, it is suggested that no personnel be released from Memorial Branch until a determination has been made of the over-all requirements of the Branch. Since the Branch is already under its present ceiling, this personnel could be temporarily assigned elsewhere in the Branch.[61]

For reasons that would be difficult to fathom the change-over was not effected until March 1944.[62] On 30 March the chief of the Memorial Branch directed through channels to The Quartermaster General an 8-page analysis of the personnel problem confronting his organization. After noting that the Civilian Personnel Division had promised 16 additional clerks by the end of June, 10 of whom were to be supplied immediately, and that only one clerk had been received to date, the Branch Chief stated that the overseas backlog had reached a peak, with "400 letters from nearest of kin, 20,000 death and burial reports to be photographed and 30,000 names on weekly reports, including serial numbers, organizations, graves locations and cemeteries to be checked with records and corrections made when necessary." [63] Special attention was called to the recently established Identification Subsection. Consisting of only two employees and confined for the present to such elementary work as confirming finger prints, serial numbers, and other basic data, this new agency, he insisted, should be immediately expanded in order to pursue detailed research under the supervision of a qualified subsection chief. "This work," he insisted, "unless actively pursued at this time, will pile up and become an almost insurmountable task upon the cessation of hostilities. The fact that this determination of identification was delayed until a considerable time after the cessation of hostilities would create a doubt in the minds of many parents as to the identification of their sons that had been returned to them by the Government . . . The work of the Identification Sub-Section in the last war clearly proves to me the suspended work may be done in this manner. I think it most important that we make every effort to promote this particular endeavor." [64]

The warning that special provision must be made in the immediate future to cope with the vital problem of identifying the unknown dead was followed by a summary of personnel requirements, 29 being requested for the Overseas Section, 2 for the Headstones Section, 2 for the National Cemeteries Section, and 4 for the Planning, Requirements, and Fiscal Section.

Arguments offered in justification of the large increase recommended for the Overseas Section emphasized the fact that, while this agency had been originally established to process reports and correspondence in connection with overseas deaths, no special provision had been made to allow for personnel increases in keeping with the extraordinary and expanding nature of the activity. This analysis included quotations from Section A, Part II, of Policy Study No. 34, 13 August 1943, recalling that Memorial personnel had been per-

[59] Office Procedures Section, Orgn Plng Br, OP&C Div., Study of Personnel Needs, Overseas Section, Mem Br, 27 Oct 43, pp. 1, 5–9.

[60] On 27 October 1943, the Overseas Section had 18 employees. Between July and October, 1943, 5 employees had been added to the July strength of 6. During the survey 7 more employees were assigned to the section. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

[61] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[62] These reasons were reviewed in a letter dated 19 January 1944 from Colonel Harbold to the Director of the Service Installations Division, and in a second letter from Colonel Harbold to The Quartermaster General, no date (ca. 28 Mar 44). Trouble began when it developed that the photographic machine (Model 1–G–20) specified by the OP&C investigators was not on the schedule of supplies and a Duophoto machine was purchased in place of the desired model. This substitution led to an unhappy chapter of accidents and unforeseen delays.

[63] Memo, Col Harbold for TQMG, 30 Mar 44, par. 4.

[64] *Ibid.*, par. 8.

Digitized by Google

mitted to decline from 54 to 33 between 30 March 1941 and 14 August 1943 in disregard of the facts that requirements with respect to care of the dead in the United States had increased threefold during that period and that the increase occasioned by deaths in the theaters of war since the establishment of the Overseas Section was sixfold. Reference was also made to the communication of 28 September 1943, requesting that the Overseas Section "be considered as a new installation incident to our entry into the war and that due allotment of civilian personnel necessary for the efficient operation of this section be authorized over and above the existing allotment of 54 for the Memorial Branch and the existing ceiling for the OQMG." [65] Final justification for the personnel increase was offered in the concluding paragraph of the memorandum of 30 March which stated that the work of the branch could not be belittled, ignored or denied and that "its relationship to the morale of the home front (and in this case the home front consists definitely of mothers, fathers and wives who have loved ones overseas) is direct, intimate and filled with explosives." [66]

Aside from discussion of the problems involved in identification of the unknown dead and a statement of present personnel requirements, Colonel Harbold's memorandum of 30 March presented a lengthy arraignment of the personnel policy that, insofar as an intelligent estimate of the extraordinary workloads imposed by hostilities was concerned, had virtually ignored the existence of a state of war. While specialists of the Organization Planning and Control Division had conducted elaborate surveys from time to time for the purpose of examining the abnormalities manifested in mounting backlogs, and had suggested remedies intended to restore the agency to a normal state, it was now evident that a drastic correction of the real causes of failing productivity, rather than continued treatment of the symptoms, must be undertaken without further delay.

This indictment of policy was followed on 5 April by a reiteration of the plea for additional employees and an organization chart indicating a divisional setup of six branches with a personnel total of 82. Two of the proposed branches, the Graves Registration Branch and the Planning and Requirements Branch, were earmarked for considerable expansion in the future. The remaining four branches, namely the Cemeterial Branch, the Headstones Branch, the Technical Branch and the Fiscal Branch were regarded as comparatively stable.[67]

Reestablishment of the Memorial Division

Meantime the Organization Planning and Control Division experts conducted their own study of the problem. On 13 April they produced an organization chart which presented several striking contrasts to the one prepared by Colonel Harbold and his advisors. Whereas the chart of 14 August 1943, and that of 5 April 1944, proposed to elevate the Graves Registration Service Branch to a position of extraordinary importance—one which would have given it virtual autonomy within the division—the Organization Planning and Control Division chart required that the old Overseas Section and the Planning and Requirements Section should be incorporated in a hybrid administrative unit, the so-called Registration Planning and Requirements Branch, which would supervise the planning, engineering, and maintenance aspects of the national cemeteries, along with the preparation and processing of records pertaining to the overseas dead. Nor was any recognition given to the fact that the office responsible for the procurement and distribution of headstones had from the very beginning of the administrative history of the cemeterial system been regarded as an independent agency, performing a fairly distinctive function and associated with the administration of the national cemeteries only to the extent of delivering to these cemeteries about 10 percent of the total number of headstones approved and ordered for all types of soldiers' graves. In total disregard of long-established practice and the force of tradition, it was proposed that the Headstones and National Cemeteries Section be consolidated in a single branch.

Adoption of the Organization Planning and Control Division scheme was urged by its sponsors in emphatic terms.

> This organization chart differs from that proposed by the Memorial Branch but it is suggested that the attached organizational structure be adopted for the following reasons:
>
> a. Establishes a simple and integrated organization of only three branches and six sections as compared with 6 branches and 18 sections proposed by the Memorial Branch;
>
> b. It provides for an Administrative and Executive Officer to exercise close supervision over the operating activities of the Division and to give continuity to the top management of the Division;
>
> c. By combining the position of Administrative and Executive Officer with that of the Planning and Registration

[65] *Ibid.*, par. 10, quoting Policy Study No. 34 and Harbold to TQMG, 28 Sep 43, par. 5.

[66] *Ibid.*, par. 11.

[67] Ltr, Col R. P. Harbold to TQMG, 5 Apr 44.

Digitized by Google

Branch, puts proper emphasis on the expanding activity (Graves Registration Section).[68]

Colonel Harbold's proposed division of six branch units and a semiautonomous Graves Registration Service Branch was rejected in favor of the one described "as a simple and integrated organization of only three branches and six sections." Office Order No. 25–78, 6 May 1944, announced that "there is hereby established in the Office of The Quartermaster General the Memorial Division under the supervision of the Deputy, The Quartermaster General." Paragraph 6 of the order stated that "the Memorial Division consists of the Cemeterial Branch, the Planning and Registration Branch, and the Administrative Branch."[69]

Some advantages were secured by this reorganization despite the fact that it came more as a grudging concession to the inescapable pressure of events than as the result of action dictated by an intelligent appraisal of future requirements. The reorganization urged by Colonel Harbold in August 1943 anticipated the bloody march from Salerno to Cassino and the battles of extermination in the conquest of Northern New Guinea and Micronesia. With the Normandy landing only a month away, the reorganization of May 1944 reluctantly granted less than had been requested in August 1943. Nevertheless, the shift to a divisional basis permitted personnel allotments on a scale that had been prohibited since 30 March 1942. A total of 105 civilian employees was allotted the division, including 5 for the Administrative Branch, 23 for the Cemeterial Branch, and 60 for the Planning and Registration Branch. With a personnel strength of 54, the Graves Registration Section outnumbered its sister section in the Planning and Registration Branch by 10 to 1 and had a larger clerical strength than the other 2 branches combined.

Such disproportion of strength seems strangely at variance with the statement describing this new divisional structure as "a simple and integrated organization of only three branches and six sections." While structural simplicity may be indicated by a small number of component parts, it does not follow that a divisional organization of three branches necessarily lends itself to a higher degree of integration than one composed of six branches, or that the unwieldy sections of a small number of hybrid branches present a simpler problem of coordination than smaller sections regrouped in a larger number of homogeneous branches. Again, it is questionable if proper emphasis was put on the expanding activity of the Graves Registration Section by such a simple expedient as enlarging the authority and multiplying the duties of the branch chief to whom this overgrown section was assigned for supervision. Finally, the confident assertion that an administrative device had been provided "to exercise close supervision over the operating activities of the Division and to give continuity to the top management of the Division" can be accepted only as another expression of optimism on the part of management experts whose former predictions had not always been justified by events.

Although the volume of work performed by the Overseas Section admittedly required a personnel strength of approximately 50 percent of the aggregate of the Division, recognition of the functional importance of this section was stubbornly denied. Furthermore, its incorporation in the same branch with a section which was concerned exclusively with cemeterial affairs in the United States presented a combination of incompatible elements. Yet, while every dictate of the principles of sound organization argued against the association of such unlike elements, there was a certain justification for the groupment of agencies which would assume large responsibilities in the future and apart from those which were identified with traditional functions of the Division.

Even though a step in the right direction, the advance was made in so hesitant a manner as scarcely to indicate an appreciation of the fact that the Memorial Division would assume responsibilities in the foreseeable future for the accomplishment of three separate missions—one involving final disposition of the war dead, the second relating to a large construction project in the United States, the third being a continuation of its historic function, as enhanced by the multiplication of national cemeteries and an enormous increase in the number of living veterans eligible for future burial in this enlarged system. Aside from a realization that additional responsibilities justified a liberalization of personnel ceilings, little thought appears to have been given by those finally responsible for the division established in May 1944 that the assignment of new missions would require organizational adjustment which could not be successfully made by a mere increase in the number of employees.

The faulty logic in associating incompatible elements in the Planning and Registration Branch prevailed for another year. Not until the month following V-E Day did this anomalous relationship become so obvious that support for continuation of the faulty relationship finally vanished. On 10 June 1945 the division chief

[68] Ltr, E. O'Toole, OP&C Div, to Brig Gen H. A. Barnes, Dir OP&C Div, 13 Apr 44.
[69] OQMG OO No. 25–78, 6 May 44.

Digitized by Google

recommended that the Planning and Registration Branch be abolished and that its component sections be established as independent branches.[70] It was further recommended that an Operations Section be added to the new Graves Registration Branch. Pursuant to an office order of 14 June,[71] the proposed organization received official sanction, finally bringing into existence the nucleus of a special staff for the chief, AGRS, somewhat in the form that had been advocated since August 1943.

Neglect of organizational requirements over a period of 4 years had fairly well subverted the purpose originally sought in attempting to set up and operate a central office of mortuary records. Thanks to this neglect, a greatly augmented Graves Registration Branch required the better part of two more years for the completion and verification of burial records. The costly confusion that attended correction of World War I burial data following the armistice of 11 November 1918 was repeated on a vastly extended scale.[72]

Any effort to assemble a body of evidence for the purpose of making a case against those individuals whose shortcomings may have contributed to this unhappy situation would, in the end, tend only to prove that the sum total of mismanagement was not so much an accumulation of incapacity on the part of those individuals as it was the inevitable consequence of an elaborate system of collective irresponsibility.

[70] Ltr, Chief, Mem Div to TQMG, 12 Jun 45, sub: Reorgn of the Mem Div.
[71] OQMG OO No. 75-78-A, 14 Jun 45.

[72] These circumstances are presented in detail in Chapters I–III of History of the AGRS in the World War II Dead Program, in preparation.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX

Initial Planning for Disposition of Remains

INDIFFERENCE on the part of higher echelons to arguments advanced in Policy Study No. 34 that any long-range preparation for disposition of the war dead must be preceded by an extensive reorganization of the Memorial Branch denied a realistic approach to the whole program. As already related in Chapter VIII, the Memorial Division was belatedly reestablished without regard to the responsibilities it must assume in connection with disposal of the war dead. Then, while other aspects of the plan proposed in the policy study were reviewed and given tentative approval, those recommendations which specified the organization of a self-contained American Graves Registration Service, with components in every quarter of the globe, were neither approved nor disapproved. After summarizing criticism to the effect that many difficulties would be encountered in relating elements of the proposed organization of the existing chain of command, The Adjutant General's letter returning Policy Study No. 34 to The Quartermaster General observed that "changing circumstances consequent upon the conclusion of major hostilities in the European-African theater might require a re-examination of the present plan." [1]

In terms of this qualified approval, it would appear that efforts to act on the planning instructions outlined in Brigadier General Tomkins' directive of 18 June 1943 [2] were productive only of a decision to postpone consideration of the major aspects of the project until some propitious date in the future. Such an interpretation, however, is only partially valid. Policy Study No. 34 really served the purpose of amplifying the original planning directive and, while lacking the status of a "firm" plan, stated in general terms the objectives that were sought in various planning programs and developed during the ensuing years of hostilities. A detailed analysis of this policy study is therefore essential to an understanding of the whole course of planning for return of the dead.

[1] Memo, Maj Gen J. A. Ulio, TAG, for TQMG, *et al*, 28 Nov 43, sub: Demobilization Planning (Disposal of the Dead). Discussion of the limited approval given this plan follows a detailed analysis of its various parts.

[2] See above, Ch. VII, footnote 34.

Proposed AGRS Organization in Policy Study No. 34, 14 August 1943

Part I explored the problems of permanent burials beyond the seas and return of the dead to the homeland. The first step involved an analysis of available statistical data with a view to determining the probable ratio of burials in foreign lands to the number of remains returned to the United States. Data in this respect were so meager as to furnish nothing more than a clue to trends of opinion during the future course of hostilities. In August 1943 the trend toward return seemed overwhelming. Such a trend appeared to be reflected by the fact that only one letter out of some 4,000 received from next of kin of the dead had not requested the return of remains to the homeland.[3]

After noting that some 46,000 of the 77,000 overseas dead of World War I were returned for interment in the United States, while 31,000 were buried in 8 military cemeteries on the European Continent and in Great Britain, the opinion was advanced that the World War I ratio of 4 homeland to 3 foreign burials would shift after World War II toward a ratio approximating 4 to 1. Two reasons supported this assumption. One had to do with the global extent of the war. While American military cemeteries established in France, Belgium, and Great Britain at the end of World War I appeared to many relatives as appropriate resting places for their soldier dead and not so far removed as to forbid the hope of some day making a pilgrimage to these graves, kinsfolk of the dead now lying on the distant shores of Asia and in Africa, Australia and the islands of the Pacific would, with few exceptions, favor the return of remains from those remote regions. Again, the bonds of sentiment existing in 1919 between America and Western Europe, particular Great Britain, France, and Belgium, had not been torn by the unparalleled violence of total war. Excepting only Brookwood Cemetery in England, the military cemeteries of World War I had fallen into enemy hands dur-

[3] Policy Study No. 34, Part I, p. 1.

Digitized by Google

ing the high tide of German conquest. It seemed reasonable to believe that reaction in the minds of those who elected a quarter-century ago to leave 31,000 of the war dead in Western Europe and the British Isles would have a powerful influence in forming a general disinclination against burial of the dead of this war in any foreign land. "These thoughts," it was argued, "will be transmitted to their children who are now the parents and wives of sons and fathers buried in foreign lands and consequently the number of requests for the return of these bodies will far exceed the 60 percent established after World War I." In view of this probable figure, "It did not seem wise, economical or sentimentally sound to consider the establishment of additional national cemeteries in the far-flung foreign battle areas of this war." [4]

In consequence of the hypothesis that the ratio of requests for return of the dead would greatly exceed that of 1919 and, therefore, give greater emphasis to repatriation than burial abroad, the following policies were recommended.

1. That no remains of American dead overseas, and beyond the continental limits of the United States, be returned to the United States until after the cessation of hostilities.
2. That a general policy to return World War II dead to the United States or concentrate them in national cemeteries to be established in Allied Countries upon request of the nearest of kin be adopted.
3. That nearest of kin of all known overseas dead be polled by letter by The Quartermaster General after the cessation of hostilities, for the purpose of securing the final requested disposition of remains.
4. That, should the requests for return of the dead buried in any Allied country attain or exceed 70 percent of the total known American burials therein, all dead will be returned and those for whom no authorized requests have been made, will be given final burial in a national cemetery in the United States, which will be designated by The Quartermaster General prior to the commencement of repatriation operations.[5]

Plans for return of the dead, as detailed in Policy Study No. 34, were necessarily restricted to consideration of the type of organization best suited for the job. The American Graves Registration Service, QMC, in Europe, as developed at its peak during the repatriation operations of 1919–1922, furnished the only historic model for such an organization. In the present instance, however, operations would not be restricted to a relatively small geographical region of western Europe, as was the case in 1919, and enjoy the facilities of highly civilized communities that had suffered no irreparable damage by the violence of war. It was apparent by August 1943 that some elements of the postwar graves registration organization must work amid the ruins of nations that had stood in the foremost rank of modern culture, while others would pursue their mission in jungles, deserts, and Arctic wastes heretofore known only to barbaric aborigines, adventurers, and a few scientific explorers. No approximation of ultimate casualty figures could be made, nor could responsible statesmen or soldiers venture to predict the final deployment of forces that were then only testing the perimeter of Fortress Europe and had not as yet breached a vital sector in the outer defenses of the oceanic empire of Japan. While military opinion was fairly unanimous in a view that the fate of Germany would be sealed by bloody battles on the European Continent, there was then no certainty whether the decisive blow against Japan would be dealt on the Asiatic mainland or delivered by a triphibious assault from the Central Pacific. Again, while it seemed a reasonable prediction that the Philippines would see a campaign of exhausting marches and frightful battles of extermination, and that the Japanese would relinquish their position in the Dutch Indies, the Malay Peninsula, and Burma only after desperate resistance, no one could foresee that, after remnants of the Imperial Fleet had been immobilized, the combined effects of submarine attack and air bombardment, culminating in the fury of two atomic explosions, would compel the Mikado to sue for peace before Allied ground armies had massed in Asia or had stormed ashore on any one of the Japanese home islands.

In view, then, of an unpredictable future, only the general features of a postwar American Graves Registration Service could be visualized. Six factors were recognized as determinants: (1) the probable extensions of active theaters; (2) distances involved in theaters of operations; (3) the total number of dead in all theaters and defense commands; (4) communications facilities in actual and probable theaters; (5) estimated losses for each theater; (6) the time factor authorized or prescribed for completion of the work.[6] The experience of World War I and the number of dead already buried overseas since December 1941 suggested a desirable type of organization, while the six stated determinants indicated the geographical distribution of major units into which the organization would be divided.

The existing deployment of American forces marked several more or less distinctive regions as future seats of operations in disposal of the dead, including portions of the continents of North America, North Africa, Aus-

[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[6] Policy Study No. 34, Part II, Sec B, pp. 1–2.

Digitized by Google

tralia and New Guinea, the islands of the North Atlantic and the Caribbean Sea, the atolls and archipelagoes dotting the Pacific Ocean from Bering Strait to the Bismarck Sea, and, due to operations recently launched from the North African base, several islands in the waist of the Mediterranean and probably the adjacent shores of the Italian Peninsula.[7] Fatalities sustained in maintaining the lines of communications with beleaguered Russia and China extended the distribution to areas of the Middle East, the Scandinavian countries, and remote places along the air route from India over the Himalayas to China. Altogether, the existing and prospective theaters comprised 12 geopolitical regions which were recognized as major administrative areas of the American Graves Registration Service and which were given the designation of "Zone." In all there were the following 12 zones: (1) North America, (2) Hawaii, (3) Australia, (4) the Dutch East Indies and Malaya, (5) the Philippine Islands, (6) India and Burma, (7) China, (8) the Middle East, (9) Europe, (10) Great Britain and Ireland, (11) Africa and (12) the Caribbean.[8]

In proportion to the actual or probable density of war dead within a geopolitical region, and in accordance with the advantage of recognizing geographical features or existing political boundaries, each zone was subdivided into two or more sectors.[9] The Zone of Hawaii, for instance, comprised the Oahu Sector and Wake-Midway Islands Sector. The tentative subdivision of the Zone of Dutch East Indies and Malay included the Timor, Java, and Celebes Sector, the Borneo Sector, the Sumatra Sector, and the Malayan Peninsula Sector. The four proposed sectors of the Zone of North Africa were identical with the political subdivisions of that theater—Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Tripoli. The prospective Zone of Europe, on the other hand, comprised an assortment of political and geographical areas, namely the Sectors of France, Italy, the Lowlands, Dalmatia, the Balkans, and Austria-Hungary. In fact, no fixed rule determined the subdivision of zones; the whole scheme was regarded as tentative and designed primarily for the purpose of setting up a flexible organization to meet the ultimate requirements of an expanding war front. Although it was foreseen that administrative expediency would require a subdivision of the Zone of China into at least four sectors, no effort was made to name or define the areas to be assigned to such subdivisions.[10]

In his capacity as Chief, American Graves Registration Service, The Quartermaster General would be administrative and technical director of the overseas organization of 12 zones and 46 sectors.[11] The American Graves Registration Service Branch was designed to act as his special staff in overseas operations.[12] The zone commanders would report directly to The Quartermaster General, and the chiefs of sectors to the same officer through their respective zone commanders. Since it was realized that the zone commanders would eventually assume the responsibilities originally assigned theater commanders in the conduct of cemeterial operations, the American Graves Registration Service was contemplated as a self-contained organization, with full control over supply and transportation incidental to field operations, as well as administrative and disciplinary jurisdiction over its personnel.

The zone commander, who was to hold the rank of full colonel, would be assisted by a headquarters staff composed of three divisions and a group of four independent officers. The organizational scheme is best indicated by listing the divisions and their subordinate branches; (1) the Administrative Division, including the Personnel Branch, Information Branch, Statistical Branch,[13] and Medical Branch; (2) the Operations Division, including the Field Operations Branch, the Maintenance Branch, and the Registration Branch; [14] (3) the Supply and Transportation Division, including the Rail and Water Transportation Branch, the Motor Transportation Branch, the Supply Branch and the Contracts, Rents, and Claims Branch. The independent offices consisted of the Office of the Adjutant, Office of the Finance Officer, Office of the Property Officer, Office of the Foreign Missions. Forty-six commissioned officers, 21 field grade and 25 line officers, were allotted to the zone headquarters. A group of 74 civilians, including office personnel, auto mechanics,

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[9] The breakdown of the zone organization into sectors is given in *ibid.*, pp. 4–7.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[11] This is implied in the organizational scheme described in the following pages.

[12] The mission assigned the American Graves Registration Service Branch, Memorial Division, as detailed in Policy Study No. 34, Part II, Sec. A, p. 33, is cited in substantiation of this statement. After rejection of the proposed reorganization, Colonel Harbold renewed his plea for an A. G. R. S. Branch during March 1944. "It is the opinion of the undersigned that the expansion of the present Memorial Branch to the proposed American Graves Registration Service and Memorial Division is the most essential step in preparation for the comprehensive plans for return of the dead. It is the foundation upon which all other plans must be built." Mem Br (Harbold) to TQMG, 30 Mar 44.

[13] The Statistical Branch was to be comprised of four sections: the Statistical, Photographic, Drafting, and Historical Sections, the latter of which would prepare a history of the AGRS Policy Study No. 34, Part II, Sec B, p. 8.

[14] The Registration Branch was assigned the following functions: receipt and checking of all authorizations from Washington; forwarding of authorizations to Field Operations Branch, and supplying the Administrative Division (Statistical Branch) with necessary information; furnishing Maintenance Branch with information regarding field investigations, new locations and remarkings; receiving completed forms from Field Operations and Maintenance Branches; checking same and forwarding necessary data. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

Digitized by Google

and chauffeurs completed the establishment.[15] This scheme virtually reproduced the headquarters establishment of the American Graves Registration Service, QMC, in Europe, as adopted during August 1920.

The sector headquarters organization reproduced the main features of the zone setup, "with certain obvious sections and subsections omitted and functions of certain other sections combined in one section." Headed by a colonel, the sector headquarters comprised 22 commissioned officers, 5 enlisted men and 65 civilian personnel.[16]

The section or field unit which would conduct exhumation and casketing operations under direction of sector headquarters, was to be commanded by a captain, with 2 lieutenants acting as inspectors of operations. With an aggregate strength of 43, including 4 professional embalmers and 8 technical assistants, this unit was closely patterned after the one employed by the American Graves Registration Service, QMC, in Europe following World War I. That organization consisted of 4 operating groups, each of which included a supervisory embalmer, 2 technical assistants, a checker and whatever local labor was required. It was estimated that 270 such field operating sections would be employed in overseas operations following World War II.[17]

The problem of determining a suitable organization for port offices presented difficulties similar to those encountered in drawing up organizational charts for the zone and section headquarters. While it was certain that at least two ports would be required in each sector for the importation of supplies from the United States and the transshipment of casketed remains to the homeland, the volume of traffic controlled by any one port office could not be estimated until the sector which it served had been established. The principal functions of a port office could, however, be stated in terms of experience gained during the repatriation program after World War I and on the basis of a shrewd visualization of future requirements. These were enumerated: (1) receipt of supplies; (2) distribution of same to sections in the field; (3) inspection, testing and repair of caskets, shipping cases, etc., received from the United States; (4) manufacture of packing pillows for caskets and other essential items; (5) receipt and storage of casketed bodies; (6) inspection of cases received, cleaning shipping cases, replacing broken handles, etc.; (7) loading bodies on transport; (8) accomplishment of bills of lading, manifests, etc.

A total of 90 ports was estimated as the minimum number required. Each port office was to be headed by a major and staffed with a force of 2 commissioned officers, 3 enlisted men, and 42 civilians. The tentative nature of this estimate was recognized, in view of the possible destruction of normal communication and other developments in future operations.[18]

Consolidated figures of the table of organization, American Graves Registration Service, included 12 zones, 45 sectors, 270 field operating sections and 90 port offices. There was an aggregate personnel allotment, military and civilian, of 22,792. Military personnel totaled 3,189, including 2,622 commissioned officers; civilian personnel totaled 19,603, including 3,443 office workers and 3,420 morticians and technical helpers. The transport consisted of 5,895 motor vehicles, including passenger cars, trucks, and ambulances, with a servicing force of 924 motor mechanics and helpers.[19]

For present planning purposes, the policy study took a negative attitude in regard to expansion of the national cemeterial system and acquisition of sites for cemeteries in foregn lands. Examination of existing trends of opinion, as expressed in correspondence with next of kin of the deceased, indicated so overwhelming a consensus in favor of return of the dead as to put consideration of the problem of establishing military cemeteries abroad beyond the scope of current planning.[20] It was also pointed out that "the location of sites can be better chosen in an area after the country has returned to a peace status and the terrain, centers of population, communications systems and supply facilities assume a prewar normality." [21]

Planning for any extension of the national cemeterial system encountered obstacles that held the War Department to inaction. Available acreage in eight of the larger national cemeteries provided space for some 160,000 graves. Since about 90 percent of the repatriated remains of World War I were interred in family plots or privately owned cemeteries, and since there was every reason to believe that the preference then expressed would be repeated, it followed that existing cemeterial facilities would accommodate a death roll of over a million, or 20 times that of the first world

[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 8–10.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[17] (1) Hq, AGRS, QMC, in Europe, Manual of Regulations and Table of Organization of the American Graves Registration Service, QMC, in Europe, issued April 15, 1921. Quartermaster Section, War Records Office, National Archives, Washington, D. C. This document is reproduced in the History of the American Graves Registration Service, QMC, in Europe, III, 103–153. A transcript copy of this work is available in the Reference Unit, Memorial Div, OQMG. (2) Policy Study No. 34, Part II, Sec B, pp. 12, 14–15.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[19] *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15.

[20] *Ibid.*, Part I, p. 1.

[21] *Iibid.*, Part III, p. 1.

Digitized by Google

conflict.[22] Furthermore, until such time as the policy stated by President Roosevelt on 29 December 1941, in opposition to further cemeterial expansion, should be reconsidered by the President himself, or overruled by the Congress, any proposal to the contrary from the Office of The Quartermaster General seemed inexpedient. Such, at any rate, was the opinion held by the chief of the Memorial Branch.[23]

The program embodied in Policy Study No. 34, 14 August 1943, was given tentative approval after review of the paper by the directors of the Operations and Personnel Divisions, ASF, the Chief of Transportation, ASF, and the Director, Special Planning Division, War Department General Staff. Maj. Gen. Le R. Lutes, Director of Operations, ASF, noted that the plan provided for economy of operation. While the provision for 12 zones and 45 sectors was deemed adequate in number, it was admitted that "the scope of military operations may dictate that this number should be increased." [24] It was the opinion of the director, however, that less emphasis should be placed on elaborate graves registration headquarters throughout the world and that more attention should be given "to the establishment of sections to fit into headquarters structures of Theaters of Operations." Overhead personnel, he insisted, should be authorized on an allotted basis to provide for fluctuations of requirements, "it being more desirable to increase or decrease an allotment than to reorganize a standard table of organization unit." General Lutes also stated that it seemed feasible "to include the Quartermaster Graves Registration unit as a cell in Communications Zone organizations, T/O 6000–2, now in process of approval" and that "all military personnel in the continental U. S. should be authorized on an allotted basis." [25] With these reservations in mind, it was recommended that "the paper be referred to the Director of Personnel for comment in connection with the use of overhead personnel on an allotted basis and to the Chief of Transportation for comment in connection with Port Organization before being returned to the Director, Special Planning Division." [26]

The Director, Personnel Division, ASF, was, for the most part, in accord with the Director of Operations concerning personnel allotments, contending that "to properly establish an authorization of personnel for the Demobilization Planning as outlined in basic letter, personnel should be allotted by the War Department to the Theater Headquarters for distribution to the sectors as organized within the then existing chain of command." He added: "The arbitrary establishment of zones and sectors without regard to existing military boundaries of a command will unduly complicate the administration of personnel." [27]

Two additional conditions were attached to the requirement that personnel allotments must be distributed by theater headquarters to graves registration sectors as organized within the existing chain of command. In the first place, the numbers and grades of personnel should be reviewed when the allotment was made. In the second place, existing personnel commitments to supply and combat functions precluded the possibility of putting any part of the recommended plan into effect "prior to the availability of personnel at the end of the war." [28] In other words, a theater command with existing military boundaries offered the only conceivable framework within which an American graves registration zone or any of its component sectors could be established. Lacking such a framework, the establishment of zones or sectors would constitute an arbitrary act and would, therefore, unduly complicate the administration of personnel. Moreover, since no personnel would be available prior to the cessation of hostilities, the creation of these zones and sectors must be deferred until such time as military boundaries had lost their real significance. The contradiction here was not unlike the one that witnessed frustration and delay in the activation of graves registration companies during the augmentation mobilization programs that preceded the outbreak of hostilities.

The Transportation Corps had a concrete suggestion to offer, namely, that "the personnel of the Port Organization . . . be increased by one (1) Technical Assistant to the Embalmer and one (1) carpenter." [29] Since no basis for this estimate was offered, it is difficult to understand just how a transportation specialist could make a better guess than an expert in mortuary matters as to the number of technical assistants required by an embalmer in a conjectural situation, or how many carpenters in the same situation would be needed to repair the breakage of an unknown number of caskets.

On 28 November 1943, the plan submitted in Policy Study No. 34 was returned by The Adjutant General to The Quartermaster General with a statement that the

[22] *Ibid.*
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[24] Dir of Opns, ASF (Lutes), to Dir, Control Div, ASF, 20 Sep 43.
[25] *Ibid.*
[26] *Ibid.*
[27] Col C. E. Hixon, Deputy Dir of Pers, to Dir, Special Plng Div, 13 Oct 43, 1st ind to above citation.
[28] *Ibid.*
[29] Col Clifford Star to Dir, Special Plng Div, 21 Oct 43, 2d ind to above cited basic communication.

Digitized by Google

broad policy recommended to the Special Planning Division, War Department General Staff, in Parts I and III, was approved in the following terms:

> a. That no remains of American dead beyond the continental limits of the United States be returned to this country prior to the cessation of hostilities.
>
> b. That a general policy be adopted of returning all World War II dead to the United States from any theater when 70 percent or more of nearest of kin of known dead so request. If less than 70 percent of nearest of kin desire return of remains to the United States, requests for such return will be honored, the balance of the dead to be concentrated in one or more national cemeteries as required in the particular theater.
>
> (1) The Quartermaster General to poll the nearest of kin of all known overseas dead upon the cessation of hostilities to determine the final requested disposition of remains.
>
> c. That no plans for the expansion of national cemeteries in the United States are necessary at the present time.[30]

After calling to the attention of The Quartermaster General copies of remarks by the Director of Operations, the Director of Personnel, and the Chief of Transportation concerning the organization put forward in Part II of the basic study to implement the recommended policy, The Adjutant General noted that "changing circumstances consequent upon the conclusion of major hostilities in the European-African theater might require a re-examination of the present plan." In short, the War Department officially reaffirmed the policy which had been implied since the beginning of hostilities. At the same time, approval of the organization designed to implement the recommended policy was indicated in terms that could be scarcely regarded as other than noncommittal. While the zone-sector scheme of organization was accepted in principle, any serious steps looking to the establishment of such an organization during the continuance of hostilities was regarded as premature. No comment was made in reference to Section A of Part II, which was designed to implement the recommended policy and which, with inclusion of a self-contained American Graves Registration Service Branch, was regarded by the author of this plan as "the foundation upon which all other plans must be built." [31]

In the last analysis, the solution to the problem of establishing a world-wide American Graves Registration Service to implement the tentatively approved plan for return of the overseas dead seemed to be governed not so much by the kind of organization best adapted to the prospective program, as by a transitory set of conditions that would prevail in the overseas theaters at the climax of fighting and would, presumably, dictate procedures for fitting the elements of a paper organization into "the then existing chain of command." In short, an organization intended to perform a nonmilitary function under peacetime conditions should, according to this view, be based upon a military organizational scheme that was passing into disuse. There can be no question, of course, that existing conditions precluded the possibility of finding a satisfactory solution; it is equally difficult, however, to conclude that a better solution might be found by postponing all further consideration of the problem until some propitious event foreshadowed the end of hostilities. In total war the transitions from peace to hostilities and back again to peace are not so abrupt that they may be fixed in point of time by legalistic legerdemain: hostilities no longer begin on the date specified in a formal declaration, nor does peace come in consequence of a capitulation in the field or a proclamation by the victorious power. Just as an interim period variously called a "War of Nerves" or a "State of Limited Emergency" precedes the exchange of blows on the battlefield, so steps in preparation for peace are taken during hostilities. Demobilization planning, as first projected during April 1943, is a case in point. Even though return of the dead may be a nonmilitary undertaking, preparation for initiation of the program at any given date after termination of the war must, of necessity, envisage the continuance of many of the practices successfully employed during the period of hostilities.

The world-wide American Graves Registration Service was eventually built on a foundation laid by graves registration service units of the theater commands. This was accomplished piecemeal in the rearward zones of theaters where the battle fronts had become quiescent, as in North Africa, or far removed from port areas, with intervening communications lines traversing wide stretches of peaceful territory, as was later the case in Italy and Continental Europe. Administrative efficiency and economy of force in such situations, it was thought, could best be secured by assigning to the headquarters of specially organized graves registration units complete responsibility for the maintenance of semipermanent cemeteries and supervision over all reinterment operations within the theater. In fact, as will be presently seen, it was the request pressed by Allied Force Headquarters during September 1944 for the establishment of an American Graves Registration Area Command, in the Mediterranean area and under direct administrative and technical control of The Quarter-

[30] TAG to TQMG, 28 Nov 43.

[31] Policy Study No. 34, Part II, Sec A, p. 1. Cf. Tompkins, Demobilization Planning, p. 67.

Digitized by Google

master General, that led to a realistic view of the problem.[32]

In a sense this proposal was consistent with one aspect of the criticism offered by the Director of Operations, Army Service Forces, upon the proposed zone-sector scheme of organization, namely that more emphasis should be given to the establishment of sections to fit into the headquarters structure of theaters of operations and less thought expended "on elaborate Graves Registration Headquarters throughout the World." The main weight of this criticism, however, was to the effect that existing personnel commitments to supply and combat functions, together with the complexities of administration which arise whenever personnel allotments are made on an arbitrary basis, precluded any possibility of considering either the establishment of American Graves Registration Service headquarters throughout the world or the assignment of specially organized graves registration sections within the theater commands until after the conclusion of major hostilities in the European-African Theater. It may be concluded, therefore, that demobilization planning for return of the war dead, as initiated on 20 June 1943, and tentatively approved on 28 November 1943, accomplished nothing more in positive terms than a reaffirmation of the promise implied to thousands of next of kin that the dead would be returned. At the same time, the plan which emerged on 14 August from the Memorial Branch did define in some detail a number of problems that were related to the over-all program and, as then defined, become the basis of separate planning projects.

Policy Requirements for Uniform Burial Practices

The development of separate planning projects was, in large measures, dictated by current operating requirements. Problems encountered in formulating uniform graves registration procedures in the overseas theaters could not be entirely dissociated from those which had already arisen in connection with planning for the disposition of remains following hostilities. Indeed, the first comprehensive statement of policy looking to uniform burial practices beyond the seas appeared in a letter drafted jointly by Col. R. P. Harbold and Col. Thomas R. Howard, sometime Chief, Memorial Branch, and Graves Registration Officer designate, NATO.[33] Prepared for the signature of The Quartermaster General and transmitted to all overseas theaters and defense commands on 13 August 1943, just one day before submission of Policy Study No. 34, this letter was obviously related not only to proposals then intended to assign additional responsibilities of The Quartermaster General as Chief, American Graves Registration Service, but to suggestions put forward in the Policy Study for establishment of the American Graves Registration Service Branch and the Memorial Division.

The letter stated that economy in the exhumation of remains and restoration of the burial sites to owners in their former usable condition were the primary purposes which all temporary cemeteries in the theaters were intended to serve, and that the realization of these objectives was endangered by rivalry in extravagant methods of burial and cemeterial construction. Competition, it was noted, ran to the use of costly caskets, metallic liners, concrete vaults, massive headstones, permanent parking areas, heavy fencing, and ambitious landscaping projects.[34]

It was pointed out that much of the labor required in undoing the consequences of useless construction would of necessity be directed to demolishing obstacles and obliterating all unauthorized grave markers that might create doubts as to the accuracy of cases of identification. "The weighty grave markers unless completely destroyed and names thereon obliterated will be the source of inquiries to the War Department for years to come when American tourists, and in some instances, relatives of American soldiers who may have been killed in action and buried in this particular area find cement headstones bearing the names of American soldiers in the bush or protruding from a stone fence." Therefore, it was concluded, "the construction and use of concrete vaults for burial of remains should not be permitted under any circumstances." [35]

Particular attention was given to exposing the mistaken belief that embalming and interment in manufactured caskets or metallic liners offer any practical advantage over the simple soldier's burial. When the body, clad in uniform and wrapped only in a blanket or shelter-half, is buried in well-drained soil above the permanent water line, the remains are invariably found after 2 years in a "dry" condition, all body liquids and results of decomposition having been absorbed by the earth. In contrast, caskets and metallic lined containers, unless properly perforated to permit the escape of gasses and fluids, retain both body fluids

[32] This phase of planning for return of the war dead is examined in a later section of this chapter.

[33] Interv, OQMG historian with Col. Howard, 16 Jan 47. A draft of this letter is among Colonel Howard's private papers.

[34] Cir ltr, TQMG to GR Officers, all overseas theater and defense commands, 13 Aug 43.

[35] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

and results of decomposition, while embalming, as performed in the field, only temporarily delays the process of decay. After two or more years in the ground there is no appreciable difference in the condition of casketed and blanket-wrapped remains. Unidentified casketed remains, however, require a difficult screening process in the search for clues that might restore the lost identity. Moreover, such clues seldom survive the chemical action of decomposition within an air- or water-tight container. Finally, all remains, whether blanket-wrapped or casketed, must be transferred to caskets specially designed for the voyage by land and sea to the final resting place.

The concluding paragraphs set forth standard procedures deemed essential in attaining the primary purposes for which all temporary military cemeteries in the theaters are maintained. These included uniformity in the arrangement and numbering of individual graves and of rows and plots, an intelligent and economical use of available materials for fencing, landscaping, and other phases of physical development, which should be designed to lend an appearance of sanctity to the site and finally, a general requirement concerning the preparation of cemetery maps. The concluding paragraph was explicit on this point, stating that "these maps are required in order that when reports of interment are received in this office it will be able to determine and record the exact place of interment of these decedents on such maps, so that there will be no questions after cessation of hostilities as to the location of burials." [36]

Proposals for Assignment of Responsibility to The Quartermaster General for Disposition of All American Dead

The separate planning program which anticipated rather than awaited a propitious date for reexamination of Policy Study No. 34 fell into four general categories: (1) Planning in connection with the assignment of responsibility to The Quartermaster General for returning the remains of all American dead, including those of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, civilian employees of the War Department and of other agencies of the Government; (2) consideration by the Joint Chiefs of Staff of policies for the employment of uniform practices by the Army and Navy for exhumation and concentration operations in the theaters and of other operations preparatory to eventual repatriation of the dead; (3) the development of plans for extension of the national cemeterial system in order to provide graves for whatever part of the 10,000,000 living veterans might eventually request burial in a national cemtery; [37] (4) planning for the establishment of American Graves Registration Service area commands in quiescent theaters or in rearward zones far removed from the battle front of active theaters.[38]

Partial planning along these lines continued through the late autumn of 1944, when General Eisenhower's forces began breaching the West Wall and MacArthur succeeded in establishing a firm foothold in the Philippine archipelago. In November these activities converged on the central theme of formulating final plans for disposition of the war dead. Since the definitive statement of policies and procedures as approved on 8 September 1945, under the title, *Plan for Repatriation of the Dead of World War II and Establishment of Permanent United States Military Cemeteries at Home and Abroad*, was largely a synthesis of the planning initiated in August 1943 and thereafter conducted along parallel lines in 1944, this final statement can be understood only in terms of its various sources. It is proposed, therefore, to examine the different phases of partial planning as introductory steps in an analysis of the plan of September 1945.

The first policy measure initiated by the director of the reconstituted Memorial Division was a proposal that total responsibility for the return of all American war dead should be assigned to The Quartermaster General. A statement of the problem submitted to Quartermaster General Gregory pointed out that there were numerous classes of decedents, with as many different agencies of the Government currently responsible for their return to the United States.[39] Summarization of the facts bearing upon this problem and consideration of the means of bringing all interested agencies into agreement on the desired solution required a reexamination under existing conditions of the repatriation program proposed the previous August in Policy Study No. 34. In view of the facts recited, it was recommended that

[36] *Ibid.*

[37] Defeat of the legislation providing for expansion of the national cemeterial system and consequent suspension of the program that would otherwise have been undertaken by the Planning and Requirements Section necessarily diminished from the historical point of view the work actually accomplished in this connection. The planning project, however, deserves attention as an important phase of the administrative history of the Memorial Division.

[38] Colonel Harbold divided the history of graves registration policy making into the following phases: "(1) The original submitted in Policy Study No. 34, Aug. 14, 1943; (2) the assignment of complete responsibility to TQMG for return of all American dead; (3) the J. C. S. policy for exhumation and concentration of Army and Navy dead in the active theaters prior to repatriation; (4) plans for expansion of the national cemeterial system; (5) plans for the establishment of American Graves Registration Service area commands in the rearward zones of active theaters." Rpt, Harbold to TQMG, 29 Sep 45, sub: Conference to Review Plans and Policies Covering Graves Registration Procedures, p. 2.

[39] Colonel Harbold, Dir, Mem Div, to TQMG, 20 Jun 44.

Digitized by Google

the various departments and agencies concerned should be invited to a conference to discuss the proposal.

As an active participant in care of the war dead, the Navy, of course, occupied a special position. It was noted that in many areas "there will be increased numbers of Navy, Marine, and Coast Guard dead, and Navy representation on GRS units working these areas seems desirable, and this question is one that should be taken up in the above mentioned conference." However, delegation of total responsibility to The Quartermaster General for return of the dead, regardless of the extent of participation of any agency, was regarded as fundamental.

> Considering the vast area to be covered and the fact that The Quartermaster General has to lay the ground work for such return, it is recommended that the total responsibility of returning all American dead be placed on The Quartermaster General. Such action will permit one Department entering a cemetery for exhumation purposes to continue such operations until completion; simplify negotiations with foreign Governments in obtaining clearances, permits, and authorizations for repatriation of all American dead, and permit of the sites to be immediately returned to the rightful owners.[40]

Submitted through channels and approved 18 July 1944, by the Deputy Chief of Staff, Colonel Harbold's proposal of 20 June was referred back to the Deputy Director of Plans and Operations, ASF, with instructions that measures should be taken to call a conference of all departments and agencies interested in the repatriation program, and that the Special Planning Division, War Department General Staff, be apprised of the results accomplished at the conference.[41] Accordingly, General Somervell instructed The Quartermaster General to call the conference and directed that the Chief of Transportation and the Deputy Director, Plans and Operations for Demobilization, ASF, attend the meeting.[42] The affair was set for 25 August in the Office of The Quartermaster General and letters of invitation were transmitted to the following agencies: Foreign Service Administration, Air Transport Command; Plans and Operations, War Department General Staff; Plans and Operations for Demobilization, ASF; Chief, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Navy Department; Commandant, United States Marine Corps; Commandant, United States Coast Guard Service; Chief, Transportation Corps; Chief of Chaplains, United States Army; Chairman, American Red Cross; the United States Employees' Compensation Commission; Administrator, United States Maritime Commission; and the American Field Service Commission.[43]

Response of the agencies addressed was prompt, cordial in tone, and favorably disposed toward policies and plans indicated in the invitation. It was assumed, to be sure, that historical experience and existing circumstances would dictate an expedient course of action. Apart from the Army, the State Department alone had a policy and procedure for returning its dead from foreign lands. For this reason the State Department, while attending the conference and expressing approval of its aims, ultimately determined to follow a departmental tradition which antedated even that of the Army.[44] For the rest, no single agency or department of the Government other than the Navy could point to any large number of remains in foreign lands and urge that considerations of prestige or tradition justified an extraordinary expenditure for independent action in returning these dead. The outcome of discussion proposed for 25 August really depended upon the course of action which the Navy was disposed to adopt.

The Navy Department, however, had committed itself since the beginning of hostilities to a definite course with respect to repatriation of the naval dead. The War Department directive of 13 December 1941, suspending shipment of remains from overseas stations to the United States, was paralleled by a similar order from the Secretary of the Navy. The Bureau of Medicine and Surgery thereupon promulgated instructions that burials, whenever possible, should be made ashore in selected sites and that "the marking, identification, and preservation of graves should conform to detailed procedures which had been set up by the War Department in its Graves Registration Service." [45] In absence of a specialized mortuary organization comparable to the Army's Graves Registration Service, care of the dead devolved upon the Medical Corps and the Corps of Chaplains of the Navy. Of necessity, the provisional organization thus constituted quickly departed from the traditional and zealously sustained practice of maintaining separate service installations for identical purposes. In areas of combined operations burial teams of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery cooper-

[40] *Ibid.*

[41] Brig. Gen. W. F. Tompkins, Special Planning Div, to CG, ASF, 21 Jul 44.

[42] Lt Gen Somervell to TQMG, 29 Jul 44, 1st Ind. on above cited communication.

[43] TQMG to Commandant, U. S. Marine Corps, 10 Aug 44. List of the other agencies to which similar letters were sent is noted in file SPQYE 293, Mail and Records Br, OQMG.

[44] The State Department "withdrew its concurrence at the time of the change in its personnel incident to the resignation of the Honorable Cordell Hull." *Plan for Repatriation of the Dead of World War II and Establishment of Permanent United States Military Cemeteries at Home and Abroad*, 8 September 1945, p. 15.

[45] Ltr, Rear Admiral L. Sheldon, Acting Chief, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, to TQMG, 15 Aug 44.

Digitized by Google

ated wholeheartedly with Graves Registration Service units of the Army in establishing American military cemeteries for the burial of Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard Service dead. Indeed, the groundwork for acceptance of the proposal that the return of all American dead should be accomplished by the American Graves Registration Service had long been prepared by cooperation between the Army and Navy in every area where these two services had engaged in combined operations.

Acknowledgment by Rear Admiral L. Sheldon, Medical Corps, United States Navy, of General Gregory's invitation to the conference of 25 August not only expressed complete agreement on the part of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery with the policy proposed for discussion but emphasized the fact that the Navy had already committed itself to this policy.

> In all of the directives regarding care of the dead issued during the present war it has been contemplated that after the war there would be a return to the continental United States of remains of the dead in those instances where the next of kin so desired. In view of the fact that the Army in its Graves Registration Service is organized to accomplish such a task, it is not the desire of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery to set up a duplicate organization, but rather to ask that the War Department coordinate the return of the dead of the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard with the return of the Army dead. The Navy would be prepared, of course, to furnish the necessary records and directives with respect to the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard, and if so desired to provide personnel to work with the Army and such funds and material as the Army may require.[46]

The keynote of the conference was struck by Quartermaster General Gregory, who stressed in his opening address "the desirability of formulating an operational procedure which will give maximum expedition, economy, and unity in effecting the return of America's war dead from temporary cemeteries scattered throughout the world." [47]

It was not expected, of course, that complete unanimity of opinion on all matters of detail could be achieved at a single meeting. In fact, the agenda was limited to a brief analysis of War Department policies governing the return of the dead and an exposition of the organization and functions of the postwar American Graves Registration Service, as detailed in Policy Study No. 34. Eight charts portrayed almost to the point of oversimplification the larger geographical and statistical aspects of the problem, as well as the functional relationship between The Quartermaster General and other governmental agencies in the enterprise. An open discussion followed the presentation of policy and organizational relationship.[48]

Inquiry and speculation concerning particular problems on the part of different representatives of the 12 governmental agencies present amounted to an exploration of hitherto uncharted fields of planning. For instance, W. S. Douglas, representing the Navy Department, touched on two of the many problems that were reserved for future treatment.

> Just one point here—after we get the bodies back to the United States, the Navy and I think the Marine Corps and the Coast Guard will feel that the escort should be a blue jacket for the Navy and the same thing for the Coast Guard, and for the Marine Corps a member of the Marines. I think that is a detail which can be worked out very nicely when the time arises or preliminary to that time.[49]

In another connection, Mr. Douglas expressed the conviction that "communication between the Navy Department, the Marine Corps and the Coast Guard and the next of kin should be conducted by the respective agencies rather than by the Army." [50]

While no important decisions or commitments were made during the deliberations of 25 August, and although the affair, as already indicated, partook largely of the nature of a lecture on policy and related matters, along with an open forum to develop both the areas of agreement and conflict of interest, the importance of this conference should not be underestimated. It marked the beginning of concrete operational planning for return of the dead. These different agencies sought and received definite instructions concerning the sort of burial information required by the Graves Registration Section and directions for correspondence with next of kin. The obligation of furnishing authoritative interpretations in response to many such queries amounted to nothing less than conducting an educational program, which contributed as much to the clarification of policy as it did to supplying specific points of information. Typical of instructions given to the various agencies were those transmitted by the Memorial Division to the American Red Cross. These instructions covered in detail the procedures to be followed in delegating responsibility to the Memorial Division to receive, verify and complete burial records of Red Cross personnel, to correspond with next of kin of the deceased for purposes of ascertaining their wishes as to disposition of remains, and to act in other capaci-

[46] *Ibid.*

[47] Stenographic Rpt, Conference on Evacuation of Remains of American Dead from Overseas Theaters to the United States upon Cessation of Hostilities, 25 Aug 44, p. 1.

[48] *Ibid.*

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 2. Colonel Harbold conceded in discussion of this point that "the details of handling the bodies from the port of arrival to the final destination is a matter to be worked out." *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[50] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

ties as the appointed agent of the Red Cross in matters relating to overseas dead of that organization.[51]

It was only to be expected that examination of the details of cooperation between the Army and Navy initiated a new phase of planning. It was determined at a conference on 29 September between Lieutenant Colonel Darling, Chief, Graves Registration Section, and representatives of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery that the Navy would supply the Memorial Division with copies of its overseas burial records and assign a liaison officer for permanent duty with the Graves Registration Section, together with such additional personnel as might subsequently be requested by the director of the Memorial Division. Other procedural and policy problems were examined at this conference and referred in a memorandum to the Chief, Memorial Division, with the suggestion that "your opinion and recommendation on these various matters will assist this Bureau in arranging for complete cooperation toward one common end." [52]

Many of the inquiries arising from the 25 August conference and addressed to the Memorial Division by the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery sought detailed information on established points of graves registration policy. These included the general subject of isolated burials, the recovery of bodies washed ashore on remote coast lines and buried by friendly natives, and procedures that would apply in the exhumation of mass burials and in burials containing fragments of unidentified bodies. The Bureau of Medicine and Surgery went further, requesting information that required interpretation of broad policies and discussion of tentative programs, such as identification by Graves Registration Service units of the remains of Navy and Marine Corps personnel killed at the beginning of hostilities in Pacific Ocean areas lost to the enemy and subsequently regained, plans for a simultaneous evacuation of areas, and the effect of a majority vote of next of kin favoring permanent burial in the area where the dead had fallen.

The Memorial Division's reply covered all points raised by the Navy. It was something more, however, than a list of answers appended to a questionnaire. Indeed, repatriation planning emerges in this document from an announcement of theoretical principles to the practical consideration of concrete situations. Treatment of the question inquiring if remains would be evacuated from different areas simultaneously or in sequence evoked an interpretation of policy laid down in August 1943, together with a number of suggestions for the guidance of the Navy in conforming to the stated policy. After noting that all areas would be worked simultaneously, it was explained that the areas in question "will be designated zones and each zone will be subdivided into sectors and the sectors will be worked in sequence." The following suggestions were offered to the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery.

> All survey of next of kin must be made before detailed instructions are given for exhumation. Therefore, it is necessary for this office to receive the records of the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard dead in order that such records may be checked with records in this office. If there are any discrepancies found, such discrepancies must be thrashed out before instructions are given to the field. When records have been coordinated, checked, and corrected, the Navy will be informed and the Navy should contact next of kin for shipping instructions and advise the next of kin that these bodies will be returned to a designated address or shipped to a designated national cemetery if they so wish. The wishes of the next of kin should be immediately imparted to this office. Information as to the name of vessel, time of departure from overseas and Port of Debarkation concerned and arrival in the United States will be received by this office and Ports of Embarkation from GRS Headquarters and overseas escorts will be assigned at ports of debarkation to escort bodies to destination. As these ports of debarkation will be near or adjacent Naval facilities, Naval escorts of Navy dead will be requested from the Navy representative. These lists, so far as Navy personnel is concerned, are available to representatives of Navy at Port of Debarkation so that he can make arrangements for escort when bodies of Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard personnel arrive. This Headquarters will also transmit all advance information to your office received from the overseas agencies.[53]

Discussion of problems involving the search of remote regions for isolated graves, the recovery and identification of Navy dead in reconquered areas, and the exhumation of mass burials emphasized that the successful participation of Graves Registration Service units in all such enterprises would be greatly facilitated by cooperation on the part of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery in furnishing complete and accurate copies of its mortuary records pertaining to all overseas burials. It was pointed out in reference to the investigation of isolated burials in inaccessible places that, since Army plane crashes had occurred in every quarter of the globe, search by Graves Registration Service units would extend over all remote regions where Navy personnel might have been interred and that such remains, together with "all American dead no matter where interred overseas," would be returned by the American Graves Registration Service. It was sug-

[51] Brig Gen H. A. Barnes, Deputy TQMG, to the Chairman, American Red Cross, 15 Nov 44.

[52] W. S. Douglas, Civilian Assistant, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, to Col R. P. Harbold, 29 Sep 44.

[53] Ltr, Harbold to the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, 16 Oct 44.

Digitized by Google

gested, however, that the Navy Department could perform a useful office in responding to calls for transportation facilities in some instances where the availability of Navy boats would expedite shipments of supplies, personnel and bodies. This would appear to be particularly applicable to the South, Southwest, and Central Pacific Areas. "Coordination and cooperation between Army and the Navy," it was added, "are essential to the successful culmination of this project." [54]

The location of graves and the identification of the remains of Navy and Marine Corps personnel killed during the early operations of the war on Wake Island, Guam, and in the Philippines, or who subsequently died in the prison camps of Luzon and the Asiatic mainland was accepted as a responsibility of the Army. It was urged, however, that all available information pertaining to Navy and Marine Corps burials in those regions should be forwarded to the Memorial Division.

Consideration of the problem of mass burials brought forth a definite statement of policy. Only when sufficient evidence became available to justify the identification of fragments of bodies would such fragments be regarded as identified bodies and, therefore, subject to the expressed desire of next of kin. Otherwise the following procedure would be followed:

> Where fragments of bodies have been found and buried as a "Mass burial" and such fragments cannot be identified—not enough of any one body to identify—then these remains will be disinterred and brought back to the U. S. and placed in one of our national cemeteries. If the names of the deceased from whose bodies the fragments or parts are known [sic], a stone will be erected indicating names of deceased; if names are not known, then headstone will be erected over grave as an Unknown Soldier. If the names of the deceased are known, as above, the next of kin will be advised that the bodies have been buried as a "Mass burial" in view of the fact that the individual bodies could not be identified and told that the remains have been buried in such and such a national cemetery with a stone erected at grave with names of deceased.[55]

The contingency that an adverse vote of next of kin might cause some revision of repatriation planning, at least in reference to a particular theater, was regarded by the director of Memorial Division as highly improbable. Citing the fact that out of 20,000 letters in his office no more than four or five correspondents indicated opposition to a uniform policy of returning the dead, he nevertheless conceded that, "if the poll of the next of kin results in the majority desiring the remains left overseas, then the matter will be taken up for a determination as to the establishment of American cemeteries." [56]

[54] *Ibid.*
[55] *Ibid.*
[56] *Ibid.*

The transfer of jurisdiction over cemeteries established by the Navy or Marine Corps to the Army Graves Registration Service presented the final test of ability and desire on the part of all concerned to cooperate wholeheartedly in a proper disposition of the war dead. The way to a satisfactory solution of this delicate problem was opened by the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery in its proposal that The Quartermaster General should state the conditions under which the Navy could make such a transfer desirable and indicate the procedure by which the transaction could best be effected in the common interest. Colonel Harbold's reply was tactfully phrased, stating that "when there are established Navy cemeteries (including Marine and Coast Guard) and the Army is now garrisoned [sic] or occupying that area, these cemeteries should be turned over to the GRS representatives of the Army who will accept the custody of them and they will be guarded in every respect and given the same treatment as our cemeteries considered a part of the GRS establishment. The GRS will make a continued search to identify any unknown Navy, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard dead that may be buried in that area." [57]

The establishment of working relations with the Transportation Corps was as important a step in the development of cooperative repatriation planning as the effective liaison that the Memorial Division and the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery had succeeded in bringing about. On 16 October 1944, just 2 days after submission to the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery of Colonel Harbold's interpretative statement on tentative policies governing joint graves registration operations in the theaters, the Chief of Transportation notified General Gregory that the plan and charts presented at the conference of 25 August for return of the dead had been reviewed by his office and that the plan as presented was considered sound and could be effectively implemented by the Transportation Corps. At the same time, clarification on two points seemed desirable. One concerned a chart which indicated that the control of transportation from ports of debarkation to final destination was reserved by the American Graves Registration Service. While the Chief of Transportation agreed that "the over-all control of distribution and records remains under jurisdiction of the AGRS, transportation to final destination, including negotiation with carriers, is the responsibility of the Transportation Corps and should be so reflected in Chart No. 7." The other point involved an elementary problem of stowage, as determined by dimensions of the standard casket.

[57] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

It was requested that these data be supplied as soon as available "in order that advance planning may be initiated for the probable conversion of ships to be used in repatriation." [58]

Any doubt that the Chief of Transportation may have entertained in regard to the possibility of an attempt on the part of Graves Registration officers to question the just extent of his jurisdiction over the movement of remains was allayed by assurances from the Chief of the Memorial Division that "steps have been taken to have future copies of charts referred to show the responsibility of the Transportation Corps." It was stipulated, however, that "the GRS officer at the Port [of Debarkation] will have the responsibility for the instruction of the escorts." [59] With reference to the request for dimensions of the standard caskets, the Chief of Transportation was apprised that "specifications had been submitted to the Casket Manufacturing Industry and that a conference of the representatives of interested services would be called as soon as the industry's recommendations became available." Despite hopes of an early solution, delays in the allocation of critical materials for casket construction postponed further consideration of this phase of the planning program beyond the period of hostilities.[60]

Interservice Planning for Concentration of Remains

While the Memorial Division and the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery were devising methods of interservice cooperation within the scope of existing policy, changing conditions in the Pacific afforded the possibility of revising directives that had heretofore obstructed progress in the concentration of remains. Where the flexible system of motor transport that supported land operations in North Africa and Italy had permitted some diversion of vehicles for the carriage of unburied and disinterred remains from combat zones to the large military cemeteries in rear areas, few such possibilities existed in the Pacific. The Navy's provisional burial organization had no water-borne transportation to complement the motor transport system of the Army's Graves Registration Service. Furthermore, the spearheads of offensive action in the Pacific, as illustrated in the forward leap from Eniwetok to Saipan, swept over hundreds of miles of ocean space, isolating enemy defense positions and establishing bases for another massive blow. The demands of such a strategy on available shipping had precluded the possibility of diverting tonnage from the main lines of communication for purposes other than supply. For this reason it had been considered inadvisable to undertake the consolidation of remains from many small cemeteries in isolated areas until after the conclusion of hostilities.[61]

This situation went unaltered until October 1944, when the prospective abandonment of naval bases in the Samoan Defense Group led to a joint proposal by the Commandant of the Defense Group and the Commanding General, South Pacific Base Command, that the bodies of all military personnel buried at Nanomea, Nukufetau, Funafuti, Wallis, and Upolu should be exhumed and concentrated at the Tutuila Military Cemetery.[62] Chief of Staff I. H. Mayfield, Samoan Base Command, transmitted the joint proposal on 31 October to the Commander in Chief, United States Fleet. After reviewing all directives concerning the disposition of remains and ascertaining that "in none of these directives is there an expressed or implied policy covering or provisions made, for disinterment or reinterment," Admiral Nimitz recommended that "no action along the lines proposed be taken until after the war." [63] The case was then referred to Admiral E. J. King, Commander in Chief, United States Fleet, for review.

While conceding that the decision taken by Admiral Nimitz was in accord with established policy, Admiral King expressed dissatisfaction with the policy. He communicated his views in a memorandum (JCS 1195) to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and suggested the following action:

> As stated by the Commander in Chief U. S. Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas in the enclosure, there exists no policy expressed or implied regarding disinterment and reinterment. It is considered that such a policy will be needed and it should be joint.[64]

With concurrence on the part of General George C. Marshall, Chief of the War Department General Staff, JCS 1195 was referred by the Secretariat, Joint Chiefs

[58] Ltr, Brig Gen Robt. H. White, Asst Chief of Transportation, to TQMG, Att: Dir Mem Div, 16 Oct 44.

[59] Ltr, Col Harbold to Chief, TC, 24 Oct 44, 1st ind, to above cited communication.

[60] Harbold to TQMG, 29 Sep 45, sub: Conference to Review Plans and Policies Covering Graves Registration Procedures, p. 10. In this connection Colonel Harbold explained that many months had been devoted to research on the casket program and that casket makers had cooperated 100 percent. "We want to select one type of casket," he explained, "which will be acceptable to all Services. The arrangements are that whichever type is accepted, all casket manufacturers will be able to make that casket for us."

[61] J. H. Towers, Deputy CinC, U. S. Fleet and POA, to CinC, U. S. Fleet, 23 Nov 44, 1st ind. to basic letter, I. H. Mayfield, CofS, Samoan Defense Group, to CinC, U. S. Pacific Fleet, 31 Oct 44. Reference was made in this indorsement to the following directives concerning disposition of remains: (a) BU M&S ONZO/A14-6 (121) of 25 June 1942, (b) BU M&S QWZO/A14-6 (121) of 4 March 1943, and (c) Sec Nav. Dispatch 261900 of 26 June 1942.

[62] *Ibid.*

[63] CINCPAC & CINCPOA TO COMINCH 23 Nov 44, 1st ind, to above cited basic speed ltr.

[64] Admiral E. J. King, CinC, U. S. Fleet, to JCofS (Memo, JCS 1195) 11 Dec 44.

Digitized by Google

of Staff, to the Joint Logistics Committee.[65] Machinery for the investigation was completed on 28 December with the designation of 10 Army and 2 Navy officers "as a subcommittee to submit recommendations on JCS 1195." Colonel Harbold, Chief of the Memorial Division, was appointed "Steering Member" of the subcommittee.[66]

The subcommittee prepared and submitted through prescribed channels a study entitled "Disinterment and Reinterment of Bodies Outside the Continental United States." This paper comprised an analysis of the problem and offered five specific recommendations for action. The draft of a tenative directive for commanders of all theaters, defense commands, and departments beyond the seas appeared as Appendix A of the study, while a detailed discussion of the facts bearing on the problem comprised the subject matter of Appendix B.[67]

Appendix B recited the Army's experience in the progressive exhumation and concentration of its dead, in all theaters of operations. This program, it stated, had been carried forward "in accordance with instructions contained in TM 10–630 and letter from the Office of The Quartemaster General, Chief, American Graves Registration Service, to all theaters, dated 13 August 1943." The following objectives, it noted, should be attained:

> *a.* To reduce the number of personnel required for supervision and maintenance of smaller cemeteries.
>
> *b.* To properly secure and maintain all remains which have a burial register in the Graves Registration files.
>
> *c.* To enable the War Department to fulfill the obligation it has pledged to the next of kin of our soldier dead that their graves will be maintained, protected, and secured by Army personnel until they are returned to the United States or concentrated in military cemeteries subsequently established.
>
> *d.* In islands of the Central, South, and Southwest Pacific Areas in conformity with instructions and to reduce the number of points to be supplied. . . .[68]

Conditions in the Pacific areas, it was further stated in this discussion, gave a particular urgency to immediate application of the policy pursued elsewhere by the Army's Graves Registration Service in advancing the program of concentrating at strategically located cemeteries all remains scattered in isolated graves and burial sites, the maintenance of which would impose an undue burden on available personnel and transportation. Finally, it was submitted that "this concentration will eliminate the losing of reported grave locations because of action by the elements, decay of markers and obliteration by rapid tropical growth; prevent desecration and molestation by man or beast and expedite recovery, preparation, and repatriation of these remains after the cessation of hostilities." [69] The conclusions derived from examination of these facts specified that, inasmuch as the Army Graves Registration units had conducted joint burial, exhumation, and concentration operations whenever required, "the continuation of this service in the instant case and such others as may occur is sound, practicable, and helpful to home front morale." [70]

Five specific recommendations were offered in paragraphs 5–9 of the study. To all intents and purposes, the joint policy was stated in these five paragraphs and in the draft of a tentative directive submitted in Appendix A. The procedure in transforming the subcommittee's report into a formal statement of policy was simple and direct; with a rearrangement of paragraph sequence and the addition of a phrase of four words, the subcommittee's study was transmitted as JCS 1195/1 (Washington) through the Secretariat to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for action.[71] After concurrence by the Office of the Chief of Staff, United States Army,[72] the Joint Deputy Chiefs of Staff, acting for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, approved the text of JCS 1195/1 (Washington), including Appendix A, and appropriated the language of paragraphs 5–9 to serve as the text of JCS Policy Memorandum No. 12, *Disinterment and Reinterment of Bodies Outside the Continental Limits of the United States*. Finally, on 17 February 1945, copies of Policy Memorandum No. 12 and the approved version of the directive for all theater commanders were transmitted to the Assistant Chief of Staff, Operations Division, War Department General Staff, and to the Aide of the Commander in Chief, United States Fleet, for appropriate action.[73]

Policy Memorandum No. 12 required (1) that the Graves Registration Service of the Army would accomplish the exhumation and concentration of American

[65] Joint Logistics Committee (JLC 252/1) 26 Dec 44.

[66] C. H. Donelly and R. B. Regram Jr., Joint Secretariat, Memo for Col R. P. Harbold, Steering Member, *et al.*, 28 Dec 44.

[67] Joint Logistics Committee (JCS 252/2), 23 Jan 45, inclosure, sub: Disinterment and Reinterment of Bodies Outside the Continental Limits of the United States. Note by the secretaries of the joint committee states: "The enclosed subcommittee report is circulated for consideration by the Joint Logistics and the Joint Military Transportation Committee." *Ibid.*

[68] *Ibid.*, App "B," par. 2.

[69] *Ibid.*

[70] *Ibid.*, para 4.

[71] R. B. Pegram, Jr., Secretary, Joint Logistics Committee, memo for JCofS, 26 Jan 45, with inclosure, sub: Disinterment and Reinterment of Bodies Outside the Continental Limits of the United States. Report by the Joint Logistics Committee and Joint Military Transportation Committee. The inserted four-word phrase read: "or otherwise cared for."

[72] Lt Col Florence T. Newsome, Asst Secretary, GS, Memo for the Secretariat, JCS, 14 Feb 45.

[73] Capt E. D. Graves, Jr., Deputy Secretary, JCS, Memo to ACofS Opns Div, WDGS, and Aide to CinC, U. S. Fleet, Re: Policy Memo No. 12, February 17, 1945.

Digitized by Google

dead "in such larger cemeteries as may be located nearest such places where there will be an Army installation and as may be readily accessible to promote expeditious repatriation of all our service dead"; (2) that such exhumation operations must not be conducted on a scale that would interfere with military operations or divert water-borne military or naval or air transportation from assignments previously made by appropriate commanders; (3) that, whenever the conduct of exhumation and concentration activities would interfere with military operations or disrupt existing transportation schedules, the Department of State would endeavor "to obtain the cooperation of the appropriate foreign government controlling the base in providing for adequate security and caretaking of the cemetery;" (4) that the continued care of American dead interred at Army or Navy bases that were to be relinquished in the future, or the exhumation of all American remains at such bases and their reinterment elsewhere, would devolve upon the Army Graves Registration Service; (5) that the enclosed directive (Appendix A, JCS 1195/1), as amended by the Chief of Staff, would be sent to all overseas theaters.[74]

Intended to implement JCS Policy Memorandum No. 12, the directive defined the responsibility of theater commanders in execution of the program. In particular, they were responsible for the selection of concentration points and for completion of the operation. Their somewhat remote relationship to the Chief, American Graves Registration Service, was indicated in the following requirement: "Where the exhumation and concentration operations cannot be effected in accordance with the policy herein stated, notification will be made to the Chief, American Graves Registration Service (The Quartermaster General)." [75]

In a word, JCS Policy Memorandum No. 12 extended to joint action in the Pacific the burial program first envisaged in the circular letter transmitted on 13 August 1943, to all theater Graves Registration Officers. Comparison of the text of the study prepared by the subcommittee for the joint committees on Logistics and Military Transportation with the wording of JCS policy Memorandum No. 12 establishes beyond any doubt that the subcommittee on which the Chief of the Memorial Division served as steering member actually drafted the policy and that approval by the higher coordinating levels amounted to scarcely more than the enactment of required formalities.

[74] Copy No. 60, JCS Policy Memo No. 12, 16 Feb 45, signed by A. J. McFarland, E. D. Graves, Jr., Joint Secretariat, JCS, and inclosed Directive to Theater Commanders.

[75] *Ibid.*

Plans for Extension of the National Cemeterial System

Consideration of the problem of providing greater burial space for future needs of the armed forces could not long be held in abeyance by President Roosevelt's expressed opposition to extension of the national cemeterial system in the immediate future.[76] But if the wishes of the President determined War Department policy in this regard, the Congress was under no restraint in forming its own views on the question of national cemeteries. Furthermore, active interest on the part of a responsible committee of either chamber would necessarily involve The Quartermaster General in technical aspects of legislation looking to enlargement of the national system.

During October 1943 several Congressmen became interested in proposals to expand the system in such manner as would give at least one national cemetery to every State of the Union. Plans for an informal meeting of the group included a letter addressed to Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson requesting that Colonel Robert P. Harbold, "an officer with many years experience in connection with National Cemeteries," be instructed to appear and "answer questions of fact pertaining to this subject." [77]

Informal discussion of the cemeterial problem led to the draft of a bill, H. R. 3582, 78th Congress, 1 November 1943, which provided for "one National Cemetery in every State and such other National Cemeteries in the States, Territories, and possessions as may be needed for the burial of war veterans." Consideration of this bill by the House Committee on Military Affairs definitely committed The Quartermaster General to collaboration with the committee members in an exhaustive study of the whole problem. On 2 November it was requested that the Secretary of War furnish the committee a report covering four related topics, namely: (1) an estimate of the number of soldiers of all wars eligible for burial in each State; (2) an estimate on the approximate space required to meet the burial demands of veterans of World War I, World War II, and veterans of all other wars; (3) an estimate of total costs; (4) recommendations for execution of plans based upon the proposed legislation.[78]

[76] Cf Policy Study No. 34, Part III, p. 2. In a letter of 29 December 1941 the President stated that in view of burial space still available in existing national cemeteries, he expected that no steps would be taken to establish additional national cemeteries under Public Law No. 774, approved 29 June 1939, until after the cessation of hostilities. *Ibid.*

[77] Earl S. Willey, MC, to Hon. Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War, 22 Oct 43.

[78] Ltr, Julia Watterson, clerk, House Committee on Military Affairs, to Hon. Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War, 2 Nov 43.

Digitized by Google

The report prepared in consequence of the committee's request by Colonel Harbold, then Chief of the Memorial Branch, and submitted through channels on 5 February 1944 by The Quartermaster General,[79] served as an introduction to a series of studies which extended over a period of 2 years. While a full interpretation of this extensive and prolonged activity can be given only in terms of the legislative history of H. R. 3582, 78th Congress and its successor bill, H. R. 517, 79th Congress, with companion bills considered by the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, the entire project is adequately summarized in a two-volume report submitted through the Under Secretary of War on 15 February 1945 and entitled *National Cemeteries, A Study Prepared in the OQMG upon Request of the Committee of* [*sic*] *Military Affairs, Reference* H. R. 516.[80]

This study called attention to serious limitations of the national cemeterial system and proposed remedial measures. The most serious flaw in the system was not the scarcity of burial sites but rather the faulty location of cemeteries with respect to distribution of the population. The fact that there were 79 national cemeteries in the United States containing approximately 175,000 available graves sites, together with an undeveloped acreage capable of providing 200,000 additional sites, was generally accepted as evidence that potentialities of the system were adequate to meet the veteran burial demands for many years to come. Little heed, however, had been given in the past to the location of these cemeteries, nor had the possibility of subsequent visitation of graves by relatives of the deceased been regarded as a major cemeterial problem.

Circumstances governing the selection of many cemetery sites during and immediately after the American Civil War excluded any possibility of considering future needs. As a matter of fact, each cemetery presented an isolated problem, that of selecting a plot of ground wherein remains from the surrounding area might be suitably reinterred and given perpetual care. Since the strategy of war determined these areas and, in turn, dictated the location of many cemeteries, they could not be regarded as a national system in the sense of having a distribution designed to serve future peacetime requirements of the Nation. Many sites were difficult of access and far removed from populous centers. Twenty of the States had no national cemeteries within their borders. There seems no exaggeration in the statement that

> they were a negative answer to thousands of veterans' families who were offered the privilege of burial in a National Cemetery for their loved ones. To avail themselves of this privilege a journey of 500 to 1,000 miles would be required for the body and members of the family who desired to be at the grave side when remains were committed to their final resting place.[81]

The possibilities of a modernized national cemeterial system which looked to future needs rather than to requirements which imposed a faulty solution in the past were quite apparent. An analysis of burial statistics for the years 1939–44 disclosed that 75 percent of all graves opened for interment were in nine cemeteries situated at or near such metropolitan centers and relatively populous areas as New York, Philadelphia, Washington, D. C., Baltimore, St. Louis, St. Paul, San Francisco, San Antonio, and El Paso. It followed that the distribution of additional cemeteries with respect to population centers would insure an average annual burial rate more nearly equivalent to that of the nine enumerated cemeteries than to the much lower average of the system as a whole.

Aside from recently observed trends at a few favorably located national cemeteries and some speculative conclusions that might be derived from the percentage of World War I dead buried in military cemeteries at home and abroad, there were no reliable data on which to base an accurate estimate of the factor termed "Potential Graves Sites Required." Any such calculation involved the total number of living veterans entitled to burial in the national system, together with that proportion of the veteran population who extended their eligibility to wives or widows. Designed as "Eligibles for Burial," this quantity was basic in the determination of potential graves sites required. It was still necessary, however, to estimate the increased percentage of eligibles for burial that might seek interment in national cemeteries more advantageously located than the old ones with respect to population centers.

Determination of the increased percentage was necessarily restricted to an intelligent guess. Experi-

[79] (1) Memo, TQMG for USW, 7 Feb 44. (2) Col R. P. Harbold, Svc Instl Div, Mem Br, to GAS Div, Congressional Sec, 5 Feb 44.

[80] Hereinafter cited as Report on National Cemeteries. Volume I contains the analysis of the problem and is divided into five parts; Volume II consists of exhibits and charts. Neither volume is paged. Reference to the text of Volume I is made by indicating the Part. This report, it should be noted, was not originally an integral part of the basic plan of 8 September 1945 for repatriation of the war dead. The report on national cemeteries was transmitted directly by the Under Secretary of War to the House Committee on Military Affairs on 15 February 1945, while the basic plan was submitted through military channels to the General Staff on 1 June. Nevertheless, the Report on National Cemeteries was submitted nominally as Part VI of the basic plan. Actually, the text of the two-volume cemeterial report comprised Exhibit A attached to that plan.

[81] Report of National Cemeteries, Vol I, Preface.

Digitized by Google

ence tables from World War I established that slightly over 12½ percent of bodies returned to the United States were interred in national cemeteries. At the same time, it was noted that interment records invariably reflected an appreciable increase of burials in three exceptional situations: (1) where national cemeteries are located near Veterans' facilities not having cemeteries; (2) where a national cemetery is sponsored and its maintenance scrutinized by local patriotic organizations; (3) where national cemeteries are located on or near military reservations and where the administration, maintenance, and advantages of the cemetery are matters of common knowledge to the residents of such communities. It was assumed that the system established in consequence of enactment of H. R. 516 would be so publicized by press, radio, and patriotic organizations that national cemeteries generally would, in the course of time, gain the same esteem enjoyed by only a few of the older ones. For these reasons it was concluded that 16⅔ percent of eligibles for burial represented a conservative guess as to the proportion which would claim the right of interment in units of the modernized establishment.[82]

Calculation of total eligibles was based on the known number of living veterans and a computed figure for single males in the State of New York. The World Almanac put this figure at 36.4 percent of resident males during the year 1930. Since the computation for current purposes was based on males who would be 19 or over in 1944, and since the minimum age bracket would be ascending annually, it was deemed that a reduction from 36.4 to 20 percent would offer a consistent correction. Thus the known figure for living veterans was increased 80 percent in establishing the over-all number of eligibles for burial.[83]

In view of the fact that H. R. 516 required the establishment of one national cemetery in each State and the establishment of additional cemeteries, or enlargements of existing ones, wherever needed in States having a population of 500,000 or more, the study was necessarily extended to the individual States and their potential burial requirements. The method of approach may best be illustrated by taking the case of New York. Here the analysis embraced seven parts: (1) a statement giving the location of national cemeteries within the State; (2) a brief historical account of each installation; (3) a statistical summary of burials at each installation; (4) the estimated total of available grave sites; (5) a conclusion concerning the possibilities for development of existing installations; (6) a statistical compilation of burial requirements based on the number of resident veterans, registrants, and dependents; (7) a recommendation for the appropriate location of the required number of new national cemeteries.

According to the data listed under parts 1–5, New York had three national cemeteries, one of which was established in 1862, another in 1874, and a third, the Long Island National Cemetery, in 1936. Strategically located with respect to the New York metropolitan area and containing 91,691 available grave sites, the Long Island National Cemetery alone was considered to have possibilities for future development. The total number of eligible veterans and the consequent burial requirements were calculated by adding the eligible veterans of the various wars to reach a total of those eligible for burial; adding 16⅔ percent plus 80 percent of this total to obtain a figure representing potential grave sites required; and totaling up the available grave sites for comparison.

Based on an established burial requirement of 447,947 eligible veterans and dependents, the following proposals regarding new cemeteries were offered for New York:

> One of 150,000 near *Metropolitan Area* of New York on east side of Hudson.
> One of 125,000 in the *Buffalo Area.*
> One of 100,000 in the *Syracuse Area.*
> One of 100,000 in the *Albany Area.*
>
> In determining these locations due consideration must be given to the density of population in fixed areas, the railroad network serving the areas and minimized railroad express hauls. The need of additional burial capacity near Metropolitan New York is obvious . . . The maximum railroad hauls for the area are Monticello, 108 miles, and Port Jervis, 88 miles. There are but two cities over 10,000 population, in the area which would have hauls exceeding fifty miles.
>
> The Adirondacks Section in the northern part of the State offers the only difficult transportation problem. The railroad lines weaving around the mountain section present such increased distances that the area can be diverted into Syracuse and Albany to secure short hauls. The table of distances indicates the division necessary. A great part of this northern area would have much shorter hauls to the National Cemetery at Burlington, Vermont.[84]

The analysis of needs by States and territories established the conclusion that 79 new national cemeteries were required within the 48 States of the continental homeland, with at least one for every State, and one for each of the territories of Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. Fourteen cemeteries of the existing system were thought to be adaptable to large expansion and, there-

[82] *Ibid.*, Vol I, Part III, Introduction.
[83] *Ibid.*
[84] *Ibid.*, Vol I, Part III, New York.

Digitized by Google

fore, capable of "offering facilities in the furtherance of providing burial sites for the Potential Requirements deduced herein." [85] The remaining 66 national cemeteries were divided into three categories. The first consisted of 16 cemeteries, all of which had available grave sites for some time in the future. The second included 8 cemeteries which had few or no remaining burial sites. The third embraced a group of cemeteries which, excepting the Mexico City National Cemetery and 8 others, were established during the years 1867–1873. While serving as an impressive and irreplaceable memorial to the American Civil War, this group was of little practical value in meeting future requirements. The report recommended that all cemeteries of the second and third categories should be inactivated as soon as practicable and that those in the first should be removed from the active list as their available sites were filled.

The estimated cost of the entire project was put at $122,938,331, a sum approximating the cost of one capital ship.[86]

Planning for Establishment of Quartermaster Graves Registration Area Commands (ZI) in Active Theaters

Where action by the Joint Chiefs of Staff had been required in formulating a policy for combined operations in the disinterment and reinterment of Army and Navy dead, a successful pursuit of the policy first outlined in the circular letter of 13 August 1943 was, when applicable to Army dead alone, a matter for collaboration between The Quartermaster General and the various theater commanders. The former as Chief, American Graves Registration Service, was responsible for the establishment of policies and procedures governing operations of the Graves Registration Service outside the continental United States; the latter, in addition to directing combat operations, were responsible for the conduct of all related military activities, including graves registration within the territorial limits of their theaters, and for the institution and operation of such organs of civil government as might be required.

In other words, the theater commanders' duties were "strategical, territorial, and administrative." [87] The relationships of these functions, however, were never constant. Upon the attainment of victory the theater commanders' duties tended, in the main, to become restricted to matters of routine administration. Those of the Chief, American Graves Registration Service, on the contrary, were greatly enhanced by the administrative and technical control of operations incidental to repatriation of the war dead. At the same time, the prompt initiation of operations involving exhumations in every quarter of the globe and the transportation of hundreds of thousands of remains by land and sea to appointed destinations in the United States required something more than a carefully worded statement covering general policies and operational plans, together with a set of exhibits including tables of organization and equipment. The headquarters establishments and operating units of such an organization could not spring full-born from a paper diagram. It became increasingly evident to Graves Registration Service officers in the field and in the Memorial Division that, unless steps were taken to establish the nuclei or cells of such elements in the theater commands, a sudden collapse of Germany or Japan would bring the chief of the American Graves Registration Service face to face with an emergency as critical as the one that confronted The Quartermaster General on 8 December 1941, when the outbreak of war necessitated the activation of a Graves Registration Service, the elements of which existed only on paper.

Considerable attention had already been given to proposals for setting up American Graves Registration Service area command organizations "to carry out all phases of control and operation of the program for Repatriation of the War Dead including the security, care and maintenance of cemeteries now far to the rear of combat zones." During the summer of 1944 Mediterranean Headquarters had advised the adoption of such a plan.

> Inquiries have been received from the Mediterranean Theater regarding the activation of a War Department plan for the early turnover of cemeteries now in the rearward areas of that theater to Zone of the Interior units. These inquiries were directed to The Quartermaster General in an effort to have provided a means or agency which would insure the continued and unremitting care of rearward cemeteries without dilution of Graves Registration personnel allocated the theater for support of combat operations in order to make personnel and equipment available for the required servicing of a non-combat activity.[88]

Indeed, the situation in the Mediterranean Theater was critical. While the theater commander was responsible for the security, care, and maintenance of cemeteries in North Africa, Sicily, and Southern Italy, the continued discharge of this responsibility involved

[85] *Ibid.*, Vol I, Part III, Introduction.

[86] *Ibid.*, Vol I, Part IV.

[87] Memo, TQMG for CG, ASF, 11 Nov 44, sub: Organization for the Quartermaster Graves Registration Service.

[88] Harbold to TQMG, 8 Nov 44, sub: Establishment of American Graves Registration Service Area Commands—Theaters of Operations.

Digitized by Google

a utilization of Graves Registration Service personnel that detracted from the strength which was required in support of combat. A similar situation, it was noted, developed in other theaters wherever the combat zone moved forward and service elements closed up in order to support the combat formations. Thus an advancing battle front created rearward areas with little or no military occupancy. With the forward movement of base sections, these areas virtually became a zone of interior. However, military cemeteries in such areas could not be evacuated until after the conclusion of hostilities. When the base sections and their assigned Graves Registration Service units moved forward, cemeterial requirements in the rearward areas could not be met without some dilution of GRS personnel and a consequent impairment of unit efficiency in the combat zone. Mediterranean Headquarters was persuaded that the continued care and maintenance of such cemeteries was not a contribution to the support of battle and, therefore, that personnel in addition to those calculated in theater of operations troop ceiling strengths should be furnished for the future performance of this function.

Planning to this end was hastened by a radio dispatched from Allied Force Headquarters, Caserta, Italy, to The Quartermaster General.

> Request for early radio reply as to present status of your proposed plan for operation by Zone of Interior graves registration units of all cemeteries in rear areas of this theater for use in planning purposes effecting personnel and service units.
>
> Suggest consideration as development of this plan with a flexibility that would permit early turn over within entire Mediterranean Theater or area of all cemeteries to Z of I.[89]

During October 1944 Col. Thomas R. Howard, former chief of the Memorial Division and presently Graves Registration Officer, MTO, was assigned for temporary duty at the Office of The Quartermaster General to collaborate in preparing an initial study and tables of distribution for the proposed Graves Registration Service Area Command. Entitled "Organization, Quartermaster Graves Registration Service (Zone of Interior)," the plan was prefaced by Colonel Howard's "Introductory Study of Phased Development of Activation of Graves Registration Area Commands and Subordinate Units." This survey began with the proposition that, "as the Combat Zone moves forward and no further need is held for manning the rear areas by service troops in support of combat, cemetery facilities located in such rearward areas shall pass to the control of The Zone of The Interior Graves Registration Service Area Command." [90]

The total organization of these zone of interior area commands and their personnel build-up, it was stated, would be based on estimates of operational requirements during four successive phases of development. These phases were identified in the following description of trends in the Mediterranean Theater.

> 1st Phase—Cemetery Security, Caretaking and Maintenance.
>
> To be initiated at such time that it becomes impracticable to provide security, care and maintenance of cemeteries in rear areas through the continued use of regularly constituted Graves Registration companies of the normally determined theater overhead.
>
> 2d Phase—Supply, Finance and Medical Responsibilities.
>
> To be initiated at such time that, through application of a redeployment program or for other cogent reasons technical service facilities no longer are available in the area, zones or sectors and Graves Registration Service units must become self-sufficient in these regards.
>
> 3d Phase—Reception and Information.
>
> To be initiated at such time that commercial transport facilities are opened to civilian travel; to receive and furnish information to visiting personnel, which it is anticipated will consist of, mainly, next-of-kin and members of the Executive and Legislative Branches of our Government and to conduct visitors on tours of inspection and observation of cemeteries, initial burial plots of individual deceased and of battle areas.
>
> 4th Phase—Exhumation and Repatriation.
>
> To be initiated at such time that provisions must be developed for repatriation of the United States dead and transfer of custody of enemy and allied dead shall be made to the appropriate nation.[91]

It will be recalled that the Zone-Sector organization outlined in Policy Study No. 34 contemplated a self-sufficient establishment under direct administrative and technical control of The Quartermaster General. But any attempt in August 1943 to have anticipated the steps by which the elements of such an organization might be established in the theaters would have exceeded the bounds of practical speculation. It will also be recalled that the higher coordinating echelons were agreed in November 1943 that final consideration of tables of distribution for the elements of a world-wide American Graves Registration Service should be deferred until the conclusion of major hostilities in the European-African Theater.[92] In November 1944, however, it was the consensus of Graves Registration Service officers in all theaters, as well as the considered opinion of Allied Force Headquarters in the Mediterranean

[89] CG, Allied Force Headquarters, Caserta, Italy, to War Department, 1 Sep 44, No. F 90302.

[90] Organization, Quartermaster Graves Registration Service (Zone of the Interior), n. d. Tab A. Hereafter cited as Organization, QM GRS (ZI).

[91] *Ibid.*

[92] TAG to TQMG, 24 Nov 43.

Digitized by Google

that, irrespective of any given date, this problem should be solved by the method of "phased development."

The program for setting up an area command would be initiated in a particular theater whenever conditions similar or identical to those indicated in Phase 1 obtained in that theater. At such time the activation of cemeterial caretaking and maintenance detachments would be effected. These elements were designated in the plan as Cemeterial Teams and Cemeterial Augmentation Teams. Consisting of a supervisory staff of one superintendent (Technician, 3d grade) and one foreman of laborers (Technician, 4th grade), the Cemeterial Team would provide "personnel and equipment for security, care, and maintenance of United States overseas cemeteries." It was estimated that "labor, as required for maintenance, will be furnished by service troops or civilian personnel" and that "this team is capable of handling a cemetery whose capacity does not exceed 1,440 graves." [93] A Cemetery Augmentation Team, consisting of one assistant foreman of laborers (Technician, 5th grade), required labor, and necessary equipment would be activated and assigned on a basis of "each additional 720 graves." [94] The establishment of provisional zone and sector headquarters would accompany the activation of cemeterial caretaking and maintenance detachments, sector headquarters being organized "under a table of distribution comparable to the Platoon Headquarters, type AC, T/O & E 10–500," and zone headquarters under one "comparable to company headquarters, type AC, T/O & E 10–500." [95]

The personnel policy recommended for this and the succeeding phase anticipated that the initial activation of the cemeterial security and caretaking units and their supervisory sector headquarters would be accomplished by transfers from personnel then deployed in the theater but without reduction of theater overhead or replacement strengths. Then, in order to provide a trained cadre for the Zone of Interior units, 25 percent of the personnel required during Phases 1 and 2 would be furnished by transfer to the security and caretaking unit or sector headquarters of qualified personnel from currently activated units performing similar duties. The remaining 75 percent of the required personnel would be recruited from limited assignment personnel available to the theater commander. Finally, it was thought that recruitment for Graves Registration Area Command units should be developed on a voluntary basis and, preferably, from combat or service personnel who were engaged in or in support of combat action in the area served by the cemetery to which they would be assigned.[96]

Phase 2, which marks the shift of zone and sector establishments to self-sufficiency in regard to technical service facilities, would require an expansion of sector and zone headquarters to the Company, Type AC, and Battalion, Type AD, replacing, respectively, the Platoon, Type AB, and Company, Type AC, of T/O & E 10–500. During Phases 1 and 2 the administration and technical control of zone of interior operating units and supervisory zone and sector headquaters was to be exercised by The Quartermaster General through a field agent on duty in the theater. The delegation of authority to this field agent was to be made by The Quartermaster General with the consent and approval of the theater commander.[97]

According to Colonel Howard's "Initial Study," the area command would be established "at an appropriate time prior to the eventuation of the conditions and circumstances outlined in Phase 3." [98] The area commander would then supersede the field agent and assume direct responsibility under The Quartermaster General. An outline description of the command at this stage of development was given in the following passage:

> Area Commanders, holding responsibility for extensive geographical areas, will function through subordinate zone and sector Heaquarters.
>
> Zone Headquarters will be established to administer, exercise. staff supervision and technical control over major geographical areas and Sector Headquarters shall be established to administer Graves Registration matters and to discharge Graves Registration functions of a current nature within local areas. Boundaries of Sectors will be such that they will include the maximum number of cemeteries but not so large in area that the officer-in-charge will be unable to visit all cemeteries within 72 hours nor that any part of a sector shall be at a distance normally requiring in excess of 24 hours of motor travel from the headquarters location.[99]

The table of distribution for the Graves Registration Service Area Command Headquarters showed a total personnel of 153, including a commanding officer with the rank of brigadier general, 43 other commissioned officers, 7 warrant officers, and 142 other ranks. Its organizational structure embodied two principal elements: (1) a headquarters staff composed of the deputy commander, medical officer, chaplain, and chiefs of the four staff divisions, all of whom would hold the rank of colonel, and (2) the four staff divisions, namely, the

[93] Organization QM GRS (ZI), Tab E.
[94] *Ibid.*
[95] *Ibid.*, Tab A.
[96] *Ibid.*
[97] *Ibid.*
[98] *Ibid.*
[99] *Ibid.*

Digitized by Google

Administrative, Intelligence, Plans and Operations, and Supply Divisions. The headquarters staff was intended as a policy making organ which would be concerned with such problems as international relations, civilian personnel procurement and control, operations, and inspection.

With the activation and assignment of Reception Teams during Phase 3 and Exhumation Teams during Phase 4, the organizational structure of the area commands would have been completed. At such time the area commanders, under direction of The Quartermaster General, would become responsible for administrative and technical control of all matters within their areas relating to the following functions:

a. Security, care, and maintenance of United States temporary cemeteries.
b. Exhumation and repatriation of United States deceased.
c. Transfer of custody of Allied and Enemy dead buried by United States personnel, to the appropriate nation.
d. Rehabilitation of abandoned cemeterial lands and their return to their rightful owners.
e. Reception and orientation of visiting relatives and friends of United States deceased and representatives of various Governments and others acting in an official capacity in connection with graves registration matters.
f. Such other functions as may be especially delegated them by The Quartermaster General.[100]

A map of the proposed Mediterranean Graves Registration Service Area Command was submitted as Exhibit 5 (Tab E) of the plan. This command was to include North Africa, Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica, Southern Italy, and the Balkan States. These regions were designated in the order named as Zones 1, 2, 3, and 4. Sardinia and Corsica were to be included as Subzones "A" and "B," respectively, of Zone 2. Zone 1 would be composed of 4 sectors, namely, Morocco, West Algeria, East Algeria, and Tunis; Zone 2 would comprise the Sector of Sicily and the subzones "A" and "B"; Zone 3 would include four sectors designated as Nettunō, Carano, Naples, and Bari, including the Adriatic Coast. In all, there would be the Area Command Headquarters established at Naples, 4 zone headquarters, 11 sector and subzone headquarters. Schedules for the successive activation of cemeterial teams, cemeterial augmentation teams, sector, zone, and area headquarters, reception teams, and exhumation teams were shown in tabular form on the map.[101]

The plan was submitted on 6 November to The Quartermaster General with recommendations that the zone and area commands, with their basic security and caretaking units, should be established as soon as possible in the Mediterranean Theater and that "activation of units in that area will serve as a pilot in developing plans for world-wide application." [102]

On 11 November 1944, Quartermaster General Gregory transmitted the plan through channels. After reciting the principal arguments which had been urged in justification of "Organization, Quartermaster Graves Registration Service (Zone of the Interior)," namely, that care and maintenance of cemeteries in passive areas "are functions beyond those which can be considered as contributory to the support of battle" and that "the responsibilities of The Quartermaster General for administration and execution of the Program for Repatriation of the War Dead are implied in his designation, Chief, American Graves Registration Service," it was noted that "an informal request has been received from the Mediterranean Theater of Operations (Hayduck Mission, 26 September 1944) requesting information as to the date the War Department will assume Graves Registration Service responsibility in passive areas." Quartermaster General Gregory therefore recommended "that the plan as outlined in Tabs 'A' and 'F' (Exhibits 1 and 5) for the Mediterranean Theater of Operations be approved and referred to the Commanding General, Mediterranean Theater of Operations for concurrence" and "that the Quartermaster General be authorized to present through technical channels to other Theater commanders, plans similar to the basic plan, herewith, for the Mediterranean Theater of Operations and arrange for the implementation thereof by the respective Theater commanders." [103]

The first obstacle to War Department approval of "Organization, Quartermaster Graves Registration Service (Zone of Interior)" was interposed by Maj. Gen. Le R. Lutes, Director of Plans and Operations, Army Service Forces, who insisted that responsibility for all military cemeteries within the geographical area of an operational theater resides in the theater commander and that this responsibility can be abolished or abridged only by inactivation of the command or by alteration of its territorial boundaries. It followed that until one or the other of these transformations had actually taken place, "responsibility of Army Service Forces (The Quartermaster General) for overseas cemeteries [should] be limited to technical advice and assistance and formulation of policies as required by Circular No. 206, War Department, 1943." In short,

[100] *Ibid.*
[101] *Ibid.*, Tab E.
[102] Col C. P. Bellican, memo for TQMG, 6 Nov 44, sub: Quartermaster Graves Registration Service Organization for the Repatriation of American War Dead.
[103] Memo, TQMG for CG, ASF, 11 Nov 44, Attn: Dir Plans and Opns.

964114—52——14

Digitized by Google

none of the attributions of power and prerogative originally associated with a theater command could be alienated by the commanding general. With these restrictions in mind, General Lutes recommended that "the attached plan and the foregoing comments be submitted to the Commanding General, Mediterranean Theater of Operations, for his comment and concurrence." [104]

In other words, there was no objection to action on the part of a theater commander in reorganizing his Graves Registration Service along lines suggested by The Quartermaster General. Any such change, however, must avoid delegation or transfer of powers and responsibilities that, in effect, would constitute a divided command within the theater area.

The Commanding General, Army Service Forces, approved the recommendations offered by General Lutes and submitted the case through the Assistant Chief of Staff, Operations Division, to the Mediterranean Theater Section for necessary action. The case was referred, in turn, for remark and recommendation to the Supply, Organization and Training, and Personnel Divisions [105] of the War Department General Staff. G–4 concurred in the proposed organization for the Quartermaster Graves Registration Service, "subject to the changes recommended by the Commanding General, Army Service Forces in his first indorsement . . . dated 25 November 1944." Since, however, the personnel involved was a matter of primary interest to the G–1 and G–3 Divisions, G–4 made no comment on grades and ratings in the organization charts of the proposed plan.[106]

While approving the changes made by the Commanding General, Army Service Forces, G–3 suggested that the plan "be submitted to the Commanding Generals of all Theaters for their information and not for their concurrence inasmuch as The Quartermaster General is now charged with the formulation of policies for the operation of graves registration services outside the continental limits of the United States (WD Cir 206, 11 Sep 43)." [107]

G–1 concurred in the changes recommended by the Commanding General, Army Service Forces, and stated its position with reference to the personnel problem in guarded terms.

> Since no increase of personnel and grades to overhead allotment is involved, the Personnel Division does not consider it necessary to comment on proposed grades other than to recommend that grades conform to those set up in comparable Tables of Organization and Equipment. The grades proposed for Area Headquarters, Quartermaster Graves Registration Service (Tab C) [Exhibit 3], appear to be excessive. However, as personnel and grades will be absorbed in the theater overhead allotments, allocation of grades for the Quartermaster Graves Registration Service will be a function of the overseas commander.[108]

By virtue of the changes proposed by General Lutes and sustained by the Commanding General, Army Service Forces, with concurrence on the part of the three consulted General Staff divisions, it appeared that responsibility for any allocation of personnel and grades to a Quartermaster Graves Registration Service in any theater would rest with the theater commander. However, since no increase of personnel and grades to the overhead allotment of the theater would be involved in setting up such an organization, the Personnel Division felt that its responsibility in the matter was limited to making a statement for the record.

On 13 December, after the case had been referred back to the Mediterranean Theater Section, Operations Division, under direction of the Chief of Staff, it was suggested that the proposed plan be rewritten, incorporating within it the changes recommended by the Commanding General, Army Service Forces, in his first indorsement and approved by G–1 and G–3, and that the Commanding General, ASF, forward to TAG the plan as revised for their information and recommendation.[109]

Recasting the plan involved no change of organizational structure other than a restatement of relationships between the theater commander and the Graves Registration area commander, and those that would subsequently apply between the Chief, American Graves Registration Service, and Graves Registration area commanders. This was accomplished by The Quartermaster General, to whom the plan was returned for correction.[110] A preliminary statement entitled "Phase Development of Graves Registration Service Area Commands and Subordinate Units Required for the Care of Military Cemeteries and/or the Repatriation of the American War Dead" replaced Colonel Howard's "Initial Study of Phased Development of Activation of Graves Registration Area Commands and Subordinate Units." While the preliminary statement incorporated

[104] Maj Gen LeR. Lutes, Dir Plans and Opns, ASF, to ACofS, Opns Div, 25 Nov 44, 1st ind to above cited memo.

[105] Col J. W. Bowen, Chief, Mediterranean Theater Section, Theater Group, OPD, to I, G–4, II, G–3, III, G–1, 27 Nov 44.

[106] Col Shiras A. Blair, Chief, Plng Br, G–4, to I, G–3, II, G–1, 30 Nov 44.

[107] Brig Gen W. W. Irvine, Deputy ACofS, G–3, to I, G–1; II, OPD 7 Dec 44.

[108] Lt Col G. B. Walker, Jr., Asst Exec, G–1, to OPD, 13 Dec 44.

[109] Col C. P. Smith, Actg Chief, Mediterranean Theater Section, Theater Group, OPD, GS, to CG ASF, 15 Dec 44.

[110] Maj Gen W. A. Wood, Jr., Actg Dir Plans and Opns, ASF, to TQMG, 15 Dec 44.

Digitized by Google

much of the material in the original study, the required changes were set forth in the first three paragraphs of the preliminary statement and in Colonel Howard's initial study relating to personnel policies. In brief, the four amendments stipulated that (1) the theater Graves Registration area command should assume responsibility for cemetery facilities in the rear areas of an active theater whenever the regularly constituted Graves Registration Service companies or detachments were withdrawn, and the Area Command should exercise this responsibility until such rearward areas were passed to the zone of interior; (2) that during this specified interval the Area Command should be under the administration and operational control of the Quartermaster of the command, who would continue to be responsible for the accomplishment of Graves Registration Service activities in accordance with the provisions of Section II, War Department Circular No. 2, 1 January 1945,[111] and such policies as were announced by The Quartermaster General; (3) The Quartermaster General should assume complete control of all Graves Registration Service activities when, due to discontinuance of a theater or a readjustment of its geographical boundaries, responsibility for military cemeteries in such circumstances passed from the theater commander to the zone of interior; (4) that initial activation of units of the Graves Registration Area Commands "will be accomplished by utilization of personnel now deployed in the theater and charged to the theater troop ceiling." [112]

Quartermaster General Gregory submitted the revised plan through channels on 13 January 1945, and on the 30th The Adjutant General transmitted copies to the Commander-in-Chief, Southwest Pacific Area, the Commanding Generals, Theaters of Operations, Defense Commands, Departments, the Northwest Service Command, and to the commanding officers of base commands. The document was described as "a plan for organization of Graves Registration Service in theaters of operations." It was specified, however, that the plan "is not to be construed as a basis for an increase in the theater personnel or troop basis." [113]

The copy received in due course at Allied Force Headquarters, Caserta, Italy, must have inspired in the commanding general conflicting reflections. No doubt he appreciated the solicitude of Army Service Forces and the War Department General Staff in upholding the indivisibility of his command. At the same time he must have seen some incongruity in the fact that his own request for transfer of military cemeteries in North Africa and the Mediterranean islands to the zone of interior should have invoked a solemn pronouncement on the doctrine of command instead of stimulating a careful study of proposals which, in the last analysis, were designed to facilitate the pursuit of his primary mission on the Italian peninsula. He was still saddled with the onerous burden of caring for temporary cemeteries in many areas of the theater which had lost their former military significance. Although granted a free hand in activating the elements of an area command in accordance with the tables of distribution shown in the proposed Quartermaster Graves Registration Service (Zone of Interior), he could neither absolve himself of administrative responsibility for such an organization nor could he charge the required personnel to any source other than his own theater troop ceiling. The relief he had requested in September 1944 led to suggestions in January 1945 that begged the whole question.

In reality the original proposal for the activation of zone of interior Quartermaster Graves Registration Service units in passive areas had been motivated by the recognition of the need of increasing the graves registration establishment of expanding theaters by indirectly liberalizing the fixed ratio of one graves registration company to a type corps of three divisions. This ratio, according to Colonel Howard, could not be accepted as a constant in the sense of a fixed number of field batteries or machine gun companies in a standard divisional organization. That is, every death sustained by an army corps becomes an additional liability to its supporting graves registration company until the final disposition of remains after the termination of hostilities. Therefore, the true determinant of a theater graves registration establishment should include the number of effectives and the total number of interments in temporary burial places. In seeking this adjustment, and in providing for the basic elements of a postwar American Graves Registration Service, the method of

[111] WD Cir 2, 1 Jan 45, included Cir 206, 11 Sep 43, together with existing regulations and recent changes covering the report of casualties, dissemination of burial information, etc. Since the date of promulgation of Cir 2, 1945, fell between submission of the original plan, "Organization of QM GRS (ZI)," and the amended plan, this directive, instead of Cir 206, 1943, was mentioned as the basis of authority of the Chief, American Graves Registration Service.

[112] Memo, TQMG for CG, ASF, 13 Jan 45, incl. I, Tab A. The original paragraph governing personnel allotments in Colonel Howard's initial study read: "Initial activation of the Cemeterial and Security and Caretaking Units and their supervisory Sector Headquarters will be accomplished by transfers from personnel now deployed in the theater but without reduction of theater overhead or replacement strengths."

[113] TAG to CinC, SWPA, CGs, TOs, and others, 30 Jan 45, sub: Organization for the Quartermaster Graves Registration Service.

Digitized by Google

personnel allotment was incidental to the purpose in view: [114] so long as the dilution of Graves Registration Service personnel required in support of combat was arrested, it seemed immaterial whether the additional personnel should be charged to a theater troop ceiling or to the zone of interior. The availability of such personnel was the crux of the problem—not the method of allotment. As a matter of fact, all reserves of available manpower in the zone of interior at the conclusion of 1944 were earmarked for combat or supply and, moreover, these commitments extended through the year 1945.

Influence of Wartime Planning on AGRS Organization

Shortage of military manpower was the real obstacle to establishing within the theater structure a self-contained graves registration area command that would, upon cessation of hostilities, have been capable of initiating final operations for disposal of the war dead. Nevertheless, the scheme was carefully tested in this respect and, while falling short of the objectives originally sought by its sponsors, did offer a great deal more toward setting up a postwar organization than would otherwise have been derived from an untried paper plan. This becomes increasingly evident in an examination of that organization, as described in the *Plan for Repatriation of the Dead of World War II and Establishment of Permanent United States Military Cemeteries at Home and Abroad.*

A detailed analysis of the final or, as it generally became known, "current" plan, would comprise the introduction to an operational history of the American Graves Registration Service in pursuit of its mission during the postwar years. One aspect of this plan, however, must be examined in order to realize that the overseas commands were largely patterned after the zone-sector concept of Policy Study No. 34 and, furthermore, that the method of setting up these commands was derived from the subsequent plan for establishing Quartermaster Graves Registration area commands in the overseas theaters. Indeed, a full understanding of the preliminary planning programs already described in this chapter cannot be had without seeing their reflection in the current plan.

While the problem of establishing Quartermaster Graves Registration area commands in passive areas of the overseas theaters was under consideration, ASF Headquarters became concerned about the status of final planning for disposition of the war dead. This concern was expressed in a directive to The Quartermaster General on 30 November—just 5 days after the plan embodied in "Organization Quartermaster Graves Registration Service (Zone of Interior)" had been referred by General Somervell to the General Staff with recommendations for changes which resulted in a redraft of the original plan. Thus the directive of 30 November, together with the requirement for revision of proposals for the phased development of Quartermaster Graves Registration Service units in all overseas theaters along lines which would preserve the principle of unity of command within these theaters, initiated the final step in formulating general policies and operational plans for the ultimate disposition of the war dead. Piecemeal planning projects that had heretofore been conducted along parallel lines were now merged in a definitive program.

Although an opinion had been expressed on 28 November 1943, that changing circumstances after the conclusion of hostilities in the European-African Theater might require a reexamination of the approved plan set forth in Policy Study No. 34, the ASF directive of 30 November 1944 gave compelling reasons for making the reexamination at once. It was pointed out that the original plan must be modified in the light of additional data now available. Furthermore, the probable assignment of complete responsibility to The Quartermaster General for repatriation of American dead of all the armed services and civilian agencies, together with the contemplated establishment of new national cemeteries in the United States, and the supposition that there might be requests for a substantial number of permanent overseas burials, had greatly extended the scope of policy defined in the study of 14 August 1943. "Existing War Department policies," the directive emphasized, "should be revised, reviewed and additional recommendations submitted to the War Department if considered appropriate." [115]

In brief, Army Service Forces instructed The Quartermaster General to summarize the various planning projects he had already developed in his capacity as Chief, American Graves Registration Service. As a matter of fact, the original repatriation plan of August 1943 had been in a constant state of reexamina-

[114] This interpretation of the Quartermaster Graves Registration Service (Zone of Interior), as originally submitted on 11 November 1944, was given to the writer by Col T. R. Howard in an interview on 16 January 1947. Colonel Howard stated on this occasion that he and his collaborators in the Memorial Division were well aware that the proposal to insert a zone of interior setup in any theater command involved serious objections but that the proposal was pressed in hopes that these very objections would give emphasis to the necessity of finding a solution to the personnel problem.

[115] Maj Gen Le R. Lutes, Dir Plans & Opns, ASF, to TQMG, Attn: Mem Div—Col R. P. Harbold, 30 Nov 44, sub: Current plan for return of American dead and establishment of overseas and United States Cemeteries.

Digitized by Google

tion since August of the following year, when the Chief of the Memorial Division had proposed that complete responsibility should be assigned The Quartermaster General for final disposition of the war dead. Thereafter, in conference with interested parties and in subsequent exchange of views with the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, the Transportation Corps, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and various departments and agencies of the Federal Government, the Chief of the Memorial Division had explored many of the policy and operational aspects of the general problem of repatriation. Then, while the initiative in a program for expansion of the national cemeterial system had been taken by Congress, justification for this measure in terms of national policy devolved upon the Memorial Division. Finally, proposals for the establishment of Quartermaster Graves Registration area commands in the overseas theaters became the point of departure for mature study of the organizational structure of a world-wide American Graves Registration Service and, moreover, had suggested definite procedures for the activation of its basic elements during the transitional period between the climax of combat and inactivation of the theaters.

Despite the considerable amount of preparatory work, it became impossible to meet the completion date of 1 April 1945 stipulated in General Lutes' directive. With the chronic shortage of Memorial Division personnel available for planning purposes, serious difficulties were encountered in concluding the extensive two-volume report on national cemeteries, requiring an extension of the date to 1 May.[116] Then, when it appeared during April that burial reports of record in the Graves Registration Section were some 75,000 below known battle casualties and actual interments indicated in monthly burial reports from the theaters, Colonel Harbold again recommended an extension of time. An additional month, he urged, would enable the division to obtain burial reports from the European and Mediterranean theaters "which will give accurate figures on which to base a detailed plan for repatriation of our dead in these two theaters." [117]

Final preparation of the study was entrusted to Lt. Col. Earl F. Sechrest, former Chief Graves Registration Officer, ETO, who had been invalided to the United States and upon discharge from the hospital was assigned to duty with the Memorial Division for this purpose.[118] With an intimate knowledge of conditions in the largest of the overseas theaters, Colonel Sechrest undertook the task of pushing the program to completion early in April and completed it by the end of May. Delivered personally by the Chief of the Memorial Division at ASF Headquarters on 1 June 1945,[119] the document was given War Department approval on 8 September, some 4 months after V-E Day and just 6 days after the surrender of Japan.[120]

As already suggested, many of the administrative and operating units indicated in Policy Study No. 34 appear in the later plan. Those which were retained underwent little modification. Considerable revision, however, was made in the total number of units. Again, the proposed personnel allotments for units of the Quartermaster Graves Registration Service (Zone of Interior), all of which were carried over into the approved plan submitted on 30 January 1945 to the overseas commands, furnished cells for many elements of the postwar establishment. However, delay in the implementation of this plan during hostilities gravely altered the circumstances under which the basic units would be established.

Anticipating an early cessation of hostilities in Europe and continuation for some time of large-scale operations against Japan, the current plan proposed that all graves registration companies in the European and Mediterranean theaters would, pending their redeployment, conduct a search program of the battlefields for unburied dead and, in addition, complete the concentration of all such remains, together with those found in isolated graves and communal cemeteries.[121] Thereafter this work would be carried on over an interim period by operating units and supervisory headquarters establishments similar to those which, according to the plan of 30 January 1945, were to have been activated during the first three phases prescribed in that plan. A reflection of this thinking in the current plan is indicated by the following statement:

> These types of administrative and operating units should be employed only during the interim period from the time of withdrawal of regularly constituted Graves Registration companies to the actual beginning of repatriation activities (Phase 4) with the exception of "Cemeterial Teams" which may be required for a longer period. Also as previously stated, "Exhumation Teams" should be provided for concentration and identification activities under Phase 1, 2, and 3, and be replaced by a different organization setup under Phase 4.[122]

[116] Col R. P. Harbold to Lt Col C. C. Ingle, Plans and Opns, ASF, 29 Mar 45.

[117] Col R. P. Harbold to Dir, Plans and Opns, ASF, 28 Apr 45.

[118] Interv with Lt Col Earl F. Sechrest, now Chief, Budget and Fiscal Div., Federal Power Commission, 18 Jan 47.

[119] *Ibid.*

[120] Brig Gen Henry C. Wolfe, ASF, to TQMG, 12 Sep 45, sub: Current Plan for Return of American War Dead and Establishment of Overseas and U. S. Cemeteries. This version of the plan was published by The Adjutant General's Office on 24 September 1945, under the title, *Plan for the Repatriation of the Dead of World War II and Establishment of Permanent United States Military Cemeteries at Home and Aboard.* Hereinafter cited as *Current Plan.*

[121] *Current Plan*, p. 7.

[122] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

Digitized by Google

Upon initiation of the shipment of remains to the homeland, this interim setup would be merged in an over-all organization consisting of three American Graves Registration Service Area and 14 subordinate zone commands.[123]

Provision for three superior area commands denotes the only significant departure from the zone-sector scheme described in Policy Study No. 34 of August 1943. One would embrace all overseas defense commands and military departments within the Western Hemisphere, together with those regions of Africa lying south of the Sahara Desert; another was to include all areas involved in the war against Germany; the third would be composed of all other areas identified with operations against Japan. The first command was designated the American Area, the second the European and Mediterranean Area, the third the Southwest Pacific and Asiatic Area. The American Area would come under operational control of the Chief, Memorial Division, while those in the Eastern Hemisphere would, after inactivation of the theaters in which they were originally established, operate under area commanders directly responsible to the Chief, American Graves Registration Service.[124]

These American Graves Registration Service area commands, as already emphasized, had no counterpart in the organizational scheme of August 1943; nor should they be confused with the so-called area command of the Quartermaster Graves Registration Service (Zone of Interior). Nonetheless, a fortuitous relationship did exist between these two dissimilar types of command—one which tends to emphasize again that much of the thinking in the plan of 30 January 1945 finds a reflection in the current plan. There is no direct evidence, of course, as to the cause of the borrowing in this particular instance, excepting the fact that it was done. To be sure, drawing up tables of distribution for the headquarters establishments of the European and Mediterranean Area and the West Pacific and Asiatic Area involved a venture beyond the borderland of established precedent. At the same time, boldness of thought in such ventures is seldom applauded or even approved by acknowledged experts in personnel matters. Prudence in this situation, no doubt, suggested that any sort of precedent was better than none at all. At any rate, the table for headquarters of the Mediterranean Theater Area Command was borrowed and applied without a single change to the headquarters establishments of both American Graves Registration Service area commands in the Eastern Hemisphere.

In all there were 14 zones in the organizational chart of the proposed American Graves Registration Service. The following distribution is shown:

European and Mediterranean Area
- Zone of Great Britain
- Zone of Western Europe
- Zone of North and Central Europe
- Zone of Middle East
- Zone of South and Southeast Europe and North Africa

Southwest Pacific and Asiatic Area
- Zone of Philippine Islands
- Zone of India-Burma
- Zone of Australia
- Zone of Dutch East Indies and Malay States
- Zone of China (tentatively includes Japan and Manchukuo)

American Area
- Zone of North America
- Zone of Hawaii
- Zone of Caribbean
- Zone of Africa except North Africa

The plan of August 1943, it will be recalled, provided for 12 zones. There was no intermediate authority, however, between these 12 zone commanders and the Chief, American Graves Registration Service. The territorial distribution and subdivision of zones within both the American Area and the Southwest Pacific and Asiatic Area was similar to the zone-sector setup outlined in the original Plan (August 1943) for the Western Hemisphere and the Pacific Ocean Areas and the Asiatic Continent. In contrast, the zone organization of the proposed European and Mediterranean Area departed widely from that of the original plan: the Zone of Europe, as specified in Policy Study No. 34, was broken up in the current plan and distributed through three zones of the European and Mediterranean Area, while the original zone of North Africa was assigned as a sector to the Zone of Southeast Europe and North Africa of the new area command.[125]

While personnel requirements originally determined in connection with the Mediterranean Theater Graves Registration Area Command appeared to be adequate for the headquarters establishments of the two independent American Graves Registration Service area commands, it was thought that the personnel allotments made in November 1944 for the small zones of the Mediterranean Graves Registration Service Area Command would be entirely inadequate for the administration of those extensive geopolitical regions which comprised the 14 zones of the current plan. Moreover, it was apparent that personnel requirements of the new zone headquarters would vary under different conditions, "depending on the number of field operating

[123] *Ibid.*, Exhibits, D-G.
[124] *Ibid.*, Exhibits D and G.
[125] Cf Policy Study No. 34, Part II, Sec B, pp. 3-7 and *Current Plan*, Exhibits D-G.

Digitized by Google

sections, ports, burials, and whether operations are principally land or amphibious." [126]

With these variants in mind, a maximum requirement of 27 military and 92 civilian personnel for the zone headquarters was determined. The military personnel would fall into the following classification:

1 Colonel—Chief of Zone
1 Lt. Colonel—Executive officer
4 Majors—Division and Branch Chiefs
8 Captains—Chiefs of Sections: Inspector, Medical Officer, Finance Officer, Chaplain, and Adjutant
5 1st Lieutenants—Assistants
3 2d Lieutenants—Assistants

* * * * *

2 Warrant Officers—Headquarters

* * * * *

1 Technical Sergeant—Garage
1 Technical Sergeant—Medical
1 Technical Sergeant—Finance [127]

The over-all function of this headquarters, it was stated, "will be general supervision and control of a number of field sections, varying in number and depending on the number of burials in a particular zone engaged in exhumation and concentration activities and port offices serving such field operating sections." [128] The detailed organization, duties and responsibilities assigned the zone headquarters would be similar to those of the area organization, except for the obvious combination or omission of certain sections and subsections.

As already stated, only minor changes were made in the internal organization of field operating sections and port offices as detailed in Policy Study No. 34. Two typists were added to the former unit, while a technical assistant and a carpenter were allotted to the latter.[129]

[126] *Current Plan*, p. 19.
[127] *Ibid.*
[128] *Ibid.*
[129] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

The current plan also presented a clear statement of the function assigned to the field operation section, namely, the exhumation, identification, preparation and casketing of remains for return to the United States or burial in permanent cemeteries abroad. Built around four embalming groups totaling 4 professional morticians and 8 technical assistants, and capable of handling 40 bodies a day under good working conditions, this unit was to be commanded by a captain, with 2 first lieutenants serving as inspectors of exhumation and embalming activities. Aggregating 43 civilian personnel, the organization would include a transport section, a clerical force to execute disinterment reports and prepare other records, several conveyors who would guard bodies while in storage and in transit to concentration points or ports, and temporary laborers to be hired locally as required. It was estimated that 55 such field sections would be required for the three area commands, of which 31 were to be assigned to the European and Mediterranean Area, 16 to the Southwest Pacific and Asiatic Area, and 8 to the American Area.[130]

While the organization and functions of the port office establishment, like that of the field section, underwent no material change, the total number in each case was reduced, the former from a tentative figure of 90 to 30, the latter from 270 to 55.[131]

Both the current plan and Policy Study No. 34 present tables recapitulating Quartermaster personnel requirements. These tables illustrate the similarities and differences of the two plans.[132]

A comparison of the data presented in these two tables indicates that the zone principle suggested in

[130] *Current Plan*, pp. 21–22. The number of field sections estimated in Policy Study No. 34 was 270.
[131] *Current Plan*, p. 22.
[132] (1) Policy Study No. 34, Part II, Sec. 3, Recapitulation (The figures given here are adapted from those appearing in the "Recapitulation"). (2) *Current Plan*, p. 24.

TABLE 2.—*Statistical Comparison of Plans for Graves Registration Service, 1943–45*

Plan of 14 August 1943						Current Plan (24 September 1945)					
Unit	No. of units	Personnel			Total	Unit	No. of units	Personnel			Total
		Comm.	W. Os.	EM or Civilians				Comm.	W. Os.	EM or Civilians	
Area Hq	0	0	0	0	0	Area Hq	2	88	14	284	386
Zone Hq	12	552	36	924	1,512	Zone Hq	14	308	28	1,330	1,666
Sector Hq	45	990	90	4,270	5,350	Sector Hq	0	0	0	0	0
Field Sections	270	810	0	10,800	11,610	Field Sections	55	165	0	2,310	2,475
Port Offices	90	270	90	3,960	4,320	Port Offices	30	90	30	1,380	1,500
Total	417	2,622	216	19,954	22,792	Total	101	651	72	5,304	6,027

NOTE.—Additional requirements for local labor in the field and at port offices were estimated at 4,475.

Digitized by Google

August 1943 was fundamentally sound. This principle was accepted as the basis of the "Organization of the Quartermaster Graves Registration Service (Zone of the Interior)", as proposed in November 1944 and carried out in the amended plan transmitted to the theaters on 30 January 1945. The personnel allotments for the zone headquarters estimated in August 1943 did not vary greatly from those of the current plan—1,512 for 12 zone establishments as compared to 1,666 for a total of 14 headquarters units. Reductions in total personnel requirements were effected in the current plan by elimination of the sector headquarters and a sharp reduction in the total number of both port office establishments and field sections. The rate of reduction in the number of administrative and operating units corresponds roughly to that effected in the over-all reduction of personnel requirements. In other words, the fundamentals of the structure sketched in 1943 were retained in the design of 1945.

Some idea of the magnitude of the program to be undertaken by this organization is revealed by tentative estimates of total costs, as well as by the difficulties that were encountered in arriving at a reasonable approximation of these figures. While costs of the World War I dead program had been calculated on the basis of conducting operations in a restricted area of Western Europe, where the economic and political fabric had suffered comparatively little damage, the return program of World War II was global in extent, embracing civilized areas that had been visited with the unparalleled devastation of total war, as well as vast land masses and remote islands where the most primitive conditions of life prevailed. In such a situation, the determination of costs relating to transportation, the hire of native labor, rental of lands and buildings, etc., was largely speculative. Furthermore, any calculation of the cost of mortuary supplies, as referred to the World War I experience, was subject to wide price variations. Finally, there was no firm figure for the total number of remains to be returned to the homeland or buried abroad.

Nevertheless, estimates for the operation put the average cost per body delivered to the next of kin at $700. The comparable figure for World War I was $400 per body. The total estimated cost of delivery of 300,000 bodies to next of kin would approximate $210,000,000. To establish and improve 18 overseas cemeteries containing 45,000 bodies, which was considered a maximum, would involve the following costs: $200 per body for concentration, $200 per burial for improvement, $6 per year per burial for a period of 50 years, a total of $300, to equal the original cost of $700 for returning bodies to the United States. The total cost of burial overseas did not end here; the Government would still have the perpetual obligation for maintenance of overseas cemeteries.

The choice, however, was not regarded as a matter of dollars and cents. In the opinion of the Memorial Division, "comparative costs were not the primary consideration in a matter so involved with sentiment." The Government of the United States, it held, accorded to relatives of the dead the right of decision concerning final disposition of their loved ones "as the final gesture of a grateful country to those who paid the supreme sacrifice." [133] Here, indeed, is an echo of sentiments expressed nearly 2,000 years ago by Paul the Apostle.

> As unknown, and *yet* well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;
>
> As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and *yet* possessing all things.[134]

[133] *Current Plan*, p. 28.

[134] II Cor. 6: 9–10.

Digitized by Google

Conclusions

ANY useful review of the many problems encountered by The Quartermaster General in formulating basic policies and technical standards for care of the dead during World War II, together with their execution on the part of tactical commanders in the field, necessarily involves an examination of those aspects of the experience which seem to have a bearing on wars of the future. This requirement, to be sure, invades the realm of prophecy. The venture is problematical, to say the least; no military staff in history has ever given a completely reliable forecast of just what measures should be taken to win the next war.

In attempting any such preview a careful course must be steered between two dangerous extremes. First, there is the mediocre perfectionist who, talking the language of conservatism, contends that preparations for a future struggle should be guided by hindsight and thus eliminate all mistakes of the last conflict. Then there are those radical extremists who indulge the belief that new wonder weapons will so completely transform warfare as known in the past that the predictions of an excited imagination seem preferable to the reasoned judgment of a professional soldier. Yet, while it is true that no military staff has ever completely visualized all the details of preparation that assure success in an eventual war, it is nevertheless true that nations stake their very existence on the judgment of military experts in formulating sound strategical and tactical doctrines for just such an eventuality. It is also obvious that, however waged, wars will exact their toll of death; relatives of American dead will continue to look to their government for an accounting of the remains of those who give their lives in defense of the Republic. What, then, are the lessons that may be learned from the foregoing account of graves registration operations during World War II?

At least two examples of faulty policy making invite inspection. These misconceptions first appeared in World War I and were then repeated on a larger scale and at far greater cost during the recent world conflict. Repetition with increasing confusion in two different wars would indicate that the aspects in question are fundamental, having an application in all war situations. In designing and assembling the American military machine which took the field in 1941, the General Staff made no provision until after the outbreak of hostilities for incorporating Quartermaster Graves Registration Service companies in the military establishment. Delay in providing this operating unit to function in support of combat formations not only retarded an effective system of unit training for graves registration companies but compelled the forces in the field to establish provisional organizations and, for nearly two years, to conduct all operations relative to care of the dead on a basis of improvisation. In other words, the consequences of delay in establishing a single element of the field forces in two past wars should hold a warning against reoccurrence of the same lag in a future conflict, despite an admitted inabiliy to predict the precise organization of future combat formations or that of supporting technical units.

A second deficiency in the formulation of graves registration policy during World War II was the persistent equivocation which subverted every reasonable effort to develop a central office of mortuary records on a basis that would fully justify the existence of such an agency. However soldiers may meet death in the future, the value of an accurate and currently compiled body of burial records at a central location will be a constant requirement. Although the long range economy of this method was recognized in principle, at the outbreak of World War II, attempts at compromise with arbitrary personnel ceilings resulted in half measures which continued throughout the course of hostilities, leaving a legacy of unrecorded burial reports that cost far more during the two ensuing years to verify and complete than the amount of any reasonable outlay for support of the activity from Pearl Harbor to the surrender in Tokyo Bay.

Closely related to the purposes sought in maintaining a central office of mortuary records is the accumulation of certain data during peace and war which will contribute to improved performance in establishing the identity of unknown remains and, at the same time, satisfy public expectations that the armed forces are not remiss in meeting obligations imposed by the national burial policy. The experience of World War II clearly demonstrated that, excepting only a complete

Digitized by Google

set of finger prints, the tooth chart became the most effective means of establishing identity when all such media as identification tags and corroborating evidence in the form of pay books, personal papers, and membership cards, etc., were missing. Like the finger print, the tooth chart offers a medium that cannot be lost or misplaced through carelessness of the individual. Only occasional dismemberment of the body would destroy the usefulness of one or the other of these media. Furthermore, in instances of hasty and unrecorded burials, dentures resist decay for an indefinite period, while disintegration of fleshy parts limits the time in which recognizable finger prints may be made. Yet administrative provisions for exploiting the possibilities of identification through individual tooth characteristics have lagged behind those associated with finger printing. Where a master file of finger prints was available during World War II for comparison with prints made in the field, there was no comparable file of tooth charts.

Obviously this lag should be overcome by requiring that competent technicians construct as a phase of the preliminary medical examination standard dental charts of all recruits upon induction into the armed services, and that such charts, together with notation of individual changes occasioned by subsequent dental treatment and supplemented by a new chart prepared on occasion of departure for overseas duty, be assembled in a master file for ready comparison with charts made from potential unknowns in the field by Graves Registration Service technicians.

Turning from matters of major policy to procedures in the field, the graves registration experience of World War II seems at first glance to offer few lessons, unless, of course, the next war should be deliberately planned with a view to perfecting the strategic and tactical doctrines that secured victory in World War II. Such a contingency, to be sure, would require elaborate discussion of different procedures described in the foregoing pages. This course, however, is rejected on grounds that nations which methodically prepare for the last war generally go down in defeat. The question thus arises: does the field experience of World War II furnish any suggestions of lasting value?

At least one consideration common to all theaters emerges from the narrative. The cycle of collection, evacuation, and identification began on the battlefield. Since the conventional Quartermaster Graves Registration Service Company (T/O & E 10–297) did not perform battlefield collection, this responsibility devolved upon tactical units. Yet all other phases of graves registration, including burial and final disposition of remains in accordance with wishes of the next of kin, depended in large measure upon the promptness and efficiency with which the initial steps of this cycle were taken in company and battalion areas.

In other words, the number of identified remains recovered from the battlefield and evacuated through collecting point systems to temporary cemeteries, together with the percentage of this figure in reference to the total killed in action, was largely determined by the quality of small unit participation in the collection and primary identification of bodies. At the same time, the facts of graves registration history reveal that these units, because of their preoccupation with combat at the very time when casualty rates ran highest, were least able to meet their responsibility with respect to the dead. That is, the weakest link in the whole sequence of graves registration activity is the one which anchors the chain to the battle front. Furthermore, it is established beyond doubt that however organic collecting teams may have been selected, effective results in collection and primary identification were attained only by those units which had acquired through painful experience a fairly wide dissemination of certain fundamental requirements of graves registration procedure. It is equally apparent that unseasoned formations will, at the beginning of a campaign, continue to defeat the best efforts of experienced graves registration units unless these fundamentals are included in the basic training of the soldier.

Even though restricted to a few minimal essentials, such basic training should put due emphasis on the individual responsibility of the soldier in making certain that he always wears his identification tags and carries other identifying media, such as his paybook. It should be stressed that he incurs this obligation not entirely as a duty in complying with military regulations, but also out of consideration for friends and relatives who must carry on in support of the cause for which he may give his life. In other words, the obligation is incurred by virtue of the fact that he is a responsible member of society and only incidentally associated with a particular military organization.

This observation, admittedly, contradicts two irreconcilable assumptions of military psychology, one insisting that the dead must be promptly removed from the sight of the living, the other maintaining that there should be no intimation of the possibility of death in battle. But in place of these contradictory equivocations, it should be stressed that the individual soldier is obligated to make provision for just such an eventuality as his own death in battle, and to do so for the same reasons that persuade most civilians to carry identifica-

Digitized by Google

tion cards in their wallets. To contend that an attempt at indoctrination along these lines might be detrimental to a sound state of morale seems quite on a par with arguing that any man who has the forethought to acquire a cemetery plot for himself and the members of his family, or who buys a life insurance policy which carries double indemnity for accidental death, betrays the morbid tendencies of a fatalistic philosophy. The fact remains that a training program which is properly designed to enlist a personal sense of responsibility on the part of the individual soldier in these matters offers greater prospects for improving the whole process of identification than all the scientific techniques and administrative methods that may subsequently be devised to reduce the number of unknowns delivered for burial without any identifying media.

Reliance on a spirit of voluntary cooperation is not, of course, advocated as a substitute for disciplinary methods which are intended to secure compliance with orders but which, in this particular instance, have fallen short of their avowed aim. An ancient military axiom states that the issuance of an order that cannot be enforced is destructive to good discipline. We are also told that a high rate of intelligence in the rank and file of modern democratic armies is not necessarily a deterrent to the attainment of firm discipline. Quite to the contrary, experience shows that the rigorous enforcement of rules and regulations is dependent in large measure upon an understanding of the validity of such measures. This applies to field and line officers as well as to the rank and file.

Another matter of controversy common to all theaters was the problem of determining a just division of labor between supporting graves registration units and organic teams engaged in the collection and evacuation of remains. From a practical point of view these difficulties were virtually insoluble. In the first place, the assignment of personnel from tactical units to graves registration work was generally made on a part-time basis. Again, since the methods of selection were dissimilar in different tactical situations, there was no firm standard by which an equitable distribution of effort could be determined. Where the Fifth Army appears to have justified its practice of making up such details from combat personnel, equally good reasons were found in the Central Pacific area for establishing a provisional battlefield salvage service, which undertook the collection and evacuation of bodies as its primary function during the assault phase of an island operation. Then in 1944 a general solution to the problem was offered by the War Department in a revised table of organization (T/O & E 10–298), which increased the aggregate strength authorized in T/O & E 10–297 from 125 to 252 and added the function of battlefield collection.

In the last analysis, these various expedients were devised to meet conditions of different tactical situations, while the War Department's proposed solution lacked the virtue of universal application. As a matter of fact it fitted nowhere. Rigid restrictions of personnel policy forbade the assignmenfft of many categories engaged in graves registration activities on a part-time basis. Theater commanders saw no advantage in approving a program of reorganization which would only result in replacing an existing establishment of small company units with a diminished number of larger companies. Since all workable solutions found in the various theaters were products of adjustment to local conditions that seem unlikely to recur in the future, and since the proposal looking to an over-all solution was not tested on a universal basis, it would appear that any controversy over the hypothetical merits of T/O & E 10–298, as compared to those of T/O & E 10–297, can scarcely have more than an academic interest in a long-range view of the problem.

This impasse brings us back to the first point already suggested, namely, the failure to activate Graves Registration Service companies while augmenting the field forces in anticipation of war. Whether proceeding from deliberate neglect or inability to meet all the pressing demands of a hastily conducted general mobilization, delay in the activation of any component of the military establishment until the outbreak of hostilities invites the risk of belated discovery that an untried paper organization may not serve the purpose for which it was intended. Assuming that T/O & E 10–298 really corrected the defects found in its predecessor, the practical difficulties involved in manning the new unit prevented the change, however desirable.

These considerations suggest a final conclusion—one which should be assigned equal importance with those urging timely activation of the Quartermaster, Graves Registration units, maintenance of an adequately staffed central office of mortuary records during hostilities, and inclusion in the basic training of all armed services of certain fundamental requirements of graves registration procedure that concern the serviceman as an individual. The fourth point is a necessary complement to all three and, moreover, has a particularly important bearing on the first and third. It may be briefly stated: the continuity of graves registration organization must not be completely broken in time of peace.

At least one active company should be maintained for experimental purposes and recorganized from time

Digitized by Google

to time in accordance with organizational changes that take place in tactical units. If large-scale maneuvers are essential during peace in the work of testing new tactical doctrines and organizational principles, the method should be fully exploited by including technical units that otherwise might not stand the test of battle. Intelligently planned and realistically conducted, such exercises not only disclose defects and suggest the best method short of war for correction, but supply the sort of information most useful for the limited amount of training that previous experience has established as requisite to all combat troops.

It goes without saying that practical objections are to be anticipated in justifying any scheme which would advance graves registration training in time of peace. An attitude of opposition is revealed by a flat refusal on the part of tactical officers to go so far as even to mention graves registration problems in connection with basic training, and, again, by persistent objections to the participation of reserve graves registration units in general maneuvers. The reasoning here may, in part, be attributed to those irreconcilable assumptions of army psychology that have had the effect of putting this whole subject under a taboo. At the same time, there are good reasons for believing that the taboo has a different origin. It does not seem entirely improbable that the maneuver field is sometimes confused with the parade ground, and that grand maneuvers are occasionally planned, not so much for the purpose of testing new theories and devices to the breaking point and discovering experimentally just why and under what particular circumstances they break down, but rather with a view to putting on a good show that moves with all the precision of a well-managed performance.

Deliberate exclusion of any element of the field forces, tactical or technical, from such exercises betrays a want of realistic appreciation of the ends they are intended to serve. If progressive divorcement from reality in an inclination toward the parade ground mentality is sanctioned by higher authority, it would follow that a valuable precedent might be consulted in the military policy of the Han Emperors, who, according to Chinese tradition, rated the professional competence of army commanders in accordance with their proficiency at the chess board.

O

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google