

HEADQUARTERS 318TH INFANTRY
APO #80, U.S. Army

3-2
"AFTER ACTION REPORT"
November 1944

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During the period 1-7 November 1944 the same static situation that had prevailed in our sector since 9 October 1944 continued. We made no attacks - the enemy made no counterattacks. Patrol activity continued, with the I & R platoon and at least two of the Battalions sending out patrols nightly, some with the mission of determining fordability of the SEILLE RIVER at all points to our front, others with mission of determining enemy strength and dispositions on opposite side of River, including the towns of NOMENY and ROUVES. As a result of these patrols, information was gained which proved invaluable a few days later when our attack was launched.

The enemy maintained purely defensive positions, interested only in when and where an attack by our forces would be made. Patrols were sent out by them with mission of capturing an American prisoner, but this mission was in no case completed in our sector. They were continually on the alert against an attack, and few of our patrols succeeded in penetrating their lines without drawing fire.

During this static period the enemy situation changed in some degree. In addition to the 1431st Fortress Bn and 38th SS Pz Gr Regt, 17th SS Pz Gr Div, identified the preceding month as being in our sector, a local attack 1 November 1944 by 319th Infantry, 80th Infantry Division identified the German 48th Infantry Division as also being in 80th Division zone. According to latest information gained through PW sources, on 2 November 1944 3d Bn, 38th SS Pz Gr Regt, 17th SS Pz Gr Div was in defensive positions from CHEMINOT to EPLY; 1431st Fortress Bn (under tactical command of 48th Inf Div) from EPLY to ROUVES; 2d Bn, 126th Regt, 48th Inf Div vicinity MAILLY; 1st Bn, 126th Regt, 48th Inf Div in reserve at THEIXY ST MARTIN; 2d Bn, 127th Regt, 48th Inf Div vicinity AULNOIS. Supporting the 48th Inf Div was 1151st Arty Bn consisting of three batteries, each with 3 105mm Howitzers (Std), 4 LMGs and 80 men; in addition to Division's organic artillery, 148th Arty Regt which consisted of nine batteries.

Of these units, the 1431st Fortress Bn and elements of 126th Inf Regt, 48th Inf Div were disposed more directly in the path of 318th. The morale of these troops ranged from fair to low. The majority of them were older men, 35-50 years of age, many of whom had had previous combat service, been discharged due to physical disabilities, and only recently reimpressed into service.

The 1431st Fortress Bn was composed of four companies - 3d Co with 140-160 men, 18 LMGs; 4th Co equipped with 12 81mm mortars. Strength of companies in 2d Bn, 126th Inf Regt was approximately 70 men each, equipped with normal Infantry weapons.

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It was the general opinion among PWs that their present defensive line along the SEILLE RIVER was the German MLR; they knew of no secondary defense line between there and the West Wall. However, they were also of the opinion that sufficient forces and defenses were in back of them to prevent a penetration by our forces, regardless of how heavy an attack we might launch.

One very interesting feature of the German defensive measures which we had encountered before but appeared to have more emphasis at this stage, was their 'No retreat order'. In practically every unit contacted, their orders had been to hold to the last man, with the result that when our forces would break through, the surviving enemy troops had no predesignated positions nor assembly points on which to fall back. A German officer, taken prisoner in a recent action, when questioned on this point, stated that no German officer was authorized to issue a retreat order except on approval of higher authority. Since this same condition applied to all levels in the chain of command, the officer PW knew of no one with the necessary authority to issue such an order.

As part of a coordinated drive to the East by the entire U.S. Third Army, at 0600, 8 November 1944 the 318th Infantry (reinforced) launched an attack on the enemy, under cover of probably the heaviest artillery barrage it had ever had in support. In spite of the rain, mud and cold the attack progressed successfully. A bridge head across the SEILLE RIVER was established and the town of ROUVES was taken. Some difficulty was at first encountered by the unit assigned the mission of taking NOMENY, due to the fact that tanks could not be used in the initial attack as had been planned. The Infantry unit attacked NOMENY without support of the tanks and were pinned down for three hours by heavy enemy fire. In the afternoon when our tanks were brought up at this point, enemy resistance collapsed, with the majority of them surrendering. In one group alone, 93 PWs were brought in from this town, in addition to many smaller groups from the same area.

During this first day's operation the 318th took 323 PWs, 3 of which were officers. Of these, the 3 officers and 171 enlisted men were from 1431st Fortress Bn; 138 from 126th Inf Regt, 48th Inf Div; 5 from 148th AT Bn; 5 from 148th Arty Regt; and 1 from 1st Bn Hq, 37th SS Pz Gr Regt, 17th SS Pz Gr Div.

At 1600, 8 November the enemy launched a local counterattack near MAILLY but was driven back before darkness.

On 9 November our attack was renewed and during the morning the towns of NOMENY, MAILLY and PHELIN were cleared of the enemy. During the day a total of 140 PWs was taken and two new enemy units were identified. These were 1126th Gr Regt, 559th Gr Div; and 148th Replacement Bn. 13 PWs from 1st Bn, 1126th Regt were taken, and 5 from 3d Co, 148th Replacement Bn; while 7 more were taken from 1431st Fortress Bn and an additional 115 from 126th Gr Regt.

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The 1st Bn, 1126th Gr Regt had arrived from CHATEAU SALINS the preceding day and committed in area North of MAILLY. The 2d Co of this unit had a strength of approximately 60 men; 3d Co 55 men; and 4th Co 65-70 men. The 13th Co of this Regt had been dissolved and from it the 4th and 8th Companies had received 4 75mm Inf Hows each. 4th Co was composed of one mortar platoon with 3 80mm mortars, 2 HMG platoons with 3 HMGs each, and one Inf How platoon with 4 75mm Inf Hows. The 148th Replacement Bn had been moved from TINGRY to vicinity of PHLIN where they took up positions 1 November. According to PWs the strength of 2d and 4th companies was approximately 60 men each.

The S-2 estimate of the enemy situation as of 091900 placed the enemy strength in 318th sector at approximately 1000 men, and making a general withdrawal to the East. These troops consisted of remnants of 1st and 2d Bns, 126th Gr Regt; 148th Replacement Bn; 1st Bn, 1126th Gr Regt, 559th Gr Div; and elements of 1st Bn, 127th Gr Regt, 48th Gr Div.

Continuing its part in the Eastward drive, on 10th and 11th of November 318th drove the enemy from the towns of NONCHEUX, PO-VILLE, JUVILLE and ACHATEL 10 November, and TRAGNY, THIMONVILLE, MORVILLE-sur-NIED and ST EPREVE 11 November. During the night 10-11 November disorganized remnants of 48th Gr Div continued their retreat, moving their remaining artillery to East side of the FRENCH NIED RIVER.

The enemy made an unsuccessful attempt to establish a new line of defense to run through TRAGNY and THIMONVILLE but by 1000, 11 November this new line, the enemy's third line of defense East of the SEILLE RIVER, was broken with heavy losses to them. Enemy units used in 318th sector to form this third defensive line were the 48th Security Bn, 48th Gr Div; 1st Bn, 1126th Gr Regt, 559th Gr Div; and 1st and 2d Bns, 951st Gr Regt, 361st Gr Div.

The 951st Gr Regt, 361st Gr Div had arrived in our sector 10 November from the VOSGE MTS after a trip of 150-200 kilometers on trucks, and had been committed on this line to defend and not to attack - a complete reversal of customary German tactics. The average company strength of this unit was 50 men.

Other new enemy units contacted were 2d and 4th Cos, 813th AAA Bn - 2d Co having 3 platoons with 4 20mm AA guns each; 4th Co with 9 37mm AA guns. 4th (257th AAA) Bn, 42d AAA Flak Regt - composed of 11th, 12th, 13th and 15th Batteries; 11th and 12th Batteries were equipped with 12 37mm single barrel guns each; 13th Battery with 5 88mm AA guns; and 15th Battery with 12 20mm AA guns each. (42d AAA Flak Regt was composed of 4 Bns but the other three, 86th Light Flak, 164th AAA and 191st AA Bns, were not contacted).

During these two days' operations, 383 PWs were taken by the Regiment, of which 5 were officers, 53 NCOs and 325 enlisted men.

After having been forced from West side of NIED FRANCAISE RIVER 11 November the enemy, on the following day, unsuccessful

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attempted to prevent our crossing. During the day, however, 318th cleared the town of BARDREUCOURT, established a firm bridgehead across the River and cleared the towns of VATRIMONT and LUCY.

The principal enemy unit used to resist our crossing of the FRENCH NIED RIVER was 128th Gr Regt, 48th Gr Div. The average combat strength per company in this Regiment, originally 80-100 men, was believed to be down to 50 men per company, ninety percent of their ages ranging from 17-20 years. Their morale was from fair to low. The Regiment was equipped with normal infantry weapons.

Another enemy unit contacted 12 November for the first time was 3d Co, 183d AA-AT Bn. This unit had 100 men in company, equipped with 10 20mm SP ($\frac{1}{2}$ track) guns, with double mission of protecting heavy guns from low level bombers and for ground defense.

Of 105 PWs taken by 318th 12 November 3 were officers, 12 NCOs and 90 enlisted men.

On 13 November the enemy continued losing ground to our forces and the towns of HOLACOURT, ARNAINCOURT, BRULANZE, THICOURT and THONVILLE were taken by 318th. In making their withdrawal the enemy blew bridges in our zone of advance, established strong points in the towns and used harassing artillery and mortar fire.

Although not contacted up to this time by 318th, on 13 November the 317th Infantry identified the German 36th Gr Div as being on 80th Division front. As estimated by SHAEF, the strength of this Division was 4,500 - 5,000, its organization and composition being similar to the 553d, 559th and 361st Infantry Divisions.

At this juncture the 318th was assigned the mission of protecting XII Corps North boundary, resulting in the direction of our advance turning from East to North after having reached HOLACOURT.

In moving North to take up its assigned position on XII Corps left flank, 318th launched an attack Northward 16 November. This attack the enemy resisted with heavy mortar and smallarms fire, and in the afternoon launched a counterattack from BOIS DE NEULANDER. This counterattack was driven back and the enemy withdrew toward FALQUEMONT.

As a result of the day's action 16 November, 159 more PWs were taken by 318th. This made a total of 1110 PWs taken since the beginning of our present offensive, 8 November 1944.

Principal enemy units contacted in this action were 118th and 165th Gr Regts, and 268th Arty Regt, 36th Gr Div. Morale of the men from these units taken prisoner was fair to low, many of them glad to surrender. Their mission was defensive only, with orders to hold positions at all costs. They had been told that anyone withdrawing without orders would be shot.

It was learned from PWs that the German High Command had recently changed their 'No retreat order' to the extent of includ'

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German officers whereas, in the past, it had applied only to enlisted men. In effect, the new order stated that any German officer guilty of ordering a retreat of his men or removing himself to a safer place rearward would be courtmartialled, have his commission cancelled and then placed on front line duty as a rifleman.

After the enemy counterattack on afternoon of 16 November had been driven back the enemy left only relatively small forces for rearguard and delaying action between 318th and the MAGINOT LINE. The outer fringe of these defenses, consisting of anti-tank ditches and a few scattered concrete pillboxes just West of FALQUEMONT, was contacted by 318th forces 20 November when the town of FALQUEMONT was taken against only light resistance. Here were found the usual evidences of the enemy's delaying and harassing measures, consisting of blown bridges in addition to heavily mined and booby trapped areas in and around the town.

The enemy at this time was mainly occupied with improving new defensive positions North and Northwest of TRITTELING, sending out patrols and harassing our positions with light artillery and mortar fire. During the night 21-22 November the enemy counterattacked with one company in an unsuccessful attempt to drive our forces from LAUDREPANG, where we had made a local penetration of their new defensive positions on main MAGINOT LINE forts.

During night 22-23 November 3d Bn, 861st Inf Regt, 347th Inf Div relieved 1st Bn, 165th Inf Regt, 36th Inf Div in their sector which extended from BOIS DE NEDERCHEN to ZIMMING to HAMBIDERSTROFF; 1st Bn, 165th Inf taking up new defensive positions Northwest of LAUDREPANG.

The 3d Bn, 861st Regt had been formed about 16 November 1944 from Division reserve and shipped from the RIEPEL regions to this sector, arriving 22 November. Bn was organized and equipped along regular Infantry lines. The three rifle companies had an average strength of 120 men, while the heavy weapons company strength was approximately 150 men. Personnel of this unit was very young (17-18 years of age) and their morale above average - this was their first commitment to combat. Immediately on taking up positions night of 22-23 November, the 11th Co of this unit sent out a 7 men reconnaissance patrol with mission of determining whether or not the villages of HAUTE VIGNEULLES, BASSE VIGNEULLES and DORVILLER were occupied by our troops. At BASSE VIGNEULLES they had the misfortune of running into a group of 80th Division Reconnaissance men, which resulted in the entire patrol being either killed, wounded or captured.

The 347th Inf Div was composed of two Inf Regts (860th and 861st), each with three Bns; 347th Fusilier Bn; 347th Arty Regt, composed of a 2d and 4th Bn, plus an attached 1308th Fortress Arty Bn; 347th Replacement Bn; 347th Engr Bn; 103d Army AA Bn; and 1st Co, 347th AT Bn.

At about the same time that 3d Bn, 861st Regt was sent to this sector, the 3d Bn of 860th Regt also came to the area and

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went into reserve in LONGEVILLE. The presence of other elements of 347th Div was not definitely established, although PWs believed the 2d Bn, 347th Arty Regt was in our zone.

In preparation for an attack 25 November on the MAGINOT fortifications in our sector, 318th Infantry troops moved forward 24 November to secure the Line of Departure, the high ground to West and South of BAMBIDERSTROFF. In doing this harassing artillery, mortar and MG fire was encountered.

This attack began at 0800, 25 November and 318th had mission of taking the towns of BAMBIDERSTROFF and ZIMMING, BAMBESCH woods, and the forts of BAMBESCH, BAMBIDERSTROFF and EINSLING. Strong enemy resistance was encountered in the attack, but by 1600, 25 November all Regimental objectives were taken.

204 PWs were taken during the attack 25 November of which 7 were officers, 33 NCOs and 164 enlisted men, all of them being from 3d Bns, 860th and 861st Regts.

3d Bn, 860th Regt, initially in reserve in LONGEVILLE, had been committed at 1130, 25 November South and Southwest of there. The mission of both battalions had been to hold at all costs, with no secondary positions being given.

On the following day, 26 November, the enemy launched a series of five counterattacks to the South from West edge of FORET DE LONGEVILLE, all of which were repulsed with heavy losses to them.

After putting up a stiffened resistance 26 November, enemy resistance collapsed almost completely after 0800, 27 November.

As 319th Infantry entered ST AVOLD, 318th Infantry continued to guard the North flank of 80th Division and XII Corps. No further action resulted. 318th Infantry then reverted to Division reserve.

As a result of repeated counterattacks by elements of the reorganized 17th SS Pz Gr Div, 318th Infantry took over the sector of 317th Infantry at 1700, 29 November vicinity FORET FAREBERSVILLER, going into defensive position. Opposite the Regiment was the 17th SS Ren Bn, with the support of several tanks and assault guns from 17th SS Pz Regt.

Up to end of period the defensive positions of 318th remained the same. The enemy made no counterattacks.