Memorandum.

Subject: Report on operations of 1st Division against ST. MIHIEL SALIENT September 12 - 15, inclusive.

Map reference: 1/60,000 CONTINENT.


(a) Entry into attack.

On September 6, 1918, the 1st Division was assembled in the area around PAGNY-sur-MEUSE, under the orders of the commanding General, 4th Army Corps. It had recently been relieved from the Salient sector and, less artillery, completed one week's training in the VAUCOLEUFS area. This training had continued battalion combat exercises initiated in the SAIZERIS sector and had culminated in a division maneuver which simulated very closely the operation which the division was soon to be called upon to make.

On September 6, 1918, in conformity with orders received from the 4th A.C., the division commenced the relief of troops on the Line of Resistance in the western part of the sector held by the 89th Division. The relief was completed on the night of Sept. 7-8. The F.C. of the division closed at PAGNY-sur-MEUSE at 9:00 A.M. Sept. 8 and opened at Rangevel same late and hour. At this time the Commanding General of the Division assumed command of the new BEAUMONT SECTOR, held by one battalion of the 89th Division on the Line of Surveillance and by the First Division with attached units on the Line of Resistance in the Northern part of the Forest de la REINE.

On the night of September 9 - 10 2 companies of the battalion of the 89th Division on the Line of Surveillance in the BEAUMONT SECTOR and one advanced battalion of the First Division on the Line of Resistance were relieved by elements of the 89th D.I. (French), which took over a portion of the front originally comprised in the BEAUMONT SECTOR. This left the division charged with the defense of that portion of the front in which it was to attack.

On September 11 the disposition of the division and attached units was as follows:

2 companies 89th Division on the Line of Surveillance.

The Infantry of the Division on the Line of Resistance, which had been advanced to the BEAUMONT-RAMBUCOURT road to cover the emplacement of Artillery and masses in the northern part of the FORET de la REINE.

The Divisional Artillery, plus the 56th P.A. Brigade (less one battalion 15cm), 76th P.A. and one battalion 8 inch howitzers, 44th C.A.G. emplaced in the sector.

One battalion 1st Brigade Tanks, in the northern edge of the FORET de la REINE.

1st M.G.Bn. and 7th M.C. Bn. (Div. M.G.Bn. of 3rd Division), in rear of the sector.

1st Regt. Engineers, plus 2 companies 51st Pioneer Infantry, employed on works in the sector.

2nd Field Bn. S.C., employed on communications in the sector.

8th Observation Squadron, attached to the Division, in normal position at OURCINES.

9th Balloon Company, attached to division, in normal position at Gerari Sars.

One platoon, Co. "A", 1st Gas Regt. (Engrs.), attached to division with divisional infantry.

1st Provisional Squadron 2nd Cavalry, attached to division, in rear of sector.

Immediately preceding the attack a report was received from the 29th D.I. that a recon naissance patrol had advanced well into the enemy lines without resistance and that a possibility existed that the enemy had entirely withdrawn. To verify this fact the battalion commander commanding 2 companies 89th Division on the Line of Resistance
ordered to send out strong reconnaissance patrols. These patrols ascertained that the enemy still held his lines and no change in the original programme for attack was made.

(b) ATTACK.

In conformity with Field Orders #14, Eq. 4th A.C., September 8, 1918, this division attacked at 5.00 hrs. September 12, 1918, passing through six elements of the 39th Division on the Line of Surveillance. The attack was ordered in Field Orders #55, Eq. 1st Division.

The operation was a part of the operation of the First Army to reduce the St. Mihiel Salient by two simultaneous attacks, one from the west by the 5th A.C. and one from the south, with the Fourth Corps on the left and the First Corps on the right. The division was the left flank division of the Fourth Corps and had the mission of covering its own advance as well as the advance of the divisions on the right. It had on its right the 42nd Division. It held on its left the 39th D.I. (French) which, however, was charged mainly with diversion and exploitation and did not attack until one hour after this division.

The attack was preceded by an artillery preparation of four hours and accompanied by a rolling barrage which removed generally at the rate of 100 meters in 4 minutes. In spite of very unfavorable weather conditions all infantry was in place at the jumping-off line ESTHONNE-MAHRISOEN, and attacked on time. The tank battalion was delayed by unfavorable ground but it crossed the jumping-off line soon after the infantry and reached the infantry lines at the 1st Objective.

The 1st Objective was reached on time at a mean hour of 5:40 hrs. This Objective, from east to west, was the southeast bank of the RUPT DE MADE to RICHECOURT, thence a box inclosing RICHECOURT and the open ground to the north-west. This Objective was prescribed and covered by a halt in the artillery barrage to insure the passage of the infantry across the RUPT de MADE. Up to this point few casualties were suffered. These were mainly from artillery fire.

The second Objective was taken on time. This Objective was an arbitrary line passing north of the enemy position northwest of the RUPT DE MADE and was covered by another halt in the artillery barrage, to cover the reformation of troops after passing through this position. This objective was taken with few losses. The infantry passed through or crossed the RUPT DE MADE on prepared foot bridges and found no great difficulty in crossing the enemy wire, which was old, low, and in bad shape. Some resistance was encountered from enemy machine guns but the resistance was feeble and the morale of the enemy low.

The most serious resistance of the day was encountered between the 2nd and 3rd Objectives at the southern edge of the QUART DE RESERVE. The enemy's principle line of resistance ran through this woods and considerable opposition was encountered here. It speaks well for the morale of the infantry, that in spite of the fact that it suffered losses of some 600 men during the operation, all infantry units unite in speaking of the enemy's resistance as feeble. Even at this point the front line infantry battalions attacked the enemy positions which were delaying their advance with their own and special arms, passed over and submerged them.

The 3rd Objective was reached between 9:30 and 10:00 hrs. The divisional 3rd Objective was the 1st Phase line of the first day's objective as prescribed by the Corps, passing through the northern edge of BOIS RATE. During the advance to this objective orders were received from the 4th A.C. to push on to the first day's objective as soon as the division was ready for the new phase of the operation. Under the circumstances and in view of the fact that it was necessary to bring up artillery to support the further infantry advance it was decided not to unduly hurry this advance but to resume the advance as per schedule at H plus 6 hours.

In accordance with this decision the infantry went forward at 11:00 hrs. Sweared by a rolling barrage, and took the first day's objective at about 12:30 hrs. This objective was the defensive position marked by the towns of LAMORCHE-NOISARD and included the occupation of a defensive left flank running from NOISARD south to junction with 39th D.I. (French) at the BOIS DE GARGANTUA. This position also was taken without serious losses and consolidation was begun. Enemy encountered were killed, captured or driven back.
During the progress of the advance to the 4th Objective, the two battalions of infantry and the 1st A.C. Battalion, in Division Reserve, were pushed forward into positions to resist enemy counter attack which was expected from the north west. The provisional squadron 2nd Cavalry was likewise pushed forward to beyond the original jumping off line in order to make it immediately available for exploitation. Immediately on assurance that the attack was progressing favorably the 4th A.C. ordered a resumption of the advance to the first phase of the 2nd Day's Objective, as prescribed in the original Corps order for the attack. This order was given by telephone and later confirmed by Field Orders #21, Hq. 4th A.C.

In conformity with the above orders, at 16:45 hrs. September 12th orders were issued for the provisional Squadron 2nd Cavalry to advance to MONSARD, debouch from HONSARD and reconnoiter towards VIGNULLES and HEUDICOURT, with a view to interrupting communications. Orders were subsequently issued to the infantry Brigade Commanders to continue the advance to secure that portion of the BOIS HONSARD and the BOIS LAMARCHE bounded by the deauville railroad, advancing one company from front line battalions to cut communications from VIGNULLES east and to secure the left flank of the division. These orders were delivered by telephone and later confirmed by written orders. In accordance with these orders the provisional squadron 2nd Cavalry passed through the infantry lines at about 16:00 hrs. and advanced along the HEUDICOURT and VIGNULLES roads. Resistance was encountered and the cavalry was unable to make any large exploitation, although the retreat of the enemy was hindered and some prisoners taken. At 17:45 hrs. the infantry advance was resumed and at 19:45 hrs. the objective bounded by the deauville railroad was reached. At 22:00 hrs. on September 12 one company of the 28th Infantry was astride the VIGNULLES ST. DENIS road, with its left protected by the 16th Infantry and its right protected by the 26th Infantry.

During the afternoon of the 12th the enemy apparently succeeded in withdrawing some of his troops through VIGNULLES and points north, but his withdrawal was hampered and disorganized by our rapid advance.

Following telephonic instructions from the 4th A.C. the exploitation was continued during the night of Sept.12-13. To insure the safety of the rapid exploitation to the north in an endeavor to affect a junction with the 5th A.C. the division was given as reserve 3 battalions of the 42nd Division, which were ordered to be in the vicinity of LAMARCHE by 4:00 hrs. Sept.13. The division was also given one regiment (eventually one brigade) of the 3rd Division, as Division Reserve. On the arrival of the troops of the 3rd Division elements of the 42nd Division were released from reserve of the 1st Division.

Thus reinforced the division extended its left flank, whose protection was assured by the 1st Infantry Brigade. The 2nd Infantry Brigade was ordered to advance in force to the outskirts of HATTONVILLE and VIGNULLES, so as to completely close all roads leading to the north and east from these towns. This order was telephoned to Brigade Commanders, whom it reached shortly after midnight, night of Sept.12-13. It was confirmed by Memo C-3, 966. The 2nd Brigade accordingly advanced at 3:15 hrs. and occupied in force all routes leading north and east form HATTONVILLE and VIGNULLES between 8:00 and 10:00 hrs., September 13th. A scout platoon of the 28th Infantry preceded the advance, entering Hattonville and capturing prisoners there at 8:20 hrs. and entering HATTONVILLE at 7:15 hrs. At this point advance elements of the 26th Division were encountered. The patrol continued through VIGNULLES and ST. MURGUE, entering the latter town at 13:00 hrs. Complete contact with the 26th Division in the vicinity of VIGNULLES was obtained at about 9:00 hrs. Sept.13th, when the provisional squadron 2nd Cavalry passed through the town for further exploitation. Virtual contact, however, was obtained on the occupation of the VIGNULLES ST. DENIS road at 22:00 hrs. Sept.12th, after which time no large bodies of troops can have escaped from the salient.

The battalion 1st Brigade Tanks attached to the division eventually pushed forward elements as far as JONVILLE, where it encountered determined resistance.

Advanced Division P.C. was established in Beaumont September 10. The entire 1st Echelon was installed on the night of the 11-12th. At noon, Sept.13th, the P.C. was advanced to HONSARD.

(Over)

(a) (Equipment) ..............
In conformity with orders from the 4th A.C. on September 13, 1918, the division occupied the line STAKO de CHAMPREZ- west edge of BOIS BEILLE- ONSARD- west edge of BOIS de NONSARD- west edge of BOIS de VIGNEULLES- ETANG de VIGNEULLES, and organized this line for defense. All attached infantry units in Division Reserve were released and the Division prepared to defend its front from attack from either the north or the west. The object of this occupation was to permit the junction of other divisions which occupied the new front line. These dispositions were ordered in F.O. 287, Hq. 1st Division.

Following additional orders received from the 4th A.C. the division was regrouped in the general vicinity NONSARD- BOIS BEILLE OZIERE- ETANG de FANERES on Sept. 14, 1918. All attached units were released on this date. At 12:00 hrs. Sept. 16th the Division F.C. closed at NONSARD and opened at same date and hour in Soche camp at east edge of BOIS de la BEILLE OZIERE. The Division remained in reserve of the 4th. A.C. to Sept. 20th, 1918.

2. CHARACTER OF TERRAIN

The terrain was very unfavorable to a successful advance and presented many and varied minor difficulties. It was completely dominated by HONTÉRO, which the artillery fire was unable to completely blind in view of high wind. It is always marshy and was rendered more difficult by heavy rain. The first part of the zone traversed was very much cut up with old trenches and wire. Two streams, the Rupt de NACHT and the MADINE river, ran through the zone of advance of the division. Despite the jamming of its main source the Rupt de NACHT presented a very serious obstacle. It was crossed without bridges by a large proportion of the line battalions and successfully crossed by tanks near its source in rear of the jumping off line. But the very existence of the stream and the necessity for taking into account the difficulty of crossing it appreciably slowed the progress of the division. Woods constituted the next most serious obstacle. The division had considerable training in working through woods and experienced little difficulty in the QUANT de RESERVE and BOIS RATE. However, in passing through the thick deep woods of the BOIS de NONSARD and BOIS de VIGNEULLES on a black night great difficulty was naturally encountered.

3. INITIAL DISPOSITIONS

The initial dispositions were in keeping, as far as conditions of the problem permitted, with the habitual formation of the division. The 2nd Brigade was on the right, the 1st Brigade was on the left. In the 2nd Brigade the 26th Infantry was on the right, the 26th Infantry on the left. In the 1st Brigade the 10th Infantry was on the right, the 10th Infantry on the left. The three right regiments had the normal formation, with three battalions echeloned in depth, one in the front line, one in support, and one in reserve. Exterior 3rd line battalions were in Division Reserve. Interior 3rd line battalions were in Brigade Reserve. Due to the necessity of rapidly establishing a defensive position on the left flank the 18th Infantry had two battalions in the front line, the regimental commander withholding one company as his reserve in place of the support battalion. All battalions had the normal formation of two companies in the front, two in support. Each company had two platoons in the front and two in support. In general the battalions had eight lines, the first a skirmish line, the rest small columns. Battalion frontage was normal, between 500 and 600 meters, depth the same. Distance between battalions the same. Special automatic rifle teams were placed in the front line to protect wire cutters. The remainder of these weapons were grouped in the rear of each company under the command of one officer. The machine gun companies attached to infantry battalions followed the battalion without distance and maintained liaison agents with the battalion commander at all times. Regimental Stokes and 27mm guns were assigned to leading battalions and followed in rear of battalions.

4. SUITABILITY OF FORMATIONS

The initial dispositions were taken proved satisfactory as usual.
This division is now accustomed to this formation, in which it functions very well. The formation gives great driving power and at the same time facilitates the formation of a defensive flank. There is still some difference of opinion within the division as to the advisability of grouping all automatic weapons not definitely assigned to a specific mission under one officer in rear of each company. This formation probably ensures the best use of the weapon on offense against counter attack but probably sacrifices some of the value it might have as an offensive arm if immediately under platoon commanders.

The disposition of machine gun companies as attached to 1st and 2nd line Infantry battalions is practically universally approved. It is possible that use could be made of machine gun companies not so attached to reinforce artillery fire during the preliminary phases of the action. In this particular maneuver, however, the terrain and especially the distance between the lines rendered any such use of doubtful value. The two Division machine gun battalions (1st and 7th) were never really engaged. The 1st MG Battalion was held in division reserve and occupied defensive positions; the 7th MG Battalion was placed in Brigade Reserve of the 1st Brigade on account of the length of the defensive flank of that brigade.

5. How such formations were, or could have been, best adapted to meet the changing conditions of combat and terrain.

See par. 4, above.

6. EMPLOYMENT OF INFANTRY WEAPONS.

All infantry weapons were under the immediate orders of infantry front line battalion commanders and were successfully used to remove obstacles. An enemy strong points in the QUART de RESERVE which might have considerably delayed the advance of the whole division surrendered immediately these combined infantry weapons were brought to bear upon it.

7. ARTILLERY SUPPORT.

The artillery preparation was generally effective. The enemy reaction was small, due largely to the weakness of his artillery in the sector. It was practically nil up to the moment of the infantry attack, at which time it did some damage. The fact that enemy artillery was not entirely neutralized was probably due to lack of observed fire as well as to the fact that he undoubtedly maintained silent guns in unknown positions.

The artillery barrage supporting the infantry attack was very effective. It drowned out the enemy fire and the infantry was generally unaware that the enemy artillery was reacting. A large use of smoke shells was made which covered the front of the advancing troops very effectually. More difficulty was experienced in obscuring observatories on the left flank of the advance due to the strong left to right wind. The barrage was deep and effective.

The accompanying artillery consisted of individual guns accompanying front line battalions and larger units which advanced by echelons covered by regimental and brigade zones. The individual guns were not very effective and it is possible that their function can be fully executed by the 37mm gun. The advance of larger units by echelons according to the practice of this division was very successful. Despite extremely difficult conditions of terrain due to wet weather and lack of roads, the 75mm batteries advanced to positions in front of the jumping off trenches and participated in the 2nd rolling barrage at 0600 hours. 30 minutes. A second advance to positions north of the BANST de BATE and the vicinity of Bois RATE was affected by H plus 10 hours. The complete advance of all division artillery was delayed until after the one existing road. 75mm batteries, however, were able to advance over filled in trenches and improvised bridges by the use of their own personnel assisted by French Engineers.

8. PASSAGE OF OBSTACLES.

The terrain advanced over was full of obstacles. Their passage was generally effected successfully. Quiet elaborate plans had been made for the passage of all elements through wire, trenches, streams and woods.
The Engineer detachments from the 1st Engineers cut the wire in rear of jumping off line prior to 3 hr. and accompanied the Infantry for the purpose of cutting additional gaps in advance of the jumping off line. These detachments equipped with wire cutters did some service, although the wire was in such shape that the troops in general advanced over it without the necessity of cutting it. This was a fortunate circumstance which might never be repeated. The Bengalore torpedo detachments from the 1st regiment Engineers also accompanied leading battalions. This means of wire cutting, furnished only to provide against all contingencies, is not used, and it is possible that the detachments might better be employed in other ways.

The tanks were effective in opening gaps and wire whenever they encountered it. Trenches were no more than an annoyance to the advancing infantry. They delayed at first the progress of the tanks, although the tanks were accompanied by engineer details which facilitated their advance. They also delayed, although they could not prevent, the advance of the artillery which was forced out of the congested road. The streams encountered, especially the Rupt de Madt, were serious obstacles. Detachments of the 1st Engineers constructed and carried up foot-bridges which were used by a large proportion of the infantry and were very valuable in facilitating the advance of the infantry without the necessity of exposure due to wading the stream. Some infantry crossed without these bridges. The bridges were started back of the Beaumont - Rambucout road and getting them up was very exhausting work.

Detachments 1st Engineers also repaired existing and constructing new bridges for the use of artillery and other transport across the Rupt de Madt. All of the above obstacles were crossed by the infantry without losing their normal formation. Much later, in the Bots de Vignemurs, the obstacle of a six-deep, thick wood to be traversed at night forced some elements of the infantry to adopt what was practically a single file formation in order to pass through and keep contact with each other. The small woods first met with, however, were avoided or passed through without difficulty. This is principally due to consistent training in passing through woods with the aid of a compass.

9. PASSAGE OF LINES.

There was one formal passage of lines at the 3rd objective, where the three right regiments sent their support battalions through the front line battalions on division orders. This was accomplished successfully, the advancing battalions passing through in small columns. In addition, battalion commanders and at times regimental commanders effected temporary passage through by elements of their command to replace disoriented elements by fresh elements and to re-organize.

10. DESTRUCTION OF OPPOSITION.

Tanks, the use of auxiliary weapons and above all the willingness of the infantry to go forward, destroyed all enemy opposition. At times it was necessary to practically surround a machine gun to take it. At other times, the fire of auxiliary weapons caused the surrender of the enemy. The battalion of tanks rendered great service in putting out these small points of resistance and undoubtedly prevented many casualties in our own ranks.

11. FIGHTING IN INTERMEDIATE ZONE.

The last organized enemy position which was encountered was along the line LAMARQUE - ROUSARD. Thereafter the division pushed forward principally in the hours of darkness to exploit its success. Every effort was made, however, to maintain the formation of the division as a unit. In order to enable it to resist possible counter attacks and to ensure keeping it in hand for further eventualities. It is believed that this policy permitted a more complete exploitation than if small organizations had been shot out independently. The provisional squadron of cavalry, for instance, was not able to continue to advance against the opposition it encountered on the advance of September 12th. The infantry, however, was able to advance as soon as ordered and to wipe out all opposition. Subordinate commanders showed themselves very capable in handling the emergencies that arose in breaking the enemy's resistance, in continuing the advance and picking up numbers of prisoners.
12. ORGANIZATION OF GROUND.

The ground conquered was immediately organized for defense. The presumption was that any counter attack would come from the west, within the salient, but dispositions were also taken to insure meeting any offensive from the north. The infantry was organized in depth on its lines with its automatic weapons occupying properly defensive positions and the Division Reserves were likewise emplaced for defense. The artillery was sufficiently covered by the infantry and emplaced to support the infantry.

13. LIAISON.

The liaison throughout the operations was fair. The telephone, as always, gave invaluable service. The T.P.S., pigeons, projectors and all supplementary means of liaison are not fitted to an attack of this nature and were of no service. The T.A.F. was of some value in the rear zones. Liaison with aircraft was not good. This was due to bad weather conditions, the very rapid advance of the infantry and the bad liaison between the Division F.O. and the squadron. Runners were used successfully for short distances. Mounted couriers were used more or less successfully. Motorcycle couriers, which have normally been found very reliable and efficient, were practically put out by the congestion on the one existing road.

14. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

Captures.—1200 prisoners, including one major and 4 lieutenants. Material.—Unknown. About 23 field pieces have been salvaged in addition to many machine guns and trench mortars. Six hundred truck loads of material have been salvaged to date and the sector is still full of engineer and other materials. Casualties were comparatively light. They are estimated at 100 killed and 650 wounded. Exact figures are not as yet available.

This division advanced 14 kilometers on an air line in 24 hours. Small elements advanced 19 kilometers on an air line in 32 hours. Throughout this advance the left flank of the division was continually exposed, although the 39th D.I. (French) advanced on the left flank of the division as fast as possible.

In striking contrast to its last large engagement the division achieved a large advance with comparatively light losses. The morale of the infantry is very high, and despite some considerable sickness due to exposure the division has never been in better shape.

By command of Major General Summerall:

CAMPBELL KING,
Chief of Staff.