

CHAPTER VI

SEARCH AND RECOVERY OF ISOLATED REMAINS IN THE EUROPEAN THEATER AREA

Casualty Determination and Recovery of Remains

American Graves Registration Service activities falling under the official designation of "Search and Recovery" constituted an important part of the program for return of World War II remains. Like postwar graves registration activities in general, search and recovery was a continuation of wartime processes carried out by a new organization with intensified effort over vast areas that included zones of long-range air bombardment as well as areas embraced by operations of the ground forces. The quest for both isolated and unrecorded remains as well as the attempted recovery of an indefinite number of unburied dead was closely related in some of its aspects to other major graves registration activities—identification of the unknown dead and the transfer of remains to their final resting places; yet search and recovery had a distinct quality insofar as the inception of policies and the conduct of field operations were concerned.

Three conditions lent a particular urgency to prompt initiation and effective development of a search and recovery program. In the first place, administrative expediency dictated a speedy confirmation or alteration of the casualty status provisionally assigned during hostilities to thousands of soldiers, such as Presumed Dead (DIE), Missing in Action (MIA), Missing (MISS), Prisoner of War (POW) and Captured (CAP).¹ It was assumed that most persons in the latter two categories would be found and that only a few would eventually be listed as missing. In the two categories of missing persons, final solution of cases would doubtless establish that some of the men were actually dead and that others, though alive, were temporarily beyond American jurisdiction and should continue to be

¹ The earliest available report on casualty clearance activities indicates that as of 1 Dec 45 the number of unresolved casualty cases totalled 27,780. Of this total there were 11,727 Presumed Dead, 1,834 Missing and 13,727 Missing in Action. It should be noted that a large proportion of those listed as Prisoner of War during hostilities had been repatriated the date of this report. Ltr, Lt Col George M. Weir, Casualty Branch, AGO, to Lt Col E. B. Jones, GSC, Office of ACofS, G-1, 21 Dec 45. File AGPC-E 704 (13 Dec 45).

regarded as missing.² In the absence of positive information concerning their whereabouts, a considerable number of missing men would probably in the end have to be recorded as dead under the provisions of the Missing Persons Act.

A second reason for prompt initiation of search and recovery was the fact that, as first demonstrated during the American Civil War and reaffirmed in subsequent conflicts, the possibility of positive identification is inversely proportional to the time-lag between death and burial in a registered grave. Consequently, any program of search for unrecovered bodies, whether intended as a step in final disposition of the war dead or planned in connection with the clearance of unsolved casualty cases had to be hastened as much as possible. A third reason was the fact that, as a matter of public policy, the Federal Government could not ignore its obligation of reporting to relatives of servicemen the salient facts that determined their final casualty status.

The clearance of casualty records became an urgent matter at the same time active consideration was given to the establishment of Quartermaster Graves Registration Service area commands in rear regions of active theaters. This convergence was not entirely accidental. Just as accessibility to territory previously dominated by enemy governments, and the resultant possibility of examining records relating to United States servicemen detained as prisoners or buried within enemy lines, offered opportunities for correcting provisional casualty reports, so these same conditions removed many obstacles to the recovery of remains that had been insuperable as long as the enemy occupied territory in which American soldiers were buried or held as prisoners. This fact was recognized in September 1944 in the plans for the conquest of the Philippine Archipelago. They not only envisaged the reoccupation of that extensive and strategically important area, but, as the President of the War Department Dependency Board declared, recognized the existence of "a complicated and difficult problem in matters of accounting for the personnel of our forces in the Philippines at the time of the fall of the Islands and in the fiscal administration incident to such accounting."³

Philippine Casualty Clearance Plan

The Philippine casualty clearance plan anticipated the problem which would develop with the general cessation of hostilities. Like other proposals made during the fall of 1944 for the progressive acti-

² This category included individuals known to be serving in some capacity with partisan forces in enemy occupied territory.

³ Memo, Maj Gen Jay L. Benedict, Pres, WDDDB for ACofS, G-1, 30 Sep 44, sub: Casualty Administration, Philippine Islands. File AGO 704 (30 Sep) C.

vation of Quartermaster Graves Registration Service area commands in all active theaters, it aimed at the easement of a similar transition in matters relating to the final disposition of the war dead. As approved and transmitted on 7 November 1944 to the Commander in Chief, SWPA, the plan for casualty administration in the Philippines had the following objectives: (1) the return of living United States and Philippine troops to the jurisdiction of their governments and services, with determination or verification of their status while held by the enemy; (2) determination or verification of actual or presumed deaths of other troops; (3) transmission to families of important facts about the status or fate of relatives.⁴

After specifying that the Commander in Chief, SWPA, would be responsible for execution of the plan, it was stated that he "will be provided for this purpose with any general or special information available or obtainable and with such specially qualified personnel as he finds necessary." It was further indicated that his field forces would be employed to exploit all sources of pertinent information about personnel, military and civilian, dead or living. The existing field force organization for casualty reporting was accepted as a suitable nucleus for the headquarters unit which would plan and provide "aggressive direction in seeking, recording and transmitting of information by field agents with all elements of the occupying forces." Convergence of interest between this organization and the theater Graves Registration Service is apparent in the statement of policy governing persons reported or carried as dead.

From returnees, inhabitants, documents, graves registrations and otherwise, field forces should obtain information confirmatory or otherwise, concerning persons who have been reported killed in action, died of wounds or disease, died while prisoner of war or interned, died while in a missing status, etc. There should be sent to the War Department all information of value for amplification or correction of records and for information of relatives.⁵

The convergence of interest is shown most clearly in the common concern for verification of death findings. The casualty clearance program aimed at positive evidence that would substantiate, justify, or disprove reports of death; the graves registration program, in view of its ultimate objective, the final disposition of remains in accordance with the wishes of next of kin, had an equal interest in the same information.

⁴ War Department Plan for Casualty Administration upon Reoccupation of Philippines. Incl to WD Ltr, TAG to CinC, SWPA, 7 Nov 44, sub: Casualty Administration, Philippine Islands. File AG ACPC-E-A 2-4 (30 Sep 44) C.

⁵ *Ibid.*

If some confusion of thought arises because casualty clearance appears to have been inextricably bound up with search and recovery, and one can be understood only in terms of the other, it may simplify matters by observing that AG casualty sections and unit graves registration officers had always been mutually concerned with a large area of personnel records and, indeed, were dependent upon one another in the initiation of many of the reports comprising this common area. The Adjutant General was, for instance, just as much interested in reports of identification and burial of persons previously reported as Missing in Action as was the Chief, AGRS, in listings of persons known to have been killed or to be absent from their units but for whom no reports of burial existed. Again, both were equally concerned, but for different reasons, with reports of unidentified dead, after action reports, combat maps, and individual service records that, taken together, might disclose some factual correspondence with information as to place and time of death indicated in the burial reports of unknown dead.

In specifying the possible sources of information which would be exploited by the field forces, the casualty clearance plan of 7 November 1944 offered no precise directions about organized search for isolated burials and unburied remains. Aside from the statement of broad policies and procedural requirements that would govern the evaluation of evidence and the reporting of case determinations, the theater commander was given a large measure of authority in the planning and direction of the program. But owing to the violence of the campaign that ended with the fall of Manila, to say nothing of the strenuous operations that quelled the resistance of Japanese garrisons in the southern islands, there should be no difficulty in understanding that General Headquarters, SWPA, was so preoccupied with the direction of combat operations that it could devote little attention to matters unrelated to the pursuit of victory.

The War Department Dependency Board does not appear to have fully appreciated the difficulty of combining the administration of a program involving an enormous amount of paper work and supplementary field investigations with the prosecution of active hostilities. In January, some 3 weeks after the collapse of Japanese resistance on Leyte, inquiry was made of General MacArthur as to when he intended to request the specially qualified personnel mentioned in the plan of 7 November 1944 for casualty clearance in the Philippines. Then, just a month before the final suppression of enemy resistance in Manila, the President of the War Department Dependency Board noted in connection with proposed amendments to the original plan that, whatever was done about these proposals, the decision should be taken promptly. He added: "there are

many indications of need for impressing U. S. A. F. F. E. of its responsibility in casualty administration and this will help."⁶

Another problem was presented by the fact that the number of war prisoners, both American and Filipino, greatly exceeded that of all other casualty categories taken together. This ratio, moreover, was just the reverse of that which would be found in other operational areas and tended, therefore, to subordinate field investigations to the process of making determinations directly from available records. Actually, field investigations on the Bataan Peninsula were deferred to a later date and then conducted under provisions of the casualty clearance plan issued after the surrender in Tokyo Bay and made applicable to all areas involved in the war against Japan.⁷

European Casualty Clearance Plan

The rush of events after the Allied victories in the Rhineland and the final triumph of American arms in the Philippines hastened consideration of casualty clearance programs on a world-wide basis. Attention was first given by WDDDB to the German war theaters. Approved and transmitted on 12 July 1945 to the commanding generals of the European, the Mediterranean, and the Africa and Middle East theaters, a second program, the so-called European Casualty Clearance Plan, instructed these commanders that their field forces would be "fully and expeditiously utilized . . . for a maximum clearance of the residue of unsolved casualty cases incident to terminated overseas military operations." This work, it was noted, "will be a continuation, with amplification and intensification, of casualty investigation and reporting heretofore carried on by theaters [and will be] directed to co-ordination and unity of effort of the War Department, the theaters and the troops and services abroad for common objectives." More specifically, it stated that—

The field investigation of the plan includes investigation and reports to the War Department. For the time being such execution is a function of the European Theater, the Mediterranean and the Africa Middle East Theater, the commanders of which will arrange among themselves, with troops or services under their jurisdiction, and with appropriate military and

⁶ (1) Memo, Maj Gen Jay L. Benedict, Pres, WDDDB for ACoS, G-1, 3 Feb 45, sub: Casualty Administration in the Philippines. File AG 704 (30 Sep 44) C. (2) RS Benedict to General Berry, G-1, 3 Feb 45.

⁷ See below, Ch. XIV, Search and Recovery in the Pacific and Asia. The section treating recovery operations in the WESPAC Sector establishes that field investigations were initiated shortly after V-E Day in the Bataan area and continued to the middle of 1947.

civil government officials, full cooperation and coordination. Matters pertaining to the projecting investigations beyond theater limits not adjusted directly will be referred to the Commanding General European Theater.⁸

Similar in scope and purpose, a third plan was prepared by WDDDB for application in the Japanese war theaters. Transmitted on 17 August to the Commander in Chief, USAFPAC, and commanding generals of the India-Burma and China Theaters, the Casualty Clearance Plan, Pacific, stated that "as land and water areas are occupied and controlled by Allied forces, maximum effort will be directed toward clearing up all unsolved casualty matters [including] recovery of personnel, ascertainment of death or living status of persons not recovered, and securing all possible additional information concerning fate of individuals who are carried or presumed to be dead."⁹

The field execution of this plan, like those formulated for the Philippine Archipelago and the German war theaters, contemplated "timely planned and extensive investigation, searches and interrogations to ascertain the whereabouts or fate of individuals." In furtherance of such operations, it was specified that "occupational forces, special investigating crews or units, Graves Registration and any other available means will be utilized."¹⁰

Review of the War Department directives indicates that theater commanders were expected to employ all available means in the prompt liquidation of an administrative responsibility with which they had always been charged. The existing AG casualty sections assigned to tactical headquarters were regarded as nuclei for an organization which would accelerate the process of resolving cases that had accumulated during the course of hostilities. Relieved of the burden of reporting casualties incident to combat, this enlarged organization would redirect an old activity rather than initiate a new one.

A similar redirection of the graves registration mission, it has already been emphasized, was required by the cessation of combat. In these altered circumstances, collection and removal of bodies from the battlefield gave way to recovery, identification, and concentration of isolated remains in temporary military cemeteries. In contrast, however, to organizational provisions for speeding

⁸ WD Ltr, TAG to CGs, USFET, USAFMT and USAFAMET, 12 Jul 45, sub: European Casualty Clearance Plan. File AGPC-E-A (29 Jan 45).

⁹ (1) Memo, Maj Gen Jay L. Benedict, Pres, WDDDB for ACofS, G-1, 14 Aug 45, sub: Casualty Clearance Plan, Pacific. File AG 704 (14 Aug 45). (2) WD Ltr, TAG to CinC USAFPAC, USFIBT and USFCT, 17 Aug 45. File AG 704 (14 Aug) OB-S-A-M.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

casualty clearance programs, the shift of emphasis in operations relating to care of the dead dictated changes in the basic scheme of organization; Quartermaster Graves Registration Service units heretofore attached to tactical formations were now assigned to newly established theater graves registration commands and, upon inactivation of certain theater establishments, notably the China, India-Burma, and Mediterranean Theaters, became operating elements of self-contained AGRS commands under The Quartermaster General. In other words, graves registration organization underwent a shift from an extreme form of decentralization to a highly centralized command system. Then, the proposed utilization of all tactical and service forces for purposes of expediting unresolved casualty cases created a situation in which theater Graves Registration Service commands, particularly the one in Europe, where three-fifths of all battle casualties had occurred, became the logical instrument of field search. There are three clearly discernible steps in this direction.

First, in implementing the War Department directive of 12 July 1945, Headquarters, USFET, directed that "a complete and accurate compilation of all information now available concerning each individual carried in a Missing, Missing in Action, Captured, or declared dead status be made by each unit commander without delay," and that each individual report include detailed information specified under the following personnel headings: (1) vehicle borne personnel (tanks, tank destroyers, ambulances, trucks, cars, etc.); (2) airborne personnel (all types of aircraft); (3) water or seaborne personnel (troop ships, landing craft, etc.); (4) personnel not vehicle borne (foot soldiers and others who still walked). Required information about the first and second categories included the findings of investigations of damaged vehicles; that about the third and fourth, a statement of the extent of search and the results of any attempted rescue. While no definite instructions for the organization and conduct of field investigations were prescribed, the theater directive was explicit in defining procedures for the transmission and processing of reports. The compilation was to be completed on or before 30 August 1945, or before the departure of an organization from the European Theater.¹¹

The second step toward bringing field search within the scope of activities assigned to the theater graves registration command was taken in September, when the Commanding General, TSFET, was charged with the responsibility of carrying out the casualty clear-

¹¹ Ltr, Hq USFET to CG, US Forces Austria, CG, TSFET *et al.*, 6 Aug. 45, sub: European Casualty Plan. File AG 704 CAS-AGO.

ance plan as formulated by Headquarters, USFET, on 6 August and implicitly instructed that—

- (a) A single agency should coordinate all field work.
- (b) Investigational teams should be so developed that the functional responsibilities of each interested technical agency may be discharged during a single visit to a particular area.
- (c) Complete coverage of all areas in which military deceased may be expected to be recovered or living U. S. military personnel be found will be required.
- (d) The Casualty Clearance Plan should be completed prior to 1 September 1946.¹²

Issued on 8 September, approximately a month following announcement of the original theater casualty clearance plan, the supplementary directive should be regarded as an enlargement of the organizational and operational concepts of the program, rather than as one amending any shortsighted provisions of the original plan. That plan required completion of casualty compilations by 31 August 1945, a target date allowing less than 2 months for fulfillment of the assignment. Obviously, any mention of field investigations in the individual reports could be no more than a summary of such field inquiries as had been made at some previous time and were available to the reporting unit. In other words, the extended program of field search announced in the directive of 8 September was intended to afford a substantial body of evidence over and above the limited amount of data hastily accumulated during July and August of 1945. Finally, a single agency was to co-ordinate all field work incidental to the program which, it was stated, "should be completed prior to 1 September 1946."

The third step was inevitable in view of the direction taken by the first and second. Issued on 6 November, a TSFET circular tersely records the solution:

- (a) For all field work, investigations and field operations, the Commanding General, American Graves Registration Command, European Theater, is charged with the implementation of the responsibility of the Commanding General, Theater Service Forces.
- (b) In view of . . . the need for one co-ordinated operation, field teams under the direction of the Commanding General, American Graves Registration Command, will be fully integrated and technically balanced to discharge in one operation all technical responsibilities.¹³

¹² Ltr, Hq USFET, to CG, U. S. Forces Austria, CG, TSFET *et al.* 8 Sep 45, sub: European Casualty Clearance Plan—Field Investigations by Technical Services. File AG 704 AAP-AGO.

¹³ Hq TSFET, Cir No. 217, 6 Nov 45.

From the viewpoint of AGRS history, the development of casualty clearance programs becomes pertinent only to the extent that efforts looking to the determination of final casualty status gave impetus to the task of assembling an enormous and complex body of information that subsequently provided a basis for planning search and recovery operations in the field. But as planned and conducted in these latter circumstances, recovery of bodies for purposes of final disposition became the ultimate objective, while the resolution of doubtful casualty cases was, at least in the minds of those who did the field work, only a by-product of their enterprise. In this sense, the program of search and recovery really begins with the designation of the Commanding General, AGRC, as the agent responsible for the organization of all field investigation in connection with casualty clearance.

It is not to be assumed that because of the territorial scope and magnitude attained by field search operations, The Quartermaster General as Chief, AGRS, overshadowed the President of the War Department Dependency Board in his capacity as the planning and co-ordinating authority for world-wide casualty clearance, or The Adjutant General, whose office served in accordance with long-established policy as the clearing house for final casualty determinations. Even though the headlong pace of demobilization swept away many of the agencies with co-ordinate responsibilities for casualty clearance, and though the augmented AGRS commands necessarily assumed some of the burdens abandoned by depleted or inactivated agencies, there seems little reason to conclude that AGRS joined the enterprise as a junior member and emerged as the senior partner. While AGRS undertook greater responsibilities, the process of resolving casualty cases was, by its very nature, destined to outlast search and recovery of isolated remains. Final determination of a few extraordinary cases will be made long after the last vestiges of AGRS have disappeared.

Continued Search by Army and Base Section Commands

During the four-month period between the establishment of the theater graves registration command under General Orders No. 141, 1 July 1945, and 6 November, when the Commanding General, AGRC, became responsible for the direction and co-ordination of all field investigations, considerable progress was made by other theater agencies in the recovery of isolated remains. As a matter of fact, the first such effort was undertaken shortly after V-E Day in those areas of the Twelfth Army Group that were about to be relinquished to Russian occupation forces. Enjoined by General of the Army Eisen-

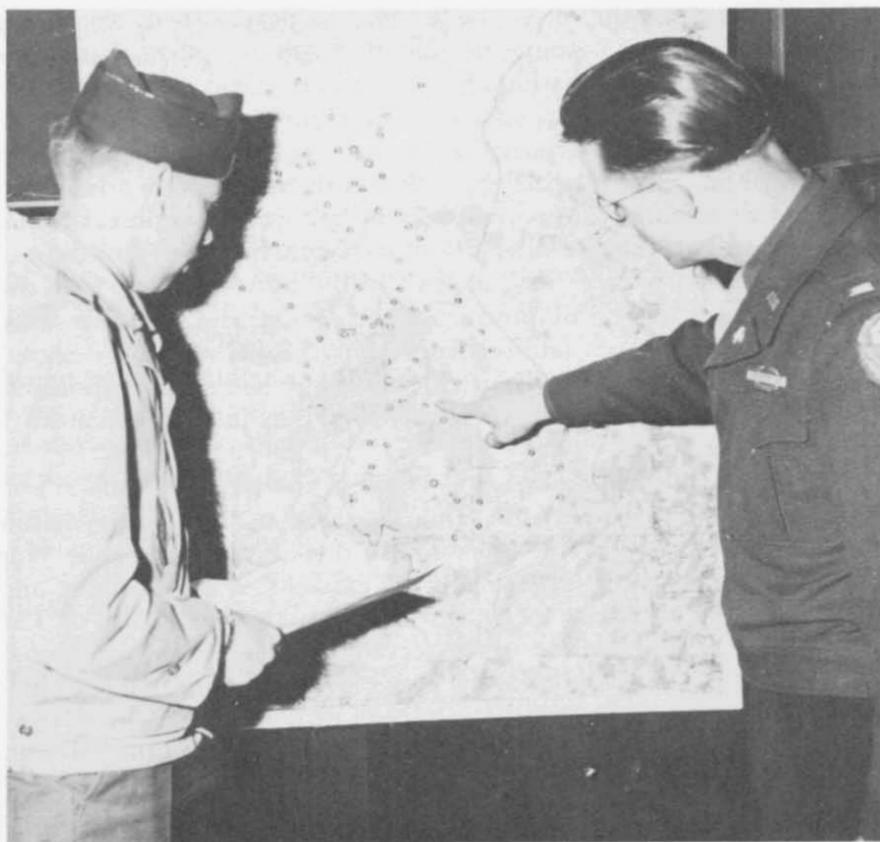


FIGURE 1. *An operations officer points to isolated burials to be recovered by AGRC in the European Theater Area.*

hower as a condition of releasing control and operation of the theater Graves Registration Service to the command then under consideration, this project was to have been directed either by the Interim Commission which had been improvised as a connecting link between the wartime Graves Registration and Effects Division and headquarters of the proposed command or, if speedily and properly organized, by the new command itself.¹⁴ As matters developed, neither commission nor command was able to undertake the assignment.

Upon assuming control of the Interim Commission and reviewing the minutes of the Eisenhower-Littlejohn conference of 8 June,

¹⁴ The so-called Interim Commission was set up after General Younger's assignment as Chief, Gr and E Div, OCQM. The revised draft of an original staff study dated 29 May and recommending establishment of a theater GR command was submitted on 5 June. The Eisenhower-Littlejohn conference concerning certain conditions of approval took place on 8 Jun 45.

General Younger realized that the Twelfth Army Group area recovery program claimed first priority. Impressed by its urgency and his inability to assemble the required field force, he arranged for a conference at Wiesbaden, Germany, between his personal emissary and representatives of the Third and Seventh Armies for the purpose of considering plans whereby the organic graves registration units of the two armies would undertake the task. He released the 1st QM Group, his only assigned unit, to the Twelfth Army Group Headquarters for the operation.¹⁵

In accordance with the program formulated at Wiesbaden, the Third Army recovered and removed all the isolated dead in Czechoslovakia for which reports of interment were then available. Younger put the number of evacuations at "some 700."¹⁶ Giving prior attention to the area of Eastern Germany marked for Soviet occupation, the Seventh Army disinterred 400 United States remains of the 600 registered isolated burials in that area. Both armies then concentrated their activities on isolated burials in the American Zone of Germany. Meanwhile, General Younger enlisted efforts of Theater Headquarters in directing the American Control Commission to negotiate an agreement with the Russian Control Commission which would permit the entrance of American recovery teams into all areas of Germany taken over by Soviet forces.

After all available theater graves registration forces, together with several types of provisional units authorized for the purpose, had been assigned to AGRC, search and recovery operations in military districts of the Twelfth Army Group area merged into the program of that command. The negotiations with the Russians, first proposed by General Younger in July, dragged on until late December, when Soviet military authorities finally authorized the entrance of three AGRC search teams into the East German provinces of Mecklenburg, Magdeburg, and Halle-Merseburg.¹⁷

Unfortunately, the reports of graves registration units that pursued search activities under operational control of district and base section commands during the post-armistice period of 1945 are so fragmentary as virtually to prevent a reconstruction of their local activities. While reports of disinterments and reinterments were submitted to Headquarters, AGRC, and tabulated by the Registration Division, the statistical summary conveys little concept of the magnitude and nature of these operations.

¹⁵ Memo Rpt. Brig Gen J. W. Younger, CG, GRSC, ET for Maj Gen Robert M. Littlejohn, CQM, 13 Jul 45, sub: Organization of the GRSC.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Rpt of Opns, 1st Fld Cmd, Oct-Dec 45, p. 13.

One exceptional situation must be noted. Delta Base Command, it appears, preserved some of the reports of search units operating within its area. During October and November 1945, Detachment "A" of the 3058th Company searched the Riviera from Aix-en-Provence to the Italian borders, recovering 111 remains, of which 62 were American. Statements accompanying six map overlays attested that "the area described hereon has been thoroughly searched, and that all isolated graves or unburied remains of United States deceased located or reported within the area shown have been exhumed or removed and reinterred in an established United States Temporary Cemetery."¹⁸

Aside from reports of exhumations and reinterments transmitted to the Registration Division, AGRC, the evidence concerning search and recovery activities other than those already indicated is vague and indirect. One example will suffice. An operations report of the Second Field Command, AGRC, for January-March 1946 lists records of the Chanor Base Command among its various sources of information in preparing special cases for field investigation. A statistical review of accomplishments in the Netherlands during January 1946 lists the recovery of 473 isolated burials as compared with 35 for February and 75 for March. This wide discrepancy is explained by a notation that the January figure included remains recovered by Chanor Base Section units prior to January 1946 "but which had not been handled in reports up to that time."¹⁹

Another aspect of search activities during the postwar months of 1945 deserves attention. This concerns field investigations as an adjunct of the casualty clearance program. It appears that these investigations were undertaken primarily to clear up unresolved cases and only incidentally to recover isolated remains. Directed by base section commanders, all investigations were performed by provisional units which were drawn from troops of these commands and which, in accordance with provisions of the theater Casualty Clearance Plan, included liaison members of the Provost Marshal's Office, AG Casualty Division, Headquarters, AGRC, and other interested services.²⁰ For a time, the apprehension of absentees as-

¹⁸ Monthly Activity Reports, Det "A," 3058th GR Company, Delta Base Command, Oct-Nov 45, Incl to Ltr, 2d Lt Charles W. Powers, Adj, Sector IV to CO, AGRC.

¹⁹ Rpt of Opns, Second Field Command, Jan-Mar 46. According to the same report, only one square mile was searched by Second Field command units in the Netherlands during January 1946.

²⁰ A report of this early form of field investigation was given at the conference of 27 December, when AGRC staff officers briefed the CofS, TSF, USFET, on organization and plans of the AGRC. Hereinafter cited as Minutes of Briefing Conference, 27 Dec 45.

sumed an importance at least equal to the verification of the reported location of some isolated burials or the discovery of the approximate location of others.

Location of the burial sites satisfied casualty clearance requirements and, as a byproduct of the endeavor, gave useful information for the subsequent planning of area search operations. Such information was reported through liaison officers to Headquarters, AGRC. Then the AG Casualty Branch, an office set up within Headquarters, AGRC, supplemented these and all other reports of disinterments and reinterments with facts relating to unsolved casualty cases. These facts were broken down in the following manner: (1) an alphabetical list of names, (2) a list of serial numbers, (3) a list of the last four digits of serial numbers for comparison with laundry and equipment marks, (4) a list of organizations to which the casualties were assigned, (5) a list of countries or localities in which the casualties occurred.²¹

In comparing the field investigations of these composite units with those accomplished in the Third and Seventh Army areas immediately after hostilities and along the Mediterranean coast of France by the 3058th GR Company, it becomes apparent that the former type of operation was quite distinct from the latter ones. While these were obviously a continuation of wartime search, as exemplified by the operation conducted in the Ardennes battle region by First and Third Army graves registration troops in cooperation with ADSEC units, the other represents an experimental effort to relate casualty resolutions to the investigation of isolated burial places. In this relationship, primary emphasis was given to the resolution of casualty cases, while the compilation of data relative to isolated burials was of secondary importance and was compiled at the staff level for future planning of search and recovery operations.

During the final quarter of 1945, co-ordination between Headquarters, AGRC, and AG Casualty Branch became increasingly effective. The Registration Division was extensively engaged in the compilation and analysis of all available burial information "for transmission to field teams in their searching operations."²² This diversified task was divided among specialized branches within the Division. The Burial Records Information Branch compared burial reports received from all sources with AG casualty cards for correctness as to name, rank, serial number, organization, and the date of death and forwarded daily to AG Casualty Branch a list of current

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Rpt of Registration Div, AGRC, Oct-Dec 45, in Rpt of Opns, AGRC, Oct-Dec 45, p. 32.

reports of burials and reburials of deceased soldiers for whom a KIA, DIE, or POW casualty report had not previously been furnished.²³

As indicated by its name, the Isolated Location Branch dealt exclusively with the location and recovery of isolated remains, receiving all reports of such burials and checking them against AG casualty cards for accuracy as to name, organization, date of death, etc. This branch also received and analyzed for planning purposes all information that might offer leads to the location of unrecorded isolated burials. The complex nature of this task may be appreciated merely by listing the varied types of information derived from different sources. These included reports of field investigating teams, Missing Air Craft Reports (MACR), International Red Cross "Death Lists," and reports on the treatment of Allied soldiers in German hospitals and prison camps, data received periodically by AGRC from French and British burial services, and the large body of captured German records. The latter category included three distinct classifications and confirmed much of the evidence offered by Red Cross reports: (1) the so-called "Buff Cards," or burial reports of some 14,000 Americans who were killed in crash landings behind enemy lines or who died in German prison hospitals; (2) the "Green Cards," or records of American war prisoners who received treatment in German hospitals; and (3) the extensive body of evidence bearing on air crash locations, as revealed in the *Dulug Luft*, a compilation which may be described as abstracts of interrogations conducted by German intelligence officers among Allied air men who passed through transit prison camps.²⁴ Collation of information from these varied sources gradually gave a comprehensive picture of the search and recovery problem. Meticulous analysis of reports and correspondence enabled the Isolated Location Branch to complete by 15 October 1945 the tabulation of verified and suspected isolated burials, and to spot these locations on 1-250,000 scale maps. These maps and related data, together with instructions embodied in Technical Operating Bulletin (TOB) No. 2, Area Searching and Evacuation of Isolated Graves, 22 August 1945,²⁵ afforded a solid basis on which plans and procedures for the recovery program could be projected. By the end of the year, 4,705 isolated remains, or 19.25 percent of an estimated total then put at 24,444 had been recovered and rein-

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

²⁴ (1) *Ibid.* (2) Interv with Miss Geneva Halterman, OCQM, 20 Dec 53. Miss Halterman served as a translator in the Repatriation Records Branch, Memorial Division, 1945-47 and translated many of the *Dulug Luft* papers, as well as German Buff and Green Cards.

²⁵ For analysis of TOB No. 2, see following section entitled Planning for Area Sweeps.

tered in United States temporary military cemeteries.²⁶ Excepting 941 recoveries accomplished by the First Field Command during November and December in the American and French Zones of Germany, this feat must be accredited to the graves registration units and composite casualty clearance teams which operated under district and base section commands.

Planning for Area Sweeps

So long as the theater graves registration forces remained under operational control of district and base sections, the Graves Registration Service Command, as established on 1 July 1945, could exert only an indirect influence on search and recovery operations. In fact, its role was limited to the staff function of exercising technical control. General Younger indeed regarded his zone commanders as agents working out of Headquarters, AGRC, and speaking for him, "rather than field agents with direct operating responsibilities."²⁷ Defining this relationship on 1 August, he advised that "the officer in your headquarters who will become charged with the activity pertaining to the concentration of isolated burials should become thoroughly familiar with the current operational procedure." He added:

Up to this time the limited personnel available to graves registration has not provided adequate liaison between this office and the field, and your officer therefore will probably find a number of things are questionable.²⁸

At this time, the concept of area search performed by units which were expressly designed for this purpose and operated under a separate field command responsible directly to the Commanding General, AGRC, was only beginning to take shape in the minds of a few headquarters planners. On 22 August, the publication of Technical Operating Bulletin No. 2, Area Searching and Evacuation of Isolated Graves, marked an important step in the formulation of a new doctrine—one which envisaged a radical reorganization of the wartime GR Company but did not clearly visualize a command system that would supersede the one still operative in base sections and military districts. Briefly, the bulletin proposed that the QM GR Company TOE 10-297 provide for several search and exhumation teams. The search units would each consist of 3 members—a leader, driver and interpreter—and would undertake searches in an assigned locality. Each exhumation unit would consist of five members—a

²⁶ Tabular Report, Isolated Location Br, Registration Div, AGRC, 31 Dec 45, sub: Accomplished Progress—Isolated Burials (since V-E Day).

²⁷ Ltr, Younger to Commanding Officers of Zones, 1 Aug 45, sub: Responsibilities of Commanding Officers of Zones pending establishment of Zones.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

medical technician, clerk-driver, and three laborers—and would exhume and identify remains reported by the search team. Evacuation of bodies would be made directly to military cemeteries in the liberated countries or, if necessary, through a relay collecting point. In an attempt to obtain pertinent information from the public, the zone headquarters would conduct a publicity campaign through the medium of posters displayed in public places, newspaper announcements, and radio broadcasts.

The supervision of operating units was not as yet clearly defined; zone commanders, presumably, would co-ordinate all search activities within their areas and provide logistical support. Arrangements for the co-ordination of field investigation and casualty resolution were still a matter of dubious speculation. TOB No. 2 stated in part:

In addition to its performance of normal graves registration regarding area searching, exhumation and evacuation, procedures incident thereto, the Theater Graves Registration Service Headquarters may be designated as the agency for other Technical Services interested in the War Department Casualty Clearance Plan. . . . Through close coordination of the interested services, under direction of a single control agency, Casualty Clearance more effectively and efficiently can be accomplished. . . .

Suitable geographical subdivisions should be made and assigned to mobile section headquarters, which will maintain messing facilities and liaison with its higher headquarters. These sections should direct searching teams assigned in suitable proportions to the area and estimated body density within that area.²⁹

In the absence of completely organized territorial headquarters establishments and assigned operating units, any action by the Commanding General, AGRC, looking to implementation of TOB No. 2 was, for reasons already indicated, necessarily restricted to upholding the instrument as a statement of technical standards which would be interpreted by his "field agents." As has already been indicated, two troop assignment orders, No. 17 of 24 August and No. 24 of 28 August, removed this impediment insofar as operations in Germany were concerned. Then, a month later, the apparent want of progress in building up the major subordinate commands took a sudden turn for the better when General Littlejohn on 1 October assumed

²⁹ TOB No. 2, Area Searching and Evacuation of Isolated Graves, 22 Aug 45. The passage relating to possible designation of Hq AGRC, as the co-ordinating agency of field search would indicate that the arrangement finally consummated on 6 Nov 45 was a matter under consideration as early as August.

direct command of the AGRC in addition to his duties as Chief Quartermaster.³⁰

Upon activation of First Field Headquarters at Fulda on 1 October, Headquarters, AGRC, reassigned to the new command 1 QM Group, 2 QM Battalions and 8 of the 15 available GR Companies, together with several platoon and section detachments from the remaining 7 companies.³¹ The residue of units acquired in August offered only a meager reserve for the buildup of other field and sector commands then included in the program of organizational expansion.

After review of the planning data furnished by Younger, Headquarters, AGRC, published two operational orders on 14 October. Curiously, Operational Order No. 1 was addressed to the Commanding Officer, Field Headquarters, Brussels, an organization which had not as yet been formally established. Operational Order No. 2 went to Fulda.

It is significant to note in connection with the overall planning program for return of the war dead that issuance of these two operational orders preceded by only a single day the completion of a document entitled "Plans for the Organization, Administration, and Operation, AGRC, TSFET," which was informally submitted to The Quartermaster General on 1 November. Annex R outlined plans for area search, recovery, and evacuation of isolated remains, presenting in its analysis of the problem the essentials set forth in TOB No. 2, 22 August 1945, and the two operational orders of 14 October.

War Department Criticism of Casualty Clearance Program

During the months devoted to formulation of operational plans and integration of field units into AGRC major subordinate commands, the War Department manifested dissatisfaction with progress of the casualty clearance program in the various theaters. The President of the War Department Dependency Board noted in particular that—

There are indications of a tendency for field execution of plans to become a long drawn methodical staff operation, apparently without the command interest essential to utilizing troops and all available means for expeditious search and investigations. There is in some commands a lack of appreciation of the necessity for aggressive action to clear up missing cases so far as practicable. Several corrective indorsements

³⁰ GO No. 259, Hq TSFET, 22 Sep 45. See above Ch. V, for a more detailed account of this important transformation in the organization and buildup of the AGRC major subordinate commands.

³¹ The list of assigned units appears in GO No. 1, Hq First Field Command, 1 Oct 45.

on communications evidencing unsatisfactory conditions have been sent and more are contemplated, particularly as theater plans and progress reports are received.³²

Pursuant to recommendations of the Dependency Board, a command letter signed by the Secretary of War reminded all theater commanders that the three casualty clearance plans contemplated the utilization of all means available for "search and investigations, including ground and air forces" and that "progress in the various theaters and extent of utilization of means have not been uniform." It was therefore emphasized that—

In order that progress in resolving casualties in general, and missing cases in particular, may continue and may be accelerated wherever practicable *the Secretary of War desires that all theater commanders, notwithstanding projected discontinuances or combining of commands give the casualty clearance project their personal attention and support, particularly in the matter of the expeditious securing and transmitting of all information to the War Department.* It is desired that the target date for the resolving of all cases be set for 1 May 1946.³³

The extent to which pressure exerted through the Secretary of War may have speeded preparations for field investigations in Europe is a matter of conjecture. The problem was by no means restricted to the transmission of readily available information. Much of the data essential to casualty determinations could be furnished only by extensive field investigation, preparation for which required elaborate planning, careful organization, and comprehensive training. Any criticism of the European Theater might seem to carry the implication that either tactical and service unit commanders had not vigorously examined the Missing and Missing in Action reports relating to their units, or that the performance of the related function of field investigation by theater graves registration commands had not met the sanguine expectations of Washington. Yet neither supposition appears entirely tenable.

Armies in the throes of rapid demobilization can scarcely undertake and aggressively pursue any program requiring the careful co-ordination of staff sections and subordinate units; however well planned, the execution of such a program must inevitably suffer the consequences of changing personnel in every echelon of command. While the practical difficulties of transforming the theater Graves Registration Service into a centralized service command may not have impressed the War Department Dependency Board as formid-

³² Memo, Maj Gen Jay L. Benedict, Pres, WDDDB for ACofS, G-1, 30 Oct 45, sub: Casualty Clearance Co-ordination, File AG 704 (30 Oct 45).

³³ *Ibid.*

able or even necessary in furthering an expeditious prosecution of the casualty clearance program, it is difficult to see just how field investigations could have been accomplished without the services of an organization especially devised for that purpose. Employment of untrained men during 1945 in greater numbers than were subsequently trained by the three field commands would not only have caused untold confusion but would also have contributed to a considerable increase in the number of unidentified dead. Certainly the progressive steps taken by Headquarters, USFET to bring newly formed graves registration elements into an effective working relationship with casualty clearance activities show that the theater was keenly aware of the unsatisfactory situation. Some 3 weeks before the Secretary's directive of 8 November 1945, the theater plan for area search had taken definite shape in Operational Orders Nos. 1 and 2, 14 October 1945. Even more significant was the introductory paragraph of Annex R, Plans for the Operation and Organization of AGRC, ETA, 15 October 1945. It declared that—

In resolving the undetermined casualty status of military personnel in connection with the European Casualty Clearance Plan, it is considered, as a basic premise, that all otherwise undetermined cases are those of potential death. Therefore, it becomes an accepted responsibility of the American Graves Registration Command to undertake the location, not only of recorded or reported burials of United States military deceased, but the searching out of all probable locations of graves for those in an unsolved casualty status who, under the basic premise, will be presumed to have become deceased.

Three days before issuance of the Secretary's directive, the Commanding General, AGRC, was, as already related, charged with the responsibility of co-ordinating all field investigations required by the casualty clearance program. Operating units of the First Field Command were now disposed to initiate the first sweep in accordance with Operational Order No. 2, 14 November 1945. Owing to later activation dates and the lapse of nearly 2 months between approval of the AGRC troop basis and issuance on 7 and 11 January 1946 of orders³⁴ allotting to all major subordinate commands enough organic and provisional TO units to complete their authorized strength, the Second and Third Field Commands were compelled to spend another month in filling up paper organizations with replacements.

³⁴ (1) GO No. 4, Hq AGRC, 7 Jan 46. Liquidation Troop Basis—American Graves Registration Command. (2) GO No. 5, Hq AGRC, 11 Jan 46. Occupational Troop Basis—American Graves Registration Command.

If the Dependency Board President intended to imply that the resolution of all complications attending determination and final approval of the AGRC troop basis, to say nothing of subsequent procedures in organizing the provisional units assigned to major subordinate commands, was indicative of "a tendency for field execution of plans to become a long drawn staff operation, apparently without command interest essential to utilizing troops and all available means for expeditious search and investigations," he did not specify such a charge. Nor is the charge spelled out in the Secretary's directive. Indeed, his rebuke involves self-criticism to the extent to which he shared responsibility with Headquarters, TSFET for the 6 months' delay in approving a troop basis for AGRC.

Area Sweeps, November-December 1945

In recounting events of the initial sweep in Germany, it should be noted that during October and November the First Field Command encountered many of the problems of organization and training that beset its sister commands at the turn of the year in southern France and the Low Countries. Although originally containing many of the organic units acquired by AGRC late in August, First Field Command immediately felt the effects of redeployment, losing its most experienced men while trying to improve unit efficiency. Administrative considerations prohibited the establishment of courses in basic aspects of graves registration at replacement centers and staging areas, and delays in the determination of a troop basis and consequent postponement of the assignment and organization of provisional units prevented the development of unit training. Thus, while AGRC training doctrine was limited in scope and looked mainly to the production of instructors, First Field Command was saddled with a training program that under existing conditions could give only a rough and ready solution.³⁵

This unfavorable situation underwent some improvement when First Field Command, in accordance with instructions, dispatched a select group of officers and men to attend a comprehensive course offered during November by the Headquarters School at St. Germain.³⁶ Laboratory work related to disinterments and reinterments was given at St. Avold Cemetery. The War Crimes Commission presented a highly specialized course designed to train identification

³⁵ An account of AGRC training doctrine is given in a summary of the Briefing Conference between AGRC Staff Officers and CofS, TSFET, 22 Dec 45. See below, Plans for Area Sweeps, 1946.

³⁶ Rpt of Opns, 1st Fld Cmd, Oct-Dec 45, p. 14.

technicians in detecting evidence of criminal violence left on skeletal parts. All remains bearing such marks were to be segregated for minute examination by experts of the Commission.

Upon return to their units, qualified graduates conducted classes in field investigation, disinterments, construction of tooth charts and processing of graves registration forms. The arrival of 600 filler replacements during December greatly intensified the difficulties of a problem already aggravated by the release of experienced men in many units as rapidly as trained substitutes could be supplied. Although this problem was never completely solved, the First Field Command training program managed to maintain a precarious sort of balance by obtaining enough instructors to pursue on-the-job training as a continuous process.³⁷

The task of improvising a training program was complicated by the necessity of disengaging a part of its strength from other commitments. With an operating force of six GR Companies, the 1st Group was primarily occupied with the evacuation of temporary military cemeteries until 20 October, when the residue of 980 American remains were exhumed from Bensheim and Reutte and reinterred at two cemeteries in the liberated countries—Margraten in the Netherlands and St. Avold in France.³⁸ Several 1st Group detachments thereafter were engaged in completing the rehabilitation of German cemetery sites pending transfer of the properties to their rightful owners. Other detachments operated collecting points for current deceased in the American Zone of Germany. In November, however, some units became available for the search mission.

Meanwhile, the assignment of additional GR Companies and detachments necessitated an allotment of two more QM Groups—the 534th and 536th. Posted at Buchenbuhl, the 534th did not become operational during 1945. The 536th established its command post at Kaiserslautern in November, with the northern part of the French Zone as its area of responsibility. The 1st Group deployed several units for sweeping operations in a corridor extending 100 miles westward from the boundary of Russian-occupied Germany and running northward through the British Zone to the North Sea and the Danish border. Late in November, all 1st Group elements, less those assigned to collecting points for current deceased, stood committed to area search.³⁹

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 10-11.

Investigative Operations

The distribution of bilingual posters during mid-November to subordinate units for display on public bulletin boards signaled the beginning of area sweeps in the American and French Zones. Like flying patrols that screen the advance of a field army, jeep-riding propaganda teams, comprised of an officer in charge, an interpreter and a driver, sped northward, hastened to cities, towns, and villages in order to put up the posters which explained the methods of search and urged the inhabitants of each community to report any information they might have concerning burial places of American dead.⁴⁰

Newspaper announcements and radio broadcasts supplemented the display of posters in public places. *The Mittel Rhein Courier*, a periodical with a circulation of 300,000 in the French Zone, published three times weekly a reprint of the poster exhibited in that locality. Radio broadcasts transmitted by local German stations were particularly effective in rural communities and upland districts. An operations officer at 356th Group Headquarters reported "It was found that in many small communities all important data had been assembled and compiled in one central place upon arrival of the investigating teams."⁴¹

However important the role of propaganda teams in enlisting the co-operation of local officials and people of the countryside, it was felt at First Field Headquarters that "the most critical phase of the graves registration mission is that of making a proper and accurate investigation."⁴² This responsibility fell to the Investigating Team, a unit similar in composition to the Propaganda Team—a leader, generally an officer, an interpreter, and a driver. Upon arrival at his destination, the leader consulted influential members of the community, including the burgomaster, police officer, parish priest, innkeeper, the local physician, the cemetery attendant, and other persons who were reported to know of some unrecorded burial place in the neighborhood. An inspection of communal records was then undertaken, beginning with those of the burgomaster and extending to hospital and cemetery files.

All such inquiries were prompted and, to a considerable extent, guided by digests of documented cases prepared at Headquarters, AGRC, and transmitted to appropriate investigating teams. As has been indicated, these digests were derived from several basic sources and, according to First Field Command reports, included completed Casualty Clearance Plan forms, Missing Air Craft Re-

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 12.

ports, excerpts from reports of Civilian Censorship Branch, War Crimes Commission, German buff and green cards, and the *Dulag Luft*.⁴³

While the primary aim of investigation in any given place was to discover the ground location of burial places indicated in documented cases or to demonstrate by exhaustive search that certain sites could never be found, team leaders understood that their mission was not restricted to documented cases and that their work at any one place would be incomplete until they had thoroughly inquired into every rumor and bit of gossip concerning the disposition of American remains for which no documentary evidence existed. In accordance with basic principles prescribed in TOB No. 2, and the accepted doctrine that search in any given locality should be so conducted as to obviate the necessity for further exploration, the leaders were cautioned that meticulous care in the investigation of all cases, particularly those which appeared to be of a routine nature, would contribute materially to the confirmation or the establishment of positive identifications.

Upon completion of their work in any community, team leaders prepared reports (Form AGRC No. 18) on discovered grave sites, embodying statements relating known circumstances of death and listing all witnesses who had contributed pertinent information. These reports were subsequently used in exhumation and evacuation of the remains to temporary military cemeteries in the liberated countries. The team leaders also reported on unfound burial places, setting forth in detail the reasons that prevented discovery. The negative reports were filed for future reference, having in mind the possibility of reopening some cases if additional information should come to light.⁴⁴

Conditions in the French Zone produced a special type of search procedure. Differing radically from those associated with documented cases, this procedure recalled methods employed in the recovery of remains after World War I, when deployed lines, with individuals holding stated intervals, literally swept the areas in which bodies were expected to be found.⁴⁵ The terrain surrounding strongly fortified points along the Siegfried line presented some of the aspects of the World War I situation. But slow progress in the clearance of land mines at these strong points and throughout the Huertgen Forest, prevented any large-scale repetition of 1918-19

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

⁴⁴ (1) TOB No. 2, Area Searching and Evacuation of Isolated Graves, 22 Aug 45, with Changes. (2) Operational Order No. 2, 14 Oct 45. (3) Rpt of Opns, 1st Fld Cmd, Oct-Dec 45, pp. 12-13.

⁴⁵ History of the American Graves Registration Service, QMC, in Europe (3 Vols., transcript; an official history prepared by the AGRS Division, OQMG) I, 21-22.

sweeping tactics. The 536th Group Headquarters sought a quick solution by using an L-5 Reconnaissance plane to spot bodies lying in the open. After the experiment had failed, Group Headquarters became resigned to awaiting the completion of demining operations by the French. But the employment of local labor scarcely capable of efficient performance, together with insufficient and defective equipment, seemed to preclude the clearance of all mine-infested areas for several years.⁴⁶

Identification of Recovered Remains

Closely co-ordinated with the investigative activity, the identification and evacuation phase of area search was conducted by a unit known as the Disinterring Team. It consisted of an investigator, an assistant who acted as truck-driver, and a force of local laborers. Arriving in a community with the information gathered by its predecessors, this unit proceeded directly to the grave site, exhumed the remains and, whenever possible, established identity on the spot. In such circumstances, positive identification was based on one or a combination of the following clues: (1) an identification tag worn around the neck; (2) an identification tag found elsewhere on or near the person; (3) a paybook found in the clothing; (4) an Emergency Medical Tag signed by a medical officer fastened to the body; (5) an identification bracelet worn around the wrist.⁴⁷

Upon completion of exhumations, the disinterring team removed the bodies to a mobile collecting point, where resources somewhat more elaborate than those employed at graveside were available for checking identifications already made and attacking the more difficult ones. The Identification Team contained one or more identification analysts who operated under the direction of the medical officer attached to Battalion headquarters, plus a group of technical assistants and a driver. The identification analyst was described as "a combination of detective, gross anatomist, and X-ray and dental technician." He and his assistants undertook a complete inspection of all unidentified remains evacuated by the disinterring team. The search for clues involved a thorough anatomical examination in which all physical "deviations from the normal" (fractures, amputations, etc.) were noted. Fleishy parts were then explored with a view to detecting foreign bodies, such as identification tags and pieces of jewelry embedded in the tissues. Meanwhile, all clothing taken from the remains was subjected to special cleaning processes designed to bring out laundry marks and other possible indications

⁴⁶ Rpt of Opns, 1st Fld Cmd, Oct-Dec 45, p. 12.

⁴⁷ See below, summary of conference report to CofS, TSF, 22 Dec 45.

of the wearer's identity. Personal effects were similarly examined for revealing clues. In all cases the identification analyst constructed tooth charts and, if the flesh permitted, made fingerprints.

While these investigations were in progress, a clerical force at the collecting point assembled all papers relating to the disinterred remains. The officer in charge then inspected final preparations for shipment by motor convoy to one of the two military cemeteries—Margraten or St. Avold—where they were reinterred pending final disposition.

Area Sweeps—First Field Command

With all elements of the 536th Group engaged in the French Zone during November and those of the 1st Group, less a few detachments assigned to removal of the current dead, deployed on a hundred-mile front in the American Zone by mid-December, the First Field Command was heavily committed to area sweeping by the end of the year. Achievements of the command are shown in a statistical summary dated 14 December 1945. A total of 12,589 square miles had been searched. The number of isolated graves and unburied bodies investigated was put at 7,651. Of this total, 971 were identified as American, the remainder being Allied or enemy dead. In all, 477 United States remains were reinterred in military cemeteries. Approximately half those evacuated had been identified either at graveside or at collecting points. There were 252 positive identifications and 225 unknown remains.⁴⁸ By the end of December, the 1st Group had covered about two-thirds of the distance from its original line of deployment to the southern boundary of the British Zone. Progress of the 536th Group in the French Zone was retarded by the difficulties of search in mined areas, with the consequent scattering of effort in more accessible localities.

Several aspects of search operations in occupied Germany invite attention. Owing to the lapse of time between death and discovery of isolated burial sites, or unburied remains, the proportion of positive identifications cannot justly be compared with the much higher ratio attained in battlefield evacuation and burial during hostilities, when some 98 percent of recovered remains were identified. While the 1945 sweep of Germany stands without precedent in graves registration history, a somewhat comparable situation may be seen in certain phases of the reburial program after the American Civil War. In the removal of remains to national cemeteries from temporary battlefield burial grounds and isolated graves along the lines of march, every effort was made to establish positive identifications.

⁴⁸ Rpt of Opns, 1st Fld Cmd, Oct-Dec 45, p. 14.

The final achievement, however, fell far below that of the 1945 sweep. Only 26 percent of all recovered remains from the areas embraced by the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House were identified.⁴⁹

The extent to which novel methods of organization, staff supervision, and operating procedures stood the test in the field seems equally noteworthy. Publicity techniques had passed through the experimental stage and, although new devices were subsequently introduced, the basic procedures were known to be sound and effective. While investigative processes left much room for improvement, this phase of the program was of necessity experimental from the outset. Aside from a few common-sense instructions written into operating bulletins, there was no tested doctrine carefully expounding its tenets in set procedures. Exhumation, identification, and evacuation of remains followed wartime practices.

Logistical Support of Field Operations

The pioneering achievements of the First Field Command in area search were paralleled in the logistical field by its successful solution of many complicated problems of procurement, distribution, and transportation. The logistical organization developed during the latter months of 1945 in Germany furnished a pattern for the Second and Third Field Commands. Though this organization became increasingly difficult to supply as the supply facilities of the base sections withered away, it retained its general features until AGRC became a self-contained organization. The establishment of the logistical organization is particularly noteworthy because there was no ready-made procedure to apply in a situation complicated by the deployment of numerous small units over a greatly extended front and by the progressive removal of numerous depots containing all classes of supply.

After various trials at the beginning of operations in southern Germany, First Field Command Headquarters set up a supply section which was described as "roughly comparable to that of the Infantry Regiment."⁵⁰ Variations from normal supply methods were caused "mainly by wide geographical separation of subordinate units from Field Command Headquarters [and] by the requirements of housing units within the zones of the allies." All classes of supplies for sub-

⁴⁹ Rpt, Lt Col James M. Moore to Bvt Maj Gen M. C. Meigs, QMG, U. S. Army, 3 Jul 1865, sub: Name of Officers and Men Found on the Battlefields of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House. The complete list of names is published in Roll of Honor, 1865-66, Report No. 2 (Washington, GPO, 1886).

⁵⁰ Rpt of Opns, 1st Fld Cmd, Oct-Nov 45, p. 16.

ordinate units consequently had to be furnished "without regard to distances involved."⁵¹

Operating headquarters in general drew all supplies, less technical items, for their subordinate units from the communities to which they were attached for administrative purposes. For instance, an element of the 536th Group stationed at Cochem on the Moselle River in the French Zone drew from the Giessen Community within the American Zone. Similar arrangements applied to other elements of the 536th Group and, except for special arrangements relative to petrol, oil, and lubricants (POL), were extended to operational areas of the 1st Group in the British Zone during 1946. Operating headquarters supplied all teams in the Soviet Zone through the Berlin District Quartermaster. Technical items were originally provided through First Field Command Headquarters but, after August 1946, they were provided through the Central Identification Point at Strasbourg, France.⁵²

Difficulties accompanying the distribution of rations are described in the following summary:

Regardless of time and/or space involved, it was deemed necessary part of the time to establish a First Field Command Central Ration Breakdown Point. In some cases the units were caused to come to the DP and receive delivery and other times it was found most applicable to break the rations down and actually deliver them to the using unit from the Central Breakdown Point. Where it was deemed most applicable, a combination of the two above methods was used.⁵³

POL supply methods varied considerably in the three western Allied occupation zones. With the allotment of a 750-gallon tanker to each group, no particular difficulty other than vehicle maintenance was encountered in the American Zone. But in anticipation of search operations in the British Zone, POL supply problems became the subject of joint planning by the Chief Quartermaster, USFET, a British Army of the Rhine (BOAR) representative and the Commanding Officer, First Field Command. The British agreed to provide the Americans with petroleum products at BOAR distributing points most convenient to the command posts of First Field Command units operating in the British Zone. Reimbursement for these products was to be determined at the USFET-BOAR level. Formulated in 1945, this arrangement was carried out with uniform success during the following year.⁵⁴

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

The scheme devised for POL supply in the British Zone underwent considerable modification when applied to the support of the 536th Group units operating in the French Zone. The geographical conformation of this area resembled an elongated hourglass, the upper half adjoining the British and the lower half adjoining the American Zone. Considerations of distance therefore suggested the economy of supplying 536th Group units either from the nearest American distribution point or from British points that had received POL bulk allowances for use of the First Field Command and were conveniently located with respect to the French Zone. Special arrangements existed with the French Army for emergency POL supply and vehicle repair.⁵⁵

The whole supply problem was gravely complicated by the inadequacies of motor transportation. With the release of thousands of trucks that had plied the supply lines during the latter months of hostilities, it seems inexplicable at first glance that there should have been any trouble in meeting the modest needs of AGRC. Yet the First Field Command's vehicle allowance was only half filled by the transfer of excess vehicles and motor equipment from the Third and Seventh Armies. These armies, to be sure, naturally welcomed the opportunity of getting rid of defective trucks, while taking every precaution to retain the best. In such transactions there developed a conspicuous difference of interpretation of the term "surplus" between those who gave and those who received supplies. The inroads of demobilization on trained men, notably experienced auto mechanics, made it virtually impossible to form permanent maintenance sections and further complicated the transportation problem. This gloomy picture is completed with the following touch:

There were very few ordnance parts available and local ordnance support was either very bad or not available at all, mainly due to continual movement of field units. All transportation activities were accomplished under untold difficulties.⁵⁶

The co-operative spirit that contributed to a satisfactory solution of POL supply smoothed many difficulties that arose in negotiating for the use of housing, office and storage space in the British and French Zones. A BOAR directive instructed that American search units be housed on a temporary basis. The headquarters of each British corps authorized the First Field Command liaison officer to enter into negotiations with lower echelons for living and administrative quarters. The French liaison officer at First Field Command

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Headquarters made all necessary arrangements for the use of such facilities in the French Zone. Estimates of space requirements excluded hospital facilities. As a general rule a medical officer was attached to each battalion headquarters. Whenever hospitalization became necessary, the patient was evacuated to the nearest United States Army hospital. A standing arrangement with BOAR permitted emergency treatment at a Royal Army hospital in the British Zone.⁵⁷

The communications net which centered at Fulda and reached out to widely dispersed field headquarters bore little resemblance to the signal services of large tactical formations. Most of these services had been dismantled with demobilization of the combat forces. The German commercial telephone system was therefore taken over for military purposes and became the principal means of communication between elements of the First Field Command. Special cables connected unit command posts with telephone switchboards only when the intervening distance justified this expedient. The deteriorated condition of instruments, switchboards, and cables, together with language difficulties, often imposed serious delays in making calls. These deficiencies were partly overcome by installing a teletype machine at First Field Headquarters and communicating with such subordinate command posts as happened to be located near an operational teletype in the field.⁵⁸

Plans for Area Sweeps, 1946

As the First Field Command was rounding off its 12,000 square-mile sweep in southern Germany, Headquarters, AGRC, completed detailed plans for search operations in all areas assigned to the three field commands. A summary of these developments, together with a description of the organization and procedures employed in the German sweep during November and December, were presented to the Chief of Staff, TSFET, by a group of AGRC officers at a formal conference on 27 December. The conference discussion included both a summary report on achievements of the command during 1945 and a forecast of operations for the ensuing year. The magnitude of the task was indicated in an estimate of the total number of bodies to be sought. This total was derived from three categories of casualty figures. The first group included the reported number of unresolved casualty cases (11,500), most of which were in the Missing and Missing in Action classifications. Then there was a considerable number of unrecovered Killed in Action. Reliably re-

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

ported as such and, therefore, involving no problem of change in casualty status, this category was primarily a concern of the graves registration command. The third group consisted of isolated remains buried in registered graves. In quantitative terms, the organization set up for search and recovery had as its ultimate objective the quest for approximately 25,000 bodies, some lying in inaccessible places, some in recorded graves, others in burial places that might be revealed by patient and ingenious inquiry, and still others—the casualties of amphibious assaults and victims of plane crashes—that were often beyond any reasonable expectation of recovery.

Location of bodies was merely a first step toward ultimate casualty clearance and final disposition of remains. The number of resolutions in unsolved casualty cases would depend upon the measure of success that attended the identification of recovered remains. Yet recovery and positive identification of all such remains would not automatically cancel out the total list of unresolved cases. For reasons already stated, recovery of the remains of all Missing, Missing in Action, and Killed in Action was beyond the bounds of practical possibility. Then there were some 4,000 unknown dead in temporary military cemeteries. Except by positive identifications, there was no way of associating the 11,500 unresolved casualty cases with the 4,000 remains already recovered but still unknown. While plans called for aggressive action toward the identification of all previously recovered unknowns, employing the techniques that 4 years of practical experience on the battlefields of World War II suggested, it was estimated that the number of unknown and unrecovered dead would range from 15,000 to 16,000.⁵⁹

The Chief of Staff was apprised that operational orders, which had been prepared and issued by the Commanding General, AGRC, to the three field commands, outlined a "sweeping program" with three main objectives: (1) the location, identification, and reburial of all United States deceased; (2) location and return to military control of living United States soldiers still listed as casualties; and (3) collection of information to clarify unresolved cases. The search, it was emphasized, would be so systematic and thorough as to make unnecessary the repetition of a search operation.

The First Field Command was to continue sweeps in its area, proceeding into the British Zone during February and then into Denmark. The Russian-occupied areas of Germany and Poland were to be entered as soon as satisfactory arrangements could be concluded with the Soviet Government. While Headquarters, AGRC, hoped to

⁵⁹ Minutes of Briefing Conference, 27 Dec 45, App. No. 156, Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC, Oct-Dec 45.

put 16 search teams and 8 disinterring teams at the disposal of First Field Command for operations in Russian-occupied areas, only 3 search teams, it was explained, "were presently available."⁶⁰

The Second Field Command was to continue the search activities already initiated by base section commands in the Low Countries and northwestern France. Its forces would enter the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg during January 1946 and, after searching these countries, would sweep northern France toward an east-west line drawn from the Swiss border to the mouth of the Loire.

The Third Field Command would sweep the path of advance of the Seventh United States Army, proceeding up the Rhone Valley during January and February of 1946, then continue eastward across the Rhine into southern Germany and Austria. Meanwhile, detachments were to search southwestern France between the Pyrenees and the boundary between the Second and Third Field Command areas.

Operating forces of each Field Command, the Chief of Staff was informed, were to comprise four specialized types of units—publicity teams, investigation or search teams, disinterring teams and identification teams. The detailed description of these units fits those of the teams which had conducted the sweep in Germany during the last two months of 1945, and apparently were based on first-hand knowledge of the organization and operating methods of these teams.

In the whole complicated process of creating an organization composed of special service units, each requiring the exercise of highly specialized skills, the development of an effective training program presented an all but insoluble problem. As already indicated in the discussion of First Field training problems, a comprehensive schedule of instruction for units destined to participate in large-scale area sweeping was found to be impracticable. For some time after the graves registration command was authorized, the number of units available for training courses was negligible. Moreover, as previously stated, the rapid turnover of personnel during late 1945 in units earmarked for assignment to the First Field Command, or actually transferred to it, deprived any training program of immediate, to say nothing, of long-range benefits. After completing in the form of technical operating bulletins and codification of all existing graves registration procedures, the Training Division, AGRC, formulated a 14-day course of instruction for specially selected candidates who would in turn conduct on-the-job training in the field commands. In reality, this program was designed to supply replacements for a staff of instructors who, at best, would encounter many unforeseen

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

difficulties in meeting the demands of a rapidly expanding field operation.⁶¹

However brief, any description of the area sweep concept would be incomplete without mention of the contributions of Headquarters, Air Forces, to the collection and interpretation of burial data pertaining to their arm. During the formative period following announcement of the theater Casualty Clearance Plan, Air Forces Headquarters had undertaken a compilation of all air casualties. While data contained in Missing Air Craft Reports (MACR) constituted a large part of this compilation, the reported facts of such crashes furnished only a basis of information required in a systematic search for locating isolated sites of fallen airmen. Aside from identifying the plane and its crew members, the MACRs usually indicated only an area within which the crash may have occurred. In some instances, map study of the terrain established the improbability of successful search. In other instances, greater accessibility to the indicated areas offered sufficient promise to justify organized efforts to locate crash sites. In any event, data supplemental to that contained in the MACRs would help materially in search activities. To gather such data, a Missing Aircraft Research Investigation Office (MARIO) was established at Headquarters, AGRC. It worked on the assumption that airmen could best furnish any needed additional information. Their greater ability to interpret reports of air operations and their greater technical knowledge of the often differing items of equipment carried by bombers and fighters were considered indispensable in search for isolated remains of airmen. Fifteen MARIO search teams, composed exclusively of Air Forces troops, were accordingly established to handle the more difficult crash cases. Early in January 1946, Headquarters, AGRC, assigned ten of these teams to the First Field Command, which retained one unit at Field Headquarters and allocated three units to each of the Groups.⁶²

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² (1) *Ibid.* (2) Rpt of Opns, 1st Fld Cmd, Jan-Mar 46.

CHAPTER VII

SEARCH OPERATIONS IN THE LIBERATED COUNTRIES

The search program of 1946 contemplated sweeps over a vast area marked by the places where United States air, ground, and naval forces had left their dead. The total operational area embraced two extensive geographical regions. One extended over the ephemeral Nazi empire, including many nations east and south of Germany and north of the Baltic Sea—Norway, Denmark, Poland, Western Russia, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Hungary. Neutral Sweden was added because of two score American fliers who had fallen within its borders. An estimate of 1 January 1946 put the number of isolated dead in the eastern region at 16,666.¹ Less extensive in area and containing only 3,373 isolated remains, or about one-fifth of the number in the east, the western region was composed in part of the United Kingdom and the four "liberated countries"—France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Neutral Switzerland, Spain, and Portugal were added for reasons similar to those that suggested the assignment of Sweden to the eastern region.

A wide discrepancy between the ratio of isolated remains to total war fatalities sustained in the west, as compared to the ratio applying in the east, is readily explained by the fact that advancement of the military frontier during 1944 made the latter region accessible to theater Graves Registration Service units for recovering the dead of both air and ground combat during and immediately after hostilities. Then the high efficiency with which battlefield evacuations and burials were maintained beyond the Rhine tended to restrict isolated remains to fatalities of the far-ranging air war over Germany and her satellites. One highly important exception should be noted: many unrecovered bodies lay in areas thickly sown with land mines along the deep zone of defensive works that covered the western frontier of Germany. Aside from this exceptional case, the

¹ (1) Tabular Report, Isolated Location Br, Registration Div, AGRC, 1 Jan 46, sub: Accomplished Progress—Isolated Burials (Since V-E Day). (2) Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Rumania and Hungary were originally assigned to the Mediterranean Theater GRS Command, an arrangement suggested by the consideration that the air bombardment of these countries had been carried out by the Fiftieth Air Force from bases in Italy. Logistical considerations subsequently dictated the transfer of Roumania and Hungary to AGRC, ETA.

remains of missing airmen in the east were, in contrast to concentrations of unrecovered remains in relatively restricted areas within the western region, scattered over the vast extent of territory traversed by long-range bombardment planes.

These considerations suggest that search and recovery in the west offers a single theme and that activities of the Second and Third Field Commands should be related from the commencement of operations in January 1946 to the end of August, when these two organizations ceased to exist and newly created zone commands continued the search activity on an individual case basis. Then, having accounted for area sweeping in the liberated and contiguous neutral countries and the subsequent operations under the zone commands, it is proposed to return to the First Field Command and trace in a succeeding chapter the course of its sweeps through Western Germany and the occupied countries to 1 January 1947, after which this command, although retaining its original designation and organizational identity, continued the search mission well into 1949 on a basis of individual case search.

Area Sweeps, Second Field Command

Organization of the Command

Prior to January 1946 the Second Field Command existed in name only. Two depleted QM Groups, the 531st and 551st, comprised a headquarters establishment that had functioned since 1 November at Brussels in the limited capacity of a planning body.² Positive steps toward organization of the command for purposes of assuming operational responsibility were necessarily delayed until the last week of December, when an allotment of 50 officers and 500 enlisted replacements provided approximately one-half of the proposed troop strength (1,143) of the command.³

Publication of Operational Order No. 2, Headquarters, AGRC, 1 January 1946, formally announced the establishment of the command, Col. Henry W. Bobrink commanding. Then the two General Orders Nos. 4 and 5 of 7 and 11 January respectively, listed eight types of provisional units, including one GR Company (the 6893d), which were to be organized by the command. GO No. 4

² (1) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC, Jan-Mar 46, p. 13. (2) The authorized strength of a Hq/Hq Det, QM Group, as established by T/O 7E10-22, 4 Jan 45, was 35 officers and enlisted men. Reported military strength of Second Field Command as of 31 Dec 45 was 24 officers and no enlisted men. Hist, AGRC V (Rev), p. 289.

³ (1) GO No. 4, Hq AGRC, 7 Jan 46, Liquidation Troop Basis—American Graves Registration Command. (2) GO No. 5, Hq AGRC, 11 Jan 46, Occupational Troop Basis—American Graves Registration Service Command. According to GO No. 4, the LTB was 798. GO No. 5 set the OTB at 345.

included among the Liquidation Troop Basis (LTB) units three organic GR companies—the 603d, 605th and 3059th—which are described as “having been previously assigned thereto.”⁴ The Occupational Troop Basis (OTB) units as listed in GO No. 5, included four provisional QM Battalions. The 531st and 551st QM Groups are mentioned as “having been previously assigned thereto.” During the process of organization, these two units provided personnel for the headquarters establishments of major subordinate commands to which the four QM battalions and four GR companies, along with other provisional units listed in both orders were to be apportioned by reassignment.

During January 1946, Colonel Bobrink set up a training program based, according to report, “on the latest information extracted from Technical Operating Bulletins . . . and the experience of three officers returned from St. Germain.” Meanwhile, the 551st Group, less personnel⁵ and equipment, was transferred to Nijmegen, the Netherlands, where it absorbed the 544th QM Battalion, an organization which had previously operated in that country under Chanor Base Command. The reconstituted unit then established headquarters of an element that took the designation of 551st Group and which was to operate as a major subordinate command under Second Field Headquarters in Holland and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. The personnel left at Brussels furnished a nucleus for the reorganization of headquarters of the field command.⁶

While preparations were under way for organizing the group command at Nijmegen, the 531st Group, with two organic GR Companies—the 605th and 3059th—together with 500 newly arrived replacements, moved from Brussels to Namur, Belgium, where it was activated under GO No. 1, Second Field Headquarters, as a major subordinate command, with Belgium as its area of responsibility and Col. James G. Gee as commanding officer.

During January, Colonel Gee pushed his replacements through a 2 weeks' training course which included topics described as “disin-terments, identification, history and psychology of natives, etc.” By the first week of February, he had completed the organization and training of a sufficient number of search teams to permit the commencement of field operations in his assigned area. The Group

⁴ The date of assignment is not stated. Since the reported military strength of Second Field Command as of 31 Dec 45 was 24 officers and no enlisted men, it would appear that these three units, if assigned prior to 31 December, must have been transferred less personnel and equipment and subsequently organized by the command. It is possible that they might have been assigned between 31 Dec 45 and 7 Jan 46.

⁵ Rpt of Opns, 2d Fld Cmd, Jan-Mar 46, p. 1.

⁶ (1) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC, Jan-Mar 46, p. 16. (2) Rpt of Opns, 551st Gp, Jan-Mar 46, p. 1.

mustered 45 officers, 591 enlisted men and 44 indigenous civilians.⁷

Similar preparations at Nijmegen enabled the 551st Group to initiate sweeps on 11 February in the Netherlands and Luxembourg. With approximately one-fourth of the command committed to the Grand Duchy, the total force counted 32 officers, 427 enlisted men, 2 War Department civilians, 68 "indigenous" civilians and 29 POW. Following redeployment of Colonel Bobrink to the Zone of Interior on 27 January, Col. George S. Wear assumed command at Second Field Headquarters.⁸

Operations in the Low Countries

Procedures in the field generally followed those prescribed in AGRC Operational Orders 1 and 2 of 14 October 1945 and tested by the First Field Command in the German sweeps of November-December 1945. Publicity teams distributed posters in the languages appropriate to the area of operations—Dutch in the Netherlands, French and Flemish in Belgium. Radio broadcasts, newspaper notes, together with letters addressed to burgomasters—a device to be used later with considerable success in Germany—accompanied the display of posters. In contrast to the experience in Germany, these measures induced the most effective of all propaganda devices: a spontaneous word-of-mouth campaign swept through every community of the designated search areas.⁹

Due, possibly, to a lower potential of isolated remains than existed in equivalent areas of Germany, Second Field Headquarters bent its efforts to testing and improving procedures in all phases of the search operation from investigation to evacuation of remains. Staff officers were continuously in the field "to observe operations from the viewpoint of the smallest unit and, as new methods in operations were noted they were made available to all . . . to further improve methods of the command as a whole." Unfortunately, these improved methods are not described.¹⁰

The total accomplishment of Second Field Command in recovered remains during February and March does not seem impressive when stated in absolute figures. The achievement, however, assumes a new aspect when related to the number of remains (1,102) recovered in the search area during 1945 and the estimated total (1,507) remaining therein on 31 December 1945.¹¹

⁷ (1) *Ibid.* (2) Rpt of Opns, 2d Fld Cmd, Jan-Mar 46, pp. 17-18.

⁸ (1) *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 17-18. (2) Rpt of Opns, 551st Group, Jan-Mar 46, p. 2.

⁹ (1) *Ibid.*, p. 3. (2) Rpt of Opns, 531st Gp, Jan-Mar 46, p. 2.

¹⁰ Rpt of Opns, 2d Fld Cmd, Jan-Mar 46, p. 3.

¹¹ Tabular Report, Accomplished Progress—Isolated Burials since V-E Day.

The consolidated Headquarters report gives the following figures for the period January through March 1946:

TABLE 5.—*Search and Recovery Report*

Month	Country	Square miles searched	No. remains recovered
Jan.....	Holland.....	1	473
Feb.....	Holland.....	2,642	35
Mar.....	Holland.....	8,599	71
Jan.....	Belgium.....	0	0
Feb.....	Belgium.....	2,650	6
Mar.....	Belgium.....	4,233	522
Jan.....	Luxembourg.....	0	0
Feb.....	Luxembourg.....	513	14
Mar.....	Luxembourg.....	482	35
Total.....	Holland.....	11,242	106
Total.....	Belgium.....	6,883	528
Total.....	Luxembourg.....	995	49
Grand total.....		19,120	683 ¹²

Accomplishments reported by Second Field Headquarters on 31 March for the months of February and March invite comparison with the performance of First Field Command during November–December 1945 in Germany. There, 12,587 square miles were swept, yielding 971 United States remains, as compared to 19,120 square miles covered in the Low Countries, with 683 recoveries.

Before drawing any conclusions in a comparison between these two achievements, a conditioning factor common to all search programs should be kept in mind; production figures in any two given search areas are largely determined by the difficulty of the areas assigned for search. It is conceivable that twice the production figure in one area over that in the other may, in reality, reflect an inferior performance. In pursuing its investigative mission, the search teams of Second Field Command were operating in the region that witnessed the Wehrmacht's final effort to halt the Allied advance and strike its last offensive blow to retrieve a desperate military situation. Here in the historic "cockpit of Europe" American fatalities approximated those suffered on the sanguinary battlefields of Normandy and far exceeded losses sustained in the pursuit

¹² The 473 remains shown as recovered during January in the Netherlands were actually recovered in 1945 but not previously reported. It seems unreasonable to suppose that this number could have been recovered in one square mile. See Rpt of Opns, 2d Fld Cmd, Jan–Mar 46, p. 23.

across the Seine River basin. But for reasons already stated, a large proportion of the dead in areas of intense combat had been recovered by Theater Graves Registration Service units. There were few to be recovered in Normandy after the Armistice of Reims. Then graves registration units assigned to the base commands continued the work of recovery during the post-armistice period of 1945. Aside from the search and recovery program in the Twelfth Army Group area beyond the Rhine, search efforts in the occupied countries were negligible. Where over 50 percent of the estimated number of isolated dead in the liberated countries had been recovered by the end of 1945, less than 5 percent were located and evacuated from the occupied countries.

These figures reflect conditions that gravely influenced the conduct of search operations in 1946. In any protracted search operation, the initial effort is concentrated on easy cases, while the difficult ones are subjected to careful analysis at field headquarters and then assigned to teams composed of expert investigators. When the Second Field Command moved into the Low Countries, it took over an area from which most of the easy cases had been removed. Although anticipating events of a later period, it should be noted here that Second Field Command made its highest monthly record of recoveries after extending its operations to the Seine River basin and adjoining regions, where battle casualties had been much lighter than in Normandy and in the Low Countries. The base commands, it is obvious, had concentrated their efforts on areas of high body density, leaving to Second Field Command a relatively large area in which the isolated dead were widely scattered.

Again, a comparison of achievement in terms of square miles searched, as accomplished by First Field Command (12,587) in November-December 1945 and by Second Field Command during February and March of 1946 (19,120), suggests a significant conclusion. However these achievements may be measured, it seems logical to assume that the Second Field Command's operation in an area nearly thrice that of the one swept by its sister command in Germany during 1945 had more of the aspect of a re-search program, as conducted by First Field Command between July and December 1946, than an original sweep. This assumption is strengthened by the fact that the sweep of First Field Command through Germany to the North Sea recovered approximately the same proportion of estimated isolated remains in that region as did the predecessors of Second Field Command in the Low Countries during 1945.

Problems of supply and evacuation during February and March in the Low Countries were complicated, as in Germany, by the

chronic shortage of motor vehicles and spare parts. Second Field Command, it should be noted, did not contend with the distance of haul in the evacuation of remains and forwarding of supplies that beset the First Field Command in Germany. Whatever the condition of its transport—and complaint of its field units were numerous—Headquarters, 551st Group, observed that, while distribution of supplies to scattered units was sometimes difficult, it never became serious enough to retard planned schedules of the program. Common items were drawn from Antwerp and Liège; the AGRC depot at the Isle St. Germain furnished technical items.¹³

Operations in Northern France

With the sweep in Luxembourg concluded by 3 April and operations in the Netherlands nearing completion, 551st Group Headquarters sent an advance party from Utrecht to establish a command post at Reims, in the upper valley of the Seine. Group Headquarters followed on 16 April.¹⁴ At the same time, 531st Headquarters shifted from Liège to Rouen, where it could advantageously direct operations in the lower Seine Basin.¹⁵ On 7 May, Second Field Headquarters quit Brussels and repaired to Fontainebleau, a point on the Seine River 18 miles south of Paris and midway between Reims and Rouen.¹⁶

Reorganization of the supply service accompanied the shift in operational areas. Common supplies were requisitioned and drawn from Q-100 depot at Rouen, while St. Germain continued to furnish technical items. Organization of a third echelon maintenance shop at Rouen, with picked German war prisoners serving as mechanics, met transportation requirements until the sectors took over their appointed function of providing logistical support to Second Field Command forces. Sector V constructed a 75- by 140-foot shop building with a concrete floor and built-in grease pits. The 201st Motor Maintenance was activated to operate the installation. The other sector commands established similar facilities.¹⁷

Upon withdrawal from the Low Countries, Second Field Command had swept 24,549 square miles and completed the evacuation

¹³ (1) Rpt of Opns, 551st Gp, Jan-Mar 46, p. 3. (2) Rpt of Opns, 531st Gp, Jan-Mar 46, p. 3. (3) Rpt of Opns, 2d Fld Cmd, Jan-Mar 46, p. 3. (4) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC, Apr-Jun 45, pp. 96-97.

¹⁴ (1) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC, Jan-Mar 46, pp. 76-77. (2) Narrative Rpt, Incl to Weekly Fld Opns Rpt, 2d Fld Cmd, 24 Apr 46.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Narrative Rpt, Incl to Weekly Fld Opns Rpt, 2d Hq Cmd, Week Ending 7 May 46. This report states: "Effective 0830 hours, 7 May 46, the Second Field Command Headquarters will be opened at Fontainebleau, France, APO 887."

¹⁷ Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC, Apr-Jun 46, pp. 96-97.

of 1,291 United States remains. Of these, 704 or approximately 60 percent were identified. A few select investigating teams remained in Holland to work on special case assignments.¹⁸

Working northward from the Seine to the Belgian border and southward toward the River Rhone, the two group commands searched an area of 37,632 square miles by the end of May. Although impressive from the viewpoint of territory covered, the effort gave only 44 remains, 22 of which were identified.¹⁹ Continuation of operations through June gave 14 additional recoveries with only 2 from the old Ardennes battleground.

A special report on this operation offers a partial explanation of the disparity between a dwindling number of recoveries and an expanded area of search. The Ardennes report noted: "Number of isolated burials and unburied remains reported but not yet investigated."²⁰

The widespread activities of propaganda and investigative teams since entrance into northern France had indeed uncovered evidence of many unrecorded burials. All such data required additional study in the preparation of new case assignments. While reporting meager accomplishments in May and June, Second Field Headquarters was preparing for a peak performance during July. Briefly, the successful investigation of this large accumulation of cases culminated in the recovery of 749 United States remains and the evacuation of 614. On 31 July, there were 301 reported isolated burials and unburied remains still awaiting investigation.²¹

As area search activities passed the midyear of 1946, Headquarters, AGRC, perceived that the program had entered a new phase in which old operational methods no longer served their intended purpose. Heretofore, the three field commands had concentrated their efforts on a two-fold mission: (1) the location by sweeping, and the identification and evacuation of isolated burials and unburied remains; (2) the co-ordination of activities looking to the resolution of unsolved casualty cases.²² Experience by this time had demonstrated that the method of area sweeping could not be so conducted as to obviate the necessity of re-search in a particular locality. Overlooking the assurance given the Chief of Staff, TSFET, at the briefing conference of 27 December 1945,²³ that a single sweep would suffice, Headquarters, AGRC, now asserted that

¹⁸ Hq 2d Fld Cmd, Compiled Rpt—Holland, Belgium, France.

¹⁹ Weekly Fld Opns Rpt, 2d Fld Cmd, 29 May 46.

²⁰ Final Rpt—Ardennes, Hq 551st QM Gp, no date, Incl to Ltr, Col Warren Garvey, CO, 551st Gp, to Col, 2d Hq Cmd, no sub.

²¹ Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC, Jul-Sep 46, p. 40.

²² *Ibid.*, Apr-Jun 46, p. 3.

²³ See above.

this method had been adopted as a partial expedient under pressure of the Casualty Clearance Plan. In restating the case, Headquarters apparently preferred to repudiate the doctrine so confidently propounded in December 1945 rather than admit that experience had exposed the faulty assumptions on which the doctrine had been based.²⁴

At any rate, a shift in emphasis from the concept of area sweeping to selective search suggested that the mobile aspect of organization originally associated with the field commands had, excepting the situation in Germany, served its purpose, and that the Second and Third Field Commands should be replaced by three zone commands which would more effectively combine residual search and recovery with the so-called static mission as presently performed by the sector units. More specifically, the zones were to assume the following responsibilities:

1. Investigate reports of isolated burials and concentrate remains from areas previously swept comprising for the most part the liberated countries.
2. Make final disposition of all remains buried in enemy plots in liberated countries.
3. Transfer to the custody of the proper governments all Allied remains in U. S. Military Cemeteries.
4. Train personnel, assemble equipment and prepare facilities for repatriation operations.
5. Execute repatriation operations on order.²⁵

Disbanded on 31 July 1946, Second Field Command submitted its final weekly area Search and Recovery Report (AGRC Form No. 14) on 17 August. Formal inactivation of the command was announced in GO No. 47, Headquarters 18 July 1946.

Including much of the area swept by Second Field Command, Zone I, Col. George S. Wear, commanding, came into existence under provisions of Operations Order No. 9, 1 August 1946. Upon assignment of the 335th and 551st Quartermaster Groups to his command, Colonel Wear assumed operating responsibility.

Secondary Operations of Second Field Command

Shortly after settling down at Fontainebleau, Second Field Headquarters began drawing up plans for recovery operations beyond the

²⁴ The revised version, in the second quarterly report, 1946, states: "The broad plan for AGRC activities had two major phases; Phase I, Area Searching and Identification of Unknowns. Phase II, Resolution of Individual Cases and Identification of Unknowns. Phase I introduced as a natural consequence of the European Casualty Clearance Plan . . . was never expected to produce 100 percent resolution of cases." Hq AGRC, Rpt of Opns, Apr-Jun 48, p. 3.

²⁵ Opns Order No. 9, Hq AGRC, 1 Aug 46.

limits of its area in northern France. One contemplated the evacuation of 17 American remains from three Channel Islands— Jersey, Guernsey, and Alderney. Another considered an expedition to the Azores, where the remains of 39 Americans, including 29 servicemen and 7 merchant seamen, were interred. The third involved a co-operative effort of AGRC technicians and United States Army engineers in the recovery of remains from plane wrecks embedded in the soft soil of Holland, notably one in a marshy region near the village of Zegveld. Finally, an airborne expedition intended to recover approximately 100 remains from the Iberian Peninsula required logistical planning in a new field, as well as the design of a special airlift casket.²⁶

Although Second Field Headquarters completed plans for the Azores mission early in June, unavoidable delays in dispatching a reconnaissance party to the distant island group caused Headquarters, AGRC, to relieve Second Field Command of further responsibility in the project.²⁷

The Channel Islands operation alone was carried out by a 531st Group detachment which reported continuously to Second Field Headquarters. The remaining two fall within a sort of borderland that separates the authentic history of Second Field Command from the theme of search and recovery as continued by its successor zone command. But in view of the fact that Second Field Headquarters initiated the planning for these two projects, and that they were carried out by veteran units of the old organization, it does not seem illogical to regard both as concluding episodes in the story of Second Field Command.

Channel Islands Operation

Planning at Second Field Headquarters for recovery of American remains interred on the Channel Islands went hand in hand with development of the Iberian and Zegveld operational plans.²⁸ On 7 May, representations to the British home office apprised His Majesty's Government that AGRC desired to exhume the bodies of 17 United States servicemen buried during hostilities in the Channel Islands and reinter them at Blosville. This course, it was stated,

²⁶ It should be noted that First Field Command also conducted an airborne expedition to Norway during Jun 46. Three of the five teams composing the Iberian Detachment were flown to Madrid, landing 21 July. Planning for the Iberian expedition was initiated at Second Field Headquarters early in May, while the Norway airlift was under consideration. (1) Narrative Rpt, Incl to Weekly Fld Opns Rpt, 2d Fld Cmd, 8 May 46. (2) *Ibid.*, 15 May 46.

²⁷ (1) *Ibid.*, 12 Jun 46; 16 Jun 46. (2) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC, Jul-Sep 46.

²⁸ Narrative Rpt, Incl to Weekly Fld Opns Rpt, 2d Fld Cmd, 8 May 46.

followed the dictates of policy requiring that all isolated remains recovered from foreign soil be concentrated temporarily in United States military cemeteries.

Headquarters, AGRC, felt some concern about securing a favorable reply from London. Dissent on the part of the British Government would, it was feared, tend to influence the governments of other Allied and neutral nations in acceding to similar requests and thus imperil the search and recovery program in all foreign countries. Britain's want of sympathy toward the American policy of repatriation was thoroughly understood at Paris.²⁹

In the absence of any response to the original communication, Planning Division, AGRC, sought the mediation of the American Embassy at London. The Home Office, it appeared, had no objection to dispatch of a search team to the islands, but disinterment of the remains was a matter which the governor of Jersey must determine. Voicing local sentiment and, indeed, anticipating similar expressions by the peoples and governments of Denmark and Sweden, this official seemed unfavorably disposed toward removal to a temporary burial place in France of American remains which had rested in graves prepared and tended by residents of the islands.

While matters stood at this delicate impasse, Second Field Headquarters on 8 June dispatched a disinterring party to the scene. Colonel Wear, commanding the Second Field Command, then hastened to Jersey in hopes of overcoming the governor's hesitancy. Colonel Powers, his Chief of Staff, accompanied the Colonel commanding and took over general direction of the operation. In the event disinterments were to be permitted, he would supervise the evacuation.³⁰

A happy resolution of the local diplomatic tangle hastened other negotiations—one with the United States Navy, another with the Government of France. When the Channel Islands dead were ready for shipment to the mainland, it developed that the Navy could not furnish a ship of war for the occasion. Colonel Wear deemed the use of commercial craft as wanting in the respect which should be accorded these dead. Approached through diplomatic channels, the French Ministry of Marine directed that the destroyer *Alcyon* report at Jersey and take the American remains aboard.

On 15 June the *Alcyon*, flying the tricolor of France at halfmast, steamed into Cherbourg. After appropriate ceremonies upon landing at the port, the dead were conveyed under an honor guard to Blosville.³¹

²⁹ (1) *Ibid.*, 8 May 46; 29 May 46. (2) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC, Apr-Jun 46, p. 102.

³⁰ Narrative Rpt, Incl to Weekly Field Opns Rpt, 2d Fld Cmd, 12 Jun 46.

³¹ (1) *Ibid.*, 19 Jun 46. (2) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC, Apr-Jun 46, p. 103.

The Zegveld Operation

Late in May, Second Field Headquarters concluded a survey of outstanding cases in the Netherlands. Close study of MACRs indicated that many crippled planes had plunged into water-soaked soil, leaving only fragments of a wing or tail to mark the spot. Confronted by the problem of recovering remains from these wrecks, headquarters set up a field reconnaissance team to determine types of heavy equipment best suited to the end in view.³² Including an engineer officer and a Second Field Command representative, the team completed its investigation and submitted technical recommendations on 12 June. Thereupon Second Field Headquarters formulated plans for recovery of the remains of several crewmen thought to be entombed in the wreckage of a B-17 which had been shot down on 21 February 1945 near Zegveld by a pursuing swarm of German fighter planes. Surface inspection indicated that the stricken bomber had sunk to a depth of twenty-five feet in the marshy *Polderlandt*.³³

Examination of the ground to be traversed by a 15-ton Quickaway crane convinced the assigned engineer officer that six small bridges should be reinforced and that passage over a particularly soft spot called for the construction of a new bridge. Then, after moving their Quickaway over the prepared way, the engineers belatedly discovered that the narrow canal-lined road leading directly to the site of the wreck would not support the mammoth crane.

Faced with this impasse, all members of the composite detachment toiled the better part of two days in working a lighter Bucyrus Erie Crawler to the scene. Finally, after laying a platform of duck boards and constructing retaining walls by driving heavy wooden panels deep into the slime, the crane was put in position. Despite all precautions, large quantities of soft soil slipped into the excavation, while the seepage of water required continuous pumping. Then the menace of unexploded bombs thought to be in the plane hampered every step of the operation.

On 24 August, after dredging for nearly two weeks, the remains of three crewmen were recovered from the soggy wreckage. Investigation of the crash report had established that two members of the crew parachuted safely to earth, and that the remains of three others were buried in a German cemetery near Amersfoort. With eight of the ten crew members now accounted for, it remained to be seen if continued dredging would bring up the two missing bodies. At

³² Narrative Rpt, Incl to Weekly Fld Opns Rpt, 2d Fld Cmd, 29 May 46.

³³ (1) *Ibid.*, 29 May 46; 12 Jun 46. (2) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC, Jul-Sep 46.

this juncture, a mechanical failure of the crane caused postponement of the effort. With a favorable turn of the weather and repair of equipment, the search was resumed.³⁴

The Iberian Expedition

By the end of May, planning for the Iberian expedition had attained a form that justified the initiation of negotiations through diplomatic channels in order to secure approval on the part of the governments of Spain and Portugal, as well as British military authorities at Gibraltar. Second Field Headquarters designated Lt. Col. Paul Clark, 551st Group, and commander designate of the expedition to take the first step in these procedures. He was to acquaint the United States Embassies at Madrid and Lisbon, and the Consulate at Gibraltar, with the general nature of his mission and to convey through these intermediaries assurances that "removal of the remains in question will be carried out in a manner consistent with the most rigorous standards of sanitation and without jeopardy to the public health."³⁵

While Lieutenant Colonel Clark returned to his headquarters and completed the detailed planning for organization of the Iberian Detachment, American diplomatic representatives in Spain and Portugal encountered no serious difficulty in securing the necessary clearances for the entrance of AGRC units and waivers of sanitary regulations which prohibited exhumation of human remains in both countries during the summer season. The United States Consul at Gibraltar was equally successful.³⁶

The government of Portugal gave its assent verbally on 14 July, stating at the same time that necessary instructions had been transmitted by telephone to local authorities. The Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs apprised the American Ambassador in a *Verbal Nota* of 26 July that "the *Direccion General de Sanidad* had informed the ministry that appropriate instructions had been sent to the civil governors," including "for their better understanding the list of graves and proposed procedure for disinterment." Meanwhile, the acting governor of Gibraltar gave written authorization for the exhumation of American remains within his command, and notified the United States Consul that the Fortress engineer had been directed to act as

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ (1) Rpt, Lt Col Paul Clark, FA, 551st Group to CO, Hq Zone I, 9 Sep 46, sub: Final Rpt on Opns in Spain, Portugal, and Gibraltar, p. 1. Hereinafter cited as Clark, Iberian Opn. (2) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC, Jul-Sep 46, pp. 143 ff.

³⁶ (1) Ltr, Philip W. Bonsal, Chargé d'Affaires, U. S. Embassy, Madrid, to Secy of State, 12 Aug 46, sub: Negotiations with the Spanish Government for Removal of American War Dead. (2) PRO, Hq AGRC, News Release, 5 Sep 46.

his co-ordinator and furnish the American detachment with all required equipment and transportation.³⁷

Tentative estimates put the number of American dead in the Iberian Peninsula at approximately 100. The majority were flyers who perished in crash landing of planes injured in combat. Among the dead were seven army officers killed in the crash of a Pan American Clipper in Lisbon Bay during 1943. Then the remains of several American merchant marine seamen, victims of U-Boat attacks, had been washed ashore along the west coast of Portugal and buried in the sand by fishermen.³⁸

Shortly before departure of the Iberian detachment from northern France, United States consular officers in Spain and Portugal compiled a final survey of burial information relative to American dead in their respective districts. After comparing these listings with those previously prepared in the Madrid and Lisbon embassies and then checking the adjusted figures with related burial data compiled by Registration Division, the Commanding Officer, AGRC, furnished a revised list to Lieutenant Colonel Clark on the eve of his departure to the Peninsula.³⁹ Before flying south, the Commanding Officer divided his detachment into five field teams with the following area assignments:

- Team No. 1 to Catalunya;
- Team No. 2 to the Cantabrian Mountains of Galicia;
- Team No. 3 to Lisbon and central Portugal;
- Team No. 4 to the southern Mediterranean Coast;
- Team No. 5 to Gibraltar.⁴⁰

Lieutenant Colonel Clark established his headquarters at the office of the military attaché in Madrid. All communication facilities of the Embassy were put at his disposal. Teams Nos. 3, 4 and 5 flew with the detachment commander to Madrid and thence to their assigned areas. Meanwhile, Teams Nos. 1 and 2, travelling in separate motor columns, entered Spain, the former passing the frontier at Irún, the latter at Port Boa. The detachment commander directed all field operations from his headquarters in Madrid.

Crash landing of crippled planes, as already indicated, accounted for a large majority of deaths in the Peninsula. In many instances the remains had been interred in village cemeteries and the cir-

³⁷ (1) Clark, *Iberian Opn*, p. 2. (2) Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Spain, to U. S. Ambassador, Madrid, 26 Jul 46, sub: *Nota Verbal*, Incl to Ltr, Bonsal to Secy of State.

³⁸ (1) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC, Jul-Sep 46, p. 147. (2) PRO, Hq AGRC, News Release, 5 Sep 46.

³⁹ Clark, *Iberian Opn*.

⁴⁰ (1) *Ibid.*, p. 2. (2) Rpt of Opns, 2d Fld Cmd, Jul-Sep 46, p. 148.

cumstances of interment recorded according to customary practice. Some planes, however, had crashed at points beyond the reach of wheeled vehicles, thus requiring the organization of search parties which moved by mule pack or on foot. One wreck in the mountainous terrain of Galicia illustrates the difficulties that were overcome in reaching such sites and evacuating the remains. After scaling a lofty peak and finding the wreckage, the search party from Team No. 2 carried the remains by stretcher down the precipitous mountainside to a road winding through a deep gorge to the village of San Martin de Vigo.⁴¹

Within 24 days after reaching their assigned areas, the five field teams recovered the remains of 84 Americans. Teams Nos. 1, 2 and 4 evacuated 24 bodies from widely separated graves and remote crash sites in Spain; the Portuguese Team No. 3 recovered 19 remains; Team No. 5 made 41 exhumations from the North Front Cemetery at Gibraltar.⁴²

In accordance with new procedures prescribed during August 1946 for the identification and evacuation of isolated remains, disinterment details restricted graveside identification to determination of nationality.⁴³ The remains were then casketed and, after completion of disinterments in a single locality, borne away amid ceremonies in which the local population and representatives of the Spanish Government invariably participated. Collecting points in the various areas were located at airfields selected for the takeoff of return flights. Lifted over the Pyrenees to Strasbourg, France, and delivered at the Central Identification Point, the remains underwent examination by skilled laboratory technicians. Of the total received from time to time, 63 received positive identification; 21 remained unknown.⁴⁴

The airlift casket was only two-thirds of the size of a standard casket and weighed only ninety pounds, but it met most requirements of shipment by plane and served adequately as a carrier for the airtight, metalized container which encased the remains.⁴⁵

The Iberian airlift consisted of two C-47 cargo planes furnished by the European Air Transport Service (EATS). In providing logistical support to the five field teams, and completing the evacuation of remains, the two planes flew approximately 22,000 miles. Despite delays in scheduled flights that were attributed largely to inexperienced mechanics in the maintenance crews, the operation

⁴¹ PRO, Hq AGRC, News Release, 5 Sep 46.

⁴² (1) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC, Jul-Sep 46, p. 154. (2) Clark, Iberian Opn, p. 4.

⁴³ A detailed discussion of the adoption of these procedures is given below in Ch. XIX, in connection with identification operations.

⁴⁴ Iberian Det, Final Fld Opn Rpt, 9 Sep 46.

⁴⁵ Rpt of Opns, 2d Fld Cmd, Jul-Sep 46, p. 150.

was completed within less than half the original time allowance of 60 days.⁴⁶

Like most neutral nations of the west, the governments and peoples of Spain and Portugal evinced a sympathetic interest in the determination of the Americans to reclaim their dead. Here the piety of peasant communities gave an emotional touch that was not so apparent in Protestant countries of northern Europe. Throughout the Peninsula, religious ceremonies were, according to report, held at the cemeteries, "often with entire villages in attendance the villagers kneeling in prayer as flag draped coffins borne by army pallbearers passed by." Every cortège was accompanied by the local mayor and parish priest. At Gibraltar, British Army chaplains officiated at graveside ceremonies. A quaint yet eloquent expression of this sentiment was voiced by a Spanish provincial newspaper in its account of the ceremony at Cadaques, a village near Barcelona:

At midday there took place the ceremony of the exhumation of the remains of 13 American aviators, killed in an accident in the midst of the world war. . . . There were present Major Jose Moreno of the general staff, in representation of the Spanish army, the attaché of the American consulate in Barcelona, Mr. Varela, the Mayor, the municipal judge, et cetera.

A section of infantry of the Spanish army arrived to render honors to the mortal remains of the American aviators. The parish priest intoned a response and Major Jose Moreno of the general staff, in the name of the Spanish army, spoke a few words. In continuation of the military forces a platoon of the civil guard marched past the bodies and fired a salvo. The lieutenant of the American forces expressed his appreciation of the attention received from the civil as well as from the military authorities, and his appreciation also of the conduct of the entire village of Cadaques which gathered en masse at the ceremony. From Cadaques the American soldiers will proceed to Llanas to remove bodies of other American aviators who died in a similar accident and to transfer them also to the United States via France.⁴⁷

Area Sweeps, Third Field Command

Activated on 7 December 1945, when Col. Thomas R. Howard, commanding, two officers and a War Department civilian arrived at Aix-en-Provence, the Third Field Command attained by the end of the month a strength of 81 officers, 622 enlisted men, together with

⁴⁶ (1) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC, Jul-Sep 46, pp. 150, 154. (2) Clark, Iberian Opn, p. 3.

⁴⁷ News Release, PRO, Hq AGRC, 5 Sep 46.

38 War Department civilians, 19 indigenous civilians, and 200 German prisoners of war.⁴⁸

Colonel Howard reported on 5 January 1946 that his organization included three major subordinate commands—the 535th, 538th, and 6884th Quartermaster Groups, and that one GR company had been reassigned to each of the groups. Each company in turn had been organized into three mobile bivouac units, with a strength of one officer, 38 enlisted men and 33 attached French civilian employees. This unit comprised 6 search teams, 2 evacuating teams and an administrative team. The mobile bivouac units thus constituted the field force assigned to each group. An allotment of five 10-ton trailer vans with built-in bunks for 24 men was a distinguishing feature of the mobile bivouac unit and was intended, no doubt, to support the mobility implied in the designation.⁴⁹

With recovery of isolated remains left in the path of the Seventh Army as its principal mission, Third Field Command's area of responsibility extended from the French Riviera northward up the Rhone River basin to the Lorraine plateau, thence eastward over the Alsatian plain and across the Rhine to include the French and American zones in Germany south of the Kaiserslautern-Buchenbuhl line and the allied occupational areas of Austria. Two regions beyond the broad path traversed by Seventh Army formations fell within the total area of responsibility, one being all of southwest France lying roughly between the Loire, the Pyrenees and the Rhone, the other including the Swiss cantons.

Taken together, these regions comprised the largest single territorial block assigned to a field command. The average density of isolated dead, however, was less than half that distributed throughout the area of the Second Field Command and less than one-third of the density within that part of Germany assigned to First Field Command. Only at the bend of the path, where the Seventh Army encountered stubborn resistance in forcing the high Vosges and sweeping over the Lorraine plateau in conjunction with the Third Army, were large casualties sustained and a corresponding number of isolated dead left in the wake of the advance.

After assessing specialized skills in the mass of replacements assigned during December, and discovering that only one officer and eight enlisted men offered previous training or experience in graves registration work, Colonel Howard set up a two weeks' training

⁴⁸ (1) GO No. 2, Hq AGRC, 7 Dec 45. (2) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC, Jan-Mar 46, p. 36.

⁴⁹ The intent here was not fully realized; the cumbersome vans proved so unwieldy on secondary roads and rural lanes as to defeat economy of movement in many search areas.

program designed for hasty instructions in the rudimentary aspects of search procedures, exhumation, and graveside identification.⁵⁰

During the first week of January 1946, Third Field Headquarters put five search teams in the field. After covering 1,044 square miles in the Bouches-du-Rhone Department, these teams were reorganized in order to receive 20 "school trained" men for on-the-job instructions during the ensuing week. According to the plan as then reported, the overstrength teams were to be broken down into individual operating units and receive 40 "school men" on 14 January, thus theoretically doubling the number of field-trained men each week. It was intended that the evacuation teams, which began classroom instructions on 7 January would follow the pattern in field training and operations. Subsequent weekly reports attest the success of this scheme.⁵¹

On 16 January, the 6884th Group, after having completed its mission on the Mediterranean coast, moved up the Isere River, a tributary of the Rhone rising in the shadow of Mt. Blanc, and established headquarters at Grenoble. Clad in winter clothing furnished by Delta Base command, the three mobile bivouac units worked laboriously over difficult terrain toward the Haute Alps, recovering all but a few isolated remains reported at inaccessible sites in the deep winter snows.⁵²

Meanwhile, the 538th Group proceeded to Lyons, a thriving manufacturing center and river port whose original location on the promontory overlooking the confluence of the Rhone and Saône was first occupied by a wandering band of Greek refugees in 198 B. C. Here Lt. Col. William A. Callaway established his headquarters and initiated search operations in the middle reaches of the river Rhone. Then, early in February, 535th Group Headquarters and one mobile bivouac "leapfrogged" from the Department of the Var, on the Riviera, to Nancy, at the southern edge of the Lorraine plateau. Reinforced later in the month by the other two mobile units which had completed their assignments in Var, 535th Group Headquarters completed disposition for sweeping the Lorraine plateau, while search teams worked through the forest-clad Vosges and out across the Alsatian plain to the river Rhine.⁵³

In clearing the southern coast and initiating sweeps in the regions around Grenoble, Lyons, and Nancy, Third Field Command units

⁵⁰ (1) Narrative Rpt, 3d Fld Cmd, 5 Jan 46, pp. 3-4. (2) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC, Jan-Mar 46, pp. 19-20.

⁵¹ Progress Rpt, 3d Fld Cmd, 13 Jan 46, pp. 3-4.

⁵² (1) Narrative Rpt, 3d Fld Cmd, 20 Jan 46, p. 4; 6 Apr 46, p. 1. (2) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC, Jan-Mar 46, p. 109. (3) Progress Rpt, 3d Fld Cmd, 29 Jan 46, p. 3.

⁵³ (1) Narrative Rpt, 3d Fld Cmd, 2 Feb 46, p. 1; 9 Feb 46, p. 1. (2) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC, Jan-Mar 46, p. 535.

publicized and searched an area of 28,646 square miles during the first quarter of 1946. After obtaining 472 positive and 3,966 negative reports in the course of visiting 3,494 communities, the Command recovered 152 isolated American remains and evacuated 69 by 31 March. The latter category included 42 positively identified bodies and 27 unknowns. This accomplishment involved the investigation of 1,529 isolated burials and unburied remains and required the co-ordinated effort of 80 field teams—22 publicity, 41 search, 13 exhumation and 4 special investigative teams.

In terms of recovered remains and square miles searched, the achievement does not seem particularly impressive. After sweeping an area not measurably larger than the one searched by Second Field Command during the same period, Third Field Headquarters reported a total recovery figure which was less than half the number recovered by Second Field Command in the Low Countries.⁵⁴

While bringing its mission in the Saône-Rhone Valley toward completion during April, 538th Group Headquarters dispatched an advance party from Lyons to Urach, a town in the French Zone of Germany, and hastened preparations to close up the main body.⁵⁵ At the same time, Col. Samuel N. Lowry, commanding the 535th Group at Nancy, made a reconnaissance of the United States Zone of Germany in order to discuss with First Field Headquarters the disposition of three GR Companies which were to be assigned by First Field Headquarters to the Third Field Command. It was then intended that 535th Group Headquarters would, upon completing its assignment in Alsace-Lorraine, move to Bad Tölz and, reinforced by the three First Field Command units, direct area sweeps in southeast Germany and the United States Zone of Austria. While these matters were under consideration, 538th Group established headquarters in Urach in the French Zone and during the first week of May, posted its three mobile bivouac units at Ravensburg, Bad Liebenzell, and Titisee.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, the 6884th Group shifted headquarters from Grenoble to Dijon, midway between Lyons and Nancy. During the first week of April, Lt. Col. John C. Knox, commanding, disposed his three mobile bivouac units on a line running from Châlons-sur-Saône to Besancon. Fanning out, the field teams publicized and searched a wide area extending toward Lyons, in the south, and reaching northward to the foothills of the Vosges and the headwaters of the Marne. Then, after completing its mission in this area, the

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁵⁵ Narrative Rpt, 3d Fld Cmd, 6 Apr 46, p. 1; 27 Apr 46, p. 2.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 4 May 46, p. 1.

group moved to the British Zone of Austria and established headquarters on 29 May.⁵⁷

The eastward trend of search activity was signaled on 1 May by the transfer of Third Field Headquarters from Aix-en-Provence to Strasbourg. With his command post situation in the Quartier Lize, near the site of an ancient Roman fort, the *Operdinium*, which once housed headquarters of the Eighth Legion and guarded the eastern gateway into Gaul, Col. George R. Lynch, now commanding the Third Field Command,⁵⁸ was advantageously situated to exercise effective supervision over residual operations in Alsace-Lorraine and the Saône-Rhone basin as well as those which were expanding in the occupied areas of southern Germany and Austria.⁵⁹

Shortly after moving into Nancy, 535th Group Headquarters encountered the problem imposed by a large number of isolated German dead. Under terms of an agreement providing that the AGRC would transfer custody of Allied and enemy remains in its care to designated officials of the governments concerned, the French urged that recovered German dead be removed to German soil. The Americans, although primarily concerned with their own dead, were willing to assume the additional burden. With recorded isolated German remains numbering 2,091, and estimated as high as 3,000, the recovery and evacuation of these dead presented the major portion of the group's workload.⁶⁰

Early in April, Colonel Lowry, the group commander, had concluded arrangements with French military authorities whereby the enemy remains would be transported through Strasbourg and delivered in burial boxes at designated cemeteries in the French Zone of Germany.⁶¹ Saddled with the double burden of American and German isolated dead in an area containing the highest body density yet encountered or anticipated by the Third Field Command, Colonel Lowry adopted the expedient of organizing 12 exhumation teams composed of German war prisoners. American search teams located the isolated grave sites, while enlisted technicians and clerks performed all work relating to disinterment, identification, and reinterment. After evincing earnestness and proficiency in their part of the program, German team members were assigned as identification technicians. When, on 28 May, the 535th Group moved to Bad Tölz, a detachment of 30 officers, 28 enlisted men and 33 French interpreters remained in France to investigate special cases

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 6 Apr 46, p. 1; 1 Jun 46, p. 2.

⁵⁸ Colonel Lynch superseded Colonel Howard late in March 1946.

⁵⁹ Narrative Rpt, 3d Fld Cmd, 4 May 46, p. 2.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 6 Apr 46, p. 1.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

of unrecovered American dead in mined areas and to direct the German POW teams in completing the evacuation of some 1,600 isolated German remains. While working satisfactorily toward a completion date of 30 June, the program terminated abruptly upon refusal by the administration for the French Zone of Germany "to permit Third Field Command vehicles carrying German bodies to enter Germany."⁶²

With 182 remains on hand, the 535th Group detachment commander was faced with the difficulty of finding a burial place for the bodies that had been exhumed in deference to French wishes and were now denied transit to their homeland. Desirous, perhaps of disassociating the French Army from this absurd situation, the commandant of the Sixth French Military Region designated a reburial cemetery in Sarrable, a commune near Region Headquarters at Metz.⁶³

The German mission in Alsace-Lorraine was brought to completion with the exhumation of 49 remains subsequently discovered at Pompey and reinterred in the German plot of the U. S. Military Cemetery, Andilly, France.⁶⁴

When the 538th Group crossed the Rhine into southwest Germany, Third Field Headquarters approached the problem of organizing a long-range transport service for the evacuation of remains to St. Avold. While the distance of haul was not measurably increased by dispositions in the French Zone of Germany, the contemplated sweeps in southeast Germany and Austria would require an allotment of German POW truck units. In examining these requirements, Third Field Headquarters expressed a preference for the semi-trailer vans that had originally been designed as sleeping quarters for field team personnel, and subsequently employed in the transportation of remains. With built-in racks for 24 bodies, the van was regarded as superior in every respect to the standard 2½-ton truck. If this type was not available, the command suggested an allotment of sufficient tractors for the vans presently on hand at Strasbourg.⁶⁵

The request for POW truck units and additional tractors and vans was supplemented by a study that examined the feasibility of evacuation by air from southeast Germany and Austria. Neither the desired vans, truck units, or cargo planes appear to have been available at this time. On 16 May, Col. George R. Burgess, who relieved

⁶² *Ibid.*, 13 Apr 46, p. 1; 27 Apr 46, p. 1; 1 Jun 46, p. 1; 22 Jun 46, p. 1.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 6 Jul 46, p. 1; 12 Jul 46, p. 2.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 4 May 46, p. 2; 11 May 46, p. 2. The number of requested POW truck units is not stated in the 11 May report.

Colonel Lynch as CO, Third Field Command, early during the month, protested that unless his recommendations for the airlift were approved, the requisition for two POW truck platoons should be filled at once by Headquarters, AGRC. The Colonel commanding added: "These have not as yet arrived and we are being held up by lack of transportation for evacuation from Germany."⁶⁶

Aware of incessant demands on Headquarters, AGRC, to maintain expanding transportation requirements of the three field commands, to say nothing of the six sectors. Colonel Burgess dispatched Colonel Edwin D. McCoy, Operations Officer, Third Field Command, to plead his case with G-4 and the Transportation Corps, USFET at Stuttgart. Although contrary to policy, Colonel McCoy proposed an arrangement whereby his command might be permitted to employ German POW units presently assigned in the occupied zones of Germany and Austria. After some hesitancy on the part of Transportation Corps officers who, according to report, were disposed to regard AGRC requirements as "peculiar," it was agreed that "clearance would be forwarded by TWX for the use of AGRC POW companies in all these areas."⁶⁷

Whatever the precise nature of arrangements during May for buildup of the Third Field transport, it would appear that certain adjustments, including the assignment of two POW truck platoons and additional tractors, met immediate demands. Upon representation by Colonel McCoy of further needs on 3-5 June at AGRC Headquarters, it was disclosed that no air transportation would be available pending the determination of requirements of an airlift for the Iberian expedition. Third Field Command thereupon made a careful "resurvey" of its own facilities and reported: "we shall be able to handle this phase without difficulty. It is planned to reinforce each convoy of bodies with additional trucks that may be used in case of breakdown."⁶⁸

It is important to note that only the 538th Group, which entered the French Zone of Germany early in May, had not developed search operations beyond the Rhine to the point of producing any considerable number of remains for evacuation to St. Avold. Late in May, this group sent an advance party, accompanied by two publicity teams, into the French Zone of Austria and began the publicization of its mission in that area. Then, while the search teams of two mobile bivouac units moved into the Zone on 11 June, all

⁶⁶ (1) Narrative Rpt, 3d Fld Cmd, 16 May 46, p. 1. (2) Colonel Lynch was transferred from Third Field Command to Hq AGRC, taking over the important assignment of Chief, Plans and Coordination Division.

⁶⁷ Narrative Rpt, 3d Fld Cmd, 26 May 46, p. 2.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 8 Jun 46, p. 2.

evacuation teams remained in southwest Germany to complete the mission in that region.⁶⁹

Elsewhere in the trans-Rhine region, operations had not progressed much beyond the preliminary phase of publicization. The 6884th Group, it will be recalled, had moved into the British Zone of Austria on 29 May and, while publicity teams sampled selected communities to test the adequacy of coverage accomplished by the method of employing military and civil authorities as publicity agents, the mobile bivouac units took position with a view to conducting search and exhumation operations simultaneously.⁷⁰

Movement of the 535th Group from Nancy to Bad Tölz, in southeast Germany, was made at the same time that the 6884th Group moved from Dijon to British-occupied Austria. The mobile bivouac units of both groups were disposed during the first week of June, those of the 535th Group in the United States Zone of Austria, while the 6884th Group units, as just stated, prepared to sweep the British Zone. The program discussed early in May by Colonel Lowry, 535th Group Commander, and officers of the First Field Headquarters for sweeping southeast Germany had not been productive of positive results. Instead of three GR companies filled to TO strength, as originally promised by First Field Command, only two depleted company units had become available by the middle of May. Revision of the original plan was under consideration when the 535th Group Headquarters appeared at Bad Tölz.⁷¹

The commitment early in June of all Third Field Command Forces, less the detachment left in Alsace-Lorraine to investigate special cases and supervise the evacuation of German dead, gave a critical turn to the transport problem that had been under examination during May. Whatever the precise nature of emergency adjustments from time to time, motor transport facilities seem to have been adequate to such needs as were imposed by the expanding sphere of operations. The allotment of a C-47 transport plane on 15 June prompted Third Field Command to release a POW truck platoon.⁷²

The problem arising from extension of search activities through the Strasbourg gateway into southern Germany and Austria were not restricted to providing adequate transportation for the evacuation of recovered remains. In following the path of pursuit taken by the Seventh Army beyond the Rhine, Third Field Headquarters became increasingly concerned with the investigation of air crashes

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 4 May 46, p. 1.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 1 Jun 46, p. 2.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 4 May 46, p. 2; 16 May 46, p. 3.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 15 Jun 46, p. 2.

and less than heretofore with the recovery of isolated dead incident to ground combat. In anticipation of this situation, Colonel Lynch, on 20 April, requested an assignment of ten additional MARIO teams. Late in May, while 538th Group teams were completing the sweep in southwest Germany, and both 6884th and 535th Groups were preparing to move eastward, four MARIO teams reported at Strasbourg. The remaining six, the Colonel commanding learned, were on their way to Third Field Headquarters. After apportioning the newly arrived teams between the 535th and 538th Groups, Colonel Lynch remarked: "I feel that the technical knowledge of the personnel of these teams will aid materially in the gaining of information that, in addition to helping with immediate identification, will permit many administrative identifications."⁷³

A faulty network for the transmission of intelligence was, no doubt, the most aggravating, if not the most forbidding, obstacle to an effective supervision of field operations. Just as First Field Command had been plagued with deficient telephone communications while sweeping northward during November and December of 1945 from the Kaiserslautern-Buchenbuhl line, so Third Field Headquarters experienced exasperating difficulties in getting calls through to the group command posts in southern Germany and Austria. Then, after a connection had been made, time-worn equipment, indifferent maintenance and lack of qualified operatives made the completion of a coherent conversation, particularly with Klagenfurt, all but impossible.⁷⁴

Protests and pleas led to proposals for a direct cable between Strasbourg and the Mannheim military switchboard, and relay of calls from that point to the various group headquarters. The AGRC signal officer passed favorably on technical aspects of the proposal and informed Third Field Headquarters that the connection could be made if it were shown that economies resulting from improved service would justify the outlay. A survey revealed that only one call was made in France for every six attempts to communicate with stations beyond the Rhine. The direct line, it was urged, would alleviate reception difficulties in calls to group headquarters at Bad Tölz and Urach, Germany, and Klagenfurt, Austria, and shorten time in getting calls through. The survey report also implied in masterful understatement that improved communications might result in disuse of explosive language to which many frustrated communicants had become addicted, and thereby contribute to an

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 11 May 46, pp. 1-2; 25 May 46, p. 2.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 8 Jun 46.

atmosphere of dignity that should prevail at the headquarters of a major field command.⁷⁵

When an adequate telephone communications system had been established between Third Field Command headquarters and the field operating units and the C-47 transport plane assigned to the Command was ready to begin scheduled flights between Vienna and St. Avold Military Cemetery, all Third Field Command units, less a detachment of the 535th Group assigned to investigate special cases in France, were widely distributed over southern Germany and France. The 6884th Group had made considerable progress in making known its need for burial information in the British Zone of Austria.

By mid-July, the disbandment of LTB units had caused a drastic reduction of effective strength. After replacing low-point men in OTB units by transferring officers and enlisted men with relatively high retention points, the Command levelled off with an aggregate of 360 (60 officers and 300 enlisted men). Upon completion of transfers to the OTB units authorized under the new troop basis, the 6884th Group ceased to exist as an operating unit of the Third Field Command. The 538th Group took over the entire area of Austria while the 535th Group became responsible for completing the sweep of southeastern Germany. The single Mobile Bivouac Unit of the 538th Group, which remained in southeastern Germany when the other two Mobile Bivouac units moved into the French Occupation Zone of Austria, worked in conjunction with the 535th Group in sweeping northward toward the Kaiserslautern-Buchenbuhl line, which marked the boundary between the First and Third Field Commands. This sweep was completed on 27 July when Colonel Burgess reported that one unit continued in the Nivard area above the demarcation line "until statements received from the burgomaster convinced us that the entire area had been covered, either by the First or Third Field Command."⁷⁶

Completion of the "contact sweep" released the 538th Group Mobile Bivouac Unit that had participated in the sweep through southeastern Germany for operations in Austria, while all 535th Group units became available for special case investigations in all southern Germany below the Kaiserslautern-Buchenbuhl line and continuation of special case investigations in heavily mined areas in the vicinity of Nancy. As the gradual progress of French mine clearance detachments opened up pockets for inspection, American

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 15 June 46, p. 4.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 27 Jul 46, p. 2.

search teams moved in. During the last week of July, 28 American remains were recovered from such pockets.⁷⁷

Meanwhile, the 538th Group carried forward its mission in Austria, completing the publicizing of its objectives and needs in French, American, and British occupation zones and equipping a mausoleum at Vienna, where all remains recovered in Austria were concentrated and processed for transportation by air to St. Avold Military Cemetery. On 6 July, Colonel Burgess reported that the evacuation of American remains from Vienna was in progress, "primarily by C-47." He added that in the event of bad weather "or too many 100-hour checkups, I propose to use rail transport; arrangements have been made with the USAF for this."⁷⁸ By the end of July, the French and American Zones had, according to report, been "completely searched and evacuated." The same report expressed a hope that all search and recovery operations within the British Zone could be brought to completion, "probably within the coming week."⁷⁹

Discontinuance of graveside identification during July accelerated the rate of evacuation from the field to an extent that constrained command headquarters to warn exhumation team leaders that "with the new system of doing all the processing in the Morgue at Strasbourg, the exhumations will not continue as a mass digging job. It is feared that any tendency to dig them up quickly will result in loss of identity due to improper and incomplete pre-examination investigations."⁸⁰

At this juncture, the Soviet Military Government in Austria indicated a disposition to examine proposals that American graves registration units be permitted to enter the Russian Zone of Occupation. Soviet Army officers met representatives of the Third Field Command on 23 July. With characteristic Russian foresight in anticipating all possible complications, the Red Army emissaries brought up and discussed such problems as search and investigative procedures, housing for units working away from their bases, the issuance of passes to American units operating in the Russian Zone, the hiring of local labor and interpreters, and the co-ordination of planning and operational control by American and Russian teams engaged in the same type of work. Notice of the first roadblock the Russians intended to throw up came with an announcement that they had been compiling files on United States burials in their

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 15 Jul 46.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 27 Jul 46, p. 2.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 20 Jul 46, p. 2.

Zone and that, since these files would be turned over to the 538th Group Headquarters, the Americans would be spared the necessity of sending propaganda teams into the area. For continued investigation of isolated grave sites, the Soviet delegation propounded a scheme which they termed "Quadrupartia Publicity." Requests for burial information, it was explained, would be distributed through Russian military channels to local communities. Response at the local level would flow back through the same channels to a central office at the Schoenbrun Palace in Vienna, where representatives of the United States, Great Britain, and France would be accommodated with office space, and where burial information pertinent to each national interest would be delivered.⁸¹

By mid-August, the need for burial information had been widely publicized under the Quadrupartia Agreement in the 10,300 square miles of the Russian Zone. At the same time, Third Field Command Headquarters completed arrangements whereby the 538th Group would be reinforced by the 612th GR Company, with the 347th Battalion Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment acting as its administrative agent. According to plans then contemplated, these units were to be transferred to the First Field Command to complete search and recovery operations while the residue of the Third Field Command would serve as a nucleus of the Second Zone, which was to be activated shortly at Étampes, France, under command of Colonel George R. Burgess.⁸²

Colonel Burgess exercised operational control over the Third Field Command in its assigned area during August. On the 24th, he reported the completion of search and recovery operations in the British Zone of Austria. Meanwhile, all records and files for southern Germany and for Austria were prepared for transfer to the First Field Command headquarters. His final weekly report of Third Field Command operations states: "I have moved my entire headquarters to Etampes, opening here at 0001 hours, 1 September."

When the last full quarter of the Third Field Command's existence ended on 30 June 1946, it had completed 72,000 miles of area searching, visited 1,184 communities, and located and investigated 16,341 isolated graves or unburied remains. Of the recovered dead, only 1,629 proved to be Americans. They were evacuated and reburied in temporary United States military cemeteries. The others were Allied or enemy remains.⁸³

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 27 Jul 46, p. 2; 10 Aug 46, p. 1.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 17 Aug 46, pp. 1-2; 24 Aug 46, p. 2.

⁸³ Rpt of Opns, AGRC-EA, Apr-Jun 46, pt. II, p. 47; KCRC-AGRC-Europe.

Establishment of Four Zones

General Order No. 50, 12 August 1946, disbanded the Third Field Command, effective 31 August, and established the Second and Third Zones, AGRC-Europe, effective 1 September 1946. The Second Zone in general covered northern and northwestern France, including portions of the former Second and Third Field Commands. General Order No. 50 assigned responsibility for Third Field Command records to the Second Zone until they were ready for proper retirement.⁸⁴ The Third Zone, more extensive in area than the first two zones, included a considerable portion of territory formerly under jurisdiction of the Third Field Command, covering central, southern, and most of eastern France, in addition to Switzerland, the British Isles, and Eire. The last two countries constituted the Fourth Zone, when it was established on 1 October 1946. As has been related, the First Zone had come into existence on 1 August 1946 and covered much the same territory as the former Second Field Command, including Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg. On 1 October 1946, the sector organizations of AGRC and their responsibilities, functions, personnel, and property were transferred to the newly activated zones in the following manner:⁸⁵

Sector I	Fourth Zone	Sector IV	Third Zone
Sector II	First Zone	Sector V	Second Zone
Sector III	Third Zone	Sector VI	Second Zone

The missions of the zones were similar. They investigated isolated burial reports, concentrated recovered remains in temporary United States cemeteries, operated, developed, and maintained cemeteries, and transferred Allied and enemy nationals to the jurisdiction of the country of their allegiance. It is proposed now to discuss the important role played by the zones in search, recovery, and evacuation operations.⁸⁶

With headquarters established at Liège, Belgium, under the command of Col. George S. Wear, the First Zone consisted of five main divisions and a medical section. When Sector II was absorbed (organization and personnel) into the new Zone, each division expanded to cover the broader scope of the zonal mission. Investigative units attached to AGRC, First Zone, were the 551st QM Group,

⁸⁴ GO No. 50, 12 Aug 46, App. No. 4 to Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, Jul-Sep 46; KCRC-AGRC-Europe.

⁸⁵ Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, Oct-Dec 46, pp. 20-21, App. No. 5; KCRC-AGRC-Europe.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, Organization Chart, App. No. 6, Annex A, AGRC-EA, 1 Nov 46.

AMERICAN GRAVES
REGISTRATION COMMAND
EUROPEAN AREA



located at Liège and the 335th QM Battalion, located at Maastricht, Holland.⁸⁷

During the last quarter of 1946, search and investigative operations, based upon reports of isolated burials, took place throughout Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Officer and enlisted personnel, plus civilian employees, operated Zone Headquarters, the sub-depot, and other necessary facilities in the vicinity of Liège. Searching for isolated burials resulted in the recovery and evacuation of some 66 remains to the Central Identification Point for processing and reburial in a United States military cemetery. The area covered had already been previously swept, and detailed information was required in order to close individual cases.⁸⁸

Throughout this period, joint operations were conducted with the British, based upon information received from higher headquarters or from local sources. It was felt that combined operations provided a long step toward solving such questions as the nationality of the deceased.⁸⁹ AGRC officials believed that perhaps some 180 bodies would be disinterred through this co-operative effort. By the close of 1946, however, actual recoveries and disinterments had not been impressive in point of numbers.

During the first 3 months of 1947, extremely inclement weather often caused roads to be ice covered in large portions of the First Zone, thereby hampering investigations of isolated burials. Even with favorable climatic conditions, such cases presented much difficulty because a long time had elapsed since the date of death, necessitating a close check on every clue in a final effort to solve these casualties. The ten search and two recovery teams then employed by the First Zone made some 187 special investigations during this quarter, recovering 18 American remains.⁹⁰ At the close of March, the Zone had a strength of 36 officers and 131 enlisted men. In addition, there were 63 War Department civilians and 457 indigenous workers.

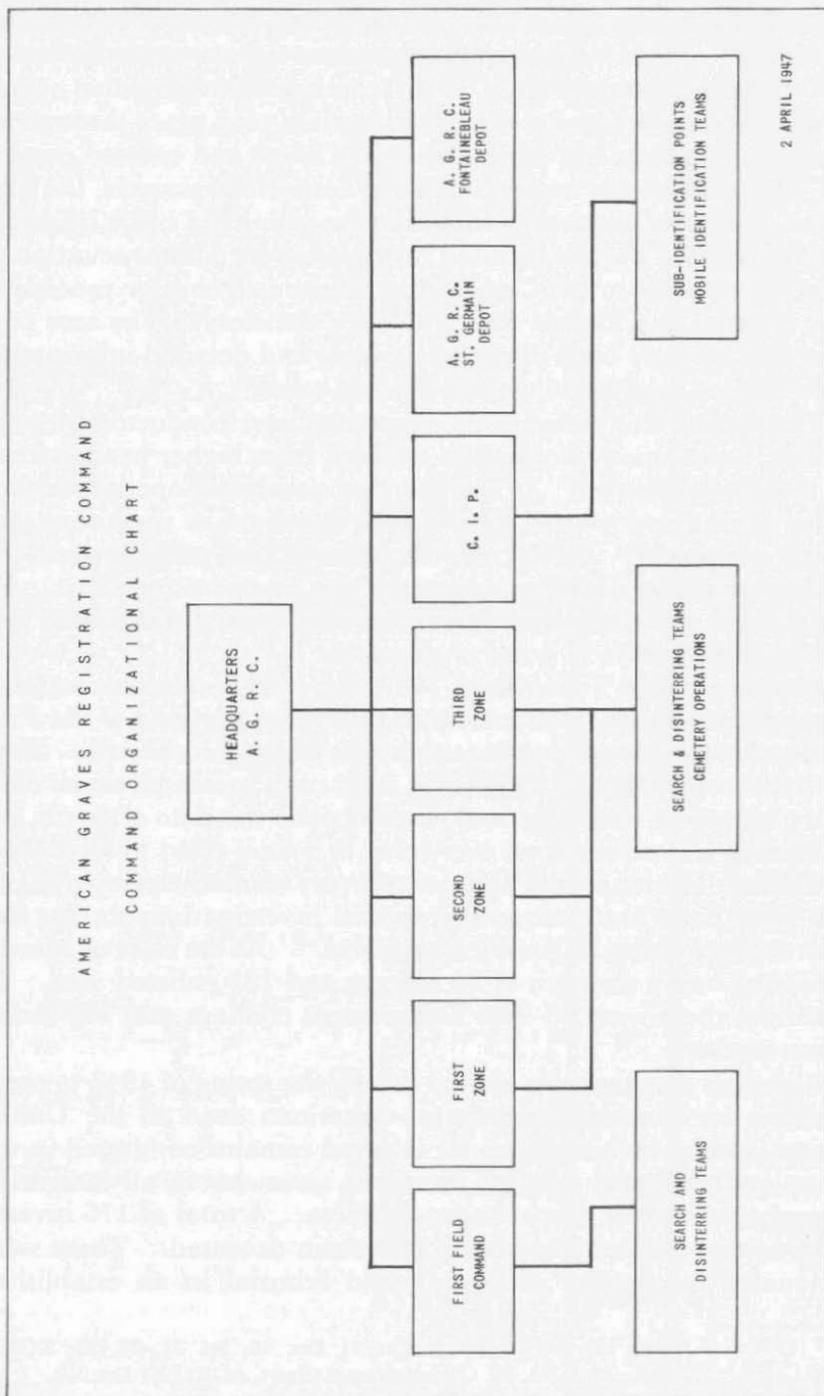
Although emphasis was shifted during the spring of 1947 to preparations for the actual return of American dead to the United States, special investigations for isolated remains continued in the Zone and personnel strength increased somewhat in all categories, except that of War Department civilians. A total of 176 investigative cases yielded 39 isolated American deceased. These were evacuated for further processing and reburial in an established

⁸⁷ (1) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Oct-31 Dec 46, pp. 21, 24, 33; KCRC-AGRC-EA. (2) *Ibid.*, App. No. 20, Organizational Chart, AGRC, 31 Dec. 46.

⁸⁸ Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, Oct-Dec 46, pp. 156-57.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, Jan-Mar 47, p. 101; Apr-Jun 46, p. 53.



cemetery. At the beginning of April, AGRC officials estimated that search and evacuation activity in the Zone would be completed by 31 August 1947.⁹¹ As was true with most forecasts of this kind, actual operations continued for some time after the anticipated deadline.

During the summer months, AGRC efforts in the First Zone, as elsewhere in western Europe, largely centered upon the fast approaching shipment of American dead to their homeland. Nevertheless, a total of 204 special investigations during the quarter ending 30 September resulted in the recovery of 18 previously unlocated deceased. By the end of the quarter, the First Zone employed only four teams for searching and one for recovering, as compared to six search and two recovery teams at the beginning of the quarter.⁹²

Recoveries in the First Zone continued to decline during the closing months of 1947, as 131 investigations resulted in the location and evacuation of only 11 isolated American remains, most of whom had originally been buried as British or Canadian dead. As in the immediate past, investigators exerted every effort to obtain sufficiently positive statements and records of circumstances to warrant the closing of cases.⁹³

At the beginning of 1948, the First Zone had just been enlarged to include jurisdiction of installations in the British Isles and Eire, which had been operating under the Third Zone. This move had been made to equalize as much as possible the workload throughout the Command. First Zone Headquarters remained at Liège. This arrangement continued until about 1 November 1948, when the Fourth Zone, AGRC-EA, was re-activated, with jurisdiction in the United Kingdom and Eire. Despite its re-establishment, AGRC officials expected that by 1 February 1949, the organization would lose its Zone status and revert to that of a detachment.⁹⁴ In addition to the loss of jurisdiction over the British Isles and Eire late in 1948, the First Zone was relieved of responsibility for operations in Luxembourg and of control over Hamm Cemetery, which passed to the Third Zone.

Search and evacuation operations in the First Zone progressed, meanwhile, in routine fashion throughout 1949 with the volume of activity diminishing as the months passed. Some 215 special in-

⁹¹ (1) *Ibid.*, Apr.-Jun 47, Vol. I, pp. 143-44. (2) Rpt, Graves Registration and Repatriation Activities, AGRC-EA, 1 Apr 47, hereinafter cited as Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, with appropriate reporting command.

⁹² (1) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Jul-30 Sep 47, p. 98; KCRC-AGRC-EA. (2) Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRC-EA, 1 Oct 47.

⁹³ Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Oct-31 Dec 47, p. 116.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1 Oct-31 Dec 48, p. 26.

vestigations of isolated remains were made during the year, 170 taking place during the first 6 months. Recoveries in the Zone also showed a marked decrease from previous years, with less than 50 American deceased located and evacuated during 1948. The fact that only 12 pending cases were on hand at First Zone Headquarters at the close of the year indicated quite clearly that the search and recovery phase of the graves registration mission had just about ended.⁹⁵

Nevertheless, some investigations, on a much diminished scale, continued during the first months of 1949. Eight new cases were received and completed by the end of March, still leaving 12 cases on hand, all of which were scheduled for termination during April, following the clearing of minefields in which the remains were located.⁹⁶ After accomplishment of this project, the First Zone retained only a minimum force of Field Operating Section personnel for the processing of unknowns at the Neuville Morgue.⁹⁷

After its establishment on 1 September 1946 under the command of Col. George R. Burgess, with headquarters at Étampes, France, the Second Zone was organized with the double mission of recovering isolated burials and of care and maintenance of cemeteries in the former Fifth and Sixth Sectors (northern and northwestern France).

The Field Operations Section of the Zone was given the task of investigating all reports of isolated burials within its area and of exhuming and removing all recovered American remains to the Central Identification Point at Strasbourg. The Zone also took charge of conducting publicity campaigns in an effort to resolve all possible missing casualties.⁹⁸ In this connection, the 535th QM Group and the 589th QM Bn. were attached to the Zone organization as investigative units.

Augmented by the surplus officers and enlisted men from the two disbanded sectors (Fifth and Sixth), the Zone immediately formed fifteen officer-directed teams on 1 October. Of this group, six investigation teams, each composed of one officer, one driver, and one trained interpreter, began surface investigations of cases then on hand. Six publicity teams of the same strength continued efforts in that category and three exhumation units, each composed of one officer, one clerk, one driver, and six prisoners of war, began disinterments of located remains.

An unexpected reduction of time required for redeployment cost

⁹⁵ Rpts of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, for each quarterly period, 1948.

⁹⁶ Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Jan-31 Mar 49, p. 136.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1 Jul-30 Sep 46, pp. 24, 160.

the Zone the services of seven teams on 11 October, and publicity operations were temporarily discontinued. Fluctuation of personnel strength continued throughout this quarter. Subsequently, no field units were up to full officer strength and not more than ten teams were ever available. Despite this shortage, the Zone's field teams achieved a high record of operational performance. During the last three months of the year, they completed 294 investigations and 566 disinterments. Of this number, 69 remains were Americans.⁹⁹

During these and later search operations, publicity proved to be of great importance. Personal contact and public information media provided the major sources for publicizing the GRS mission. Meetings with church, governmental, and military officials, and with groups of civilians were illustrative of the personal contact method. Publicity teams, after courtesy visits by a field grade officer with the Bishop and the Prefect of the French Department concerned, began a town-to-town campaign. Normally, the officer



FIGURE 2. *In its search for war dead in France, an area AGRC team consults the mayor of a French town.*

⁹⁹ (1) *Ibid.*, pp. 160-61. (2) Weekly Narrative Rpts, Second Zone, AGRC, 4 Oct-28 Dec 46.



FIGURE 3. *In France, a member of an AGRC search team tacks a poster on the door of the chapel while an Abbey looks on.*

in charge of the team called upon the mayor, priest, schoolteacher, cafe owner, baker, and other prominent citizens and explained the nature of the mission. The team then placed posters in strategic spots, distributed report forms, and collected any available data. The cordial reception and complete co-operation afforded these units was most gratifying. Public information media included in particular the newspapers and radio. AGRC teams made necessary arrangements for eight daily broadcasts over a French radio network in the eastern portion of the Zone, over BBC in Normandy and Brittany and through the National Broadcasting Company's

Voice of America. When answers to these appeals began to wane, a followup series, using a new script, was broadcast between 26 November and 14 December 1946. As a result, some 111 letters reached Second Zone Headquarters from civilians from all over Europe. Those containing information applicable to other zones were sent to the appropriate command. In addition, Paris newspapers and those in smaller communities carried items concerning the teams and their mission. At the close of the quarter, statistics demonstrated the importance of publicity measures, since they showed that 64 percent of completed cases and over 51 percent of American recoveries had originated from publicity sources rather than from data found in official files.¹⁰⁰

During January 1947, after Zone Headquarters had completed its move to Carentan, France, ten officer-led investigation teams operated in the field daily but by the close of March, this number had dwindled to only six because of constant redeployment. Correspondingly, the publicity campaigns lessened in scope. On the other hand, the number of cases received also dropped off, and the six units were better able to meet the workload. The overall performance indeed exceeded that of the preceding quarter since 309 cases were completed, resulting in the successful recovery of 91 isolated American remains and their later reburial in established cemeteries. Of this number, 46 were located in a special operation in the Azores Islands.¹⁰¹

During the spring of 1947, the Second Zone employed eight search and three recovery teams or more than either of the other two zone commands. The use of so many teams stemmed from an official AGRC estimate that some 230 isolated remains still lay within the Second Zone—a larger number than in the other zones of western Europe.¹⁰² Despite many problems, including those arising from wornout transportation equipment and shortages of trained GRS officers, investigation and evacuation activities continued in a wide area of the Zone. During the favorable weather in May and June, many difficult cases were successfully resolved. In co-operation with the British Graves Registration Service, a mass disinterment of 132 graves took place at Le Verties Canadian Military Cemetery, yielding three American remains. By 30 June, the

¹⁰⁰ (1) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Oct-31 Dec 46, pp. 162-64. (2) *Ibid.*, App. No. 56, Script of Radio Broadcast No. 2, Second Zone, AGRC; App. No. 57, Sample News Release, Second Zone, AGRC.

¹⁰¹ (1) *Ibid.*, 1 Jan-31 Mar 47, Vol. I, pp. 103-4; KCRC-AGRC-EA. (2) *Ibid.*, App. No. 24, Chart, Searching Opns, 2d Zone, AGRC. (3) Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRC-EA, 1 Mar 47.

¹⁰² Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Apr-30 Jun 47, Vol. I, p. 101; KCRC-AGRC-EA.

Zone Command had received an additional 170 cases from AGRC Headquarters and 22 new cases had been uncovered from local sources, leading to the recovery of 32 Americans.

At this time, Second Zone Headquarters requested AGRC officials to close the OMAHA Beach Tank case and declare the remains to be lost at sea and unrecoverable. During early days of the invasion of Europe in 1944, a number of American tanks had been lost offshore due to rough seas and enemy artillery fire. With the help of the French Navy, this area had been swept several times and many soundings and use of electronic underwater detectors had failed to locate the tanks. French naval authorities believed that the tanks had been completely covered by sand because of the swift undercurrent. Even divers had found nothing. The request of Second Zone Headquarters for closing this case was consequently granted.¹⁰³

Despite a diminution of personnel strength assigned to search and recovery operations during the summer months, the Zone had reduced its backlog of unresolved cases from 61 to 43 by the end of September 1947. On the other hand, the reduction was a normal development since the number of new cases naturally declined with the passage of time. During the July-September quarter, 23 additional American remains were recovered and evacuated for identification processing.

Further progress in lowering the number of unresolved cases continued in the last quarter of 1947, leaving a backlog of only 20 such cases on hand at the end of the year. A waning number of search and investigation teams had recovered only 17 isolated American remains during the closing 3 months of 1947, further reflecting the general downward trend in this phase of the GRS mission.¹⁰⁴

Search and investigation activities continued to decline through 1948, with no special incidents or problems. During the year, only 152 cases had been received for resolution and only about 40 isolated American remains had been recovered and evacuated. Six unresolved cases were still on hand.¹⁰⁵ The extent to which the search activity had diminished in scope was indicated by the fact that only one search and evacuation team operated in the Zone during the second half of 1948.

Small-scale search operations continued in 1949 until March when the Second, Third, and Fourth Zones were relieved of responsibility for this activity. The Registration Division, HQ, AGRC-EA, took

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 147-48.

¹⁰⁴ (1) *Ibid.*, 1 Oct-31 Dec 47, p. 132. (2) Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Jan 48.

¹⁰⁵ Rpts of Opns for Quarterly Periods, 1948, Hq AGRC-EA.

control of these operations for all areas formerly covered by these zones. At the same time, all records of isolated burials and unresolved casualties were transferred to the Registration Division at AGRC Headquarters.¹⁰⁶

Established on 1 September 1946, the Third Zone originally had jurisdiction over the British Isles and Eire as well as southern and eastern France but with the creation of the Fourth Zone of 1 October, it lost the first two countries. As originally organized under the command of Col. George E. Burritt, with headquarters at Nancy, France, the newly activated Zone drew most of its personnel from the 531st QM Group. Other important units included the 337th QM Battalion and the 539th, 4561st, 4566th, and 4567th QM Service Companies. At the outset, the Zone possessed a personnel strength of 34 officers, 107 enlisted men, 302 War Department and indigenous civilians, and 1,202 Prisoners of War.¹⁰⁷

The first full quarter of the Third Zone's existence (October-December) proved to be a rather turbulent one, since at the beginning, the Zone was in the throes of organization and many changes and adjustments took place. One added complication was the early disbandment of the Fourth Zone, effective 4 November 1946, after only a few weeks' existence, and the return of this region to the Third Zone. Besides this added responsibility, three departments of France, which included a United States Military Cemetery, were transferred from Second to Third Zone control.¹⁰⁸ Despite the difficulties experienced in adjusting to these organizational changes, the Third Zone completed 145 isolated burial cases during the closing quarter of 1946, with the recovery and evacuation of 69 American deceased.

One of the chief hindrances to its operations was the presence of sizable mined areas along the French-German border. As French demining units cleared these regions, the investigation teams completed their missions. Before AGRC teams entered any area, they ascertained whether recovery operations could be safely conducted.¹⁰⁹ Limited manpower constituted another problem, for investigations were carried on in scattered localities which meant that teams were often completely "on their own" and sometimes dependent upon French civilian agencies for subsistence and billeting.

¹⁰⁶ (1) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Jan-31 Mar 49, pp. 88, 139-40. (2) Operations Instructions No. 15, Hq AGRC-EA, 21 Feb 49.

¹⁰⁷ Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Oct-31 Dec 46, pp. 21, 43-44; KCRC-AGRC-EA.

¹⁰⁸ (1) *Ibid.*, p. 169. (2) *Ibid.*, App. No. 13, GO No. 62, Hq AGRC-EA, 4 Nov 46.

¹⁰⁹ (1) *Ibid.*, pp. 173-74. (2) *Ibid.*, App. No. 60, Chart, Operations, Third Zone, AGRC.

At the beginning of 1947, the Zone had on hand 72 unresolved isolated burial cases. During the first 3 months of the year, well over 100 new cases were received both from AGRC Headquarters and from local sources. Zone investigation teams closed 122 cases and recovered 20 isolated American remains. A slow rate of demining, caused mostly by unfavorable winter weather conditions in January and February hindered search and recovery of isolated deceased. Many roads, already in a state of poor repair, became impassable under snowy, icy conditions. As spring approached, minor floods made some areas inaccessible. AGRC officials expected that the bulk of this work could be completed during the oncoming warmer weather and before another winter partially closed down operations.¹¹⁰

With the advent of more favorable conditions during the spring months, demining operations increased, thereby permitting Third Zone teams to function in a wider area. At the beginning of April, the Zone employed nine search and three recovery teams in anticipation of maximum activity during the oncoming months.¹¹¹ In this period, several cases in southern France, which had long laid dormant in the suspense files, were reviewed and early in June, two combination investigating-disinterring teams entered that area. Although several isolated dead were located and evacuated, the constant arrival of new cases from this region and elsewhere in the Zone prevented any sizable reduction in the number of unresolved cases on hand.¹¹²

The complete clearing of mines during the summer months, in addition to good weather, led to a marked increase in cases successfully resolved. On 15 August, the Zone received orders from higher echelons to end search and recovery operations by 15 November. As a result, higher weekly quotas of recoveries were established for search teams. The Zone Command felt quite confident of terminating the mission before the deadline with the possible exception of the United Kingdom, where British legal barriers posed an obstacle to rapid progress.¹¹³

A special case involving a plane crash which occurred in the autumn of 1946 near Mt. Blanc was resolved during August 1947. A search detachment, stationed for 8 days in the village of Le Chapieux, worked in close co-operation with the skiing and scouting members of the 99th Battalion of the French Alpine Infantry.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1 Jan-31 Mar 47, Vol. I, pp. 108-9.

¹¹¹ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Apr 47, pp. 2-3.

¹¹² (1) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1, Apr-30 Jun 47, Vol. I, p. 152; KCRC-AGRC-EA. (2) *Ibid.*, App. No. 80, Situation Map, Searching Operations, Third Zone.

¹¹³ Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Jul-30 Sep 47, Vol. I, pp. 105-6.

Because the site of the crash was located at an altitude of about 11,000 feet on the "Aiguille des Glaciers" and the glaciers were very dangerous, only one member of the American investigating team made the final ascent. Although the French had been carefully instructed by American GRS officers, they recovered the scattered remains only with great difficulty, later evacuating them for a mass burial ceremony, attended by high-ranking French and American military officers.¹¹⁴

During the closing quarter of 1947, searching activity was intensified in an effort to meet the 15 November deadline. Field investigations in the Bordeaux and other southern areas of France resulted in the completion of 36 cases and the recovery of 10 isolated remains. On 15 November, the 539th QM Service Company was deactivated as a unit and absorbed into the Isolated Burial Section, attached to Operations Division, Zone Headquarters. A skeleton crew continued field search and investigation operations. Between the time of this reorganization and the close of the year, 24 more investigations yielded 5 positive results.¹¹⁵

The year 1948 was marked by waning search and investigation activity and relatively few new cases, which necessitated only a comparatively small amount of time and manpower. In fact, during the early weeks of the year, the Isolated Burials Section was reduced to a point where only one investigating team functioned. The few cases were scattered over all corners of the Zone. The search activity was now generally considered to be in an extended phasing-out stage. On the other hand, the fact that a small number of recoveries still occurred led AGRC officials to expect that some time would elapse before this part of the GRS mission could be considered completed. As an illustration of this point, eight isolated remains were located and evacuated during the July-September quarter of 1948, representing the largest number in any comparable period during the year.¹¹⁶ It is interesting to note that most of these late recoveries were based on local information, reflecting the effective groundwork performed by investigating teams in every corner of the Zone. Occasionally, these scattered recoveries occurred in cases which had already been closed as negative. AGRC officials felt, therefore, that unrelenting publicity throughout the Zone would continue to produce fruitful results for an indefinite period.

¹¹⁴ (1) *Ibid.*, p. 109. (2) Rpt GR & Repat Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Sep 47, p. 2.

¹¹⁵ (1) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Oct-31 Dec 47, p. 124. (2) Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Jan 48. (3) Chart, Status of Isolated Burials, Third Zone, AGRC, 31 Dec 47.

¹¹⁶ Rpt of Opns, AGRC-EA, 1 Jul-30 Sep 48, pp. 170-80.

In the closing months of 1948, the cases which remained were usually of a complex nature, including a diving operation and the excavation of a bomber crash. The diving project involved an underwater search for an LST sunk during the war. The negative results of the effort were reviewed by the investigator who donned diving gear himself and went through the hull of the sunken ship. The excavation project involved the recovery of two crew members of a B-17 which had crashed in flames in 1944. The owner of the land where the crash occurred had completely covered over the plane and excavation operations were necessary to recover the fragmentary remains.¹¹⁷

A recapitulation of search and recovery operations in the Third Zone at the end of 1948 showed that 15 cases had been closed during the last quarter of the year, that 843 cases had been received during the entire period of search and recovery activities and that 826 cases had been closed, leaving a balance of 15 cases on hand.¹¹⁸

AGRC officials, observing the degree to which search and recovery activities had diminished, soon concluded that the Registration Division, Hq, AGRC-EA, could assume this responsibility. Consequently, in mid-March 1949, the Search and Recovery Section, Third Zone, with all its records and remaining personnel, moved to Headquarters, AGRC-EA.¹¹⁹

The Fourth Zone had a rather hectic and intermittent existence, since it was disbanded shortly after its original activation on 1 October 1946 and later revived for another brief period. During its first short period of existence, the Zone held jurisdiction over the United Kingdom and Eire, which had formerly comprised the First Sector.¹²⁰ After operating for a few weeks, the Zone was disbanded on 4 November 1946 and all records, property, equipment, and personnel became the responsibility of the Commanding Officer, Third Zone.¹²¹

After nearly 2 years' absence from AGRC organizational charts, the Fourth Zone was revived by GO No. 28, Hq, AGRC-EA, 26 October 1948, with its former area of control. At the same time, responsibility for operations in Luxembourg was transferred from the First to the Third Zones.¹²² During its second brief period of activity,

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1 Oct-31 Dec 48, pp. 186-87.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1 Jan-31 Mar 49, pp. 1, 142.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1 Oct-31 Dec 46, pp. 20-21. (2) *Ibid.*, App. No. 5, Area and Unit Location Map, AGRC, 1 Oct 46.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, App. No. 13, GO No. 62, AGRC-EA, 4 Nov 46.

¹²² (1) *Ibid.*, 1 Oct-31 Dec 48, p. 19. (2) *Ibid.*, App. No. 4, GO 28, Hq AGRC-EA, 26 Oct 48.

the Fourth Zone was almost exclusively engaged in care and maintenance of Cambridge Cemetery and no search operations of any significance took place. After only a few months, GO No. 6, Hq, AGRC-EA, 21 February 1949, disbanded the Fourth Zone, effective 28 February. All subsequent GRS operations in the Zone's area again became the responsibility of Hq, First Zone, Liège, Belgium.¹²³

With the second discontinuance of the Fourth Zone and the transfer of the search and investigative operations of the Second and Third Zones to AGRC Headquarters in March 1949 and with only small-scale operations continuing in the First Zone, the story of search and recovery in the liberated areas of western Europe comes to a close, for all practical purposes, in the spring of 1949.

The following statistics show the number of isolated remains recovered and evacuated to an identification processing point by 1 July 1949 in the liberated areas of western Europe, covering the four Zone Commands:¹²⁴

<i>Country or place</i>	<i>Number of remains</i>
France:	
Northwestern.....	551
Eastern and Southern.....	610
Holland.....	1,122
Azores.....	46
Belgium.....	232
Gibraltar.....	41
Luxembourg.....	56
Portugal.....	19
Spain.....	25
Switzerland.....	61
United Kingdom.....	53
Channel Islands.....	17
Total.....	2,833

The total of over 2,800 recoveries may seem small when compared to the 16,548 recovered isolated dead throughout the European Theater by 1 July 1948. But, as mentioned earlier, the bulk of unrecovered dead at the close of hostilities lay east of the French-German border in the countries falling under the First Field Command. This comparatively low figure of later recoveries in western Europe is also partly explained by the fact that the wartime and early postwar sweeping operations there were of a thorough and efficient nature.

¹²³ (1) *Ibid.*, 1 Jan-31 Mar 49, p. 21. (2) *Ibid.*, App. No. 15, GO No. 6, Hq AGRC-EA, 21 Feb 49.

¹²⁴ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Jul 49.

CHAPTER VIII
SEARCH AND RECOVERY OF REMAINS
IN THE OCCUPIED AREAS

Operations in West Germany

On 1 January 1946, the active elements of the First Field Command were disposed to continue the northward sweep through the American and British Zones of Germany. As then constituted, these forces consisted of First Field Headquarters, 3 quartermaster groups, 8 quartermaster battalions and 13 GR companies.¹

Augmented by numerous TO units specified in the troop assignment orders of 7 and 11 January, First Field Headquarters immediately faced the distracting task of supporting active operations in the field while filling up paper organizations with replacements and, at the same time, attempting to give the new personnel some rudimentary instruction in graves registration procedures.

In accomplishing this difficult feat, the First Field Command had a slight advantage over its sister commands struggling with similar problems in the Low Countries and southern France. Some of the older units in Germany had profited by a brief period of field service, including both cemetery evacuation and search operations, and, it would seem, were available as a nucleus of expansion. But existence of such an asset was more apparent than real. While the search activities of November and December of 1945 had given the First Field Command some of the benefits of a "shakedown" exercise, the advantages derived from this experience were largely confined to improving the quality of staff work. Redeployment took from the operating units a heavy toll of high point men, removing seasoned veterans and substituting raw recruits destitute of specialized skills and, for the most part, selected without regard to aptitudes associated with any technical activity. Careless screening of replacements sent to the Command evoked bitter complaints from First Field Headquarters.

It was obvious that whoever was responsible for sending twenty-three hundred (2,300) enlisted men to this Command did not set up a screening score. In other words no restrictions were put on what enlisted men could be transferred to

¹ Rpt of Opns, 1st Fld Cmd, Jan-Mar 46, p. 3.

First Field Command from the standpoint of ASE score. Between 1 January and 25 March approximately seven hundred (700) were deployed to the Zone of Interior as they had sufficient points for discharge. Someone along the line definitely "dropped the ball" when they shipped these enlisted men to this Command. The time that could have been spent in training new men in graves registration work was spent in running a replacement depot.²

Similar complaints condemned the indifference shown at replacement centers in filling requisitions for enlisted mechanics, cooks, and typists. Faulty vehicle maintenance, poor messing, and mounting backlogs of paper work gravely impaired the efficiency of many units. Overburdened with "bodies" lacking these desired skills, First Field Headquarters adopted the expedient of hiring "ex-enemy personnel." German civilian employees increased during the first quarter of 1946 from 350 to 550. During the same period Headquarters, AGRC, assigned 20 highly qualified War Department civilians to the Command.³

During the period of reorganization, First Field Headquarters gave particular attention to strengthening the 536th Group in the French Zone by reinforcing its original complement of one group headquarters and 2 GR companies with 2 quartermaster battalions and 3 additional GR companies. With Col. George E. Burritt assigned as commanding officer, the 536th Group now enjoyed the opportunity of keeping pace with the two groups aligned on its right in the American Zone.⁴

Under conditions that can scarcely be described as encouraging, the First Field Command under Col. Harry S. Robertson undertook the most trying phase of its mission—a winter operation in the heart of central Europe. The 1st Group, Col. Elmer L. Thompson commanding, with four organic GR companies "went forward on the east [right] flank . . . and reached its phased line set for 15 February 1946, without appreciable difficulty."⁵ The 528th Group, after taking over the area originally assigned to the 534th Group in the southeast corner of Germany, moved up on the left of the 1st and, under command of Lt. Col. Hawthorne Davis, entered the British Zone during the third week of February.⁶ On the extreme left, the 536th Group pressed with renewed vigor the sweep over

² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁵ Evidently a line running approximately with the southern boundary of the British Zone.

⁶ Rpt of Opns, 1st Fld Cmd, Jan-Mar 46, p. 9.

open areas of the French Zone, while bypassing the heavily mined pockets along the Siegfried Line and in the Huertgen Forest.⁷

Meanwhile, propaganda teams sped in advance through the British Zone, distributing posters and consulting with district commanders and local German officials. Newspaper announcements and radio broadcasts supplemented the display of placards in public places. In addition to publicizing his mission, Colonel Robertson took pains to conclude an agreement at Headquarters, British Army of the Rhine, providing that areas assigned to specified search units would coincide with British divisional districts, "thereby insuring the closest sort of cooperation."⁸

Late in February, the advancing elements over-extended their lines of communication; First Field Headquarters established a forward distributing point in order to facilitate the delivery of Class I and Class III supplies, as well as required technical items. The advancement of 1st Group elements on the extreme right toward the Elbe River outreached the capabilities of light vehicle transportation. Only the fortuitous allotment of 126 new ¼-ton trucks (4 x 4, G&R) averted a breakdown of communications, with the consequent suspension of operations.

Shipped on railway flat cars to First Field Headquarters at this critical juncture, the vehicles were assembled by a German mobile labor unit and sent to the front. A transportation officer remarked:

In the light of subsequent experience with the shortage of spare parts, it can now be seen that the accomplishment of First Field Command's mission in the field would have been impossible without receipt of these mechanically perfect vehicles. At no time has there been a letdown in search and evacuation operations due to light vehicle failure.⁹

Meanwhile, the restoration and return to rightful owners of all properties used for temporary military cemeteries in Germany released First Field Command units from further participation in cemeterial operations. At the same time, the Continental Base Command assumed responsibility for evacuation of the current dead. Although the First Field Command lost the 3058th GR Company in this transfer of function, it could now devote undivided attention to direction of the sweep.

Moving northward in three columns, the advance gathered momentum during the spring months. The 536th Group, on the left, completed its surface sweep in the French Zone by 10 May. At this time, it released a few of its units for assignment to the Third

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Field Command, which was then taking over new search areas in Southern Germany and Austria. Holding the center, meanwhile, the 528th Group swept across western Hanover toward the North Sea shore. On the right, the 1st Group took up the advance through eastern Hanover, crossing the Elbe late in April and sending its propaganda and search teams forward into Schleswig-Holstein toward Jutland, the mainland province of Denmark.¹⁰

Despite a steady diminution of troop strength from 2,900 effectives reported on 31 March to 784 (98 officers and 686 enlisted men) at the end of June, the First Field Command showed a substantial improvement in production records relative to recovery and evacuation of remains. The smaller force evacuated 3,707 remains during April-June as compared to 2,138 in the first quarter of 1946. Excepting only the number of square miles searched—23,000 during the latter period in contrast to 37,000 in the former one—all other achievements would indicate that the development of a well-balanced organization, along with substantial improvements in unit efficiency, more than compensated for the loss of manpower.

First Field Headquarters attributed these gains to several causes, one being the favorable weather. Then an improved commercial telephone service in the industrial region of northern Germany removed many difficulties that had impeded progress in the south. Again, the MACR file at First Field Headquarters had by this time been completely organized. Systematized information and prompt transmission of intelligence to operating units exerted a noticeable influence on accomplishment in the field. An operations officer reported that "In those instances where the information indicated a crash that could be pinpointed, the cases of missing crewmen were processed through First Field Command and subordinate units in the same manner as that of usual isolated burials."¹¹

Another distinct contribution to overall efficiency came with the reassignment of responsibility for evacuation of remains from subordinate units to First Field Headquarters. The increased burden imposed by lengthening lines of communications, particularly on the right beyond the Elbe, could only be accommodated by the organization of a transport service which would operate on scheduled runs over a specified route. Accordingly, First Field Headquarters allotted heavy motors and 5-ton semitrailers in sufficient quantities to make up several trains, each comprising four trailers with a total carrying capacity of 57 bodies. Operating from Bremen as a relay point for relief of drivers and motors, each train ran the 400-mile round trip to the United States Military Cemetery Neuville en

¹⁰ Hq AGRC-EA, Ch. V, Operations, New Series, 8 May-30 Jun 47, pp. 383, 390.

¹¹ Rpt of Opns, 1st Fld Cmd, 1 Apr-30 Jun 46, pp. 7-8; KCRC-AGRC-EA.

Condroz, near Liège in Belgium, on an average of 5 days. During the week of 18–24 April, the First Field Command evacuated 325 remains to Neuville en Condroz. According to the carrying capacity of the single train, it would appear that a total of five must have been dispatched from Bremen within this weekly period.¹²

Finally, in traversing the northeast corner of Hanover and funneling its advance into the peninsula of Schleswig-Holstein, the 1st Group entered a restricted field which held a higher concentration of isolated burials than had been encountered elsewhere in the northward sweep through Germany. Yet the economy of effort which might have been realized in operating under such conditions was partially modified by other factors of the situation. The trans-Elbe area contained three prime targets of the British and American bomber commands—Hamburg, Kiel, and Neumünster.¹³ The wrecks of Allied bombers that fell in running the gauntlet of anti-aircraft fire had littered the environs of these target cities, while others further afield bespoke the havoc wrought by pursuing German fighter craft. Because of the relatively late arrival of American formations in the long-sustained air bombardment of Germany, a preponderance of the wrecks bore the emblem of the Royal Air Force. Hence, the location of a single American burial place required an examination of several Allied graves.

A similar situation obtained in western Hanover, where an increased body density was encountered and where 528th Group search teams, according to a report, "had to check 67,014 Allied graves in order to locate 261 United States graves during April 1946." The report adds that "as the sweep proceeded this problem became more intense."¹⁴ Yet rapid progress of the sweeps in both the 1st and the 528th Group sectors indicate that, contrary to the impression given by a literal interpretation of the headquarters report, the required checking of Allied graves did not entirely undo the advantages of search in areas of relatively heavy body density.

It seems improbable that the identification of some 67,000 Allied graves could have involved investigative methods other than a quick glance at marker inscriptions or other such surface indications that verified Allied or German burial records and thus established the nationality of the remains buried in a particular grave. At any rate, 528th Group Headquarters had a sufficient force in hand during the second week of April to permit the dispatch of a reconnaissance party to the East Frisian Islands, the central group of a sandy

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 16–17.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* This number of Allied graves seems excessively high.

island chain that fringes the North Sea shore from Den Helder in the Netherlands to Esbjerg, on the west coast of Jutland.

The Frisian detachment spent several days interviewing islanders and investigating burial places that in large part had been recorded by local officials. Then, late in April, as 1st Group forces were closing into the Schleswig-Holstein peninsula, a 528th Group exhumation team began disinterments on the East Frisian Islands. Early during May, the detachment completed its mission in the island group with the shipment of all recovered remains by commercial craft to the mainland.¹⁵

By the end of May, 528th Group investigative teams had covered the remaining search area in northwestern Hanover. Following in close support, exhumation teams disinterred all remains at reported burial sites, while collection point units prepared the bodies for shipment through the Bremen relay point to Neuville en Condroz. With completion of its mission on 15 June along the North Sea littoral, 528th Group Headquarters initiated plans for a reorganization of the command "to undertake the missions in the proposed new areas."

While operations along the coast line of northwestern Hanover neared completion, the 1st Group passed the peak of its assignment in the Hamburg-Kiel-Neumünster area, having searched by 16 May 98 percent of the peninsula toward Jutland and having completed 66 percent of scheduled disinterments in the same area. A search team had already landed in the North Frisian Islands, which comprise an extension of the broken sand reef along the western coast of Schleswig-Holstein and the lower part of Jutland.

In publicizing the island communities and locating all reported burial places, the reconnaissance detachment discovered that previous estimates of isolated remains fell short of actual findings in about the same proportion that prevailed on the mainland. After unsuccessful negotiations with United States Navy authorities looking to the assignment of a vessel most suitable to the ceremonial aspect of evacuation, 1st Group Headquarters reluctantly adopted the alternative of procuring coastwise commercial craft. An exhumation team completed disinterments during the latter part of May and, early in June, prepared the remains for evacuation by ship and motor convoy to the Bremen relay point.¹⁶

The perils of navigation in shallow waters washing the North Sea coast held an ominous threat over all detachments engaged in the Frisian Islands operations. A product of silting through the

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

¹⁶ See fn. 10.

ages, treacherous shoals made passage directly from the mainland a hazardous venture, particularly in rolling breakers blanketed by fog. Then a menace contributed by man conspired with nature to intensify the danger. The wartime barrage of floating mines still served its original purpose of discouraging approach from the open sea. But calm summer skies and placid waters seem to have favored the enterprise; First Field Command reports make no mention of shipwrecks in the shoals or disasters among the mine fields.

The final scene of the German sweep was enacted on Helgoland, the grim island fortress that guarded the North Sea approach to Germany during two world wars. A possession of the Danish Kings from pagan times until seized by a British fleet in 1807, when Denmark played the reluctant role of a satellite state in the Napoleonic Empire, Helgoland became the price Lord Salisbury was willing to pay for recognition by the German Imperial Government in 1890 of a British protectorate over the Sultanate of Zanzibar, a vast domain in East Africa.

Although the admirals at Whitehall and the flag officers of the Grand Fleet were never enthusiastically impressed by Salisbury's defense of his transaction as one whereby Britain acquired a suit of clothes in exchange for a suspender button, the fate that befell Helgoland after World War II lent a certain validity to the noble lord's quip. Immediately following V-E Day, British occupation authorities banished to the mainland the inhabitants of Oberland, an ancient village overhanging the red cliffs that gird the island rock. Then the one-time "Gibraltar of the North" served as a practice target for bomber squadrons of the Royal Air Force.

Bombardment planes made their runs day by day, enshrouding the island with a murky pall of curling smoke and powdered debris until an emissary from 528th Group Headquarters inquired if the British would be willing to suspend practice while an American graves registration team searched the rock for unrecovered war dead. The British not only expressed their willingness to comply but offered to put a naval craft at the disposal of the search party.¹⁷

Acting, perhaps, at this juncture on the consideration that the 528th Group had completed its mission in northwestern Germany and was undergoing reorganization for other assignments, First Field Headquarters instructed the Commanding Officer, 1st Group, to take over the Helgoland operation. Existing arrangements were supplemented by an understanding with the British that practice runs would again be suspended during 21-24 June in order to

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

permit the removal of remains. At the same time, First Field Headquarters concluded an agreement whereby the United States Navy command at Bremerhaven would furnish all required transportation for the exhumation and evacuation of remains. On 12 June, in accordance with the original arrangements, a British ship of war landed the 1st Group search party on a sandspit at the southwest point of the rock.¹⁸

The change of assignment seems to have contributed to some confusion in preparations for the search operation. It appears that 1st Group Headquarters failed to provide the reconnaissance party with a plot-layout of the island cemetery, which reportedly contained some 500 graves.¹⁹ After locating the burial site and counting "5 or 6 bomb craters," the officer in charge realized that the German burial records would, in the absence of a plot-layout, be of little use for a detailed examination of the graves, or in further exploration of the island. It became evident, however, that former residents of Oberland might supplement defective data in the island burial records. He therefore returned to the mainland and pursued his inquiry among the exiled Helgolanders.

Interrogation of the exiles disclosed enough positive information to justify the dispatch of an exhumation detail in accordance with the original schedule. A United States Navy craft conveyed the party to Helgoland on 21 June. Reporting completion of the mission 8 days later, First Field Headquarters noted that "Fourteen (14) remains were evacuated from which three knowns and eleven unknowns 'presumed to be' cases resulted."²⁰

In carrying the sweep from the Kaiserslautern-Buchenbuhl line in southern Germany to the North Sea front and clearing the offshore islands, the First Field Command brought to completion the first phase of its mission, as originally planned and written into AGRC Operational Orders No. 2, 14 November 1945. Total accomplishments of the operation from November 1945 to the end of June 1946 may be briefly summarized as follows:²¹

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ The evidence is not clear as to the status of this cemetery. Since it cannot be determined whether the burial place was military or civilian, or a combination of the two, 1st Group cannot, on the face of the evidence, be censured for failure to provide a plot-layout. As a matter of fact, there is no way of determining whether such a plot could have been prepared.

²⁰ Rpt of 1st Fld Comd to CO, AGRC, 29 June 46, sub: Opns, Narrative, 20-26 Jun 46.

²¹ Rpt of Opns, 1st Fld Cmd, Apr-Jun 46, p. 9.

1. Number of square miles searched to date.....	73,153
2. Number of isolated graves and unburied remains located and investigated:	
(a) United States.....	6,220
(b) Other nationalities.....	215,584
3. Number of deceased evacuated and reburied in United States military cemeteries:	
(a) Knowns.....	3,323
(b) Unknowns.....	2,999
Total.....	6,322

However impressive, these figures do not disguise the fact that the ratio of actual recoveries to recoverable isolated remains beyond the Franco-German border was still much smaller than the one applying in the liberated countries, when, on 1 January 1946, the Second and Third Field Commands initiated their sweeps. Estimated recoverables in the latter area were put at 2,637 on 31 December 1945, as compared to approximately 12,000 at the end of June in the region assigned to First Field Command. Moreover, the Command had not as yet given active attention to extensive areas in eastern Europe and Scandinavia that were dotted with the remains of American airmen who fell in the bombardment of strategic targets within those lands.

As already noted in connection with establishment of the three zone commands, Headquarters, AGRC, now recognized that the method of area sweeping had fallen short of expectations and that continuation of the search program in the liberated countries, together with the need of making some sort of accommodation for the shift in emphasis toward shipment of remains to the homeland, called for organizational adjustments of a somewhat radical nature. As a matter of fact, circumstances beyond the control of any authority in Europe prohibited AGRC from pursuing a methodical course in completing one major phase of its mission and then concentrating on another. The prospective availability of caskets for final disposition of remains, rather than progress toward completion of search and recovery, governed the timing of this shift; Headquarters, AGRC, could only provide the organization best suited to adjust the lag in one activity with the increasing momentum of the other.

In contrast to new operational requirements imposed on major subordinate commands in the liberated countries by preparations for final interment of remains at home or abroad, the First Field Command had been completely divorced from cemeterial matters after evacuation of the German cemeteries and, therefore, could have no direct participation in the repatriation phase of the program. The latter Command not only retained its original designation but much

of the structure that had taken form during the northward sweep.²² But, as already stated, limitations of the method left a large residue of unrecovered burials, many of which came to light in consequence of the sweep as a whole rather than as a direct result of the propaganda phase of the operation.

This unforeseen situation required nothing less than a re-search, or to employ an alternate designation, a "resweep" of the entire area. Yet from an operational point of view, headquarters planners did not regard the resweep as a logical continuation of area sweeping. Search teams gave increasing attention to individual case investigations as the resweep proceeded, while reporting of square miles as a measurement of search went into disuse.²³

Structural changes reflected in establishment of the zone commands and the Central Identification Point went hand in hand with a basic reorganization of the command. Effected in accordance with the policy of transforming AGRC as early as practicable during the program from a predominantly military establishment to an officer-civilian organization, this measure had its origin in a belief that the search and recovery phase would have been brought to completion during the first half of 1946 and that a large part of the enlisted strength of the command could then be released.

It will be recalled in this connection that when General Littlejohn presented, during December 1945, his estimate for a troop strength of 7,246, Headquarters, TSF, ET, approved the figure on condition that the enlisted component would be reduced, as proposed in the estimate, by midyear of 1946. Thereafter, the officer-civilian organization, with a relatively small enlisted force, would complete the repatriation phase of the program.

Inability to meet operational schedules on which the manpower policy was based did not absolve AGRC from the commitment to cut its enlisted strength. Accordingly, on 26 May 1946, as area sweeping along the North Sea front of Germany neared completion, the Commanding Officer, AGRC, rescinded in GO No. 36 the two General Orders (Nos. 4 and 5, of 7 and 11 January 1946) which had assigned to major subordinate commands the two categories of TO units authorized under the approved troop basis.²⁴ The larger one, as heretofore stated, included 213 Liquidation Troop Basis (LTB)

²² The Quartermaster Groups were later replaced by Quartermaster Battalions as the major subordinate supervisory headquarters within the Command.

²³ After 30 Jun 46 weekly reports of First Field Command carried forward the figure of 73,153 square miles as the area searched to date. Quarterly reports of both First Field Command and AGRC adopted the same device, 73,153 square miles searched to date being given in the reports for the third and fourth quarters of 1946.

²⁴ See above, Ch. VII.

units, totaling 4,723; the smaller comprised 20 Occupational Troop Basis (OTB) units, counting 2,523. Furthermore, GO No. 36 directed the inactivation of all LTB units on or before 30 June 1946.

In consequence of this order, only the remaining 20 OTB units were to be retained. Of the 13 previously assigned GR companies, only 2 remained with the Command. The TO strength of the 20 retained units was 450. The strength of this command, as authorized in January, was 2,890.

Described as "drastic," the reduction was in fact considerably less than the difference between the authorized strength of January 1946 and that of 30 June. The actual strength of AGRC had declined from 7,246 to 5,249 by 20 May, the date of issuance of GO No. 36. Furthermore, the shift from a double to a single troop basis offered an opportunity to diminish by a two-way system of transfers the deleterious consequences that had heretofore attended the rapid turnover of personnel in all AGRC units. With this end in view, GO No. 36 directed that:

Major subordinate commands will take the necessary action to transfer and reassign low-point personnel from Liquidation Troop Basis Units up to TO strength. High-point personnel and personnel expected to be redeployed for various reasons should be reassigned to Liquidation Troop Basis Units. Present Occupational Troop Basis allowance for enlisted personnel is 2051. There are at present on hand 5249 personnel. With 3198 personnel over and above Occupational Troop Basis allowance all Occupational Troop Basis Units should be completely up to TO strength prior to 30 June 1946.

Determination of a new troop basis for First Field Command by simply retaining the 20 old OTB units can scarcely be described as a method of closely estimating the responsibilities which this command would shortly assume.

The resweep, to be sure, would not require the wide deployment of numerous field forces, or the large administrative overhead that had directed the original sweep. Then the policy of retaining low point men promised considerable improvement of unit efficiency and a consequent economy in the employment of manpower. Yet these advantages offered little assurance that such an establishment, which included only three full-strength GR companies, would be adequate to the task of resweeping 93,000 square miles in western Germany and at the same time furnishing detachments for the recovery of isolated remains from the expansive ring of countries contiguous to Germany.

The prospective search operations in eastern Europe posed new problems conditioned by a combination of geography and the con-

fused diplomacy of postwar relationships. Search areas were necessarily determined by national boundaries within which operations could be conducted only with consent of the sovereign governments. The distance of evacuation from areas beyond the Baltic suggested the economy of employing transportation by air, while long-established rail connections—the Orient Route—with certain countries of southeastern Europe offered a satisfactory solution to this aspect of the logistical problem. Again, the impracticability of providing administrative support over these great distances called for the organization of self-contained detachments.

These conditions, in turn, created delicate problems of personnel. The officer chosen to command such a detachment must combine the attributes of leadership and professional competence with the gift of common sense that, successfully applied to dealings with officials of foreign governments, is generally recognized as diplomatic skill. Similar considerations dictated a high standard in the selection of civilian technicians and enlisted men; all were representatives of the United States, and equally responsible while pursuing a humanitarian mission within the territory of a sovereign nation. In other words, the formulation of these self-contained detachments took the best that First Field Command could provide.

In reality, the cutback in AGRC enlisted strength, while timed in conformity with commitments given during December 1945, was premature with respect to the actual progress of search and recovery. Continuation of this activity in the broad regions east of the Franco-German line necessitated a large diversion of units from the liberated countries which virtually stripped the newly created zones of military personnel. Fortunately for these denuded commands, delays in the casket production program postponed for several months the exhumation phase of repatriation operations.

On 30 June 1946, the effective date for completion of the reorganization under GO No. 36, the transfer of units from the west to the east gave First Field Command an effective military strength of 98 officers and 686 men, together with a staff of approximately 80 War Department civilians and some 500 indigenous employees. This strength remained fairly constant during 1947, while the zone commands in the west were augmented by an increasing number of civilian technicians from the United States, as well as by laborers and office workers recruited locally and a large force of POW service units.

Recovery of Remains in Contiguous Countries

In view of the fact that many of the search operations in the contiguous countries were completed by the end of 1946 and that prog-

ress of the program in Soviet areas of Germany and Austria was virtually brought to a stalemate by obstructionist tactics of Red Army officials, it is proposed to relate the search activities in those distant countries before returning to the resweep of western Germany.

Negotiations between the United States Minister at Copenhagen and the Danish Foreign Office for admission of a First Field Command search detachment to Denmark revealed a strong popular sentiment in opposition to removal of American remains until the next of kin had expressed their desire as to final disposition. Colonel Robertson, Commanding Officer, First Field Command, thereupon secured a tentative agreement through the American Minister whereby disinterment for purposes of identification only would be permitted. Reburial in the same grave was mandatory.

On 12 June 1946, a detachment composed of 4 officers, 2 War Department civilians and 3 enlisted men entered Denmark; the detachment commander established his headquarters at Copenhagen. Three different sources of information—the police, a British graves registration unit, and the Danish Army “Crash Book” listing locations of Allied plane crashes—assisted the detachment in locating 134 American graves. Since the agreement permitted disinterment only in the event that a reasonable doubt of identity existed, the detachment commander reported that 113 of the 134 located remains were tentatively or “believed to be” identified and 21 were unknown.²⁵

After location and identification of remains throughout the kingdom, the Denmark Detachment left the country, to be replaced later by the 466th Battalion in expectation that the remains would be evacuated. The Danish Government, however, remained firm in its refusal to permit disturbance of the dead until their kin folk had spoken. Photographs of all known graves were then taken, and case histories of all remains were completed and held in readiness for eventual evacuation.²⁶

Subsequently, conferences held by the Commanding Officer, AGRC-EA, with the American Ambassador to Denmark resulted in the re-entry of a GRS detachment on 24 May 1947 for the purpose of disinterring and identifying unknowns and doubtful cases. Operations began on 27 May and ended on 21 June and covered ten communities in Denmark, resulting in the disinterment and processing of approximately 40 remains.²⁷ Following this operation, the

²⁵ (1) Hist, AGRC, V (Rev), pp. 411-12. (2) Rpt of Opns, 1st Fld Cmd, 1 Jul-30 Sep 46, pp. 23-24.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1 Jan-31 Mar 47, p. 22.

²⁷ Hist, AGRC-EA, Ch. V, Operations (New Series), p. 530.

deceased were reinterred in the original graves where they remained until clearance was received from the State Department for their removal.

Early in 1948, after a long period of suspension pending completion of the poll of next of kin by The Quartermaster General's Office, search operations reopened in Denmark. A so-called Denmark Detachment, composed of three teams, investigated all clues concerning deceased Americans and liaison with Danish police, previously established, was strengthened further.²⁸ In April, Headquarters for search, recovery, and evacuation operations in both Denmark and neighboring Sweden, were established at Odense, Denmark, where a morgue at the New Cemetery became the collecting point for storage of recovered remains pending evacuation. Truck transportation was employed in concentrating remains to the morgue at Odense from the various points of disinterment. The American Embassy furnished gasoline books for the procurement of fuel and was reimbursed at the conclusion of the operation. The eight vehicles used traveled a total of 17,750 miles during this search and evacuation project.

On 10 May 1948, two mortuary cars were loaded and dispatched to Liège, Belgium, carrying a total of 127 remains for further processing at the Identification Section there.²⁹ Exhumation and evacuation of recovered American war dead in Denmark thereby ended, with the exception of special cases, based upon specific information offering a reasonable chance for success.³⁰

One such case, involving the possible recovery of a plane which had gone down in Lake Gamborg, highlighted the waning graves registration activity in Denmark following completion of the evacuation project in May. This operation involved an attempt to raise the plane from a considerable depth of water and from a type of soft mud which precluded the use of diving equipment. Previous attempts had proved futile. In addition, since Lake Gamborg was inaccessible by water, all equipment for this project had to be moved by land transport. Despite these obstacles, the operation ended successfully by the close of 1948. Only one remains, however, was recovered.³¹

Negotiations for recovery of American dead in Norway were

²⁸ Rpt of Opns, AGRC-EA, 1 Jan-31 Mar 48, p. 137.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1 Apr-30 June 48, pp. 151-53.

³⁰ Memo, Maj V. R. Weiss, Hq AGRC-EA to CINC, Europe, 17 Jun 48, sub: Termination of Graves Registration Search and Recovery Operations, 293, S&R, Europe, 1946-48, Alexandria Records Center, hereinafter cited as Alex RC.

³¹ (1) Rpts, GR & Repat Opns, AGRC-EA, 1 Aug 48; 1 Sep 48. (2) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Oct-31 Dec 48, p. 3.

initiated when two emissaries from First Field Command presented all pertinent burial information available at Headquarters, AGRC, to the United States Embassy at Oslo. Permission was secured through the Military Attaché for the entrance of a detachment.

The Norway operation occupies an important place in AGRC history as the first to employ an airlift. After examination of the problem, the European Air Transport Command put two C-47 planes at the disposal of First Field Headquarters for logistical support of the operation. On 2 June the Norway Detachment took off from Bremen with an allotment of ¼-ton trucks and technical supplies. By prior arrangements, heavy duty trucks were to be borrowed from the Norwegian and British military services.

Upon landing at Oslo, the detachment commander established his base at that point and organized the unit into two teams, one to operate in southern Norway, the other to search the northern coast from Kristiansund to Vadsö, a settlement within the Arctic Circle and near the Russian border. The Norwegian Navy detailed a destroyer escort to convey the northern expedition to its assigned search area and to serve as a floating base. The Norwegian Air Force furnished a sea plane to assist in movement up the fjords that serve as seaways winding through the mountainous coastline.

On 20 July, within less than 2 months after landing at Oslo, the Norway Detachment completed its mission. In all, 44 United States deceased were recovered. Of this number, two were re-interred, by request of their relatives, in the cemeteries where Norwegians had buried them and tended their graves. The air transport lifted the remaining 42 to Bremen; thence, they were conveyed in trucks under a guard of honor to Neuville en Condroz.³²

While directing recovery operations in Norway, the detachment commander was advised from Headquarters, AGRC, that 42 United States airmen, according to its records, had been interred in a plot of the private cemetery at Malmö, Sweden. An inquiry addressed to the United States Embassy at Stockholm confirmed the report and revealed that the Military Attaché had made all arrangements for these burials, and moreover, had submitted reports of interment to The Adjutant General. The Attaché thereupon made a physical survey of the Malmö plot and verified the information he had previously given. Subsequently, an officer from Headquarters, AGRC, checked findings of the Attaché and returned to Paris with a cemetery plot sketch showing the location of each deceased.

Sentiment in Sweden regarding the proposed evacuation of

³² (1) Rpt of Opns, 1st Fld Cmd, 1 Apr-30 Jun 46, pp. 19-20; 1 Jul-30 Sep 46, pp. 21-23. (2) Narrative Report of Trondheim Expedition, Hist, AGRC, V (Rev), 8 May 45-30 Jun 47, App. No. 180.

American dead was identical to that voiced by the Norwegian Government and people. On advice from The Quartermaster General, Headquarters, AGRC, directed that evacuation of remains at Malmö was to be suspended, "since it would be treated as a temporary Military Cemetery until the next of kin had been properly polled."³³

As in Denmark, a long period of inactivity followed, pending clearance by the State Department and higher echelons of the Defense Department for evacuation operations to begin. Finally, on 11 May 1948, the cemetery at Malmö was closed with an appropriate ceremony. The same Detachment which had been operating in Denmark arrived in Malmö on 17 May and evacuation activities began on the following day. The project was conducted in strict accordance with the requirements of Swedish health and church organizations. The mortuary car was loaded and departed Malmö on 20 May, destined for Hamm Cemetery, where the 40 remains would receive final processing and casketing. Two remains were permitted to rest permanently at Malmö, in compliance with wishes of next of kin. Members of the Detachment which had operated in both Denmark and Sweden arrived at First Field Command Headquarters at Bad Kissingen, Germany, on the 25th and 26th of May 1948.³⁴

Search and recovery activities in East Germany unfold a disagreeable story of continuous frustration imposed by the intransigent attitude of high Red Army officials. Notification of new restrictions on clearances and itineraries were repeatedly issued with no obvious purpose other than impeding freedom of movement and discouraging a systematic development of the program.

Operating from Berlin, the three search teams which had been accorded right of entry into Mecklenburg, Magdeburg, and Halle-Merseburg late in December 1945, continued surface investigations in those provinces until reinforced in July 1946 by the 95th Battalion, a unit consisting of 5 officers, 39 enlisted men and 5 War Department civilians. Up to this time the original teams had completed investigations of some 300 isolated graves. As yet no disinterments other than a few war crimes cases had been permitted.³⁵

During July 1946, restrictions on disinterments were lifted and the 95th Battalion reorganized its field units with a view to conducting search and disinterment concurrently. The 3 search teams were retained as originally organized; the 3 exhumation teams each consisted of 1 officer (when available) and 9 enlisted men.

³³ Rpt of Opns, 1st Fld Cmd, 1 Apr-30 Jun 46, pp. 19-21.

³⁴ Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Apr-30 Jun 48, pp. 153-54.

³⁵ Rpt of Opns, 1st Fld Cmd, 1 Apr-30 Jun 46, p. 21; 1 Jul-30 Sep 46, pp. 29-30.

The problem of clearances for field trips became an endless vexation. All requests were channeled through the Chief of Prisoners-of-War and Displaced Persons Division of the United States Office of Military Government. Soviet policy required that each application state the full itinerary, including towns to be visited, the return route and, in addition, detailed information regarding the personnel and vehicles of each team. Until 27 July, travel orders could be issued only by the Commanding General, Berlin District. Permission thereafter was granted the Battalion to issue its own travel orders.

By the end of September, a total of 181 isolated graves, including 39 Allied deceased, had been investigated. Since the reorganization of July, the 3 exhumation teams had spent 63 days in the field or less than 9 days a month for each team. Despite these hindrances, they recovered 311 United States deceased. The first deceased were evacuated by trucks during August to a United States Military Cemetery. All remains in these shipments were processed at graveside for identification. During September the command established an airlift for evacuation of remains from Berlin to the Central Identification Point at Strasbourg.³⁶

Restrictions on clearances for field trips continued through 1946. Only 40 team days for the 6 field teams, or less than 7 days a month per team were allowed during November; in December the number dwindled to 1½ days for each team. The 95th Battalion nevertheless evacuated 547 remains to Strasbourg during the October-December period.³⁷ The evasive hostility of Soviet officials continued in 1947. First Field Headquarters reported that only 5 field teams were permitted for investigative missions between 15 December 1946 and 31 March 1947. It was estimated that, given complete freedom of movement, a total of 1,080 cases might have been solved instead of the 150 investigations actually made. As matters developed, the clearance in February for 2 teams to enter the Zone resulted in the location of 184 remains. Unfavorable weather conditions delayed their evacuation.³⁸

Soviet authorities claimed that a shortage of liaison officers to accompany the search teams had been the primary cause of failure to clear more units. In addition, very severe winter weather during this period provided a real hindrance to progress in the search and recovery activity. In some cases, the ground was frozen to a depth

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1 Oct-31 Dec 46, pp. 23-24.

³⁸ (1) *Ibid.*, 1 Jan-31 Mar 47, p. 20. (2) Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRC-EA, 1 May 47.

of 5 feet, making exhumations extremely difficult. In other instances, cemeteries were located waist deep in snow which covered all traces of graves and crosses.³⁹ Another major difficulty confronting search teams was the very strict adherence of Russian liaison officers to the submitted itinerary. In many cases, AGRS requests to enter an adjoining village were denied on the pretext that the town did not appear on the approved listed itinerary.

Restrictions eased somewhat during the spring months and three search and disinterring teams entered the Soviet Zone on 12 May 1947. Four days later, they returned to Berlin after recovering approximately 100 remains. In June, search and disinterring units recovered 30 additional American dead in Halle-Merseburg Province and 53 deceased from Brandenburg Province.⁴⁰ The sweeping operation continued through the summer months in the Soviet Zone and an additional investigating team was added to speed up the whole process. The large majority of recoveries occurred in Brandenburg Province—a total of over 600. During the summer, an average of two investigating and two disinterring teams were permitted to function in the Soviet Zone.⁴¹ Nevertheless, operations in this Zone continued to be hampered by restrictions imposed by Soviet authorities. Continuous efforts by AGRC officials to ease these limitations were made through negotiations but no final solution to the problem seemed to be possible.⁴²

Despite Soviet obstructions and the constant requirement that each team in the Zone be accompanied on every operation by a Soviet escort officer, the sweep continued throughout the remaining months of 1947 and into 1948 as well. In fact, general estimates of AGRC officers indicated that this operation in the Soviet Zone of Germany and in Austria, too, would not be terminated before the close of 1948.⁴³

Although GRS teams encountered the usual obstinate interference of Soviet authorities during 1948, over 300 remains were located and evacuated from the Soviet Zone of Germany during the year, despite a general downward trend of search operations throughout the remainder of the First Field Command, and despite the fact that no more than two teams were cleared for searching at any one time. Late in 1948, the deadline for terminating all such activity

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Apr-30 Jun 47, Vol. I, Narrative, p. 106; KCRC-AGRC-Europe.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1 Jul-30 Sep 47, p. 93; KCRC-AGRC-Europe.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1 Oct-31 Dec 47, p. 79.

was extended to 1 June 1949 in this Zone, as well as in the Soviet Zone of Austria.⁴⁴

AGRC search and evacuation operations in the Soviet Zone of Germany ended earlier than the foregoing estimate because of Soviet termination on 3 March 1949 of all clearances for search teams. Consequently, on 10 March, the Berlin Detachment ceased operations. At that time, there were about 836 potentially recoverable remains still in the Zone. AGRC authorities had hoped to recover at least 60 percent of that number. When the Berlin Detachment was forced to close down, there were 218 pending cases involving 469 remains scheduled for investigation.⁴⁵

Pursuant to negotiations concluded early in July 1946 at Prague by a representative of First Field Headquarters and officials of the Czech Ministry of Defense, the 338th Battalion was activated and posted at Neustadt-Weiden to direct search operations in Czechoslovakia. Assigned to the 338th Battalion, the 611th GR Company moved to Prague and established its command post at a hospital in the suburbs. Battalion Headquarters remained in the Neustadt-Weiden area, conveniently located near the frontier for purposes of furnishing logistical support.

In contrast to the intransigence of Soviet officials in East Germany, officers of the Section of Spiritual Welfare and War Graves Records, Ministry of Defense, issued permits for movement across the border on a 30- to 60-day basis, with the option of renewal on application.

In accordance with terms of the original agreement, highly skilled Czech police officers supervised all investigative operations. No objection was raised to reinvestigation by an AGRS exhumation team member. Intended to assist rather than obstruct investigative procedures, the arrangement worked to the advantage of both parties. A Czech army officer usually accompanied each team. A spirit of cordiality grew as the operation progressed. It is reported that religious ceremonies held by people of the countryside in honor of the American dead were most impressive.⁴⁶

Evacuation of remains to Strasbourg began late in August. Two shipments were made by truck. Owing to the distance involved, First Field Headquarters saw the economy of employing an airlift. During this quarter, four shipments were made by air. By the end of November 1946, the 338th Battalion completed the operation with a total of 271 United States remains evacuated.⁴⁷ Upon with-

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 1 Jan-31 Mar 48, p. 135; 1 Oct-31 Dec 48, p. 1.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1 Jan-31 Mar 48, pp. 81, 89.

⁴⁶ Rpt of Opns, 1st Fld Cmd, 1 Jul-30 Sep 46, pp. 24-26.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25; 1 Oct-31 Dec 46, p. 18.

drawal of the 611th GR Company, arrangements were made with Czechoslovakian authorities for re-entry by units of team size, in the event that new cases required investigation. This eventuality materialized in February 1947, when two recovery teams were allowed to enter the country and subsequently recovered and evacuated 12 additional isolated remains.⁴⁸

First Field Headquarters attributed much of the success of this operation to the cordial co-operation of Czechoslovakian officials "particularly that of Brig. Gen. Jaroslav Janak, Minister of National Defense, Staff Officer in charge of Spiritual Welfare and War Graves." Indeed, the rugged terrain, the long distances, and the usual difficulties attending investigations at sites of plane crashes made this operation one which could not have been successfully completed without assistance from the government and people of the country.⁴⁹

The American Graves Registration Command, European Theater Area, acquired Rumania through a decision of The Quartermaster General to transfer that country from the Mediterranean Theater Zone. An officer dispatched from First Field Command arrived in Bucharest on 10 September 1946 to take over the detachment from Italy and complete the operation.⁵⁰ Assigned to the 347th QM Battalion, First Field Command, the Rumanian Detachment advanced the work it had performed previous to the transfer. A survey of the situation indicated that all known United States deceased had been concentrated in two cemeteries, as follows:

United States Military Cemetery, Sinaia	402
City Cemetery of Ploesti	205
Total	607

Although the original Rumanian Detachment had conducted a publicity program to inform the country of its objectives, it now launched a second program by press and radio. Rumanian officials assigned a complete lack of response on the part of the public to the fact that all United States dead in the country had been reinterred at Sinaia and Ploesti. Convinced by the apparent truth of this explanation, the commanding officer turned his attention to the problem of evacuation.

Rail connections provided by the (Orient Express) offered a satisfactory solution. An especially designed mortuary car secured through the good offices of the Rumanian Government was rebuilt for the purpose, the interior being fitted with a heated compartment

⁴⁸ (1) *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19. (2) Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRC-EA, 1 Mar 47.

⁴⁹ Rpt of Opns, 1st Fld Cmd, 1 Oct-31 Dec 46, p. 18.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1 Jul-30 Sep 46, pp. 28-29.

and bunks for the honor guard, while a painted American flag on both sides of the exterior, together with lettered instructions in five languages identified the car and gave instructions for its return to Bucharest. In view of switch points at Budapest, Vienna, and Munich, these instructions undoubtedly prevented much confusion and delay. After delivering three shipments to Strasbourg in November, the car made three additional round trips before the end of the year, picking up essential technical supplies at Vienna on the return run. By the close of 1946, a total of 416 remains had been evacuated from Rumania.

Although the commanding officer remained convinced that no more isolated burials were to be found in Rumania, the Detachment tarried until April of the following year, when preparations were made for movement to Vienna.⁵¹

At this time, search operations in Rumania were considered to be completed with a total recovery of 494 remains. AGRC officials believed, nevertheless, that some 200 additional isolated burial cases charged to Rumania were probably in adjacent countries. Only scattered isolated recoveries took place subsequently, based upon specific information received by AGRC officials.⁵²

Like Rumania, AGRC responsibility for Hungary was acquired by transfer from the Mediterranean Theater Zone. A First Field Command officer arrived at Budapest on 2 July 1946 to take over the original Detachment and complete the operation. Late in August, this small force was augmented by an additional officer and 15 enlisted men from the 610th GR Company.

During August and September, the Hungarian Detachment accomplished 5 evacuations totaling 165 remains from the Central Cemetery at Budapest. Carried in motor trucks to Vienna, the remains were shipped by rail from that point to Strasbourg. While evacuations were in progress, the commanding officer directed a nationwide publicity program, distributing 7,000 trilingual posters in 3,500 communities and publishing notices twice in weekly papers and three times in dailies of national circulation. These measures were supplemented by two broadcasts over the national radio.⁵³ Reduced in strength to 1 officer and 10 enlisted men, and operating as an element of the 347th Battalion in Vienna, the Hungarian Detachment continued its mission throughout the year and into the second quarter of 1947.⁵⁴

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 1 Oct-31 Dec 46, pp. 21-23; 2 Jan-31 Mar 47, p. 21.

⁵² Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Apr-30 Jun 47, Vol. I, p. 108; KCRC-AGRC-Europe.

⁵³ Rpt of Opns, 1st Fld Cmd, 1 Jul-30 Sep 46, pp. 27-28.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1 Oct-31 Dec 46, pp. 20-21.

After completing the evacuation of the Budapest Central Cemetery with a shipment of 113 United States deceased to Strasbourg, attention was turned to outstanding cases. These included 157 isolated burials which required investigation, together with 70 reported plane wrecks and 33 incomplete cases. A large preponderance of these outstanding cases was confined to a region west of Lake Balaton in northern Hungary. Here the investigative problem was complicated by the fact that the Fifteenth Air Force, from which most of the names in "missing-in-action" status came, had failed to complete its file of reports on missing air crews. This situation required a detailed field investigation of all the cases. An even more serious complication was the attitude of Soviet military officials, which did not encourage hopes of easy access to the Lake Balaton region.

Vigorous intercession on part of the Chief of Staff, United States Forces, Austria, supported by the Chief of the United States Military Mission in Budapest, secured a favorable result, opening the north country to search for several months. First Field Headquarters states in its operations report for the first quarter of 1947 that:

The operation of the Hungary Detachment of the 347th Quartermaster Battalion was not hampered by the need for road passes or clearances during this period, but rather by very severe weather. In spite of this factor, production continued very satisfactorily. It is anticipated this operation will be concluded in the succeeding quarter.⁵⁵

During April 1947, most of the remaining 120 isolated burial cases were investigated and a few remains located. Search teams conducted operations along the Austrian and Czech borders. Soviet road blocks hindered the team in certain areas, thereby causing a considerable loss of time. Diving operations took place, meanwhile, in Lake Balaton in an attempt to recover the wreckage of a submerged plane.⁵⁶

Search and evacuation operations on any significant scale were now rapidly coming to an end. The Hungary Detachment, before closing its activities in mid-June 1947 preparatory to moving to Vienna, received a statement of appreciation from the British-New Zealand Graves Registration Unit for assistance rendered in Hungary, where the two organizations had worked in close co-operation.⁵⁷

The First Field Command took over the incomplete work of the Third Field Command in Austria, along with several of its units, notably the 347th Battalion and the 612th GR Company on 19

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 1 Jan-31 Mar 47, p. 21.

⁵⁶ (1) *Ibid.*, p. 107. (2) Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRC-Europe, 1 May 47.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 1 May 47; 1 Jul 47.

August 1946. Reports of unrecovered remains in the British and American Zones caused a resweep of these two areas. The French Zone also had been swept by Third Field Command teams. Then, after exclusion on 23 August of Third Field Command search teams from the Russian Zone, negotiations for re-entry were revived, resulting in removal of the Soviet ban on 5 September.⁵⁸ A total of 137 remains were recovered from the Weiner-Neustadt section of the Zone by mid-September.

The subsequent story of search in the Soviet Zone of Austria offers a tedious repetition of the experience in East Germany—one of persistent obstruction masked by a certain show of friendliness on the part of Red Army officers who seemed to be restrained by some mysterious and inaccessible authority. Nevertheless, GRS units evacuated some 60 remains during the final quarter of 1946. In March 1947, two detachments stationed in the American Zone which had been permitted to work briefly in the Russian Zone were again confronted with revocation of entrance permits. The Deputy Chief of Staff, United States Forces, Austria, had little success in attempting to settle the problem of clearances by direct contact with Soviet officials.⁵⁹

Finally, on 21 May 1947, AGRC officials held a conference with General Medvediev of the Soviet Military Division and General Myachin of the Soviet Air Division, who indicated that they were fully aware of the AGRC search and recovery effort but added that final authority to grant approval and issue clearances rested with the Supreme Soviet Commander.⁶⁰ On 23 May, authorization to conduct investigative activities was granted in principle, but Soviet authorities indicated that AGRC officials must submit information concerning personnel, base of operations, localities to be visited, and approximate dates. In accordance with these requirements, AGRC officials provided this data to the Russians on 27 May. Shortly thereafter, one search team received permission to make investigations concerning American remains in the Amstetten District of Austria. As a result, AGRC units recovered 36 remains buried in 4 different Austrian towns and conducted inquiries in 7 other communities.⁶¹

Despite familiar Soviet obstacles, particularly in regard to obtaining clearances for teams, the initial sweeping search of the Soviet Zone of Austria continued throughout the remainder of 1947. Near

⁵⁸ Rpt of Opns, 1st Fld Cmd, 1 Jul-30 Sep 46, p. 26.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 1 Jan-31 Mar 47, p. 21.

⁶⁰ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRC-Europe, 1 Jun 47.

⁶¹ (1) *Ibid.* (2) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Apr-30 Jun 47, Vol. I, p. 104; KCRC-AGRC-Europe.

the end of that year, officials estimated that search operations in this Zone might not terminate before the close of 1948. During the early part of 1948, the weather imposed an additional burden on search activities, since the worst conditions of the winter were experienced.⁶²

Conditions improved in the spring and during May, some 55 remains were recovered in the Zone despite a Soviet withdrawal of clearance for one week.⁶³ Later in the summer, Soviet authorities allowed AGRC teams a wider latitude of movement. Partially as a result of this new situation, 17 American remains were recovered during July and 24 during August. During September, clearance for teams to enter the Zone were not granted so frequently as in the immediately preceding period, but in the closing quarter of 1948, despite monotonous Soviet restrictions, some 35 additional American deceased were located.⁶⁴

Recoveries during the final weeks of search activity in this region amounted to little, although the total number of remains evacuated from the Soviet Zone of Austria during the entire operation reached nearly 800.

No AGRC search teams were permitted to enter Poland until well into 1947, although the Polish Government indicated its willingness in March of that year to allow a small advance party to visit that country. After a long period of waiting and negotiating with Polish and Soviet officials, a small AGRC detachment finally entered Warsaw in mid-August 1947 and limited search and investigative operations began.⁶⁵ By the end of September, the first evacuation of American dead from Poland awaited final arrangements for transportation facilities.

Since it had become obvious that the very limited number of AGRC personnel authorized by the Polish Government to operate in that country was woefully inadequate to recover the estimated 400 remains there, negotiations began late in the summer of 1947 looking toward an increase in strength.⁶⁶ In the meanwhile, search operations in Poland, all of which were conducted from Warsaw, were characterized by great distances traveled, a scarcity of information needed to resolve cases, and difficulties in finding eyewitnesses to burials because of wartime evacuation of inhabitants.

⁶² Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Jan-31 Mar 48, pp. 135-36.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 1 Apr-30 Jun 48, p. 108.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 1 Jul-30 Sep 48, pp. 117-18; 1 Oct-31 Dec 48, pp. 160-61.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 1 Jul-30 Sep 47, p. 88.

⁶⁶ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRC-EA, 1 Sep 47.

In addition, hospital, city, and cemetery records often were erroneous—a situation which simply added to an already troublesome problem. Despite these obstacles and the fact that only one officer and three enlisted men comprised the GRS Detachment in Poland, considerable success rewarded their efforts since the first evacuation, made from Warsaw on 19 October, involved the movement of 101 remains to Berlin by railway mortuary cars.⁶⁷

Search and investigative activities continued under strict Soviet restrictions until 24 May 1948, when the mission ended. During this period, the Detachment, still composed of only one officer and three enlisted men, made 25 field trips, investigated and completed 91 cases, recovered a total of nearly 250 remains, examined 1,800 graves, and traveled 30,000 miles by truck. The final evacuation from Warsaw was accomplished by airlift since the Soviets refused to permit truck or rail travel through Poland at that time. The action which actually closed out search operations in Poland was the refusal of the puppet Polish regime to extend current visas beyond 1 June 1948.⁶⁸ All AGRC personnel finally departed from Poland on 5 June 1948, even though indications pointed to the possible existence of approximately 186 unrecovered American remains in that country. Most of these deceased consisted of Air Corps members whose missing aircraft were last sighted over Poland.⁶⁹

Re-Search of West Germany

Re-search of the occupied areas in West Germany began during July 1946. It was reported that "as new information was received each case was investigated, being handled in the same manner as that of a full-fledged special investigation."⁷⁰ Production figures during the next 6 months indicate the selective nature of the research program. From 1 July to 15 August, when shipment of remains to Strasbourg began and graveside identification stopped, only 146 deceased were evacuated to temporary military cemeteries in the liberated countries, a sharp decline from the monthly average of approximately 1,000 during the April-June quarter. Thereafter the monthly evacuation figure rose again, attaining an average of 345 for the remainder of 1946, despite a declining rate at the end

⁶⁷ Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Jul-30 Sep 47, p. 92; 1 Oct-31 Dec 47, pp. 105-07.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 1 Apr-30 Jun 48, pp. 149-50.

⁶⁹ Memo, Maj V. R. Weiss, Hq AGRC-EA, for CINC, Europe, 16 Jun 48, sub: Termination of Graves Registration Search and Recovery Operations, 293, S&R, Europe, 1946-48, Alex RC.

⁷⁰ Rpt of Opns, 1st Fld Cmd, 1 Jul-30 Sep 46, p. 11.

of the year. This average, however, was only a third of that maintained during the culminating quarter of the northward sweep.⁷¹

Concentration of effort on special investigations no longer required the large administrative overhead that had previously supported the widespread deployment of field forces in the northward sweep. The three group headquarters and headquarters detachments, less personnel and equipment, were transferred to other commands in order to facilitate reorganization on a battalion basis. Five reconstructed battalion headquarters, with three GR companies and an augmented staff of War Department civilians, continued the re-search operation.⁷²

A considerable portion of the cases assigned for special investigation were derived from information elicited by continued appeals to the public. Here, as in the instance of investigative procedure, the method became selective. The 222d Battalion Headquarters at Bad Tölz obtained unprecedented results by supplementing official bulletin boards for display of posters with the employment of similar facilities in German churches, UNRRA offices, displaced persons camps, and United States Military Government units. In addition to the customary press notices and radio broadcasts, carefully worded questionnaires were addressed to burgomasters, and Field Headquarters entered into direct correspondence with local officials in communities that had been unresponsive to other methods of approach. Headquarters representatives held conferences with burgomasters of the Huertgen Forest area in an effort to solve some of the difficult problems presented by that mine-infested region. These measures, combined with progress in demining operations under direction of French and British military authorities, contributed to recoveries from hitherto inaccessible pockets of heavy body density.⁷³

One phase of the selective publicity program seems noteworthy in that it was addressed to United States military personnel. First

⁷¹ Extract from Form 14 as of 31 December 1946 gives the following:

1. Number of isolated burials and unburied remains evacuated to Central Identification Point (since 14 Aug 46).....	1,900
2. Total remains evacuated to U. S. Military Cemeteries by First Field Command prior to establishment of CIP.....	6,469
3. Total remains of United States deceased recovered to date.....	8,369

Ibid., 1 Oct-31 Dec 46, p. 9.

⁷² Rpt of Opns, 1st Fld Cmd, 1 Jul-30 Sep 46, pp. 5-6. Col Harry S. Robertson, commanding, states that the command aggregated, 28 Sep 46, 616 officers and enlisted men. Organizationally, it included Field Headquarters, 5 QM Battalions, 3 QM Graves Companies, and the Norway Detachment. This personnel strength remained fairly constant throughout 1946.

⁷³ (1) Rpt of Opns, 1st Fld Cmd, 1 Jul-30 Sep 46, pp. 10-11. (2) *Ibid.*, 1 Oct-31 Dec 46, pp. 7-8. (3) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Jul-30 Sep 46, Vol. I, p. 138.

Field Headquarters attached a detail to the Bremerhaven staging area for the purpose of seeking information from "redeployees" relative to isolated burial places. Officers conducting the Port orientation program specified the kind of information sought and then referred individuals professing such knowledge to the detail for interrogation. Similar measures were taken to obtain information from wartime servicemen returning to the theater.⁷⁴

A combination of causes induced a transition during the last quarter of 1946 in investigative procedures. As the resweep program progressed, the cases became increasingly difficult. Then a change of War Department policy in casualty clearance determinations led to the practice of reviewing all unsolved cases in Washington and requiring a field reinvestigation of cases under review. First Field Headquarters reported that "for this and for other reasons, including the fact all easily resolved cases had been recovered, a greater emphasis was being placed on thorough investigations."⁷⁵

During October the advantage of conducting search operations from a centrally located point made advisable the transfer of First Field Headquarters from Osterholz-Scharmbeck to Karlsruhe. The movement was effected on 17-18 October. Resweep operations continued until the end of 1946, when the difficult nature of outstanding cases caused a noticeable decline in the number of recoveries and evacuations. Between November 1945 and December 1946, the First Field Command recovered and evacuated directly or through the Central Identification Point to temporary military cemeteries a total of 8,369 isolated remains. Of this number, approximately 50 percent were identified.⁷⁶

Although a precise date cannot be fixed for the definite termination of re-search in the areas previously swept, there seems some significance in the fact that evacuation during the first quarter of 1947 dwindled to a monthly average of 105 remains, as compared to 345 for the July-December period of 1946. First Field Headquarters, at any rate, observed a notable change at the turn of the year.

A very definite transition in the nature of the mission of First Field Command, AGRC, began during the latter part of the year 1946. The force of this transition was markedly felt during the period [1 January to 31 March 1947] of this report. At the outset of the operation of the First Field Command, mass recovery of bodies was possible and emphasis was placed thereon, rather than on detailed investigations, though many detailed

⁷⁴ Rpt of Opns, 1st Fld Cmd, 1 Oct-31 Dec 46, p. 7.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

investigations were accomplished in the original sweep. During the period of this report, the emphasis had very decidedly turned toward a detailed investigation of every case, including a careful analysis of the case within the office as well as a minute investigation at the location of the alleged burial. Thus the necessity for obtaining or training top flight investigators was a critical matter.⁷⁷

During this period of increasing emphasis on more detailed study of every case, the search and recovery activity continued without letup, since near the close of the first quarter of 1947, the First Field Command had 27 search teams and 12 recovery teams in the field.⁷⁸ In the American, British, and French Zones of Germany, the publicity efforts of search teams, which included an explanation of the mission's purposes through radio announcements, press stories, and posters in churches and other public places, met with considerable success. On the other hand, inclement weather hampered operations at times, particularly in mine-clearing activities. Nevertheless, 9 teams, combing the southeastern portion of the Huertgen Forest, located 91 remains and evacuated 24 of this number. Recovery of the others awaited the melting of heavy snows.⁷⁹ With the coming of spring and increased mine-clearing activity by British and French demining teams, the number of recoveries increased. For instance, teams working in the Huertgen Forest located 134 remains during this period.⁸⁰ One team was dispatched to the Isle of Sylt where operations had been postponed for several weeks because of flood conditions. In the French Zone, teams conducted investigations in the Saarbruecken area and in the vicinity of Lake Constance.⁸¹

Although extensive searching activity was terminating in certain localities under jurisdiction of the First Field Command, such as Hungary and Roumania, the overall number of search and recovery teams had increased by the close of the April-June quarter of 1947. At that time, the Command had 36 search and 14 recovery teams in the field, whose mission consisted mainly of a careful check on individual cases rather than the area sweeps of the 1945-46 period. During the summer months the number of remains located and evacuated to the Central Identification Point increased considerably as a result of accelerated operations, espe-

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 1 Jan-31 Mar 47, p. 3.

⁷⁸ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRC-EA, 1 Mar 47.

⁷⁹ (1) *Ibid.* (2) Rpt of Opns, 1st Fld Cmd, AGRC-EA, 1 Jan-31 Mar 47, p. 8; KCRC-AGRC-Europe.

⁸⁰ Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Apr-30 Jun 47, Vol. I, p. 106; KCRC-AGRC-Europe.

⁸¹ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, 1 Jun 47; 1 Jul 47.

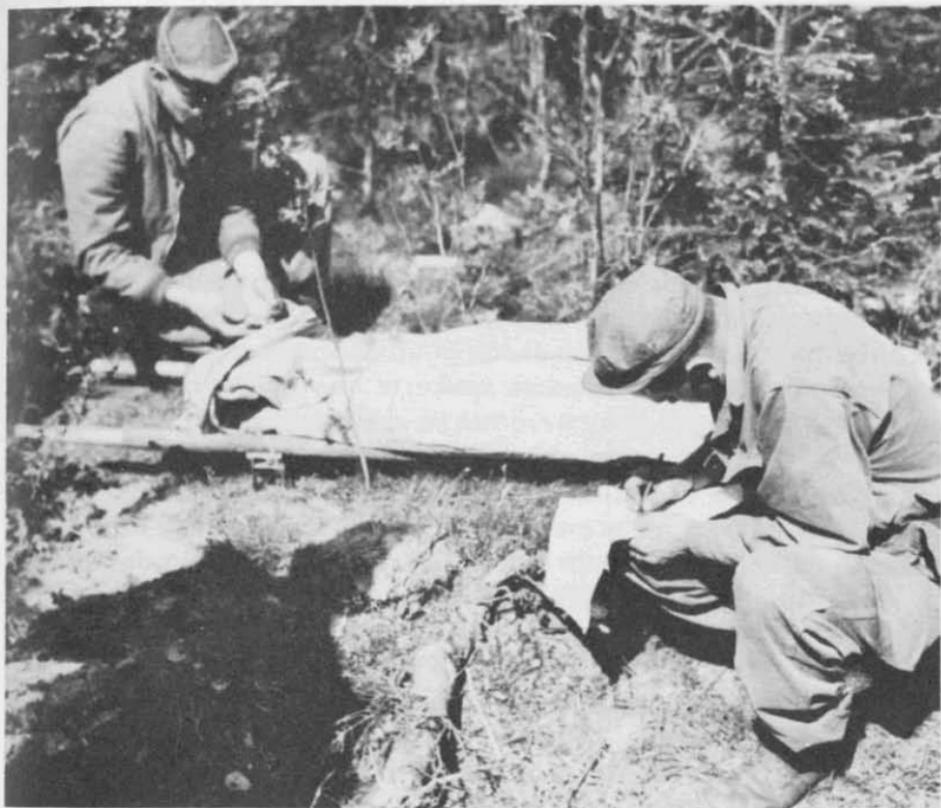


FIGURE 4. *Disinterment team reports on efforts to identify body of an American soldier found in the Huertgen Forest area of Germany.*

cially in the West Wall area of Germany and in the Soviet Zone of that country and in Austria.⁸²

At this time a highly organized investigation of the Hamburg area brought excellent results. All air crashes in the region received careful attention and British and German officials rendered valuable assistance in solving many cases. This operation around Hamburg provided an outstanding example of the complexity of the search mission for those areas previously swept, since this region had previously undergone an investigation by both American and British grave units. Search efforts in the Hamburg area resulted in the location of graves believed to contain 41 Allied dead, of which at least 17 were Americans. Because of the success of this project, similar operations were planned and carried out in two other major areas where aerial bombing activity had been very heavy—Hanover and Celle, Germany.

⁸² (1) *Ibid.*, 1 Jul 47. (2) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Jul-30 Sep 47, Vol. I, p. 88.

These operations employed the most advanced methods yet used in searching areas previously swept. With the co-operation of the British Control Commission for Germany, a meeting was held of all Burgomasters of the area, representatives of churches of all denominations, members of the press and radio, and the police. These people assisted in disseminating requests for information to all people in the Celle and Hanover areas. Posters were placed in post offices, railway stations, and street cars. Newspapers published pertinent articles for three consecutive days and radios carried requests for data. Clergymen appealed to their congregations and the police made a close check of all funeral establishments and casket makers. Burgomasters spoke of the operations at public meetings. Though results were not so gratifying as in the Hamburg area, a considerable mass of information was received. Each clue received careful examination and all information was organized for use in later cases occurring within these areas. These three operations represented the most highly organized and detailed projects attempted by any subordinate unit of the First Field Command and served as a guide for similar undertakings thereafter.⁸³

The nature of the mission of the First Field Command had now undergone a substantial change, since the majority of cases being received from Washington and Paris were of a more complex nature than previously. Often a case did not require or direct the recovery of a body, often there was no portion of a body recoverable, yet the project required detailed investigation and solution if possible. Some of the more difficult cases required weeks of intensive effort by the most skilled investigators, often entailing the coverage of several hundred miles to locate eyewitnesses—a far cry from the earlier, sweeping operations of a general nature.

The German West Wall area also offered special challenges for search and recovery units. Although demining operations had been under way for over a year previous to the summer of 1947, AGRC officials estimated that perhaps another 5 years might be required to demine fully the whole area in which American remains still lay. Another problem arose from evacuation of the civilian populace from those areas where fighting was bloodiest, thereby increasing the difficulty of obtaining intelligent and pertinent testimony. Furthermore, the violent nature of the fighting around the West Wall, the Huertgen Forest, and Battle of the Bulge areas often resulted in the total destruction of bodies by heavy artillery fire or by cremation in tanks or tank destroyers.⁸⁴

⁸³ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, 1 Sep 47. (2) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Jul-30 Sep 47, Vol. I, pp. 88-89. (3) *Ibid.*, 1 Oct-31 Dec 47, pp. 100, 105-6.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 1 Jul-30 Sep 47, pp. 89-90.

Search operations in other portions of the American, British, and French Zones of Germany meanwhile continued, highlighted by the beginning of an attempt to recover American remains from the wreckage of the Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen. This project involved underwater search in the vicinity of this great bridge and promised to continue for several months. At this time, a careful recheck of all previously processed cases was in progress in the British and American Zones of Austria in addition to the normal processing of cases received for solution.⁸⁵

At the close of 1947, a total of 28 search teams and 12 recovery teams operated under jurisdiction of the First Field Command—the same number in each category as had existed during the opening weeks of the year, thereby indicating a rather steady trend in overall search and recovery operations during 1947 in the regions covered by the Command. During the final quarter of 1947, AGRC officials believed that search activities in the American, British, and French Zones of Germany might be completed by July 1948 and in areas under Soviet control by the end of 1948. As 1947 came to a close, the First Field Command had reduced the number of unlocated remains under its jurisdiction to 4,602.⁸⁶

Operations in 1948

At the beginning of 1948, most of the area of responsibility under the First Field Command had previously been covered once by sweeping searches. The exceptions to this pattern were the two Soviet Zones (in Austria and Germany), Poland, and Russia. For those areas already combed, new cases received from all sources were almost entirely in the nature of special investigations, and usually required much effort, patience, initiative, and intelligence to resolve successfully.⁸⁷ Although some cases could be solved in a single day, many required weeks or even months of detailed investigation and study before a solution was found.

Some of the problems facing search and recovery units during this period included: (1) planes crashed in inaccessible places such as swamps, in the sea offshore, in rivers, and in mountains; (2) procurement of divers and diving equipment for underwater crashes and for remains in the wreckage of blown-up bridges; (3) location of persons who were present during hostilities but who had since moved elsewhere; and (4) great distances that had to be covered by motor from home stations to burial locations.⁸⁸ Usually, teams in

⁸⁵ (1) *Ibid.*, p. 93. (2) Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, 1 Dec 47.

⁸⁶ Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Oct-31 Dec 47, p. 79.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 1 Jan-31 Mar 48, p. 124

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 124-25.



FIGURE 5. *AGRC teams of First Field Command often recovered plane remnants as shown above. This plane crashed near Lehnstedt, Germany.*

the American, British, and French Zones of Germany were billeted by the military installation nearest the areas in which cases were under investigation. Although this system worked well in most instances, there were occasions when no unit could be near enough to be of aid in tracking down cases.

A recapitulation of operations, made at the close of the first quarter of 1948, revealed that over 4,300 unlocated remains still lay within the limits of the First Field Command.⁸⁹ Meanwhile, demining operations, particularly in the West Wall area, continued with the utmost co-operation of demining officials, who reported all evidences of deceased in areas under their direction. Demining

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

personnel cleared paths to the burial spots where men of the Aachen Detachment took charge of ensuing recovery operations.⁹⁰

During the second half of 1948, GRS operations diminished in scope in the American, French, and British Zones of Germany and Austria. In October, the Department of the Army established 31 December 1948 as the terminal date for search activities in all areas under the jurisdiction of AGRC-EA. Late in December, however, this deadline was extended to 1 June 1949 in the Soviet Zone of Germany and Austria. The waning trend of search operations in the First Field Command was indicated by the fact that only 15 search teams and 5 recovery teams were functioning at the end of 1948, as compared with 28 and 12 teams, respectively, at the beginning of the year.

Operations in 1949

During the first quarter of 1949, the major concern of AGRC-EA officials involved phase-out activities and the revision of procedures and responsibilities which would permit an efficient and progressive reduction of activities and manpower. Such revisions applied to the search and recovery program in Europe. In January, the Aachen Detachment was deactivated and responsibility for operations in the American, British, and French Zones of Germany passed to the Field Section, Hq, First Field Command. By mid-1949, a recapitulation of search and recovery activities revealed the following numbers of isolated remains recovered and evacuated by First Field Command teams:⁹¹

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number of remains</i>
Austria	
Soviet Zone.....	781
United States, British, French Zones.....	507
Denmark.....	130
Germany	
Soviet Zone.....	2,334
United States, British, French Zones.....	8,392
Poland.....	244
Czechoslovakia.....	356
Hungary.....	377
Roumania.....	510
Sweden.....	42
Norway.....	42
Totals.....	13,715

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1 Apr-30 Jun 48, pp. 144-45.

⁹¹ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRC-EA, 1 Jul 49.

The total number of recoveries in the First Field Command thus represented a substantial majority (about 82%) of the grand total of 16,584 isolated remains located in the entire European Theater by 1 July 1949. Teams of the First Field Command obviously performed the greatest recovery task in the Theater, despite great difficulties, particularly those of Soviet origin.

Recovery and evacuation activities in this Command during the latter half of 1949 and thereafter proved to be on a small scale and of little added importance or significance, except possibly in the American, British, and French Zones of Germany, where an additional 65 remains were located and evacuated during the closing months of 1949. When the First Field Command was deactivated in September 1949, responsibility for future search and recovery activity passed to the Registration Division, Hq, AGRC-EA.⁹²

⁹² AGRS Critique of Activities, Hq AGRC-EA, Ch. III, Operations, p. 120.

CHAPTER IX

WARTIME CEMETERIES AND THE SECTOR COMMANDS

Cemeterial Problems and Activities

Problems involved in the management of United States military cemeteries in Europe had their origin during hostilities, when temporary burial places were established in army areas for the interment of battle fatalities. Improved methods in the collection and transportation of remains enabled the armies to inter their dead in centrally located cemeteries so long as these burial sites remained within the extended range of evacuation. Henri-Chapelle, for instance, served the First Army for 6 months as a consolidated cemetery to which the dead of all its combat units were evacuated through divisional collecting points. Similarly, Limey, St. Avold and Margraten served the Third, Seventh, and Ninth Armies, respectively, for considerable periods.

With interments ranging from 27,579 in Henri-Chapelle to 6,012 at Limey,¹ these large army cemeteries imposed problems of maintenance that could not be ignored. While offering greater long-range economy in upkeep than would have been the case if the old system of burial by divisional units had prevailed, the very size of the army cemetery attracted widespread attention. The vast arrays

¹ These figures are compiled from an undated map entitled "Location of World War I Permanent and World War II Semi-Permanent Cemeteries" and attached to "Plans for the Organization, Administration and Operation of the American Graves Registration Service, European Theater, 30 October 1945." Burial figures for each cemetery on the undated map are taken from Annex F-1 of the planning document of 30 October. However, the date on which the number of burials in each cemetery was estimated is indicated on the undated map. The following table is based on this source:

TABLE 6—*Estimates of Burials*

Cemetery	Date of estimate	Burials			Totals
		U. S.	Allied	Enemy	
Henri-Chapelle,	28 Sep 44 By First Army.	17,321	191	10,067	27,579
Margraten	10 Nov 44 By Ninth Army.	16,202	1,026	3,048	20,276
St. Avold	16 Mar 45 By Seventh Army.	7,401	9	1,836	9,246
Limey	6 Nov 44 By Third Army	6,012	0	0	6,012

of white crosses symbolized legions of the dead to every visitor and casual passerby. In honor to those sleeping beneath the soil, it seemed eminently proper that the white crosses should stand rigidly at attention in serried ranks under the flag for which the dead had given their lives, and that each resting place should be one of peaceful beauty. Within a month following the first burial at Henri-Chapelle, General Eisenhower issued orders intended to govern the beautification and maintenance of all military cemeteries in the European Theater of Operations.²

So long as the cemeteries remained under control of the various armies, the Theater Commander's instructions looking to beautification had more the aspect of an unattainable ideal than a mandatory program in the practical sense of the term. The number of assigned Quartermaster GR companies was scarcely adequate to the task of performing their primary mission—evacuation and burial of combat fatalities. Designed exclusively for this phase of the GR mission, the type of organization was ill-adapted to other such activities as cemetery maintenance and the recovery of isolated remains.

Little improvement appeared with the progressive transfer of cemeteries to ADSEC and the base sections. Graves Registration Service forces at the disposal of these echelons of command were insufficient during hostilities for minimum maintenance requirements.

With liquidation of ADSEC upon establishment of USFET on 1 July 1945 and completion of the transfer of all cemeteries in Great Britain and the liberated countries to the five existing base commands, the possibilities for improved cemetery maintenance were not appreciably enhanced. Although the armistice released a considerable number of GR units for activities which had of necessity been given secondary consideration during hostilities, the operating efficiency of these units rapidly declined with the loss of experienced technicians in each accelerated step of demobilization. Then, while establishment of the Theater Graves Registration Service Command had the immediate effect of assembling a group of competent officers for planning purposes, their energies were fairly well restricted to developing the organizational structure and future operational programs of the graves registration command. During the interim period of some 6 months the recovery of isolated burials and maintenance of military cemeteries remained responsibilities of the base sections and military districts.

² Ltr, AG OPGD, 11 Oct 44, sub: Beautification and Maintenance of World War II Cemeteries.

During the interim between formal establishment of the command and assumption of full operating responsibility in the field, the Commanding General, AGRC, exercised pretty much the same measure of technical control over the base sections and military districts in graves registration matters that the Chief Quartermaster had exerted over the armies during hostilities. The limitations of such authority in both situations was similar; just as the Chief Quartermaster had been unable to bring about a complete uniformity of policy among the different armies, so now the various field representatives of the Theater Graves Registration Service Command were unsuccessful in preventing a diversity of practices on the part of the various base sections. General Littlejohn observed in this connection during October 1945 that:

There is a lack of coordination between the activities and operations in the different base sections. I find that each base section is planning to landscape the existing cemeteries without the assistance of competent technical personnel. A good illustration is Margraten where the officer in charge of Graves Registration in the Chanor Base Section advised me that he had secured the approval of a plan to move the road without any reference to the general overall picture. This cannot be done. It must be coordinated and flow from the planning on the part of the best landscape artists we can get.³

During his tenure of command, General Younger established in the Operations Division a staff element of Headquarters, AGRC, later known as the Planning and Coordinating Division, a subordinate unit designed for cemeterial management. Younger instructed the Division Chief that—

For the time being it is desired that you retain control of the Cemetery Plant Division until the officers therein are fully trained and experienced to a point where the Division may be set up as an independent Division. I will look to you to supervise the training and operations of the Cemetery Plant Division and advise me at such time as you may think proper to set them up as a separate Division.⁴

Shortly thereafter, Operational Order No. 4, Headquarters, AGRC, assigned Col. L. R. Talbot as Chief, Cemetery Plant Division.⁵ So constituted, the division was "to operate, maintain, and

³ IRS, Littlejohn, CG, AGRC, to Col A. N. Stubblebine, CofS, AGRC, 6 Oct 45, sub: Graves Registration Matters.

⁴ IRS, Younger to Col T. R. Howard, Chief, Operations Div, 7 Sep 45, sub: Cemetery Plant Division.

⁵ OO No. 4, Hq AGRC. The order was signed by Younger, who was not actually superseded by Littlejohn until 1 Oct 45. This circumstance may account for the fact that Younger's original designation—Cemetery Plant Division—was used in place of the one proposed by Littlejohn.

develop the United States military cemeteries and to carry out the maintenance of eight enemy cemeteries established by United States Forces and the Allied and enemy plots in United States military cemeteries.”⁶

Colonel Talbot gave immediate attention to requisitioning personnel required to staff the three branches he established within his division, namely, the Administrative Branch, the Design and Construction Branch, and the Operations and Maintenance Branch.⁷

Difficulties in setting up the new division were not restricted to an apt selection of officers, civilian technicians and other categories of employees specified in the organizational chart; analysis of the problem disclosed an almost complete lack of statistical and cartographical data relating to the physical outlay of the military cemeteries. It was realized that a natural catastrophe, such as fire or flood, might, because of the absence of surveys tying boundary intersections to permanent landmarks, obliterate all existing evidence of location and thus make impossible the reconstruction of a cemetery in such an eventuality. In other words, a series of property maps, descriptive lists of buildings, electric installations, water supply systems, and inventories of maintenance equipment was regarded as a prime requisite in any large developmental program. Colonel Talbot promptly organized several survey parties and dispatched them to the field.⁸

Before a nucleus of the divisional staff had been assembled, a delayed War Department cable directing that General Littlejohn report in detail on the development of plans and policies respecting the organization, administration, and operation of the American Graves Registration Service imposed a heavy burden on the officers who were endeavoring to acquaint themselves with a new and complicated assignment. Under pressure of events they took a practical approach to the problem. Their contribution to “Plan for Cemetery Maintenance, Beautification, and Security,” dated 15 October and included as Annex “U” in “Plans for the Organization, Administration, and Operation of the American Graves Registration Command, European Theater, 30 October 1945” actually consisted of making a few editorial changes in Technical Operating Bulletin No. 4.

Comparison of the texts of Annex “U” and the bulletin would indicate that the Cemetery Plant Division planners had no intention of revising a policy statement while collecting factual information that was essential to the development of detailed planning programs

⁶ Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC, Oct-Dec 45, p. 22.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

in connection with their mission. As a matter of fact, TOB No. 4 was largely a compilation of policies and procedures embodied in TM 10-63, Graves Registration Service, 1944, and such other wartime publications as ETO SOP No. 26, Graves Registration Service, 9 June 1944, and AG Letter, OPGD, 11 October 1944, subject: Beautification and Maintenance of World War II Cemeteries. Indeed, General Younger had described the series of seven technical operating bulletins as a codification of outstanding graves registration procedures.

Many of the specifications set forth in these wartime publications and restated in TOB No. 4 appeared in their original form in the basic Graves Registration Service regulations of 1924. AR 30-1805, for instance, assigns as one of the seven functions of the Graves Registration Service in war "the preparation of sketches showing references to indestructible landmarks and containing sufficient detail, to establish permanently the location of cemeteries and graves." Although an elaboration of long-standing requirements, Annex "U" marked a return to first principles in specifying the following types of surveys:

1. A property map will be made by survey teams from this headquarters. This map will be kept current. This drawing will include all boundary lines and the plot layout dimensions from the plot base line and referenced to official civil survey monuments; existing highways, including access rights; roads and paths; three-foot contour lines; existing buildings; drainage systems; prominent terrain features, trees and vegetation, and other pertinent data which would aid in the use of copies of this drawing when studying alterations and additions. An orientation map (preferably scaled 1:20,000) will be inset on this drawing showing the road network to the nearest town.

After specifying that the property map would be accompanied by a copy of the lease or other instruments by which the holding had been legally established as custodial property of the United States Government, it was further required that—

Individual plot plans showing row and grave numbers will be prepared and maintained of suitable scale to clearly indicate the last name and serial number of each grave occupant. Plans will be titled with plot designation, cemetery name, date of audit, and signed by the auditor with his organizational identity.

In changing the title of TOB No. 4 and offering it with little alteration of text as a plan for the maintenance, beautification, and security of temporary military cemeteries, the Cemetery Plant Division really adopted an approved set of principles and then proceeded to formulate a program on the basis of detailed information gathered from

time to time in the field. This data determined the scope of detailed planning without departing from general principles.

Beautification, for example, involved a variety of separate activities, such as the grading of plots and levelling of graves, alignment and painting of markers, seeding for grass and the planting of flowers, shrubs, and shade trees. Erection of fences and flagpoles, together with the construction of pathways, roads, curbs, parking areas and such buildings as were required for housing, administration, and storage, provided the permanent background in a scheme looking to artistic unity. Then, while the energies of construction engineers and landscape architects were directed toward this end, there were the problems of water supply and electric power for lighting and other utilitarian purposes. Proper co-ordination of all such activities required an operating policy which reserved adequate supervisory powers to the Cemetery Plant Division at superior headquarters and, at the same time, permitted a reasonable degree of initiative and enterprise in the field.

Even before the so-called "Plan for Cemeterial Maintenance and Beautification" appeared in published form, Colonel Talbot apprised the Chief of Staff, AGRC, of the steps he had taken to initiate his program. The policy governing beautification, he stated, would proceed on the assumption that all cemeteries in the liberated countries were to be considered as temporary installations, and that "all beautification plans will be submitted to this office for review and approval." However, no authorization from superior headquarters would be required in proceeding with (1) the erection of directional signs, (2) planting of grass and seed, (3) erection of fences along outside boundaries, (4) painting of crosses, (5) installation of curbs around plots and gravelling of paths and roads, (6) planting of small shrubs and hedges, etc.⁹ All other construction projects were, for the present, to remain in abeyance. Existing buildings would continue to be used until plans under preparation for "standard office buildings and reception rooms, living quarters, chapels, etc., were approved and authorized for erection." Similar restrictions applied to road constructions; only those approved by Cemetery Plant Division were to be undertaken. The memorandum concluded with the following statement:

This office is securing the services of a competent landscape architect to check on such plans as have been presented or will in the future be presented. Therefore no major change in layout will be made until an approved solution of each installation has been issued.¹⁰

⁹ Memo, Col L. R. Talbot, Chief, Cemetery Plant Div, for CoS, AGRC, 21 Oct 45, sub: Beautification of Cemeteries.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

In November, further progress on the development of beautification plans and sketches was reported to the Chief of Staff. Several British and continental landscape architects had been retained to prepare sketches for the development of certain cemeteries which were regarded as suitable for permanent overseas cemeteries and, therefore, given the classification of Category I. With augmentation of his staff by Mr. Kline, a landscape architect of the National Park Service, and Ted Glover, Chief Horticulturist at the United States Military Academy, whose services had been secured by special arrangement with the War Department, Colonel Talbot proposed the creation of a special board which would "evaluate their preliminary drawings so that final plans can be made up."¹¹

The November report indicates that the Cemetery Plant Division was now involved in two major questions of policy and organization which had been under consideration since the establishment of Headquarters, AGRC. One contemplated a consolidation of temporary cemeteries for purposes of economical maintenance; the other related to the number of jurisdictional areas of sector commands which would assume responsibility for the administrative and logistical support of cemeterial operations.

The first measure had been approved in principle by both Quartermaster General Gregory and General of the Army Eisenhower, the former in a letter of 28 May 1945 to the Chief Quartermaster, ETO, the latter in conference with this officer on 7 June, when the matter of setting up a Theater Graves Registration Service Command was under discussion.¹²

In reporting the conference to his Chief of Staff, General Littlejohn related that the Supreme Allied Commander insisted upon the adoption of three general policies:

- (a) Removal of American dead from German soil.
- (b) Concentration of American dead in as few cemeteries as possible.
- (c) Use of World War I Cemeteries when possible, thereby reducing maintenance costs and thereby securing properly landscaped terrain at an early date.¹³

Although General Littlejohn does not appear to have been in full accord with the policy of concentration, stating as elsewhere noted that he questioned "the advisability of embarking on such an extensive program . . . as proposed by General Eisenhower," he nevertheless directed that this program be included within the purview of cemeterial planning. Replying to a query of the Chief of Staff as to

¹¹ IRS, Chief, Cemetery Plant Div, to CofS, AGRC, 13 Nov 45, no sub.

¹² Ltr, TQMG to CQM, ETO, 28 May 45.

¹³ IRS, Littlejohn to Col H. W. Bobrink, CofS, GR&E Div, OCQM, 8 Jan 45, no sub.

the status of planning in this respect, Colonel Talbot advised in his memorandum report of 13 November 1945¹⁴ that the 37 military cemeteries under jurisdiction of the Cemetery Plant Division had been grouped for purposes of concentration in three categories. The scheme was indicated on an attached chart entitled "Concentration and Operational Plan for World War II Cemeteries" and, upon approval by Headquarters, AGRC, was inserted as Annex F-2, Revised, in "Plans for the Organization, Administration and Operation of the American Graves Registration Service Command, European Theater, 30 October 1945."

With a revised date of 15 November 1945, Annex F-2 listed under Category I, 12 military cemeteries as "Cemeteries which are proposed for permanent installations based [on] physical characteristics, historic and political location."

Category II cemeteries included 12 under the notation "Cemeteries which are well situated and should be maintained until completion of Repatriation."

Category III comprised a list of 13 small cemeteries, only three of which contained more than 1,000 American remains. This group is described as "Cemeteries which should be evacuated as soon as possible to conserve personnel and because of unsatisfactory features."

The number of American remains to be evacuated from Category III cemeteries totalled 9,242. This figure, however, represents only a small part of the evacuation program, as then contemplated. According to cemeterial data compiled on 6 October 1945, Category I cemeteries contained six enemy plots, the ones at Épinal and Margraten, for example, having 4,891 and 4,053 respectively. Total enemy burials in cemeteries of this category numbered 12,134, all of which were to be removed to Category II cemeteries. The total number of remains, United States and enemy, involved in the concentration operation thus amounted to 21,376.

Only one phase of the concentration program formulated in November 1945 was actually carried to completion. Deferring to expressions of sentiment by next of kin in opposition to disturbing American remains before they were removed to their final resting places, the War Department canceled plans for the evacuation of Category III cemeteries.¹⁵ But the larger phase of the program, that is, the removal of enemy remains from Category I to Category II cemeteries, could not be abandoned. Operations were delayed, however, until September 1946, when the sector commands had made

¹⁴ Cited above, fn 11.

¹⁵ (1) AGRC, Rpt of Opns, Oct-Dec 45, p. 71. (2) Memo, Littlejohn for CG, TSFET, 27 Dec 45, sub: Brief for Theater Commander's Conference on Progress in Completing Organization of GRS.

sufficient progress in other phases of their mission to undertake the evacuation of enemy plots in Category I cemeteries. These operations will be discussed in connection with other activities conducted at that time.

Organization of Sector Commands

Aside from graphically portraying a plan for the concentration and operation of temporary cemeteries, Annex F-2 reveals trends of thinking at Headquarters, AGRC, in regard to the organization of sector commands, the structure and functions of which had been a matter of uncertain speculation for some time.

It will be recalled that the organizational scheme originally proposed in the staff study of 5 June 1945,¹⁶ recommending establishment of a Theater Graves Registration Service Command, specified three major subordinate zone commands, one including Germany and contiguous occupied and neutral countries, the other two embracing Great Britain and the liberated nations. This scheme was modified during July by breaking up Zone B, which originally covered the northern half of France and the United Kingdom, into three separate zone commands, giving five in all. Then, at the suggestion of Lt. Gen. C. H. Lee, CG, TSFET, the zone boundaries were rearranged with a view to coinciding with those of the base sections. Zone commanders were to be responsible for the conduct of all graves registration activities within their assigned areas, including cemeterial maintenance and recovery of isolated remains.

Never authorized by formal activation orders, the five zones occupied a rather peculiar position from July to September 1945. Zone commanders were appointed and efforts were made to assemble headquarters establishments in anticipation of the time that they would assume operational responsibility in the field. Actually, their role was limited to exerting a measure of technical control over graves registration activities conducted by the base sections. Only the German Zone offers an exception in its exercise of operational control over the evacuation of American remains from the military cemeteries in Germany. Then, as heretofore related, the concept of AGRC organization underwent a radical change late in September with General Littlejohn's insistence that greater authority be centralized in his headquarters staff and that brigade commands should be created for the purpose of initiating the search and recovery of isolated remains. Between 1 October and 7 December, three such organizations were established under the designation of Field Commands and assigned areas of responsibility approximating those of the three zones originally specified in Littlejohn's staff study of 5 June.

¹⁶ See above.

Revision of Organizational Concepts

Activation of the Field Commands compelled a revision of the organizational concept associated with the zone as a major subordinate command responsible for all phases of the graves registration program. But the process of revision is difficult to understand; transition from zone to sector organization in 1945 is obscured by the fact that the zones of that period did not exist as officially activated commands and, excepting the Germany Zone, never exercised operational control over field units. Furthermore, certain sector commands, with assigned field units, appear to have been in existence before the issuance of orders authorizing their activation. Dated 15 October 1945, Annex D of Plans for the Organization, Administration and Operation of the AGRC presents a map showing five sectors, with jurisdictional areas identical to those of the base sections.

The tendency to identify both zone and sector areas with the territories assigned to base sections lends credence to an assumption that the sector commands indicated in Annex D were logical successors to the proposed zones. But any attempt to sustain this thesis ignores the fact that Headquarters, AGRC, never willingly accepted the organizational principle that identified areas of its own subordinate commands with those of residual commands within the Theater which no longer served the purpose of supplying armies in combat and were destined shortly to pass out of existence. The five-sector scheme embodied the Theater concept rather than the one entertained at Headquarters, AGRC. It was given official force in the issuance of GO No. 2, Headquarters, AGRC, 1 November 1945, which established the five sectors described in Annex D. An arrangement in tabular form gives the following:

TABLE 7—*Cemeterial Organization, GO No. 2*

Designation	No. of U. S. cemeteries	Area of jurisdiction	Operating agency
United Kingdom Sector . . .	3	UK Base Section	616th Bn.
Northern European Sector . . .	8	Chanor Base Section	533d Bn.
Western France Sector	13	Oise Intermediate Base Section	615th Bn.
Eastern France Sector	10	Seine Base Section	500th Bn.
Southern France Sector	3	Delta Base Section	307th Bn.
Totals 5	37	5	5

After considerable doubt as to the logic of identifying the areas of different commands with dissimilar missions and tables of organization, Headquarters, AGRC, inclined toward the view that the number, size, and geographical distribution of military cemeteries should determine the territorial extent and, therefore, the number of sector

commands. Such a trend appears to have been hastened during examination of the concentration problem between 1 November, when the Cemetery Plant Division was established in Headquarters, AGRC, and 13 November, when the cemetery concentration plan was submitted in chart form to the Chief of Staff.

In addition to listing the cemeteries by categories and indicating the relationship between categories and the proposed transfer of remains, the chart (Annex F-1, 15 November 1945) portrays a new scheme of sector organization which not only departed from the identification of areas with base sections but gave a more equitable distribution of cemeteries by adding a sector to the five authorized on 1 November.

General Order No. 5

Whether proposed in the first instance by the Cemetery Plant Division, or adopted in consequence of a reluctance to accept sector areas which had no valid relationship to its mission, Headquarters, AGRC, authorized the new scheme on 4 December 1945 with publication of GO No. 5. The order prescribed a numerical designation for the six sectors shown in Annex F-1 and determined the assigned areas of responsibility in accordance with estimates which attempted to apportion to each command a more equitable distribution of the total burden than was the case in the five-sector scheme. Sectors III and V, for instance, had 9 cemeteries each; the former included 13 departments of eastern France, while the latter embraced 10 in western France. Again, the Sector I area, with 3 cemeteries, included all of the United Kingdom. The area of Sector IV with 1 enemy and 3 United States cemeteries, extended over 43 departments in southern and southwestern France.

The scheme, as indicated in Annex F-1, 15 November and specified by GO No. 5, 4 December 1945, may be graphically represented by the following table:

TABLE 8—*Scheme for AGRC Cemeteries, GO No. 5*

Designation in Annex F-2 15 Nov 45	Designation in GO No. 5 4 Dec 45	Area	No. of U. S. cemeteries	Operating agency ^a	Assigned GR Companies ^b
United Kingdom	I	United Kingdom	3	616th Bn.	None
North Europe Sector	II	Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg	8	533d Bn.	603d Co. less 1 plat.
East France Sector	III	Eastern France 13 Departments	9	615th Bn.	610th Co.

TABLE 8—Scheme for AGRC Cemeteries, GO No. 5—Continued

Designation in Annex F-2 15 Nov 45	Designation in GO No. 5 4 Dec 45	Area	No. of U. S. cemeteries	Operating agency ^a	Assigned GR Companies ^b
South France Sector	IV	Southern and western France 43 Departments	3 (1 enemy)	307th Bn.	None
West France Sector	V	Western France 10 Departments	9	578th Bn.	3050th Co.
Central France Sector	VI	Central France 22 Departments	5	500th Bn.	3049th Co.
Totals	6	6	37	6	15 Plats.

^a According to Annex F-2, 15 Nov 45 and GO No. 5, 4 Dec 45.

^b According to Annex F-2, no mention of assigned GR companies in GO No. 5.

Some 3 weeks before issuance of GO No. 5, Headquarters, AGRC, took steps to initiate the organization of Sector V. A command letter addressed on 16 November to the Commanding Officer, 578th Quartermaster Battalion (the same operating agency of Sector V shown in Annex F-2), instructed this officer that "your battalion is being established at Carteret to serve as headquarters for the Western Sector of France" and that "the cemeteries which will be under your control are shown on the attached chart."¹⁷

Personnel Buildup

The proposed buildup involved four categories of personnel—military, United States civilian, indigenous labor, and war prisoners. The 544th QM Battalion, it was stated, had turned over a considerable amount of overstrength which, for the time being, would be employed at cemeteries assigned to the sector. Then the 3050th GR Company was to be assigned to the command and, after existing deficiencies in "competent personnel to do the job" had been corrected, would undertake the removal of enemy dead from Category I cemeteries, as well as the transfer of American remains from Category III to Category II cemeteries. Permanent units for the operation of Category I and II cemeteries would, according to plans then under consideration, be built up by soldiers who took their discharge in the theater, together with civilians recruited in the United States. A smaller but similar organization "will have to be maintained at Cate-

¹⁷ AG Ltr, J. Kronfeld, WOJG to CO, 578th QM Bn, 6 Nov 45, sub; Work Schedule. It is not improbable that these instructions were written in reference to GO No. 3, 1 Nov 45. Use of the designation "Western France Sector" would support such an assumption. At the same time, sector designations specified in the order of 1 November were frequently applied to those established under GO No. 5, 4 Dec 45.

gory III cemeteries until such time as they can be evacuated and returned to the French." Finally, the Sector Commander was notified that he was to assume responsibility for the supervision of operations in connection with the building program, as well as the procurement of local labor for all constructions incident to maintenance and beautification of the cemeteries.¹⁸

An appearance of quick decisions and a rapid rate of progress in assembling the elements of the Sector V Command hardly presents an accurate picture of the situation as a whole, or even the one offered by Sector V. Replacements for the 3050th GR Company, to say nothing of those for field units assigned to the other sector commands, were not forthcoming. Few soldiers took their discharges in the theater; the procurement of civilians in the United States involved procedures and "protocol" which were a constant source of irritation to General Littlejohn.

While pressing demands for accelerated progress in field investigation and casualty resolutions lent the search and recovery program an importance that for the time being overshadowed other phases of the graves registration mission, insistence on the part of The Quartermaster General that all burial data filed in the Memorial Division, OQMG,¹⁹ must be verified by comparison with Theater records and checked at the grave site before a poll of the next of kin could be initiated now gave the problem of sector organization much of the urgency that had hastened the establishment of the field commands. Briefly, the sectors were called upon to serve as field agents in the verification and completion of burial records, the scope and nature of which undertaking has been discussed at some length in Chapter III.

Delays in Establishing Sector Commands

The frustrating delays in setting up the sector commands during December, together with the important role they were expected to play in the preparations for repatriation of the dead, caused General Littlejohn to express impatience. "Events are moving so fast," he wrote, "and we are moving so slow that we must have a preliminary conference at 9:30 tomorrow [31 December] to secure a meeting of minds and discuss ways and means of making the sector organization really function—get the cemeteries and sector headquarters equipped and manned by adequate personnel and records in the cemeteries absolutely correct."²⁰

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Memo, TQMG for CG, Army Forces, ETO (for Chief GRS), 15 Nov 45, sub: Verification of Records of Burial, ETO.

²⁰ Memo, Littlejohn for Brig Gen J. B. Franks, CofS, AGRC, 30 Dec 45, sub: Sector Organization and Operational Plan for Repatriation.

Sectors II and III were singled out for special attention. Aware that The Quartermaster General had designated Henri-Chapelle, the largest of the military cemeteries, and located within Sector II, as the one where the first unit of verified records should be completed, he urged that "Colonel Johnston had better get his group [the 534th] together and immediately set up headquarters at Hamm and run the Second and Third Sectors for 10 days to 2 weeks." "During this period," he directed, "every effort should be made to equip all the cemeteries and train key personnel, at least in these sectors." He added: "The organization must click."²¹

Just as the historian encounters numerous perplexities in discovering those dates that mark the transition from organizational planning to active operations in the development of the three Field Commands, so an attempt to establish similar dates with respect to the six Sectors becomes equally difficult. Strictly speaking, AGRC organization was in a continuous state of flux, reacting to shifts of emphasis from one to another large phase of the mission. Then, if not contradictory, the documentary evidence not infrequently contributes to a considerable amount of confusion in an analysis of a particular situation at any given time. Certainly there was no attempt on General Littlejohn's part to mislead the Commanding General, TSFET, when, on 27 December, he reported that plans for the organization of the AGRC had been completed and that "Six Sector organizations have been set up and are functioning for the control, operation and supervision of . . . cemeteries located in the liberated countries."²²

The ways and means of perfecting the internal structure of the sectors and making them click were highly complicated. A whirlwind inspection of cemeteries in northwestern France during the first week of January strongly impressed Littlejohn with the magnitude of the problem. After reflection on conditions observed in Sector V, he imparted his views to Col. S. D. Peabody, the Sector Commander. A lengthy list of deficiencies followed a few words of commendation on "the very fine physical condition of the several cemeteries in your sector" and a statement that "we now enter a new phase," seeking the development of cemeteries in the organization "with a view to having every American soldier identified and buried in a cemetery under military jurisdiction and either repatriated to the United States or buried in a beautiful location properly cared for here in Europe."²³ The analysis of deficiencies, nevertheless, was thorough and unsparing in its criticism.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Memo, Littlejohn for CG, TSFET, 27 Dec 45, sub: Brief for the Theater Commander's Conference on Progress in Completing Organization of GRS.

²³ Memo, Littlejohn to Col S. D. Peabody, Sector V Hq, 4 Jan 46, no sub.

Aside from a satisfactory appearance of Sector V cemeteries, there was little to praise. The selection of Carteret as sector headquarters ignored those factors that should have determined a suitable location, namely: (a) proximity of the job; (b) rail and road net; (c) availability of housing, including office space; (d) communications.²⁴

The disposition of military units in Sector V suggested to the Commanding General that the territorial extent of the command, rather than a careful analysis of responsibilities to be discharged, had been a governing consideration in making these dispositions. In other words, there was a tendency to regard the sector commands as sizable military provinces which should have appropriate headquarters and subordinate units disposed in such manner as to carry out the fiction of an impressive military establishment. But, while the basic concept of AGRC organization left little room for this fiction, General Littlejohn was well aware that officers bred in the military tradition would show some reluctance in accepting an organizational principle that called for the division of their units into numerous small detachments for supervisory purposes and, in some instances, the employment of single noncommissioned officers and even specially qualified privates as "straw bosses" over groups of civilian laborers and German war prisoners. Although still uncertain in his own mind as to the exact form that the sector headquarters would assume, he thought it expedient at this time to warn the Sector V Commander that conventional ideas of military organization could have only a limited application in his situation.

Battalion Headquarters and other headquarters units have been created and assigned to Sectors and other field organizations, merely for the purpose of providing supervisory and technical personnel, not for the purpose of setting up large headquarters and large commands, and comfortable billets away from work. To perform the normal administrative functions of your Sector Headquarters, my estimate is that three individuals are ample. However, if records, supply, etc., are brought into your Headquarters some additions must of necessity be made to this figure.

The Sector Commander and the major portion of his staff must be in the field at all times in order that there may be efficient organization and that the Sector Commander may properly command it. This is fundamental.²⁵

AG Letter of 6 November 1945

Aside from speculation on the ultimate form that the headquarters organization would take, the Commanding General threw out certain

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

suggestions concerning personnel. In general, he suggested that the total allotment was to be broken down into the four categories mentioned in the AG letter of 6 November 1945, namely military, American civilians, indigenous civilians, and prisoners of war. The allotment for Sector V would be announced at a conference of sector commanders on 7 January at AGRC Headquarters in Paris. It was stressed as a fundamental proposition that United States military and civilian personnel were to be employed in the sectors and that the numerical strength should be maintained. At the present time there was a preponderance of the military. "My guess is, also," he observed, "that you have one or more organizations that do not belong to you. It is just as important that you dispose of organizations to which you are not entitled as it is to get the organizations to which you are entitled."²⁶

Another basic concept of sector organization revealed in this letter was the provision relating directly to cemetery management. The grades of superintendent and assistant superintendent were to be created; the former would be filled by officers of the United States Army, the latter by qualified civilians. An officer-superintendent would normally have supervision over two cemeteries. His two civilian assistants would be civil service appointees, with a required knowledge of "(1) horticulture, including shrubs, flowers, lawn grass, planting and care of; (2) knowledge of cemetery operations [and] ability to make all provisions for a military cemetery."

Further analysis of the letter should establish beyond any doubt that General Littlejohn was primarily concerned in thinking out the problems of sector organization in terms of actual conditions observed while inspecting Sector V and only incidentally in giving the Sector Commander the benefit of his criticism. His thinking, however, took the form of positive directions with reference to certain matters that lay within the sector commanders' power to correct. Observing that the sector headquarters and cemetery offices must afford ample space for working staffs and the reception of visitors, "a large number of which may be expected during the spring," he described the one at Carteret as "too small" and those at the cemeteries as "unsuitable" and "cluttered with equipment made from boxes."

These deficiencies were to be repaired by requisitioning standard office furniture "in keeping with the dignity of the mission" and by the erection of prefabricated huts which "are now available to Sector V." He further directed that every sector should display on the walls and bulletin boards of headquarters offices large photo-

²⁶ *Ibid.*

graphic views of the cemeteries within each area, together with road maps, landscaping charts and other information bearing on the progress of work in the field. Then each cemetery was to be provided with a visitors' register, a narrative and pictorial history which, he stated, could be obtained from the Planning Division in Paris.

Related Problems

Turning from matters of the moment, General Littlejohn explored problems relating to development of the plot charts, sector participation in casualty resolutions, procurement of motor transportation, and the organization of a supply service which would enable the sector commander to furnish logistical support to all AGRC field units operating within the area of his command.

The first was an assignment of primary concern, emanating from The Quartermaster General and devolving upon the sectors insofar as concerned the physical check at the grave site. Directions in this respect were clear and precise.

1. Under date of December 19, 1945, my office directed that a Plot Chart be prepared for each cemetery and submitted to my headquarters by January 10, 1946. This date is hereby extended to January 14, 1946.

2. These Plot Charts will be prepared solely from the stencil markings on each cross and definitely without reference to the basic records or the chart records in any of the offices.

3. You will take action to have similar Plot Charts made from the basic records in the several offices.

4. I am taking action to have similar Plot Charts prepared in my office for each of your cemeteries. As soon as these 3 Plot Charts are available, my office will assign competent experts to work with your command and check every one.

5. No changes will be made on crosses, locator cards, or basic records until these 3 Plot Charts have been prepared and such changes are authorized in writing by a commissioned officer from my office.

6. I wish to impress upon you and your command that such procedure is essential in order that every possible means may be taken to eliminate errors.²⁷

The sector's responsibility in connection with recovery of isolated burials and casualty resolutions was, for the present, restricted to a minor role. Pending the organization of technical units for field investigation, its activity in this respect was to be limited to the recovery and interment of unburied remains and the examination of isolated burials in accordance with special instructions from Head-

²⁷ *Ibid.*

quarters, AGRC. Disinterments would not be made unless so ordered. All investigations of isolated burials were to be reported to superior headquarters.

The sectors fared no better than the field commands in the matter of transport. Specifications governing the transfer of surplus motor transportation to AGRC required that the Ordnance Service furnish vehicles fit for daily use over a 2-year period, and that a reasonable proportion of the total number should be serviceable for 5 years. Superior headquarters determined the allotment of trucks and cars to the major subordinate commands. The Sector V Commander was instructed to study his allotment and make a selection of vehicles in accordance with the requirements of a program which he would develop in collaboration with the Supply and Transportation Division. Special arrangements were to be worked out with the Chief of the Transportation Branch for inspection of defective vehicles by representatives of Headquarters, AGRC, and the Ordnance Service.

The contemplated inactivation of all base sections in the liberated countries on or before 15 March 1946 required that AGRC create an independent supply service which would function through its own depots and distribution points. Each sector commander would become responsible for the logistical support of all AGRC units operating within his area regardless of assignment of such units to sector or field commands. That is, the Sector V Commander would be responsible for supplying all search teams of the Second Field Command operating within his area. He was advised of three steps to be taken in this direction. First, he should develop a motor repair service, with two highly qualified American mechanics directing a labor force of French civilians and German war prisoners. Then he should obtain a Table of Allowance and Equipment computed at superior headquarters on the basis of a 1,000-man cemetery and prepare requisitions for all authorized requirements in connection with cemeterial operations. Finally, it was suggested that he contact local officials of the Western Base Command "with a view to stocking, for example: 6 months' supply of nonperishable rations, office stationery, clothing for enlisted men, etc." Thereafter he would obtain all his supplies from the AGRC depot at Folembay or Isle St. Germain, excepting local procurements of fresh fruits and vegetables "or other items which my office may be able to authorize you to procure."²⁸

General Littlejohn's memorandum to Colonel Peabody only stirred his mind to further exploration of the problem. Attaching

²⁸ *Ibid.*

a copy of this letter to one prepared for Colonel Talbot, Chief of Cemetery Plant Division, he sought to impress upon that officer and other members of his headquarters staff the concern he felt over delays in setting up the sector organization. "A week ago," he admitted, "I felt that the searching operations were paramount. Today I feel that cemeterial operations are paramount." He added:

I believe, however, that repatriation is going to move ahead of the other two. In other words, we must shift our viewpoint from day to day to meet the changing situation.

The cemeteries have not gotten out of the rut they were in during wartime operations. The average office is unsatisfactory. It is too small. It is improperly equipped. The general field perspective is still geared for landings on Normandy Beach.

Until my recent visits to the field, I must admit that I too lacked perspective in accomplishing the job ahead of us.²⁹

In accordance with the flexible point of view demanded by a changing situation, General Littlejohn expressed an opinion that the cemeteries could no longer be considered "in terms of a plant operation." Looking forward, he insisted that "we must view them in terms of an overall operation, since every division is involved in the deceased in each cemetery, proper records, proper identification and proper repatriation."

The increasing involvement of all staff divisions in the final disposition of war remains imposed the necessity of creating a coordinating agency not only for cemeterial operations but for all operations under purview of the Planning Division. While it was desirable to break down correspondence on a divisional basis, questions of policy, he thought, should be referred either to the Commanding General or his Chief of Staff. He further advised that whenever a problem cut across several sections, the papers emanating from his office should go out through the Executive Division. Each division, of course, should maintain copies of all correspondence in which it became involved. A set of regulations was to be developed for the express purpose of controlling all procedures relative to the co-ordination of administrative actions.

The sudden realization that cemeterial operations had become of paramount importance elevated the sectors to the level of the field commands, or, as expressed by General Littlejohn, placed "a sector commander in the same category of the Mobile Field Commander." Qualities essential to success in such a post, he observed, presupposed first of all an ability to command troops. This attribute

²⁹ Memo, Littlejohn to Talbot, 5 Jan 46.

should be coupled with a pleasing personality and a shrewd capacity for grasping practical realities. "Those who fail in this respect," he averred, "cannot be sector commanders." Then, while realizing that varying conditions in the different sector areas precluded any possibility of determining a uniform organization for these six commands, and that the variations now apparent would become even more diversified as the program moved toward repatriation, he nevertheless felt that "some rough breakdown" of a sector organizational scheme might be made. This, he thought, would comprise four main elements, as follow:³⁰

(a) Cemetery Plant Div.	(b) Registration Div.	(c) Executive Div.	(d) Supply Div.
(1) Overall personnel problems	(1) Burial records	(1) Reports	(1) Supply—
(2) Buildings	(2) Plot charts	(2) Files	normal and
(3) Landscaping	(3) Identification of unknowns	(3) Records	technical
(4) Grounds (lawns, shrubs, grass), planting of		(4) Correspondence	
(5) Equipment			
(6) Technical personnel			

Returning briefly to conditions in Sector V, Littlejohn conceded that the command "is satisfactory up to the moment." This estimate, however, was qualified by the observation that "as of the the moment I would say it is unsatisfactory."

If Sector V merited a qualified compliment nothing could be said for Sector III. In expressing his displeasure with accomplishments in that area, the General observed that "I don't know but that it has to be done over again." Then delays in setting up the organization of Sector II was a source of anxiety. He again suggested that Colonel Johnston get his 534th Group together and, after straightening out the tangle in Sector III, move into Sector II. He thought it advisable that Colonel Johnston break his group down into five components and that each one undertake a definite mission, such as: "(1) housing; (2) grounds; (3) supply, normal and technical; (4) transportation; (5) reports and correspondence." In noting the misuse of personnel, General Littlejohn pointed out that Sector V headquarters was overstaffed and that the large number of people standing guard were disproportionate to the few out checking records in the cemeteries.

St. Laurent, in Sector V, was cited as an example of failure to employ prisoners of war. The debris of battle, he noted, still littered the landing beach at the rear of the cemetery. The slope should be

³⁰ *Ibid.*

cleared up and levelled off. General Littlejohn further directed that Colonel Talbot and Ted Glover, the horticulturist from West Point, should as soon as possible "go into St. Laurent and plan to landscape and plant some flowers and shrubs—and let's have a cemetery that is a credit to the United States."

Conscious, perhaps, that his observations in the memorandum to Colonel Talbot and in the inclosed copy of those to Colonel Peabody might be construed as censorious, the Commanding General sought to remove any sting of criticism by stating that he wrote in a factual rather than a critical view. He magnanimously added: "I never before knew the magnitude of this job." At the same time, he could not withhold a scathing condemnation of faulty judgment in the selection of certain civilian appointees.

I do not know who hired people as [assistant] superintendents. I don't want any superintendents hired. The one I saw . . . would probably make a fair labor foreman. I want him reclassified. Take this up with Colonel Tolliver, and stop abuses of civil service regulations and, also, a raid on the Treasury. . . . By abusing the appointments initially we degrade the job.³¹

Given the paramountcy assigned to the sector commands, there should be no difficulty in understanding General Littlejohn's concern in singling out three of the six sectors, namely the II, III, and V, and insisting that all possible haste should be made in completing the job of organization.

Distribution of Cemeteries

Despite the fact that the divorcement of sectors from the base sections, insofar as concerns identity of areas, had given a more equitable distribution of cemeteries, and that an inverse ratio of cemeteries to the territorial extent of the different sectors seemed to equalize the burden which each one would assume, the sudden realization that cemeterial management could no longer be considered "in terms of a plant operation," had the effect of shifting emphasis from the number of cemeteries in each sector to the total number of burials concentrated within that sector area. Apart from cemeterial activities associated with the plant operation, the verification and completion of burial records in preparation for the polling of some 130,000 next of kin, together with the exacting task of reducing the number of recovered unknowns, involved efforts in which the participating staff divisions and many elements of the sector commands would be working against time. The 26 temporary cemeteries within the II, III, and V sector areas held

³¹ *Ibid.*

approximately 80 percent of all remains under care of AGRC. The residue of 20 percent lay in 11 cemeteries distributed among the I, IV, and VI sector areas. The contrast between these two groups is further heightened by the fact that Sector V, the smallest of all in territorial extent, included nine cemeteries with a total burial figure exceeding that of Sectors I, IV, and VI taken together.

Notwithstanding a territorial arrangement which divided the six sectors into two distinct groups, one containing large concentrations of cemeteries in relatively restricted areas, while the wider expanses of the other were sparsely dotted by small cemeteries averaging scarcely more than 2,000 graves, there is another set of circumstances that lent some justification to the arrangement. It had an historical sanction.

While it seems unlikely that the history of OVERLORD and DRAGOON was consulted in drawing the sector boundaries, it is nevertheless an obvious fact that the lines as actually drawn marked off clusters of cemeteries which were clearly identified with distinct phases of the invasion of Western Europe from the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. An appreciation of this result, no doubt, would have given a different sequence in the numbering of the sectors.

Sectors V, II, and III represent segments of the total operational theater in which violent and sustained ground combat took place. Clustered thickly in the Normandy Peninsula, the nine cemeteries of Sector V are identified with the battles for the lodgement area and the breakout across the Seine River basin. The seventeen cemeteries of Sectors II and III trace the wide deployment of American arms facing the fortified frontier of western Germany. With minor variations, they form a line stretching 270 miles from Molenhoek, near Nim in the eastern Netherlands, to Épinal, near the Burgundian gateway.³² The 26 cemeteries within these three sectors held 167,033 remains, or four-fifths of all the dead—112,307 American, 1,921 Allied, and 52,805 enemy.

Counting only 11 cemeteries with 23,422 burials—17,871 American, 2,393 Allied, and 3,158 enemy, Sectors I, IV, and VI were the scenes of operations that, however, important in the development of the campaign, offer a sharp contrast to the bloody battle dramas enacted in the other three. The victors of Normandy swept in swift pursuit across the area of Sector VI to the German frontier, while the landing forces from the Mediterranean pushed virtually unopposed up through the wide stretches of Sector IV to the high Vosges and the Lorraine plateau, where they joined hands with formations

³² Strictly speaking, the deployment fronting western Germany from Nijmegen to Belfort, was an air-line distance of 270 miles.

driving in from the Atlantic. Sector I, the only sector correctly numbered from the historical point of view, has its association with the great base command which witnessed the buildup of the main invasion force and provided the landing fields to which many who perished in the air bombardment of *Festung Europa* returned in their crippled planes.

AGRC Headquarters correspondence during December 1945 on the subject of sector organization should establish beyond any doubt that the process of building up these six commands was, like that of the Second and Third Field Commands, a laborious task fraught with exasperating complications. Throughout December 1945 the six sectors, as well as the Second and Third Field Commands, were scarcely more than paper organizations, awaiting the assignment of authorized TO units and the arrival of replacements to fill these units.

With three previously assigned organic units—the 3060th GR Company, the 4502d and 4505th QM Mess Detachments (AF)—GO Nos. 4 and 5 assigned 40 provisional units, including 6 QM Battalions, to the 534th QM Group, which was then established at Nancy to serve as a field headquarters in furnishing administrative support to the sectors during the buildup period. The six provisional QM Battalions (6868th through 6873d) were, in turn, assigned to Sectors I–VI, respectively, replacing the six organic battalions that had originally functioned as “operating agencies” of the sector commands authorized by GO No. 5, 4 December 1945. Thus the 6872d QM Battalion replaced the 578th, the Commanding Officer of which had been instructed on 6 November as to the steps he should take in handling the workload of his sector. In all, 42 units, of which 3 were organic and 39 provisional, had been assigned by 11 January 1946 to the 534th Group for organization and reassignment to the various sectors. Including the 534th Group in the total computation of sector forces, we have the following:

TABLE 9—Listing of Sector Forces

Type of unit	TOE	Strength of unit	No. of units	LTD	OTB	Total strength
QM Gp Hq/Hq Det. (Org.)	10-22	35	1	1		35
QM Bn Hq/Hq Det. w/Med (Prov.)	10-56	28			6	168
QM Bn Hq/Hq Det. w/o Med (Prov.)	10-56	20			1	20
QM Comp. Hq Co. (AC) (Prov.)	10-500	10	14		12	140
QM GR Co. (Org.)	10-297	125			1	125
QM GR Det (GB) (Prov.)	10-500	6	15	15		90
Ord. Maint. Det (DA) (Prov.)	10-500	29	1	1		29
Ord. Maint. Det (DB) (Prov.)	10-500	45	2	2		90
QM Mess Det (AF) (Org.)	10-500	6	2	2		12
Totals			35	21	20	709

Since shifts in the emphasis given to different phases of the sector's mission prevented a uniform organization between February and October 1946, when they were absorbed by the zone commands, there seems no point in tracing the fluctuations of organizational structure and troop strengths. In general, the organizational structure of supervisory staffs comprised in one form or another the four basic divisions proposed early in January by General Littlejohn. That is, a Cemetery Management, a Registration, a Burial Records, an Executive and a Supply Division. Then there were some variations in methods of overhead administration and personnel management. Sectors II and VI afford interesting illustrations.

Assignments of Personnel

The Commanding Officer, 534th QM Group, instructed Sector II Headquarters at Liège that an assignment of personnel was to be made to the following units, all of which were included in the list of troops earmarked for this major subordinate command in the troop assignment orders of 7 and 11 January:

- 6868th QM Hq Composite Company (AC) (Prov.)
- 6334th QM Hq Composite Company (AC) (Prov.)
- 6822d QM GR Detachments (GB) (Prov.)
- 6823d QM GR Detachments (GB) (Prov.)
- 6825th QM GR Detachments (GB) (Prov.)
- 6866th QM GR Detachments (GB) (Prov.)
- 3060th QM GR Company (Org.)

Subsequently, two labor supervision companies and four labor service companies were released by Chanor Base Section and attached to Sector II. Then, on 1 February, a month after General Littlejohn urged in the memorandum to his Chief of Staff that "Colonel Johnston had better get his group [the 534th] together . . . and run the Second and Third Sectors for 10 days to 2 weeks," the 6869th QM Battalion replaced the 533d as the headquarters unit of Sector II.³³

The seven assigned units enumerated above gave an authorized troop strength of 197. Counting attached units, POW details, War Department civilians and indigenous laborers, the total manpower of Sector II was represented by a somewhat larger figure. During the same period, Sector V attained an actual troop strength of 118. On 31 March 1946, Sector VI reported a total manpower of 218, including 16 officers, 134 enlisted men, 18 War Department civilians, and 50 indigenous laborers.

³³ Memo, Littlejohn for Brig Gen J. B. Franks, CofS, AGRC, 30 Dec 45, sub: Sector Organization and Operational Plan for Repatriation.

A more detailed report concerning the buildup of Sector VI reveals something of the nature of the administrative authority exercised by the 534th Group. Briefly, it supervised all activities incidental to redeployment, rosters, personnel reports and, in accordance with stated policy, required that sector headquarters obtain prior approval of the Group for issuance of all orders intended to effect a change of assignment among sector units.

No serious difficulties, it is stated, arose until the number of Sector VI units increased from 3 to 12, with an assigned troop strength of 144 by 28 February. The vexatious problem of processing separate payrolls for small units was then solved by including five Graves Registration Detachments (AC) on the payroll of the 6969th Headquarters Composite Company (GB). By this device, a single payroll rather than six sufficed for 66 persons.

While simplifying procedures whereby units averaging no more than 11 men might be paid, Sector VI Headquarters secured some modification of the regulations that restricted its freedom of action in changing unit assignments. Throughout the first 3 months of 1946, however, the 534th Group directed operations relative to redeployment. Announcement of criteria by higher authority was transmitted by the Group to Sector VI Headquarters. The sector personnel section then screened the records to determine eligibility and submitted a name list to the 534th Group. Upon issuance of orders by the Group, Sector VI shipped the eligible men to a designated unit or port of embarkation. During the January-March period, a total of one officer and 30 enlisted men, or approximately 20 percent of the command, were redeployed to the United States.

With the final process of sector organization retarded by the preliminary training of replacements who filled the assigned units to TO strength, progress in making headway with the two missions of highest priority—completion of verified plot charts and beautification of the cemeteries—was necessarily slow and uneven. The situation suggests comparison to experiences of the mobile field commands in undertaking operations with partially trained units and inexperienced staff direction: just as these commands attained operating efficiency by a combination of learning through trial and error in the field and continued on-the-job training, so the sectors slowly gained momentum in moving toward a stated objective.

Like the field command—particularly the First and Second during January 1945—the sectors were plagued by the poor quality of replacements and an increasing rate in the loss of experienced personnel through lowering credit points for demobilization. It seems almost superfluous to remark that this form of attrition was quite as

disastrous in its effect on unit efficiency as had been the drain of battle casualties on combat formations during hostilities. Such was the consensus of sector commanders at a conference on 28 February; all affirmed an opinion which described as inferior the quality of replacements received from Army and base section centers.³⁴

Attempts to Eliminate Discrepancies

While still in a formative state of organization, General Littlejohn assigned the sector commands their "priority mission" in issuance of Circular No. 2, Headquarters, AGRC, 1 February 1946. The directive outlined procedures which were intended to eliminate discrepancies between grave marker inscriptions, cemetery records and burial reports in the central file. Intended originally as an inventory proposed by the Cemetery Plant Division in connection with plans for the Organization, Operation and Administration of the American Graves Registration Command, European Theater, 15 October 1945, this inventory became closely related to the records verification program proposed on 15 November 1945 by The Quartermaster General.

The relationship is clearly indicated in correspondence accompanying the submission of forms, the so-called plot map sheets, to the various sectors. In expectation of early action by the Congress regarding legislation and appropriation of funds for return of the war dead, the sector commanders were exhorted to do everything in their power that would avert delay once the shipment of remains began. The first step in the program, it was stated, would be a poll of the next of kin. But success in this operation depended upon the absolute accuracy of grave marker inscriptions and burial records used in preparation of the poll letters. To this end, the standard plot map sheets sent to each sector commander were to be used in making a physical inventory of all graves in all plots of the cemeteries assigned to the sector.

Three sets of plot maps, it was explained, would be completed for each cemetery. First, the primary responsibility of the cemetery staff was to be accomplished by duplicating in their appropriate spaces on the sheet the inscriptions on all grave markers in the plot. Three copies of this set were to be made, one of which would remain on file at the cemetery, another to be transmitted to sector headquarters, while the third would go to the Registration Division at Headquarters, AGRC.

³⁴ Discussion of Sector Problems at Headquarters Conference, Rpt of Opns, AGRC, 1 Jan-31 Mar 46, App. No. 74.

The second set of plot sheets were to be prepared from cemetery records either at sector headquarters or by headquarters representatives at the cemetery. At the same time, a team of Registration Division members in Paris would use the original reports of interment filed with wartime Graves Registration and Effects Division, OCQM, and subsequently transferred to AGRC, in the preparation of the third set. Experts of the Registration Division would reconcile discrepancies between the three sets of completed plot map sheets relating to a particular cemetery. Corrections in original reports of interment and cemetery records were to be made only by approval of these appointed experts.

The first step in undertaking the program encountered unforeseen difficulties. Prior to activation of the sector commands, the records of each cemetery were kept at the cemetery office. Inspection of the collections at the different cemeteries disclosed that each one had a different system and that the records at some cemeteries were incomplete. Consolidation of all cemetery records at the various sector headquarters and establishment of a uniform system thus became a preliminary requirement in development of the program.

Containing the oldest group of cemeteries in the Theater, Sector V, it seems, should have enjoyed an advantage in taking over a body of records that had benefited by processes of correction and systemization over a longer period of time than had been possible elsewhere. But whatever advantages the sector may have enjoyed in theory, the consolidation of its cemetery records awaited the transfer of headquarters early in March from Carteret to a former POW Medical Center near Carentan, in the Department of La Manche, where ample office and storage space became available.

On 8 March, the Sector Commander directed all cemetery staffs to complete the first set of plot sheets furnished by Headquarters, AGRC, and, upon completion of the work in the field, to submit duplicate sheets of the first set to sector headquarters for comparison with those of the second set based on the consolidated cemetery records. Then, as a by-product of the latter activity, the Cemetery Records Section compiled alphabetical rosters for each cemetery and transmitted each roster to the appropriate cemetery. With the data thus furnished, each cemetery staff completed a file of locator cards.

Activities following similar procedures took place in the other sector areas. Continued progress in Sector V is reflected by a report that alphabetical rosters for approximately all burials within the sector had been compiled and that locator card files were under preparation for the cemeteries.³⁵

³⁵ AGRC, Rpt of Opns, Apr-Jun 46, p. 92.

In keeping with the shifts of emphasis on different phases of the graves registration mission, the records verification program had scarcely been put on a sound operational basis when cemetery construction and beautification assumed the aspects of a first priority assignment. Orders issued by the Commanding General, USFET, on 28 March 1946, required that traditional Memorial Day observance would be held at all military cemeteries in the liberated countries.³⁶

Memorial Day Planning

The directive suggested the propriety of planning five special ceremonial programs on an inter-Allied level and that invitations be extended for the participation of representatives of the governments of Great Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and France at cemeteries selected for this purpose. Cambridge, England; Margraten, Holland; Hamm, Luxembourg; and St. Avold, France, were indicated as most desirable.³⁷ Local officials of the host governments would be invited to take part in programs of a less pretentious nature at all other cemeteries. Responsibility for all detailed planning, together with the task of putting each cemetery in presentable condition by 30 May for the occasion, devolved upon Headquarters, AGRC. While the heaviest burdens were to be assumed by two of the headquarters divisions, Cemetery Plant and Supply, other divisions and the sector commands gave the highest priority to the project.³⁸

Cemeterial Construction Operations

The impulse given by Theater headquarters only hastened a fairly satisfactory rate of progress in cemetery construction and beautification already initiated by the Cemetery Plant Division. Achievements in Sector VI illustrate the progress made elsewhere. Early in 1946, completion of a sector-wide survey established the quantities of materials for required constructions and listed beautification projects. In view of the early spring season in that part of France, the Cemetery Plant Division had placed requisitions for all desired materials.

During the month of January, new reception buildings and billets were finished at Solers and Villeneuve-sur-Auvers. These new buildings were complete with plumbing and electricity. Similar

³⁶ Ltr, 006 CAP-AGO to CG, Third Army Area, 28 Mar 46, sub: Memorial Day Ceremonies.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ (1) IRS, Denniston, CofS, AGRC to Capt Walls, PRO, AGRC. (2) AGRC, Rpt of Opns, Jan-Mar 48, pp. 72-73.

constructions were advanced during January at St. Corneille, including a reception building and interior painting. Then, while the inventory of graves was completed at Solers, St. Andre, Villeneuve-sur-Auvers, Champigneul, and St. Corneille during February and March, the billets were erected complete with plumbing and electric installations.

Meanwhile, the cemetery labor forces were at work on various beautification projects. Progress, however, was deferred at St. Andre until the coming of mild weather late in March. There the grass of the previous fall was spaded under to prepare for new seeding. At the same time, progress was made in erecting a new office and reception building, while weathering of the winter required the replacement or repair of many crosses.

The latter operation was accomplished by a special unit working under the general direction of the Sector Executive Officer, with the Operations Officer exercising immediate supervision. Consisting originally of two War Department civilians and an "Operations Sergeant," this unit was supported by an office force of three War Department civilians, three enlisted men, and one POW typist, together with details of German labor units. Since each inscription on a replaced or repainted marker must either reproduce the original one, if verified by the corrected plot map sheet, or reflect any change directed by the Registration Division record experts after reconciling the three sets of sheets, this undertaking may be regarded as a combination of two separate programs—records verification and beautification.

The Operations Sergeant assumed responsibility for securing all materials from the Supply Division, and delivering the required items at each cemetery. The reports of burial were checked at sector headquarters and stencils cut for the cemeteries. The Operations Officer set a daily production schedule of 200 stencils. This was accomplished by operating two shifts in the stencil room and by adding another shift in the paint shop. These adjustments, it is reported, permitted the stenciling of nearly 400 grave markers a week.³⁹

With the reports of burial for each cemetery arranged by plot, row, and grave, the shop foreman checked the painting and stenciling of markers in the same order. The crosses were then placed on specially designed racks built in 2½-ton trucks and trailers and dispatched to the cemeteries. An enlisted man in charge of a POW labor unit received the crosses at the cemetery and directed the erection of each one at its appointed grave. There, he made a third

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

check for accuracy of the inscription, the first having been done immediately after cutting of the stencil, the second following the painting of the stencil. The crosses were then aligned by transit from all angles.

As the freshly painted rows of crosses shone in the spring sunlight, the sector horticulturists were completing their preparations for shaded lawns, bordering shrubs, and colorful flowerbeds. Sources of topsoil required for leveling graves and other landscaping improvements were located as near as possible to the cemeteries. Florists and nurseries were sought in the vicinity for future supplies of trees, shrubs, and flowers, while requisitions were placed for trees and shrubs that had died during the winter months.⁴⁰

The overall accomplishment of cemetery construction and beautification in preparation for Memorial Day was attended with complications that taxed the ingenuity of staff and field officers alike. The principal difficulty lay in filling requisitions and securing deliveries at the right time and place of critical supplies such as lumber, gravel, paint, grass seed, and cemetery equipment. Items requested from the Zone of Interior were received only in "negligible dribbles." Tracer phone calls to Headquarters, TSFET, and even a telegram dispatched by General Littlejohn to Washington urgently requesting immediate action on a large requisition for grass seed, elicited the same stock reply: the items in question "were on the high seas."

Only by combing the European area, and through the co-operation of Western Base Section, paint, gravel, grass seed, and lawn mowers were obtained in sufficient quantities to enable the Command to get its cemeteries in order for the expected visitors. White painted hutments were constructed at the cemeteries for use as reception and supply rooms, platforms thrown up for the Memorial Day exercises, while cemetery superintendents ingeniously erected steeples on standard type structures to give the effect of chapels. "Thus," according to report, "by long distance hauling and much hard work the AGRC cemeteries of World War II were in condition to honor the heroes interred in them by a neat and dignified appearance on the day dedicated to their memory."⁴¹

Progress of the sectors toward accomplishing the two objectives of highest priority during the winter and early spring, together with the assignment of an increased number of WD technicians, now permitted a greater concentration of effort on the recovery of isolated remains, casualty resolutions and identification of recovered unknowns. But in view of the impending absorption of the sectors by

⁴⁰ Cf. AGRC, Rpt of Opns, Apr-Jun 46, p. 99.

⁴¹ AGRC, Rpt of Opns, Apr-Jun 46, p. 95.

the three zone commands established in July and August, and the continuation of these activities on an increasing scale, it seems advisable to trace their development in connection with the operations of those commands, and with special emphasis on their work in preparation for the repatriation of remains.

Mass Handling of Remains

One notable achievement of the sector commands, nevertheless, claims attention. This concerns the successful development of operational techniques in the mass handling of remains, notably during the removal of German dead from Épinal and reinterment at Andilly. Involving the transfer of 4,891 remains, the operation began on 24 September, with a scheduled completion date of 15 December 1946. It was consciously planned as an exercise which would afford practical experience to personnel of the American Graves Registration Command in undertaking the repatriation of American war dead to the United States in 1947.

Lt. Col. William A. Cauthern, commanding the 305th QM Battalion, formulated the operational plan for execution by the 4447th QM Service Company. Second Lt. Clinton A. Erb, C. O., 4447th QM Service Company, and 2d Lt. Ronald L. Croft, Jr., Executive Officer, who were assigned in charge of the operations at Épinal and Andilly cemeteries, respectively, from 24 September to 8 October, are credited by Colonel Cauthern with having organized the difficult operations into an unusually smooth procedure.

A fleet of five 2½-ton trucks transported an average of 96 remains per day on the 135-mile round trip from Épinal to Andilly. As of 11 October, 1,105 German remains had been transferred to Andilly and reinterred. Personnel strength for the operation included 2 officers, 8 enlisted men, 4 WD civilians and 340 German war prisoners. Prior to the beginning of the actual transfer, 250 graves were opened at Andilly. Work on grave digging thereafter progressed to the extent of keeping 800 open graves in advance of reinterments.

Work at Épinal extended from Monday through Friday. Exhumations on Saturday were suspended so as to prevent remains from lying above ground over the week-end. The work-week at Andilly extended from Tuesday through Saturday in order to handle the shipments from Épinal. Operations at Épinal were conducted under the direction of a Disinterment Officer, 1st Lt. Alfred W. Matthews, C. O., 4566th QM Service Company, and a staff of WD civilians and noncommissioned officers.

The labor force consisted of 180 German war prisoners. These were divided into three groups—a Digging Team, a Disinterment

Team and a Covering Team. Functioning somewhat in the manner of an assembly line, the three teams operated as follows:

1. The Digging Team included the bulk of the POWS who had the task of opening graves. They excavated the graves in pairs, removing the foot of earth normally separating individual graves so that one large excavation could be made. This method afforded the Disinterring Team ample space in which to work. The Digging Team excavated the openings to within six inches of the remains.

2. The Disinterment Team placed a screen about the double grave and uncovered the remains. When the remains were uncovered, the body and clothing were checked for identification and identity tags. Upon completion of the identification process, the remains were placed in a slit mattress cover and, together with the grave marker and the QM bottle copies of interment records, were removed from the grave site to the vicinity of the truck convoy. The remains were then placed in a covering shroud and lifted into a burial box. An Emergency Medical Tag was tied to the shroud and the cross marker was placed inside the burial box with the remains and QM bottle copies. The lid was then replaced on the open box and the grave number from the grave marker chalked on the foot of the burial box. The boxes were then placed on the trucks in a designated order and recorded and certified on the WAY BILL by the Disinterring Officer. The stacked boxes were covered with a tarpaulin in preparation for removal on the following day to Andilly.

3. The Covering Team included a laborer designated as a lime sprayer and equipped with a gas mask. After this team member dropped three pounds of lime into each excavation to disinfect the earth, the opening was refilled.

An honor guard (either French or Polish) stood watch during the night over the casketed remains resting in the trucks.

The convoy moved out at 0830 hours in charge of two armed noncommissioned officers on the 135-mile trip to Andilly and back. The Convoy Commander and his assistant served as both an honor guard for the dead and a guard over the German POW drivers. They were responsible for insuring observance of sanitary precautions, safety measures, and reverent procedures during transit. In keeping with the policy of avoiding populous centers, the convoy detoured around Nancy.

Upon arrival at Andilly at approximately 1030 hours, the Convoy Commander supervised the placing of each box at the head of the grave to which the remains were consigned and then turned over pertinent papers to the reinterring officer. When the latter officer satisfied himself that all papers concerning cemetery locations

were in order, he acknowledged proper receipt on the WAY BILL for return by the convoy commander to the disinterring officer. Upon completion of unloading of the trucks, the convoy commander placed clean burial boxes from the previous day's transfer on his trucks and departed for Épinal.

At Andilly, as at Épinal, the German POW labor force was divided into three groups or teams to operate in the following manner:

1. The Digging Team opened standard 6- x 6- x 2½-foot graves.
2. The Receipt and Reinterment Team lifted the remains from the burial boxes delivered at the grave site, placed them in their designated graves and covered the remains with one foot of earth. The QM bottle copies were placed in the grave with the remains, while the grave marker was placed at the head of the grave. As the last body was reinterred each day at Andilly, the 30 German POW members of the reinterment team, together with the American reinterment staff, stood at attention for one minute at the grave site.
3. The Covering Disinfectant Team filled in the graves, graded the surface, then scrubbed and disinfected all burial boxes delivered during the day.

Approximately 20 percent of the German dead disinterred at Épinal were identified by name. But only about 2 percent were, according to their original reports of burial, without identification tags (a far higher percentage than normally applied among American soldiers). The actual number of positive identifications after reference to German Army records would rise to 98 percent. It is interesting to note that only 5 percent of the QM bottle copies of interment reports originally placed in the graves at Épinal, or supposed to have been placed therein, were missing upon disinterment. Each body was inspected during exhumation by a member of the United States disinterring staff to determine that the remains were of German nationality.

In accordance with Operations Order No. 10, Headquarters, AGRC, 1 August 1946, which assigned overall responsibility to the newly established zone commands for the transfer of enemy dead buried at Épinal and four other Category I cemeteries,⁴² Headquarters, Third Zone, prepared six copies of each transfer list. These

⁴² Paragraph 3.f., Operations Order No. 10 states:

(f) *Transfer of Enemy and Allied Remains*

(1) Zone Commanders have been charged with the responsibility for the transfer of Allied remains from United States military cemeteries.

(2) The enemy dead buried at Margraten, Henri-Chapelle, Épinal and St. Laurent will be transferred by zones.

(3) Burial records, plot maps, etc., on deceased transferred in accordance with paragraph 3.f. (1) and (2) above, will be turned over to the Zone Commander for final disposition.

lists contained the following information: (1) identification of deceased; (2) old burial location; (3) new burial location; (4) dates of disinterment and reinterment; (5) certificates from disinterment and reinterment officers certifying to the proper disinterment and reinterment of deceased. Final disposition of lists was as follows: (1) one copy to Épinal Cemetery records; (2) one copy to Andilly Cemetery records; (3) one copy to Headquarters, Third Zone; (4) three copies to Headquarters, AGRC.

Due to want of uniformity between the grave plots at St. Avold and Andilly, those of the former cemetery varying in size and those of the latter conforming to the standard 300 grave size, it was found impossible to reinter the German dead in the exact order of original interment, as required by TOB No. 2, Reinterment of Remains. Therefore, the use of plot maps as a visual aid became necessary throughout the transfer operation. These plot maps were filed with the transfer lists.

Every precaution was taken during the operation to preserve the same attitude of dignity and reverence toward the German dead that is ordinarily accorded the remains of American soldiers. An honor guard accompanied the deceased from the time of exhumation to reinterment. Forgetting the rancor of combat, Americans joined Germans in a final salute to the soldiers who had fallen in battle. Officers who planned and conducted the program felt that results justified their concept of policy. Thoroughly indoctrinated with an ancient military tradition that had not been entirely vitiated by Nazi brutality, the German prisoners evinced their appreciation by a zealous effort to do a workmanlike job. The response of United States Army personnel was equally gratifying. Sometimes inclined toward negligence in mass handling of the dead, the soldiers on this assignment, according to report, showed "the proper attitude and respect for their part in the repatriation of United States war dead." At least, the hope was expressed that "the efficient and meticulous attention governing the disinterment, shipment and reinterment of these dead may be noted with intelligent appreciation by the French people."⁴³

⁴³ AGRC, Rpt of Opns, Jul-Sep 46, p. 163.