

## CHAPTER X

### PERMANENT CEMETERIES IN EUROPE

#### Final Selection of Permanent Sites

Shortly after the close of the war in Europe, there were 36 temporary United States Military Cemeteries within the Theater's confines, containing approximately 140,000 American deceased. Twenty-four of these temporary burial grounds lay within the borders of France, where, as in the first World War, most Americans laid down their lives. The remaining 12 were distributed in the following manner: 4 in Belgium, 3 in Holland, 2 in England, and 1 each in Ireland, Luxembourg, and Switzerland, as shown in the table below:<sup>1</sup>

TABLE 10—*Distribution of United States Cemeteries in European Theater*

<i>France</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>Luxembourg</i>	<i>Belgium</i>
Andilly	Marigny	Hamm *	Fosse
Blosville	St. Andre		Foy
Champigneul	St. Avold *	<i>Holland</i>	Henri-Chapelle *
Draguignan *	St. Corneille	Margraten *	Neuville-en-Condroz *
Épinal *	St. James *	Molenhoek	
Gorron	St. Laurent *	Son	<i>Ireland</i>
Grand Faily	St. Juan		Lisnabreeny
Hochfelden	Ste. Mere Eglise No. 1	<i>England</i>	
La Cambe	Ste. Mere Eglise No. 2	Brookwood	<i>Switzerland</i>
Le Chene Guerin	Solers	Cambridge *	Munsingen
Limey	Varois		
Luynes	Villeneuve		

\* Later became permanent cemeteries.

In its "Plan for Repatriation of the Dead of World War II and Establishment of Permanent United States Military Cemeteries at Home and Abroad," issued on 8 September 1945, the War Department listed proposed permanent overseas cemeteries, including nine in the European Theater of Operations—five in France: St. Laurent, St. James, Épinal, Limey, and Solers; and one other in England (at

<sup>1</sup> (1) Col L. R. Talbot, "The Story of the American Graves Registration in Europe and Africa" (Maj Gen Robert M. Littlejohn, ed., *Passing in Review*, ch. 26), p. 5. (2) Monthly Rpt by Cemeteries of Burials Outside the Continental Limits of the United States—World War II, 31 Jan 46, 319.1, Europe, Alex RC.

Cambridge), in Belgium (at Henri-Chapelle), in Holland (at Margraten), and in Luxembourg (at Hamm).<sup>2</sup> Most of these suggested sites eventually became the resting places of unrepatriated and unknown American deceased, but some variations from this list developed before the matter was settled. Nevertheless, the stated policy in the "current" plan favoring the establishment and maintenance of permanent overseas cemeteries largely governed the program of cemeterial maintenance and development which took place in the postwar years.

During the closing weeks of 1945, Maj. Gen. Robert M. Littlejohn, Commanding General, AGRC-EA, discussed the selection of permanent cemeteries in Europe with high Army officers and observed that the War Department's original choices were based entirely upon a technical examination of sites, with no consideration for the sentimental or historic aspect of the war. He believed that areas in which important military operations took place should not be overlooked even though they might have poor soil and be difficult to landscape. He cited Omaha Beach, where the first Americans went ashore on D-Day, as an example of an historic locality where a permanent burial ground might be created. For planning purposes, General Littlejohn submitted as his choice and that of two Army Groups and several Army Commanders, the following list of six cemeteries: St. Laurent, Cambridge, Margraten, Neuville, Hamm, and Épinal.

General Littlejohn proposed St. Laurent because it had a close association with the initial landing of the First Army at Omaha Beach and would also serve as a memorial to the airborne troops who participated in D-Day operations. Cambridge Cemetery, established in mid-1942, had been used for casualties of the Eighth Air Force and for all deaths in all Army components in England subsequent to June 1942. Margraten, basically a Ninth Army cemetery in Holland, cared for fatalities suffered during the drive to the Roer River and those who fell in Germany. Neuville served mainly as a First Army cemetery in Belgium and contained those who fell in the fighting around Aachen and during the drive into the Siegfried Line. Hamm Cemetery stemmed from Third Army deaths during the Battle of the Bulge and Ardennes and provided the only American burial ground in Luxembourg. Finally, Épinal was chosen as a Seventh Army cemetery, which contained fatalities of the drive through the Vosges Mountains and the battle for the Colmar Pocket. If these six cemeteries could not care for American

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<sup>2</sup> Current Plan for Return of American Dead, p. 16.

deceased remaining in Europe, General Littlejohn suggested four additional sites: Ste. Mere Eglise No. 2, Foy, St. Avold, and Limey, all of which possessed historic and sentimental interest.

During this period, officials in Memorial Division, OQMG, also studied the matter of permanent overseas sites for American war dead and considered various plans for their establishment. Plan No. 1, prepared by Operations Branch, Memorial Division, and submitted to higher authorities for approval, listed six proposed permanent cemeteries—Cambridge, St. Laurent, Hamm, Epinal, Henri-Chapelle, and Margraten.<sup>3</sup> It will be observed that while all suggested lists of cemeteries included several sites in common, each also had certain variations.

#### *Origin and Function of American Battle Monuments Commission*

Any project pertaining to the selection, layout, and operation of overseas American military cemeteries required co-ordination with the American Battle Monuments Commission, an agency which had been created by Act of Congress (Public Law 534, 67th Cong.), approved 4 March 1923, in order "to erect suitable memorials commemorating the services of the American soldier in Europe, and for other purposes." The Act specified that the Commission "shall consist of not more than seven members who shall be appointed by the President, who shall also appoint one officer of the Regular Army to serve as its secretary."<sup>4</sup>

Executive Order 6614, 26 February 1934, transferred responsibility for the administration and maintenance of World War I cemeteries from the Quartermaster Corps to the Commission. Still later, but within a year after V-J Day, on 4 March 1946, another Executive Order extended the Commission's functions but failed to provide for the administration and maintenance of World War II cemeteries. Apparently, high-level policy envisioned the War Department as handling repatriation activities and establishing permanent overseas burial grounds *before* they were transferred to the ABMC, in line with the principle set down in 1934.

#### *Plans and Proposals for Overseas Sites*

Anticipating the ultimate enactment of legislation providing for acquisition by the Secretary of War of permanent overseas cemeterial sites for World War II deceased, The Quartermaster General sub-

<sup>3</sup> Plan Number One, Planned Opns, Overseas Permanent American Military Cemeteries, Prepared by Opns Br, Mem Div, 31 Mar 46.

<sup>4</sup> Since its creation, the ABMC has increased in size to its present 11 members.

mitted a plan to the Commanding General, Army Service Forces, for the choice and operation of burial grounds in co-ordination with the ABMC. This plan recommended that<sup>5</sup>—

- (a) The War Department select the sites for overseas permanent cemeteries.
- (b) The War Department negotiate for the acquisition of necessary land in collaboration with the American Battle Monuments Commission as to size, cost, and local terrain.
- (c) The American Battle Monuments Commission determine the ground layout, the type of buildings and monuments and the building specifications.
- (d) The War Department conduct reburial of remains in accordance with the architectural development; i. e., proper placement of grave sites in relation to buildings and monuments.
- (e) The American Battle Monuments Commission be assigned the responsibility of cemetery administration and maintenance after reburial operations had been completed.

During the spring and early summer of 1946, interested officials in Europe and in the OQMG advanced various proposals for permanent cemeterial sites. The United States Military Attaché at Bern, Switzerland, for example, suggested the use of the small Munsingen American Military Cemetery as a tribute to airmen who had lost their lives when forced down in Swiss territory. He stressed the interest of the Swiss people in the cemetery and argued that its transformation into a perpetual memorial would strengthen the already cordial relations between the two nations.<sup>6</sup> His suggestion elicited no support in the War Department. The Chief of Staff believed that the number of permanent cemeteries must be held to a minimum and that only potentially large sites should be selected. Inspections of possible sites during the summer of 1946 by Gen. Thomas North, Secretary, ABMC, and Mr. Leslie Biffle, also of the ABMC, definitely eliminated Munsingen Cemetery.

During this same period, AGRC officials authorized a detailed study of proposed cemeteries by Markley Stevenson, A. H. Alexander, and A. R. Jennings, landscape-architect consultants, who went to Europe to aid in consideration of the problem. Col. L. R. Talbot, Chief, Cemetery Plant Division, AGRC-EA, secured the services of Major Fry, a competent architect, who organized crews

<sup>5</sup> Memo, Maj Gen Larkin, TQMG, to CG, ASF, 28 May 46, sub: Overseas Permanent American Military Cemeteries for World War II Dead.

<sup>6</sup> Ltr, Brig Gen Barnwell R. Legge, Military Attaché, American Legation, Bern, Switzerland, to CO, AGRC-EA, 26 Apr 46, sub: American Military Cemetery, Munsingen, Switzerland; KCRC-AGRC-EA, 687.

to make plot and topographical surveys of the various suggested sites so that tentative layouts could be prepared for purposes of comparison. Stevenson, Alexander, and Jennings concurrently carried out their own field inspections and made their own tentative layouts.<sup>7</sup>

These studies, strongly influenced by basic obligations to establish and maintain cemeteries as stated in the "current" plan, indicated that of the original 36 cemeteries in the European Theater, at least a dozen should be disinterred and the remains moved to one of the larger burial grounds. The cemeteries recommended for abandonment either consisted of rather small plots in remote locations or were poorly placed and expensive to maintain. Experience in World War I showed that approximately 40 percent of the deceased would probably remain overseas. The same ratio applied to World War II forecast a potential 53,000 burials or more, depending upon recovery of isolated cases.<sup>8</sup> The studies showed that the wartime cemeteries had been laid out for convenience only, with little thought of beautification. Spacing of the graves in most cases did not conform to the standard desired in permanent burial grounds, which required more room between markers.

During the studies, GRS officials assumed that the sites would be chosen on the basis of historic significance, geographical location, capability for expansion, and association with the troop organizations which had fought in the area.<sup>9</sup> Certain sites obviously deserved primary consideration. The Air Corps would certainly insist upon the selection of Cambridge Cemetery in England. St. Laurent would probably be retained as the first cemetery established on the Continent. Margraten was a likely choice as the main Ninth Army Cemetery in Holland. { Third Army cemeteries would be either Hamm or St. James or both, } Henri-Chapelle, Belgium, probably represented the most important First Army burial ground, with the possible exception of St. Laurent. The Seventh Army had indicated that Luynes or Draguignan in southern France should receive serious consideration for that area. They also favored Épinal in eastern France.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, the architectural consultants and the representatives of the ABMC decided to submit the names of ten locations to the OQMG for approval and later presentation to the ABMC. The first six cemeteries listed had top priority, with the last four to be

<sup>7</sup> Talbot, "AGR in Europe," pp. 19-20.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

considered for permanent retention if the need should arise. These sites and their maximum capacities were <sup>11</sup>—

No. 1	St. Laurent . . . . .	12,000
No. 2	Cambridge . . . . .	5,000
No. 3	Hamm . . . . .	7,500
No. 4	Margraten . . . . .	12,000
No. 5	Épinal . . . . .	6,500
No. 6	Henri-Chapelle . . . . .	12,000
No. 7	Ste. Mere Eglise No. 2 . . . . .	5,500
No. 8	Limey . . . . .	8,000
No. 9	Vicinity of Bastogne . . . . .	8,000
No. 10	Neuville or new site near St. Avold . . . . .	8,000
	Total . . . . .	84,500

New sites were suggested in the vicinity of Bastogne and St. Avold since the existing burial grounds at Foy and St. Avold were believed to be unsuitable for topographical reasons.

General Horkan approved the list except for Neuville-en-Condroz. He felt that this locale should be eliminated because of its lack of any significant historic or sentimental importance and its closeness to the tentatively chosen Henri-Chapelle. He further noted that Neuville Cemetery, unlike the others, was not established by combat elements in support of combat operations.<sup>12</sup> He believed that planning emphasis should be placed upon the first six selections, for the generally prevailing opinion at that time held that they would be sufficient for all permanent interments in the European Theater Area. General Horkan particularly warned the Theater Commanders not to acquire land, even for temporary use, without specific approval from the OQMG. Nor should "any representations be made, nor discussions had, which might be construed as indicating the intention of the United States of establishing cemeteries on such sites."<sup>13</sup> General Horkan emphasized the strictly *tentative* nature of the selections, pointing out that no permanent sites could be designated overseas until so authorized by Congress and once designated, could not be established and developed until funds had been made available for that purpose. A draft of necessary legislation, then in preparation in the OQMG, would be so written that the Secretary of War would be free to select the sites and determine the number of cemeteries to be established.

<sup>11</sup> Memo, Col J. C. Odell, CO, Hq, AGRC-EA to TQMG, 4 Jun 46, sub: Proposed Permanent WW II Cemeteries—European Theater; KCRC-AGRC-EA, 687. (2) Memo, Cem Plan Div, 1 May 46, same subject.

<sup>12</sup> Memo, Horkan, Chief, Mem Div to CO, AGRC-EA, 18 Jun 46, 1st Ind to Basic Ltr, 4 Jun 46; 687, Europe, Alex RC.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

In July 1946, officials attending a conference at Washington, D. C., considered various cemeterial plans. In attendance were officers from Memorial Division, OQMG, the three associate consulting architects who had returned from Europe, and high ABMC officials. The conferees decided that representatives of the Battle Monuments Commission would evaluate all suggested plans during their coming inspection tour of proposed sites. OQMG officials would take no further action until AMBC recommendations, based upon first-hand studies in Europe, had been received.<sup>14</sup>

During August and early September, General North, Col. "Benny" Krueger, Mr. J. H. Harbeson and Mr. Biffle, representing the ABMC, and Col. L. R. Talbot of AGRC-EA, inspected American cemeteries in France, Belgium, Holland, and England in order to make a final recommendation of permanent sites to the OQMG. Mr. Harbeson prepared a detailed report, in which he divided the selected cemeteries into three categories according to priority. He contended that burial grounds should not contain more than 10,000 graves. The criteria he applied in determining final choice of cemeteries closely resembled those used by AGRC planners in the early postwar months. They were: association with outstanding military operations, accessibility from centers of transportation, possession of accommodations for visitors, natural beauty, and soil suitability.<sup>15</sup> Mr. Harbeson's first priority included Cambridge, Margraten, Henri-Chapelle, Hamm, St. Avold, Épinal, and St. Laurent. In the next category were Neuville, Limey, Draguignan, Blosville, St. James, and Villeneuve. He estimated the combined capacities of these two groups at more than 75,000 graves. The last group, to be used only if the need should arise, consisted of Brookwood, Foy, Grand Faily, and Ste. Mere Eglise No. 2, which would bring the total capacity of all burial places considered in the report to approximately 90,000 interments.<sup>16</sup> He furnished a sketch of each cemetery and designated those areas to be used for burial purposes and those to be reserved for buildings. It is interesting to note that the cemeteries listed in Mr. Harbeson's first category also had appeared in Plan No. 1, prepared by Operations Branch, Memorial Division, OQMG, in March 1946.

Following the tour of inspection by ABMC officials, several conferences took place in the office of Col. J. C. Odell, who had succeeded General Littlejohn as Commanding Officer, AGRC-EA,

<sup>14</sup> Memo, Horkan to CO, AGRC-EA, 26 Jul 46, 1st Ind to Basic Ltr, 29 Jun 46, Hq. AGRC-EA to OQMG, sub: Proposed Permanent WW II Cemeteries-European Theater; KCRC-AGRC-EA, 687.

<sup>15</sup> Talbot "AGR in Europe," pp. 33-34.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

during the spring of 1946. In these discussions, the use of the six cemetery sites located at Margraten, Henri-Chapelle, Épinal, St. Laurent, Hamm, and Cambridge was accepted as a basic premise. General North proposed the inclusion of a cemetery to commemorate the landing in southern France—a suggestion in which Colonel Odell concurred and which led to the addition of Draguignan.<sup>17</sup> General North believed that more cemeteries with fewer burials in each would be preferable to a few very large ones such as had been contemplated in the earlier AGRC plan to limit the number of permanent sites to the fewest possible. The basis for General North's position was the fact that eight World War I cemeteries contained some 30,000 burials. Judging from this figure, he believed that 13 or 14 World War II permanent resting places would not be excessive, particularly since all plans at that time were based on the assumption that 50 percent of the deceased would remain in Europe. General Odell was inclined to agree with this premise and he came to a tentative understanding with ABMC officials that in addition to the seven sites mentioned above, those at Neuville, Limey, St. Avold, Ste. Mere Eglise, St. James, and Villeneuve, near Paris, might be used, or 13 burial grounds in all with a total capacity of about 75,000 graves.<sup>18</sup>

This plan provided at least one cemetery for each country and Army involved in the actual fighting and commemorated the landings in both Normandy and in southern France. Possible changes in this scheme involved the substitution of Foy for Neuville and either the addition of Blossville or its substitution for Ste. Mere Eglise No. 2.

OQMG officials questioned the foregoing recommendations for so large a number of permanent cemeteries. In response to a request from the ABMC to furnish a list of sites which he currently favored for perpetual use, The Quartermaster General named nine choices and explained his reasons for excluding several of those proposed by General North and his group, namely Foy, Ste. Mere Eglise No. 2, Blossville, St. James, and Draguignan. The Quartermaster General believed that Margraten and Henri-Chapelle would provide adequate burial space for the unrepatriated dead in Holland and Belgium. He also pointed out that Ste. Mere Eglise No. 2, St. James, and Blossville were all within 80 miles of St. Laurent, which had a capacity of 15,000 permanent burials and could therefore presumably accommodate the deceased in western France. Because of the rela-

<sup>17</sup> Ltr, Hq AGRC-EA, to Gen. George A. Horkan, Chief, Mem Div, OQMG, 26 Oct 46, 687, Europe, Alex RC.

<sup>18</sup> (1) *Ibid.* (2) Same to same, 9 Sep 46, 687, Europe, Alex RC.

tively small number of war dead in southern France (about 2,100), he did not feel that a permanent site at Draguignan was justified.<sup>19</sup>

The Quartermaster General realized that these differences of opinion as to permanent cemeteries must be resolved shortly so that the War Department could render a final decision on the matter and be in a position to request Congress for funds to acquire the necessary land at the selected points. He accordingly urged the ABMC to submit its final recommendations not later than 15 February 1947, and to provide a layout of burial plots by 1 July.<sup>20</sup> The need for decision was increased by the necessity of acquiring cemeterial land and of preparing them for interments before repatriation operations could start.

After considerable correspondence and exchange of views between the ABMC, the OQMG, and AGRC-EA, a conference of all interested agencies was held at Washington on 15 April to iron out their differences. The ABMC and OQMG reached complete agreement on use of these eight European sites as overseas burial grounds: Cambridge, Margraten, Henri-Chapelle, Neuville-en-Condroz, Hamm, St. Laurent, Épinal, and Limey, all of which, except Limey, actually became permanent American cemeteries. One week later, on 22 April, the Secretary of War approved these selections. Final decision was deferred on St. Avold, Draguignan, St. James, and Blossville. With these selections indicated, ABMC and AGRC officials in the European Theater could complete grading and burial plans on those sites definitely chosen and could carry on preparatory operations at the other four possible permanent sites.<sup>21</sup>

At this time, the trend of replies from next of kin signified that only about 22 percent of the war dead would be buried in permanent overseas cemeteries. This was a marked reduction from earlier estimates that approximately 50 percent of the deceased would remain in foreign soil. This development suggested that the ABMC should reconsider its advocacy of numerous overseas cemeteries in favor of the earlier policy of limited burial grounds espoused by the War Department Chief of Staff and the majority of graves registration officers in Europe. The eventual choice of ten permanent cemeteries no doubt represented a compromise between the two points of view.

Meanwhile, AGRC and ABMC officials prepared detailed layout

<sup>19</sup> Ltr, Maj Gen T. B. Larkin, TQMG, to Gen Thomas North, ABMC, 9 Dec 46; KRCR-AGRC-EA, 687.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Ltr, Col L. R. Talbot, Mem Div, OQMG to CG, AGRC-EA, 12 May 47, 687, Europe, Alex RC.

plans showing the location of all graves then in the seven sites at Cambridge, Hamm, Margraten, Henri-Chapelle, Épinal, St. Laurent, and Villeneuve (near Paris). Although these officials were aware that Villeneuve Cemetery would probably not be a permanent burial place, they included it with the other six in forwarding these layout and burial plans to the OQMG for consideration at a June graves registration conference to be held in Washington, D. C.<sup>22</sup> Similar information concerning Neuville-en-Condroz and St. Avold was in preparation for presentation to the OQMG by mid-July 1947. Since officials in Memorial Division, OQMG, were again favorably considering the use of St. James and Draguignan, the European Headquarters also included preliminary sketches of those sites.<sup>23</sup>

At this time, Hq, AGRC-EA considered various procedures for grading operations in the selected sites. Brig. Gen. Howard L. Peckham, who had succeeded Colonel Odell on 1 May 1947, as Commanding Officer, AGRC-EA, listed the following grading methods that might be used:<sup>24</sup>

- (a) By local contract, with the contractor furnishing all machinery, personnel, and spare parts.
- (b) By local contractors, with the U. S. Army furnishing equipment and spare parts.
- (c) By use of Engineer troops.
- (d) By contract with a U. S. firm, with that firm furnishing machinery, personnel, and spare parts.
- (e) By contract with a U. S. firm, with the U. S. Army furnishing equipment and spare parts.

General Peckham anticipated the eventual choice of the first option as the most feasible since a preliminary survey had revealed that in France, Belgium, and Holland, several reputable contractors with ample heavy equipment and trained personnel were anxious to bid on the project. The possible use of this procedure in England was also under investigation.

During the summer of 1947, representatives of both Memorial Division, OQMG, and Hq, AGRC-EA, met with members of the ABMC in Europe for discussions on final plans to be followed in making burials in the cemeteries and to reach an agreement of the selection and development of such sites in Italy and Africa, which

<sup>22</sup> Ltr, Hq AGRC-EA to TQMG, 5 Jun 47, sub: Permanent Overseas Cemeteries, 687, Europe, Alex RC.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Ltr, Brig Gen Peckham to TQMG, 11 Jun 47, sub: Permanent Overseas Cemeteries, 687, Europe, Alex RC.

they also inspected. They planned for overseas burials based upon 40 percent interments of the war dead in the European Theater, thus affording sufficient space in the selected locales. Since the poll returns from next of kin now indicated retention in Europe of somewhat more than 40 percent of total recovered dead, General Peckham suggested that the reinstatement of Limey as a permanent site on a contingent basis should be considered.<sup>25</sup> Épinal Cemetery was definitely limited to 6,000 burials in order to maintain symmetry in the layout. Should overseas interments reach between 45 and 50 percent, St. Avold would have over 14,000 graves, or considerably above the recommended total of 10,000 in any one location. Moreover, General North and Mr. Harbeson of ABMC and Colonel Donelson and Mr. Markley Stevenson of the OQMG favored the reinstatement of Limey if burials in Europe exceeded 40 percent of the total deceased. General North also planned to confer with The Quartermaster General about adding Ste. Mere Eglise No. 2 or Blossville rather than increasing the size of St. Laurent, which could be expanded to care for as many as 13,000 deceased.<sup>26</sup>

However, at a meeting at Washington on 20 October 1947, ABMC officials determined that there should be only two cemeteries in Normandy—St. Laurent and St. James. They also decided that Limey should not be reinstated and indicated that the St. Avold area was sufficient to accommodate all graves, even if 50 percent of recovered war dead remained in Europe. In short, the Commission irrevocably determined that there would be no increase in the already approved list of ten permanent World War II burial grounds in Europe.<sup>27</sup>

Those at AGRC-EA Headquarters agreed that St. Laurent and St. James cemeteries could take care of up to 50 percent of reburials from the Normandy area and therefore laid plans for some 12,000 interments at St. Laurent and approximately 5,200 burials at St. James. They also noted General Horkan's suggestion to the ABMC that the very large potential number of burials at St. Avold (as high as 16,000 if Andilly deceased were sent there as planned) be reduced by removing the dead in Grand Faily Cemetery from the St. Avold

<sup>25</sup> (1) Ltr, Hq AGRC-EA to TQMG, 26 Sep 47, sub: Permanent Overseas Cemeteries, 687, Europe, Alex RC. (2) The reason for dropping Limey from the list of permanent cemeteries as agreed upon by OQMG and ABMC conferees and approved by the War Department in April 1947 is obscure and available records fail to throw any satisfactory light on the matter.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> (1) Ltr, Gen Thomas North, ABMC to Gen George Horkan, Chief, Mem Div, OQMG, 21 Oct 47. (2) Ltr, Hq AGRC to TQMG, 6 Nov 47, sub: Permanent Cemeteries in the European Area, 687, Europe, Alex RC.

group and concentrating them in Hamm Cemetery, Luxembourg. Although AGRC-EA officials preferred that the current figure of approximately 4,300 interments at Hamm be retained rather than increased to some 5,800, which would necessitate the preparation of a completely new layout plan, they nevertheless requested the American Legation at Luxembourg to ascertain if the Luxembourg government would object to removal of remains from Grand Faily, France, to Hamm.<sup>28</sup>

Mr. George P. Waller, Chargé d'Affaires of the Legation, conferred with Luxembourg officials who informed him that the government had no objection because remains received from Grand Faily would simply replace those repatriated to the United States from Hamm.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, OQMG and ABMC officials decided to approve the scheme. Their decision was dictated in part by the fact that a new topographical survey of Hamm Cemetery showed that a new burial layout was probably required. They also felt that since Hamm Cemetery could accommodate as many as 5,800 burials, it should do so rather than throw a still further burden on St. Avold.<sup>30</sup> In view of the combining of Grand Faily and Hamm Cemeteries, General North stated that grading plans for Hamm would not be available before the end of January 1948. Since initial reinterments in this cemetery were not anticipated until about 1 September 1948, Memorial Division officers did not feel that the delay would cause any particular inconvenience.<sup>31</sup>

Meanwhile, the Cemetery Development Branch, Registration Division, AGRC-EA, had started work on drawings for the four cemeteries which had first priority—Henri-Chapelle, St. Laurent, Épinal, and Draguignan. This project was undertaken in conformity with the provisions of Public Law 368, 5 August 1947, which finally placed responsibility for cemetery design with the ABMC and assigned acquisition of necessary land and reburial operations to the Secretary of War, who in turn delegated these functions to TQMG. The drawings and layouts were based upon cemetery designs furnished by ABMC architects. As heretofore indicated, two complete new surveys of the Hamm and St. Avold sites became necessary and

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Ltr, Hq AGRC-EA to TQMG, 21 Nov 47, sub: Hamm Cemetery, 687, Europe, Alex RC.

<sup>30</sup> (1) Ltr, ABMC to Chief, Mem Div, OQMG, 24 Nov 47, sub: Permanent Cemeteries in European Areas. (2) Memo, Col L. R. Talbot, Mem Div, OQMG to CG, AGRC-EA, 9 Dec 47, 1st Ind to Basic Ltr, Hq AGRC to TQMG, 21 Nov 47, sub: Hamm Cemetery, 687, Europe, Alex RC.

<sup>31</sup> Ltr, Col L. R. Talbot, Mem Div, OQMG to CG, AGRC-EA, 11 Dec 47, sub: Permanent Overseas Cemeteries, 687, Europe, Alex RC.

additional survey data were compiled upon request of the ABMC, at Neuville, St. Avold, Épinal, and Cambridge Cemeteries.<sup>32</sup>

The preparation of drawings and layouts for the chosen sites had progressed sufficiently by the spring of 1948 to enable AGRC Headquarters to issue a tentative schedule for turning over the cemeteries to the ABMC after all interments had been completed:<sup>33</sup>

Henri-Chapelle . . . . .	1 January 1949
St. Laurent . . . . .	1 May 1949
Épinal . . . . .	1 January 1949
Draguignan . . . . .	1 September 1948
Cambridge . . . . .	1 December 1948
St. James . . . . .	1 February 1949
St. Avold . . . . .	1 July 1949
Margraten . . . . .	1 January 1950
Hamm . . . . .	1 January 1950

No date could yet be set for transferring Neuville-en-Condroz to the ABMC.

### Operations in the Ten Permanent Cemeteries

#### *First Zone—Henri-Chapelle, Margraten, Neuville*

In considering operations relating to the establishment and development of the three permanent cemeteries in the First Zone, it is interesting to note that each burial ground possessed distinctive features. Henri-Chapelle became the first in the entire European Theater to receive permanent burials while Neuville was the last to be turned over to the ABMC. Margraten developed into the largest permanent cemetery in the First Zone. Henri-Chapelle Cemetery possessed great historical interest since it accommodated the fallen soldiers of two periods of fighting—one covering the First Army's drive early in September 1944 through northern France into Belgium and on to Holland, Luxembourg, and Germany, and the other covering the bitter Battle of the Bulge, when the region was overrun by the Nazis and the cemetery became a frontline defense post. The site was suitable geographically, lying only 19 miles northeast of Liège and close to the main railway line and a major arterial highway.<sup>34</sup>

With the choice of Henri-Chapelle as one of the two American World War II cemeteries in Belgium, AGRC officials decided that remains in Foy and Fosse should be transferred to Henri-Chapelle.

<sup>32</sup> Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, I, 1 Oct-31 Dec 47, p. 89.

<sup>33</sup> Ltr, Hq AGRC-EA to CO's, First Zone, AGRC, et al., 7 May 48, sub: Preparation of Plans for Close-Out of AGRC-EA, 320; KCRC-AGRC-Europe.

<sup>34</sup> AGRC-EA, Engineer Historical Record of Design and Development of U. S. World War II Cemetery at Henri-Chapelle, Belgium, p. 5.

Since the total number of interments in these three cemeteries stood at slightly over 22,000 and since estimates indicated that between 40 and 50 percent of this number would remain in Europe, all designs for Henri-Chapelle were based upon approximately 9,500 final burials.

The architectural firm chosen for Henri-Chapelle was Holabird and Root of Chicago. This firm forwarded the final layout plan to the AGRC-EA in November 1947, enabling AGRC engineers to proceed with grading operations. A copy of the plan was sent to ABMC for concurrence. Before this development, however, the temporary cemetery at Henri-Chapelle had been closed for exhumation activities. Those remains destined to rest at Henri-Chapelle were casketed at the site and placed in above-ground storage while awaiting final interment. By mid-April 1948, the Engineer Section, AGRC-EA, had prepared a grading plan for the permanent cemetery, based upon the final layout design submitted by Holabird and Root. A Belgian contractor then began construction work and completed it about 15 May.<sup>35</sup> Shortly afterwards, on 9 June, the first final interments in the European Theater, accompanied by solemn ceremonies, took place. To prevent grouping of unknown dead in a single area, they were interspersed with known deceased at irregular intervals—a procedure adopted at the other permanent burial sites. When Henri-Chapelle passed to the control of the Battle Monuments Commission in December 1949, it contained 7,960 burials. Appropriate ceremonies marked this occasion, including consecration of the cemetery by Army Chaplains of the three major faiths. The latest available figures show a total of 7,989 interments.<sup>36</sup>

Margraten Cemetery, Holland, also had a rich historical background, lying near the famous Cologne-Boulogne highway, originally built by the Romans and used by Caesar during his campaign in that area. Later, this road served as a warpath for Charlemagne, Charles V, Napoleon, and Kaiser Wilhelm II. In May 1940, Hitler's legions advanced over the route of the highway in overrunning the Low Countries. In September 1944, the Nazis once more travelled along this famous road as they withdrew from the countries they had held four years. In addition to its historical associations, Margraten Cemetery was surrounded by the natural beauty of the southern Netherlands countryside and, because of the nearby national railroad, afforded ready access for visitors.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 10, 13.

<sup>36</sup> Statistical Review of Permanent Disposition of WW II Dead, 31 Dec 51, p. 17.

<sup>37</sup> AGRC-EA, Engineer Historical Record of Design and Development of U. S. World War II Cemetery at Margraten, Holland, p. 5.



FIGURE 6. *Dutch children take part in 1945 Memorial Day ceremony at Margraten United States Military Cemetery.*

After Margraten's selection as the only permanent burial site in Holland, the deceased in the temporary cemeteries at Zon and Molenhoek had been disinterred and transferred there for reburial. The total number of remains in the three cemeteries reached 18,970, and based upon between 40 and 50 percent of these staying overseas, AGRC and ABMC planners assumed that nearly 10,000 deceased would eventually rest in Margraten.

Late in 1947, the architectural firm of Coolidge, Shepley, Bulfinch and Abbott of Boston, which had been chosen to prepare a final layout plan for Margraten, forwarded it to AGRC Headquarters, thereby enabling AGRC engineers to proceed with required grading activities.<sup>38</sup> After considerable delay owing to the closing of the cemetery while exhumation and subsequent repatriation activities proceeded, Dutch officials, late in the summer of 1948, granted the United States Government a right of entry to begin construction work. The contractor commenced this project on 6 September 1948 and finished it exactly two months later. On 1 December, final interments began. Despite inclement weather which froze and then thawed the ground, causing muddy conditions, a total of 1,872

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

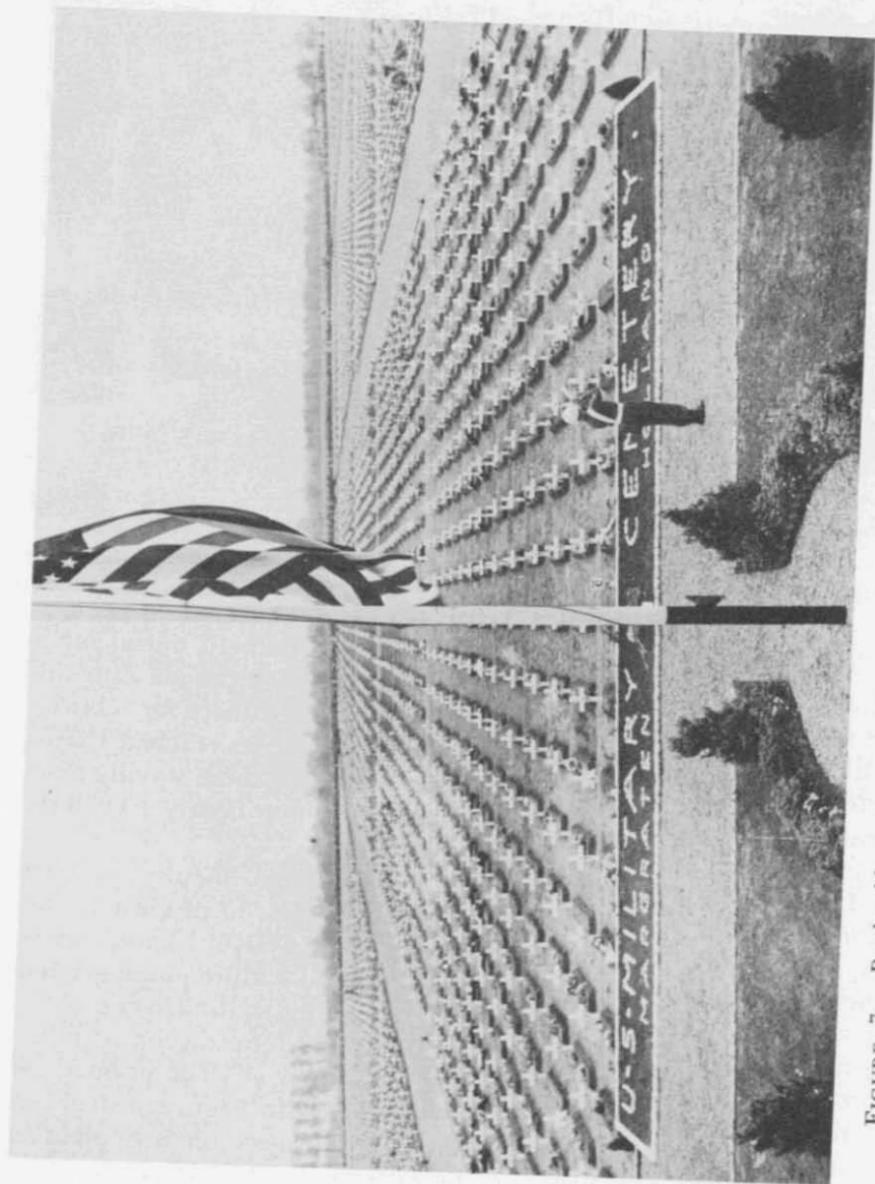


FIGURE 7. Bugler blows taps at close of ceremony at Margraten Cemetery, 30 May 1945.

burials had been made at Margraten by the end of 1948.<sup>39</sup> Most of the remaining interments were completed during the balance of the winter. The cemetery passed to ABMC control on 15 December 1949. Available figures indicate a total of 8,298 burials in Margraten.<sup>40</sup>

Of the ten designated permanent cemeteries in the European Theater, Neuville-en-Condroz, Belgium, became the last to receive final burials, and also the last to be turned over to ABMC control. In addition, it served as the site for the Central Identification Point during a considerable part of the life of that organization. Although the object of considerable disagreement over its fitness as a permanent memorial, Neuville was finally included among the chosen cemeteries. Its topography and surroundings, as well as its location just 15 miles south of Liège, favored its development, and its close proximity to the Siegfried Line and the site of the Battle of the Bulge provided some historic interest.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, the fact that combat elements did not establish Neuville Cemetery detracted from its sentimental significance and aroused considerable opposition to its final choice, particularly in the OQMG. At one time in 1946, General Eisenhower expressed a preference for a permanent cemetery which would better represent the events which occurred around Bastogne. As a result, AGRC headquarters reconsidered Foy as a possible final selection.<sup>42</sup>

After the choice of Neuville despite some misgivings but before construction work began, an incident occurred which caused considerable publicity and indignation. In September 1948, two Belgian real estate companies, owners of the land occupied by the cemetery, sent a legal summons to AGRC authorities in Liège, requiring the site to be evacuated within eight days, with all bodies removed, and the land put back in its original condition. The owners explained that they had no intention of "offending the liberators of Belgium" and that their action was directed at the "flagrant inertia of our Government."<sup>43</sup> In other words, the owners took this drastic step because the Belgium Government had failed to pay indemnities allegedly due them for nearly four years.

Reaction to this move was swift and strong. One Belgian newspaper immediately raised a vehement protest, declaring that "never

<sup>39</sup> Hq AGRC-EA, Rpt of Opns, 1 Oct-31 Dec 48, pp. 113, 171.

<sup>40</sup> Statistical Review of Permanent Disposition of WW II Dead, p. 17.

<sup>41</sup> Memo, Hq AGRC-EA, to Chief of Staff, 11 Apr 46, sub: Neuville-en-Condroz and Henri-Chapelle Cemeteries, 687, Europe, Alex RC.

<sup>42</sup> Ltr, Hq AGRC to Brig Gen George Horkan, Chief, Mem Div, OQMG, 9 Sep 46, 687, GRS-Europe, Alex RC.

<sup>43</sup> *New York Times*, September 11, 1948, Taken from File 687, Neuville, Alex RC.

before have the proprietors of land used for military cemeteries proceeded in such cavalier fashion. . . ."<sup>44</sup> A Belgian Government spokesman stated that Belgium might expropriate the land in order to make certain that American military authorities remained in undisputed possession of the cemetery. His prediction was quickly borne out since the Belgian Government almost immediately did this. When the cemetery closed on 19 September 1948, preparatory to commencing exhumation of the deceased, more than 10,000 Belgians attended the ceremony. In this manner, they showed their regret for the recent incident. Meanwhile, plans had already been formed to reopen Neuville in March 1949 as one of the two permanent cemeteries in Belgium.<sup>45</sup>

As expected, grading work ended early in March 1949, and on the 8th of that month, after a brief ceremony, the first caskets were lowered into their final resting places. Reinterment operations proceeded under quite unfavorable working conditions caused by a combination of clay soil and spring rains. The slowness of disinterment directives in arriving from Washington delayed completion of cemeterial reinterments from time to time, stretching the entire project out over a 13-month period. By the summer of 1950, the burial rate had diminished to such an extent that hand digging replaced machine work. During the months just preceding 30 June 1951, when the ABMC finally assumed control of the cemetery, reinterments averaged only about 30 monthly. The total number of burials in Neuville, at latest report, had reached the figure of 5,164.<sup>46</sup>

#### *Second Zone—Draguignan, St. Laurent, St. James*

The three permanent cemeteries of the Second Zone each possessed certain distinctions. Draguignan and St. Laurent represented the first burial grounds to be established in the invasions of southern and western France respectively. St. James, the first cemetery created by American troops after the breakthrough into Brittany, received its initial burials shortly after D-Day. Eventually, Draguignan became the only permanent burial ground in southern France and St. Laurent later developed into the second largest permanent cemetery in the European Theater, exceeded only by St. Avold.

Of the three sites in the Second Zone, Draguignan was the first to

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Washington Times-Herald*, September 20, 1948, Taken from File 687, Neuville, Alex RC.

<sup>46</sup> (1) 7887 GR Detachment, Liège, Engineer Historical Record of the Design and Development of the U. S. WW II Cemetery at Neuville-en-Condroz, Belgium. (2) Statistical Review of Permanent Disposition of WW II Dead, p. 17.

receive final overseas interments. It lay within the city limits of Draguignan, only seven miles north of a national highway. The nearby communities of St. Raphael, Cannes, and Nice offered visitors more than adequate accommodations.<sup>47</sup> When representatives of the ABMC and officers of AGRC-EA conferred on the selection of overseas cemeteries, the majority felt that Draguignan should be chosen because of its historic location along the route of combat during the great drive of the Seventh Army up the Rhone Valley. After Draguignan's final selection, planning went forward for later concentration of remains from Luynes to Draguignan. Since the total burials in the two sites slightly exceeded 2,000, GRS officials expected that nearly 1,000 final interments would be made in Draguignan.<sup>48</sup>

The architectural firm of Toombs and Creighton of Atlanta, which prepared the layout plan for Draguignan, forwarded the results to AGRC-EA in December 1947, and on the following 4 January, the temporary cemetery was closed and exhumation operations begun. Those destined for the United States were processed, casketed, and sent to Cherbourg, while those who were to rest in Draguignan were processed, casketed, and placed in above-ground storage there pending final interment.<sup>49</sup>

By 19 January, the Engineer Section, AGRC-EA, had prepared grading and drainage plans based upon the final layout design. Invitations to bid on the grading and construction work were issued to 14 French contracting firms. After receipt of 12 replies, AGRC officials awarded the contract to the lowest bidder. Actual grading operations began on 19 May and ended on 5 June. The cemetery received its first permanent reinterments on 11 July 1948. They represented the first final burials of American deceased in the Second Zone.<sup>50</sup> Reinterments terminated on 15 February 1949. Eventually, 853 Americans rested in Draguignan, which proved to be the smallest number in any permanent burial ground in the European Theater.

Since St. Laurent represented the first temporary American Cemetery established in Europe during World War II, it almost inevitably later became a permanent war memorial. Situated on a bluff overlooking that section of the Allied landing area called "Omaha Beach," St. Laurent Cemetery came into existence on 7 June 1944, just 24 hours after the first assault on D-Day. The ini-

<sup>47</sup> AGRC-EA, Engineer Historical Record of the Design and Development of the U. S. World War II Cemetery at Draguignan, France, p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 10.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

tial burials consisted of Americans who had died on the beaches during the first day of combat. Most of the interments made in St. Laurent occurred during the first 2 or 3 weeks following D-Day, and amounted to over 3,800. During the summer of 1945, the American Graves Registration Command took custody of the cemetery.<sup>51</sup> Realizing that this site, along with others in Europe, might remain in existence for several years and that some next of kin or other relatives would doubtless visit the graves of their dead, AGRC officials took steps during the autumn of 1945 to improve St. Laurent's general appearance. They supervised the repainting of all grave markers and their proper realignment, and during the early spring of 1946, directed the planting of shrubs and flowers to add color and beauty. In addition, necessary structures were erected, including a small chapel and an office and recreation building.

When the time came for recommendations on overseas sites, all interested agencies agreed on the inclusion of St. Laurent. Besides possessing great historic value, it offered adequate topographic conditions and a location only five miles north of a national highway and close to the railroad from Paris to Cherbourg. The neighboring communities of Caen, Bayeux, and Carentan provided good accommodations for visitors after the repair of war damages.<sup>52</sup>

With the choice of St. Laurent as the only permanent cemetery between Cherbourg and Paris, plans for future burials there were based upon concentration of remains from other temporary cemeteries in that area—Ste. Mere Eglise Nos. 1 and 2, Blosville, La-Cambe, and St. Andre. Total interments in these cemeteries, including St. Laurent, exceeded 22,000. Preliminary designs for St. Laurent were based upon approximately 10,000 final interments.<sup>53</sup>

The firm of Harbeson, Hough, Livingston and Larson of Philadelphia, chosen to make the final layout plan for St. Laurent, completed its work in February 1948, considerably later than had been expected, but in sufficient time to permit AGRC engineers to prepare the necessary detailed grading plans. Following this step, invitations to bid on the grading work were issued to several French contracting firms. The successful bidder was not able to begin actual operations until June 1948 because of a delay in the receipt of the right of entry from the French Government. Grading and construction operations ended early in November 1948.<sup>54</sup>

The first permanent reinterments in St. Laurent began on 4 No-

<sup>51</sup> AGRC-EA, Engineer Historical Record of the Design and Development of the U. S. World War II Cemetery at St. Laurent sur Mer, France, p. 2.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4, 6-7.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

vember 1948, immediately after completion of grading and construction activities. The remains were those for whom disinterment directives prescribed overseas burial and all unknowns buried in the former temporary cemetery at St. Laurent and contributing burial grounds. Reinterments during the remainder of the year did not proceed at a satisfactory rate, owing largely to the inadequate equipment employed by the contractor and to the fact that this site was particularly difficult to work in because of its location near the sea and because the drainage of the surrounding area went through or under the cemetery, causing the clay-like soil to be wet at all times. Nevertheless, at the end of 1948, some 1,500 burials had taken place, or about 15 percent of the eventual total.<sup>55</sup> The addition of more heavy equipment during the opening months of 1949 resulted in slightly better, but still not satisfactory, progress. At that time, officials expected reinterments to be completed by the end of May 1949.<sup>56</sup>

When control over St. Laurent Cemetery passed to the ABMC in December 1949, some 9,362 American deceased rested there. On 28 December 1949, a brief but solemn ceremony took place in observance of this transfer of authority. The most recent available figures place the total burials in St. Laurent at 9,385, making it the second largest American cemetery in the former European Theater.<sup>57</sup>

St. James Cemetery possessed sufficient historical interest and topographic and geographic assets to warrant its selection as a permanent overseas cemetery, even though it was not among the original or early choices. It marked the point where American forces made their famous breakthrough from the hedgerow country of Normandy into the plains of Brittany during their offensive around Avranches. On 5 August 1944, the 3042d QM Graves Registration Company of the Third Army established a temporary cemetery one mile west of the town of St. James, and 12 miles south of Avranches. It thus became the first burial ground established by American troops after the breakthrough into Brittany. The site had an imposing overlook from which Mont St. Michel could be seen on a clear day. Nearby Avranches was able to accommodate visitors to the burial ground. Both Avranches and St. James were connected with the national highway and railroad systems of France.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>55</sup> (1) *Ibid.*, p. 18. (2) Rpt of Opns, Second Zone, 1 Oct-31 Dec 48, Ch. VI, Plans, Operations, and Training; KCRC-AGRC-Europe, 319.1.

<sup>56</sup> Rpt of Opns, Second Zone, 1 Jan-31 Mar 49, p. 7.

<sup>57</sup> (1) Narrative Rpt, EUCOM, 1950, App. 1, Departmental Records Br, Alex RC. (2) Statistical Review of Permanent Disposition of WW II Dead, p. 17.

<sup>58</sup> AGRC-EA, Engineer Historical Record of the Design and Development of the U. S. World War II Cemetery at St. James, France, pp. 1, 6.

In correspondence concerning the subject of permanent cemeteries, graves registration officials at Hq, AGRC-EA, made little or no mention of St. James until September 1946. Colonel Odell's inclusion of this cemetery, along with Draguignan and St. Avold, in a list of suggested permanent cemeteries, caused OQMG officials to query the Theater about the matter. Colonel Odell explained that in discussions with General North of the ABMC, a decision was made, which favored more cemeteries with fewer burials. For that reason St. James, among others, had been added to the list.<sup>59</sup> St. James was among those sites whose final fate was not determined until after April 1947, when the Secretary of War approved a list of eight permanent cemeteries. Of the four still under consideration at that time, St. James and Draguignan finally were selected, with Blossville and Villeneuve dropping by the wayside. After the inclusion of St. James in the list of ten overseas cemeteries, graves registration officials realized that it would be necessary to move remains from Villeneuve-sur-Auvers, St. Corneille, Gorron, Le Chene Guerin, and Marigny to St. James. The total number of burials in these cemeteries slightly exceeded 10,000.<sup>60</sup>

The layout plan, prepared by the architectural firm chosen for St. James, reached AGRC Headquarters in February 1948 and one month later, the cemetery closed temporarily for exhumation operations, preparatory to repatriation or above-ground storage for those destined to receive overseas burial. Grading and construction operations began on 26 July and continued nearly a year, until 31 May 1949. Although the construction work was not completed, the first reinterments took place on 3 November 1948. By the end of the year, approximately 2,400 interments, or about half the eventual total, had been made. Some of the difficulties encountered included the caving in of empty grave sites during wet weather, shale and rock which had to be removed by hand, and equipment breakdowns.<sup>61</sup>

The cemetery passed to ABMC control on 15 September 1949. Latest available figures show 4,410 burials there.<sup>62</sup>

### *Third Zone—Épinal, St. Avold, Hamm*

The Third Zone contained three permanent cemeteries. Épinal

<sup>59</sup> Ltr, Hq AGRC-EA to Gen George A. Horkan, Chief, Mem Div, 26 Oct 46, 687, GRS-Europe, Alex RC.

<sup>60</sup> AGRC-EA, Engineer Historical Record of the Design and Development of the United States World War II Cemetery at St. James, France, pp. 8-9.

<sup>61</sup> Rpt of Opns, Second Zone, 1 Oct-31 Dec 48, Ch. VI, Plans, Operations, and Training; KCRC-AGRS-Europe, 319.1.

<sup>62</sup> See fn. 57, pt. 2.

Cemetery became the second in the Theater to receive final interments, St. Avold became the largest burial ground in the Theater, and Hamm was considered by many to be the most beautiful of the ten selected sites. Hamm Cemetery was not placed under the jurisdiction of the Third Zone until the spring of 1949, having previously been under control of the First Zone. All three cemeteries contained casualties incurred in the later stages of the Battle of Europe. St. Avold accommodated some of the last fatalities suffered before V-E Day.

Beginning early in 1946 with General Littlejohn's proposals, most lists of suggested permanent cemeteries, including those submitted by TQMG and by Hq, AGRC-EA, contained the name of Epinal. Established in October 1944 by the 46th QM Graves Registration Company of the United States Seventh Army as it drove the enemy northward from southern France through the Rhone Valley and back into Germany, this burial ground became the repository for fatalities in the bitter fighting through the Strasbourg Gap during the winter of 1944-45.<sup>63</sup> By late January 1945, over 7,700 deceased were interred in Épinal.

In addition to its historic interest, this site possessed ideal topographic conditions. Located on a plateau overlooking the Moselle River, it afforded a splendid view of the valley. The site lay only three miles from the town of Épinal, near good roads, and adjacent to the mainline railroad from Paris to Strasbourg. Accommodations for visitors were provided in Épinal and by several well-known resorts in the Vosges region.<sup>64</sup>

After the establishment of Épinal as a permanent cemetery, the usual procedure of moving remains from adjoining temporary burial grounds to the selected site was followed. Graves registration officials decided that American deceased in St. Juan, Varois, Champigneul, and Solers, in France, and those in Munsingen, Switzerland, should all be concentrated to Epinal pending repatriation or overseas interment. Burials in these sites, including Épinal, reached over 12,500.<sup>65</sup>

The firm chosen to prepare the final layout forwarded its plan to AGRC Headquarters in December 1947. Meanwhile, during November, the temporary cemetery at Epinal had been closed for exhumation activities. In the spring of 1948, the successful contractor began permanent construction work, including grading operations.

<sup>63</sup> AGRC-EA, Engineer Historical Record of the Design and Development of the U. S. World War II Cemetery at Épinal, France, p. 1.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

This phase of the project was completed on 15 June. Progress on cemeterial construction and preparation advanced sufficiently to permit the first reinterments on 14 June 1948, just five days after the initial interments at Henri-Chapelle.<sup>66</sup>

Burials proceeded at the rate of about 750 per month. By 30 September 1948, based upon the estimated number of overseas interments, the project had reached the half-way mark.<sup>67</sup> Progress slowed somewhat during the last quarter of 1948, owing to repeated breakdowns of machinery employed by the contractor and difficulty in securing replacement parts. During the first quarter of 1949, burials were suspended pending the receipt of further disinterment directives. In the spring of 1949, reinterments and final grading operations were completed. When control of Épinal passed from AGRC-EA to the Battle Monuments Commission, a total of 5,236 Americans rested within its limits.

On 31 July, a simple religious ceremony was held at Épinal to solemnize the recent transfer of responsibility to the ABMC, during which the keys to the cemetery were presented to Gen. Thomas North, Secretary, ABMC, by General Peckham, Commanding General, AGRC-EA. Épinal thus became, along with Cambridge in England, one of the first two permanent cemeteries transferred to ABMC—an event which had occurred on 1 July 1949.<sup>68</sup>

St. Avold, the largest permanent American burial ground in Europe, was also among the last of the temporary military cemeteries established in Europe which later became an enduring memorial to the war dead. Moreover, the final site of St. Avold proved later to be the only one in the European Theater which was entirely separate from the former temporary cemetery. From the beginning, St. Avold had served as a final resting place for troops killed in driving the German forces from the fortress city of Metz toward the Siegfried Line and the Rhine River. Most of the more than 16,000 Americans originally buried there belonged to the Seventh Army's Infantry and Armored Division and to its Cavalry Groups.<sup>69</sup> Even as a temporary burial ground, it was one of the largest in the Theater. St. Avold was located in Lorraine, whose possession had for centuries been a source of bitter dispute between the Germans and the French. During World War II, the town of St. Avold had served as a vital communications center for the vast network of enemy de-

<sup>66</sup> (1) *Ibid.*, p. 16. (2) Hq AGRC-EA, Rpt of Opns, 1 Apr-30 Jun 48, p. 171.

<sup>67</sup> Hq AGRC-EA, Rpt of Opns, 1 Jul-30 Sep 48, p. 182.

<sup>68</sup> See fn. 57, (2).

<sup>69</sup> AGRC-EA, Engineer Historical Record of the Design and Development of the U. S. World War II Cemetery at St. Avold, France, p. 1.



FIGURE 8. *French and American troops enter United States Military Cemetery, St. Avold, France, for Memorial Day services, 30 May 1946.*

fenses guarding the approaches to the western borders of the Third Reich.<sup>70</sup> Topographic conditions at St. Avold were satisfactory and the grassy fields and clumps of woodlands readily lent themselves to beautiful landscaping. Since the cemetery was located only three miles from the picturesque town of St. Avold, visitors could be accommodated there as well as in the nearby historic cities of Metz and Strasbourg, with their many tourist attractions.

Despite these favorable factors, considerable doubt shrouded St. Avold's choice as a permanent cemetery until the summer of 1947, when it was included among those finally selected. Like Draguignan and St. James, St. Avold had not often appeared on lists of recommended overseas burial grounds from the beginning of 1946 to mid-1947. After its inclusion as a permanent site, GRC officials concentrated in St. Avold the remains from Andilly, Limey, and Hochfelden. The total number of burials for these temporary cemeteries, including St. Avold, exceeded 26,000. Based upon the expected

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

number of permanent burials overseas, preliminary designs called for approximately 10,000 interments.<sup>71</sup>

The firm selected to make the final layout completed its task in February 1948, at a time when exhumations had just begun. Based upon this layout, the Engineer Section, AGRC-EA, completed the grading scheme by 15 June 1948. Construction work began in mid-August but was not completed until 9 May 1949. Unfortunately, the operations were not carried out in an efficient manner.

Final interments began, meanwhile, on 6 December 1948 and ended, for all practical purposes, about 1 July 1949.<sup>72</sup> Responsibility for St. Avold was shifted to Battle Monuments Commission, effective 15 December 1949. On 28 December, a solemn ceremony was held at the cemetery and at Hamm, Dranguignan, St. Laurent, Henri-Chapelle, and Margraten as well, to commemorate the simultaneous transfer of the six cemeteries to ABMC control. At this time, St. Avold contained 10,445 burials. The latest available figures show that this number has increased to 10,483.

Hamm Cemetery, situated in the beautiful hills three miles east of the city of Luxembourg, was established on 29 December 1944 by the 609th QM Company of the Third United States Army while the Allied Forces were stemming the enemy's desperate Ardennes offensive in one of World War II's critical battles. In addition, the city of Luxembourg served as Headquarters for Gen. George Patton's Third Army. Because of its historic associations, its suitable topography and scenic beauty, Hamm Cemetery usually was assigned a top priority during the lengthy selection of permanent overseas resting places. After its choice as the only permanent site in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, plans went forward to move remains from the nearby temporary cemetery of Grand Faily in France to Hamm, and, as described earlier in this chapter, the deceased in Grand Faily were concentrated in Hamm Cemetery.

The final layout plan was forwarded to the AGRC-EA during May 1948, enabling AGRC engineers to proceed with required grading activities.<sup>73</sup> At this time, correspondence was continuing with Luxembourg authorities about the free and perpetual use of the site for burial and memorial purposes. Already Luxembourg had begun action toward acquisition of the site for later donation to the United States as an expression of gratitude for the important part played by American forces in liberating the little country, and in

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>72</sup> Hq AGRC-EA, Rpt of Opns, 1 Oct-31 Dec 48, p. 113.

<sup>73</sup> AGRC-EA, Engineer Historical Record of the Design and Development of the U. S. World War II Cemetery at Hamm, Luxembourg, pp. 1, 11.

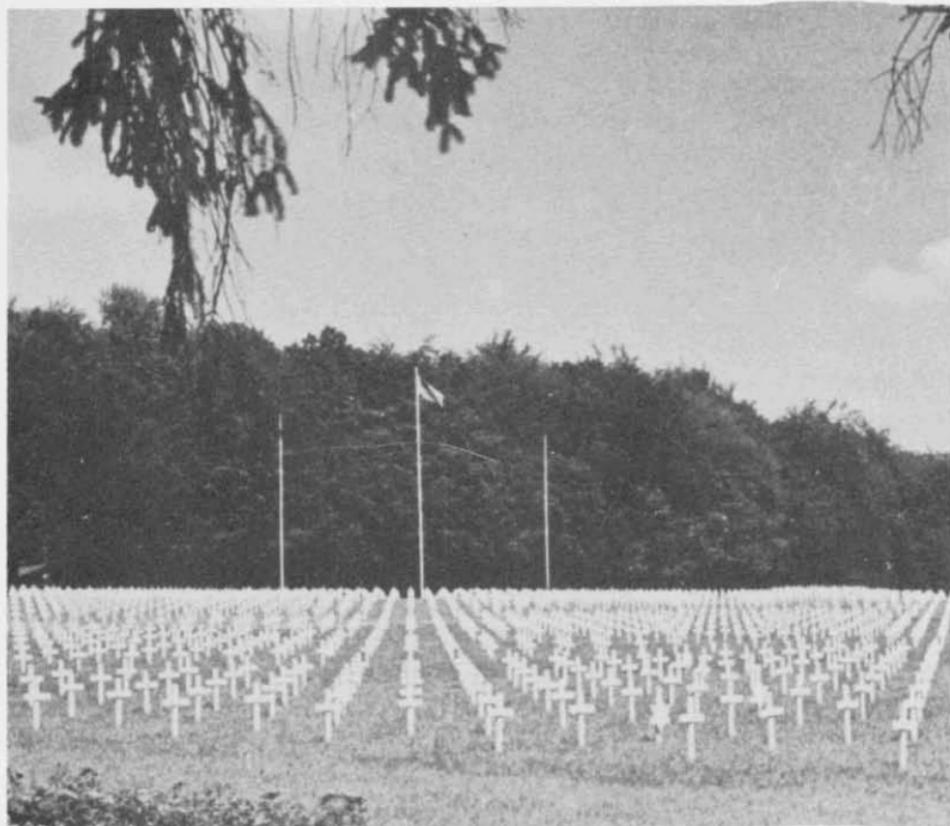


FIGURE 9. *United States Military Cemetery, Hamm, Luxembourg.*

August 1948, the Grand Duchy gave the United States a right of entry for grading at Hamm, pending actual transfer of the land.

The successful contractor for grading and construction work at Hamm began operations on 15 September 1948 and completed the project late in July 1949. During November 1948, months before the construction project had ended, reinterments commenced at Hamm. The slow rate of burials during the first few weeks of this operation accelerated during the first quarter of 1949, reaching a monthly total of 1,000 when this task was completed at the end of March.<sup>74</sup>

AGRC-EA officials had planned to transfer Hamm to ABMC in August 1949, but the latter agency refused to accept responsibility until the final location of Gen. George Patton's grave had been settled.<sup>75</sup> As matters eventually developed, the ABMC reversed its

<sup>74</sup> Hq AGRC-EA, Rpt of Opns, 1 Jan-31 Mar 49, p. 144.

<sup>75</sup> Hq AGRC-EA, Ch. III, Operations, p. 12, Departmental Records Br, AGO, Alex RC.

previous attitude and agreed to assume responsibility for the cemetery, even though the site of General Patton's final resting place had not yet been chosen. The transfer took place on 15 December 1949, with the ABMC taking control of Hamm and five other permanent burial grounds.<sup>76</sup> When Hamm came under ABMC control, it contained 5,036 American deceased. The latest available statistics indicate a total of 5,071 burials.

#### *Fourth Zone—Cambridge, England*

The Fourth Zone included only the British Isles and eventually but one permanent overseas cemetery—Cambridge, located 50 miles north of London and adjacent to the famous university town for which it was named. It was established as a temporary burial ground in December 1943 to care for the deceased fliers of the United States Eighth Air Force and combat troops who had been stationed in England, and for men in the Service Forces who died there.<sup>77</sup> Practically all plans for permanent overseas sites included Cambridge, because of its historic interest as the Eighth Air Force cemetery and its favorable topographical and geographical features. Its proximity to the city of Cambridge assured all visitors of adequate accommodations while the tranquil beauty of the surrounding English countryside added to its desirability as a permanent resting place.<sup>78</sup>

After Cambridge's expected selection became a reality, those buried in Brookwood Cemetery, south of London, and in Lisnabreeny, in North Ireland, were moved to Cambridge. Interments in the three temporary burial grounds in the United Kingdom totalled slightly more than 9,000. Based on the usual ratio of overseas interments to repatriated dead, officials estimated that there would be some 4,500 final burials.<sup>79</sup>

The cemeterial layout plan for Cambridge was completed in January 1948. Meanwhile, steps had been taken to secure from the British Government the free use of the site at Cambridge for burial purposes in perpetuity. Pending actual transfer, a right of entry to commence construction work was requested but never received from the British Government, which evidently took the attitude that a tacit agreement had been made and no formal action was needed.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 28.

<sup>77</sup> AGRC-EA, Engineer Historical Record of the Design and Development of the United States WW II Cemetery at Cambridge, England, p. 1.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

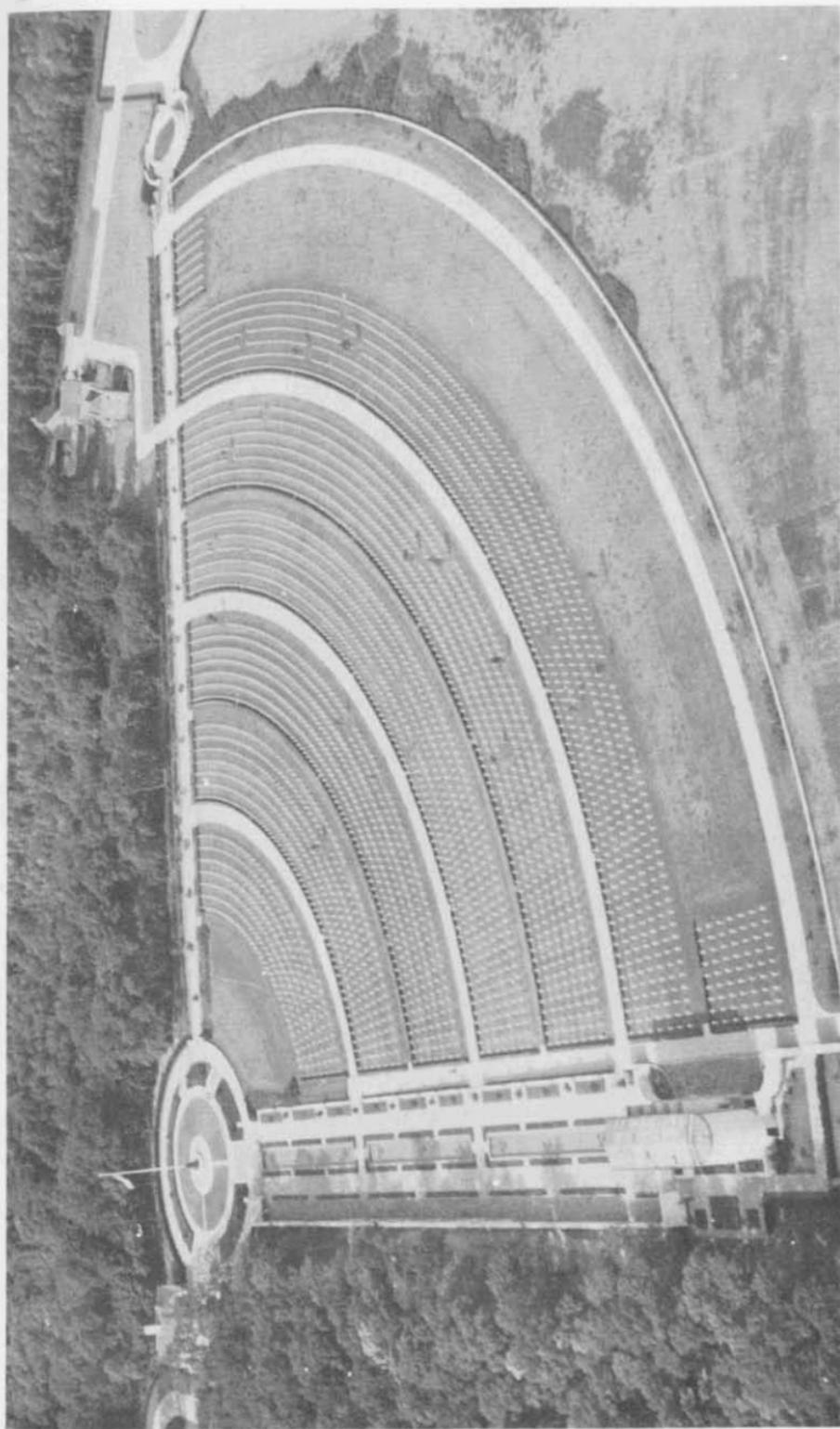


FIGURE 10. *Aerial view of Cambridge American Military Cemetery, England.*

Based upon the final layout, the engineers of AGRC-EA completed grading and drainage plans for the permanent cemetery by 22 March 1948. Invitations to bid on the grading work were issued to seven British contracting firms. The successful bidder began operations on 2 June and finished the project by 31 July 1948.<sup>80</sup> On 30 August, permanent reinterments began.<sup>81</sup> On 1 November 1948, responsibility for these operations passed to the newly created Fourth Zone. At that time, a total of 3,113 permanent interments had been accomplished. By the end of 1948, an additional 370 remains rested at Cambridge.<sup>82</sup> Reinterments ceased during February 1949, and at the end of the month, the Fourth Zone was deactivated and operational control of the cemetery passed to Hq, AGRC-EA.<sup>83</sup> On 1 July 1949, the Battle Monuments Commission assumed responsibility for this cemetery, as well as Epinal, thereby representing the earliest transfers of authority to the Commission among the permanent burial grounds of AGRC-EA. A simple ceremony in honor of this event took place at Cambridge on 10 July during which General Packham presented the keys of the cemetery to Gen. Thomas North as representative of ABMC. Chaplains of the three major faiths took part in consecrating the site. The most recent statistics reveal a total of 3,811 Americans resting in Cambridge.

### Recapitulation and Conclusions

The latest figures indicate that a total of 60,719 Americans sleep in the ten permanent cemeteries of the former AGRC-EA.<sup>84</sup> These statistics also show that almost two-thirds of overseas burials in all theaters (a total of 92,983) took place in the European Theater. Since the greatest number of deaths occurred in the campaigns against Nazi Germany, it was perfectly natural that the greatest number of interments should take place in this area.

One special case, representing an exception to established official policy, deserves at least passing attention. This case involved the interment in March 1949 of 24 World War II unknowns in the World War I cemetery for unknowns at Suresnes, thereby placing deceased soldiers of both conflicts in a single burial ground near Paris, which American tourists could easily visit. GRS officials lent technical assistance to the ABMC in preparing the cemetery for the

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>81</sup> Hq AGRC-EA, Rpt of Opns, 1 Jul-30 Sep 48, Vol I, Narrative, p. 121.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 Oct-31 Dec 48, pp. 171, 196.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 Jan-31 Mar 49, pp. 93-94.

<sup>84</sup> Statistical Review of Permanent Disposition of WW II Dead, p. 17.

new interments. Some of the 36 World War I remains were relocated in order to accommodate the World War II deceased.<sup>85</sup> This move also made possible Memorial Day observances in the Paris area for the American dead of both conflicts.

With the exception of St. Avold, all World War II permanent cemeteries were constructed, partially or wholly, on sites of previously existing temporary burial grounds. Perhaps this policy was adopted in the belief that it would reduce the transportation of remains. Yet construction of a permanent burial ground on the site of a temporary cemetery involved considerable difficulty. The remains had to be removed from the temporary resting place before the permanent site could be prepared. Often, when exhumations had been made, engineers found that the topographical conditions in the temporary cemetery were not as suitable as had been anticipated. In some graves, the remains had been interred in coffins which displaced a great deal of earth, while in others no coffins were used and little earth was displaced. For this reason, considerable difficulty was occasionally encountered in balancing cuts and fills in the earth work of a permanent cemetery.<sup>86</sup> Frustrating delays of from one to five months were encountered at Henri-Chapelle, St. Laurent, Hamm, St. James, and Margraten cemeteries before disinterments could be completed and grading operations begun. A storage problem also arose, particularly at Hamm, Cambridge, and Draguignan, where AGRC-EA officials were obliged to acquire additional land in order to store caskets for six to eighteen months until grading had advanced sufficiently to allow reinterments to begin.<sup>87</sup>

Owing to the compression of four operations—disinterment, processing, grading, and reinterment—within a small geographical area, there was often a fire hazard. At Épinal, for instance, limited space precluded the storage of caskets according to the current AGRC-EA fire plan and necessitated the storage of caskets, destined for overseas burial, two or three high for six to eight months. This situation also presented a stumbling block to the orderly removal of remains to the United States for repatriation.

On numerous occasions, the responsible officials of the French, Belgian, Dutch, and Luxembourg Governments stated their willingness to expropriate whatever lands were required for permanent cemeterial sites. They did not request the United States Govern-

<sup>85</sup> Hq AGRC-EA, Ch. III, Operations, pp. 25, 47, Departmental Records Br, Alex RC.

<sup>86</sup> Hq AGRC, AGRC Critique of Activities, Ch. III, Operations, pp. 86, 90.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

ment to choose sites overlaying temporary cemeteries or adjacent to them. They asked only that the land area be limited to essential needs. The British made no direct statement to this effect, but AGRC officials felt that their reaction would be similar to that of other European Governments.<sup>88</sup>

In retrospect, several major conclusions may be drawn about the choice of permanent overseas cemeteries and their preparation for use. In the first place, after studying the difficulties encountered and weighing the advantages and disadvantages, AGRC officials concluded that any future permanent cemeteries should be established on land *other* than that used for temporary sites.<sup>89</sup> They also recommended that the agency responsible for selecting such sites should have its architects study the availability of utilities. Furthermore, the architect designing a particular cemetery should be a member of the commission choosing the site. Other important observations advanced by the AGRC-EA were that: (1) the choice of architects be made prior to an exploration of possible sites in order that these architects might advise on the matter; (2) the responsible agency give proper consideration to the convenience of the location for visitors; (3) the Zone Commander should have sufficient qualified engineer officers; (4) the contract method proved to be the most practical one in the construction of permanent sites in Europe; (5) the system of above-ground storage, established in the AGRC-EA, was the best one, from the standpoint of fire-protection, simplicity in warehousing, and public relations; (6) adverse weather conditions did not materially affect the Command's overall progress in completion of the reinterment mission, since such operations ceased only during periods of extreme cold or very heavy rains; (7) the choice between use of heavy machinery or hand labor in each cemetery depended mostly upon soil conditions, the layout of the site, weather conditions, and the cost factor.<sup>90</sup>

When the graves registration program ended in Europe at the close of 1951, GRS officials and workers in the European Theater had completed the largest reinterment operation ever accomplished. The permanent burial of over 60,000 American servicemen in ten selected cemeteries represented a great overall achievement as shown by the accompanying statistics:<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96; 98-99; 101, 178.

<sup>91</sup> Statistical Review of Permanent Disposition of World War II Dead, p. 17.

<i>Cemetery</i>	<i>Number of burials</i>
Cambridge, England.....	3,811
Draguignan, France.....	853
Épinal, France.....	5,255
Hamm, Luxembourg.....	5,071
Henri-Chapelle, Belgium.....	7,989
Margraten, Holland.....	8,298
Neuville-en-Condroz, Belgium.....	5,164
St. Avoild, France.....	10,483
St. James, France.....	4,410
St. Laurent, France.....	9,385
Total.....	<u>60,719</u>

The constant maintenance and care of these burial places constitute a solemn and continuing responsibility which will outlast all other phases of the graves registration mission.



## CHAPTER XI

### REPATRIATION FROM THE EUROPEAN THEATER

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#### Planning for Repatriation

Final interment of World War II deceased, either in the United States or in permanent overseas cemeteries, according to wishes of the next of kin, represented the ultimate goal in the Return of the Dead Program. It also marked the culmination of the other major phases of the whole graves registration operation—concentration of the dead into centralized burial grounds, identification of remains whenever possible, and search and recovery of missing servicemen.

Planning for the eventual return to the homeland of the fallen Americans of World War II began in the European Theater long before the first repatriation ship departed from Antwerp in the autumn of 1947. In January 1946, Col. A. G. Duncan, Acting Chief of Staff, Hq, AGRS-European Theater, informed The Quartermaster General that pending receipt of advice from the OQMG regarding the rate at which remains could be handled in the United States and the length of time needed for complete polling of next of kin, studies had been made and some tentative plans formed in the Theater. These plans called for field operations which would involve: (1) a detailed inventory of cemeteries in order that the War Department could successfully conduct a poll of next of kin; (2) the establishment of storage facilities; (3) the receipt, inspection, repair, and transportation of caskets and shipping boxes; (4) the disinterment and final check of identification at cemeteries; (5) the transportation of remains from temporary cemeteries to designated ports for shipment to the United States, and (6) the transfer and reinterment in permanent cemeteries in Europe of remains not to be repatriated.<sup>1</sup>

In order to eliminate record discrepancies both in the European Theater and in Washington, it was decided to maintain in a static condition all cemeterial plots except those kept open for current burials and reinterments. Beginning in the Second Sector, three independent plot plans were then under preparation. The first would be completed through a physical inspection by cemetery employees of identification tags on graves, the second from burial records at

<sup>1</sup> Ltr, Hq AGRC-ETA, to TQMG, 17 Jan 46, sub: Plans for the Operation of the AGRC, 323.3, GRS-Europe, Alex RC.

Sector Headquarters, and the third from the file records of the Registration Division by employees of the division.<sup>2</sup> When these three listings had been completed, comparison would be made to detect errors and each discrepancy would be investigated. The final corrected plot plans would then be forwarded to Washington.

Plans in Europe at that time called for disinterment of remains for repatriation by the two Field Headquarters in France and the Low Countries. Theater officials believed that the six established sectors, subordinate to the Field Headquarters, would readily lend themselves to this procedure. They planned for the Second Field Headquarters to handle remains in northern Europe and in northern France. The Third Field Headquarters would evacuate remains from cemeteries in the United Kingdom and in southern and central France.<sup>3</sup> At the time of repatriation, all bodies in any given cemetery would be disinterred pending later return to the United States or burial in a designated permanent overseas cemetery.

Early in March 1946, Theater officials, after a conference with authorized representatives of the OQMG, agreed upon a repatriation procedure embracing these points: (1) that the poll of next of kin be conducted by plot within each cemetery; (2) that upon issuance of disinterment directives by TQMG for a given plot, a 100 percent distribution of all interments therein would be made, and (3) that all reinterments, either in the United States or in the European Theater, be made in the same type of casket.<sup>4</sup> GRS officials believed that this procedure would enable field operating units to evacuate entire plots at one time, sending remains scheduled for return to the United States to the ports and those destined for burial within the Theater to cemeteries which had been proposed for permanent use.

A careful study had been made, meanwhile, in the Theater to determine the priority of the various sectors in the future repatriation operations. Several factors governed the outcome of this study, including the availability and continuity of operation of each port, the progress toward completion of the cemetery inventory and record check, degree of concentration of burials, distances involved between cemeteries and ports, anticipated delivery of caskets, and recommended sites for permanent cemeteries.<sup>5</sup>

AGRC officials, after completing this study, proposed that repatriation operations be conducted within the currently constituted sec-

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Ltr, Col J. C. Odell, CO, AGRC-ETA, to TQMG, 8 Mar 46, sub: Plan for Repatriation, 293, Europe, Alex RC.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

tors in the following order: II Sector, I Sector, V Sector, IV Sector, III Sector, and VI Sector.<sup>6</sup> The decision to begin operations in the Second Sector stemmed from the fact that the grave inventory and check of records there were now complete, that it was believed advisable to retain the port facilities then available in Antwerp, and that the relatively short overland haul and the large concentration of remains in this Sector would facilitate homeward shipment to the United States.

The entire program for disinterment and out-shipment of American war dead depended, of course, upon the predicted delivery of caskets from the Zone of the Interior. If these caskets arrived in the Theater during July 1946 as planned, exhumations were scheduled to begin during August in order that the first repatriation ship could depart from the Theater in September 1946. These plans later proved to be both premature and overly optimistic.

To carry out these operations, AGRC officials expected to utilize three "Repatriation Groups" each composed of a varying number of field operating units, a port unit, and a remains depot. In general, each repatriation group would assume responsibility for all activities within its own area of jurisdiction. The field operating unit served as the basic unit for disinterring remains from cemeteries. The remains depot would operate at locations convenient to cemeteries and serve as a morgue for exhumed remains about to be sent to a port and as a distribution point for empty caskets. The port unit had the task of receiving, storing, and shipping incoming caskets and supplies and the handling of removal of remains to the United States.<sup>7</sup>

All repatriation groups and units thereof would draw upon the sector in which they operated for logistical support of common items and for purchasing and contracting services. The first such group would evacuate the dead from Sector II through the port of Antwerp from about July 1946 through December 1947, and would operate a remains depot at Liège, Belgium. The second repatriation group assumed responsibility for Sectors V and VI and used the port of Cherbourg during the same period. The third group would function in Sectors I, III, IV, using at various times the ports of Southampton, Marseilles, and Antwerp.<sup>8</sup>

Colonel Odell requested TQMG to approve the foregoing plan

<sup>6</sup> (1) *Ibid.* (2) The Sectors were then divided in the following manner: 1st, included British Isles, Channel Islands, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark; 2d, included Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg; 3d, covered eastern France; 4th, included southern France and Switzerland; 5th, included western France; and 6th, covered central France.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

and to indicate any specific alterations promptly. Before this elaborate scheme could reach Washington, TQMG had formulated his own tentative but detailed plan, issued only three days following those submitted by European Theater GRS Headquarters.<sup>9</sup> It called for: (1) verification of all grave locations and registrations and corrections of discrepancies; (2) polling of next of kin to determine their desires as to final disposition of remains; (3) dispatch to overseas theaters of disinterment directives for each cemetery embodying the results of these polls; (4) exhumation of remains for which disinterment directives had been received, followed by verification of identity and by disinfecting, disinfesting, wrapping, and placing of remains in hermetically sealed caskets covered with a special shipping case, and shipment to local ports of all deceased who were to be finally buried in the United States; (5) use of converted Liberty Ships to transport bodies home in accordance with sailing schedules agreed upon by the OQMG and theater graves registration services; (6) disinterment of all other bodies remaining in cemeteries at the time of repatriation; and (7) reinterment in local civilian or permanent overseas cemeteries of deceased whose families did not desire repatriation. These tentative OQMG proposals provided for the return of all unknown dead, but Federal legislation subsequently stipulated that they would be placed in overseas military cemeteries.<sup>10</sup> The remainder of the foregoing proposals were later either partially or wholly carried out.

### *Revision of Schedules*

By the middle of May 1946, OQMG officials realized that a delay in casket production in the United States until the end of the year would force a revision of all exhumation and shipment schedules to a much later time than indicated in the repatriation plans submitted in March 1946. Although Quartermaster General Larkin anticipated that the magnitude of monthly shipments would be altered materially in any new and revised exhumation schedules, he believed that the relative order of operations by cemeteries would remain substantially unchanged.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, though, General Larkin approved the Repatriation Plan proposed by Theater officials in March 1946 with two major exceptions. In the first place, he questioned whether disinterment directives could be issued simultaneously for all remains in a given plot, since slowness in replying on

<sup>9</sup> Ltr, Maj Gen T. B. Larkin to CINC, AFPAC *et al.*, 11 Mar 46, sub: Repatriation Organization and Operations; KCRC-AGRS-Pacific, 293.

<sup>10</sup> Public Law 368, 5 Aug 47, 80th Cong., 1st Sess, GRS Files, Historical Br, OQMG.

<sup>11</sup> Ltr, TQMG to CO, AGRC-EA, 17 May 46, 3d Ind to Basic Ltr, Hq AGRC-EA to TQMG, 8 Mar 46, sub: Plan for Repatriation, 323.3 Europe, Alex RC.

the part of some next of kin would unduly delay the return or other disposition of remains so directed by those who responded promptly. The second exception involved the proposed use of the same type casket for all reinterments. The Quartermaster General concurred in this recommendation regarding all permanent interments, but pointed out that wooden reburial boxes then in use in the European area should be utilized for all temporary or interim burials.<sup>12</sup>

The delay in shipment of caskets to Europe posed an immediate problem for the GRS Command, since personnel assigned to the Return Program in that area would thus be on hand several months in advance of the caskets. Another problem loomed which involved public relations with the local populace in various European countries at the time when the return of the deceased actually began. Many GRS officials realized the difficulty of making local inhabitants understand the reasons for evacuating and returning American war dead to the homeland, since no European nation had ever pursued such a policy. The task would involve the explanation of the Repatriation Act and the fact that the program was being carried out strictly in conformance with wishes of relatives in the United States.<sup>13</sup>

The GRS Command also realized that a fine distinction must be made on individual cases as to what constituted local or national interest. For instance, a grave with a local monument already erected provided definite evidence that evacuation of such remains should be delayed at least temporarily. Even if no monument existed, local interest often had been expressed in other ways. On the other hand, the desires of next of kin must always receive first consideration. In lieu of any set policy from Washington whereby the mission of the Command could be accomplished and still adhere to wishes of both local interests and those of relatives, the practice of the European GRS Command had usually been: (1) to suspend concentration or repatriation activities in cases where a conflict of desire on the part of local inhabitants and next of kin existed, pending determination of the case by The Quartermaster General; (2) in cases of national or local interest accompanied by State Department intervention, evacuation activities would be temporarily suspended.<sup>14</sup>

On 26 November 1946, in compliance with verbal instructions from TQMG, the European GRS Command submitted comments and suggestions regarding the operations schedule for the Return Program. In the first place, the Command believed that any plan-

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*—

<sup>13</sup> Hist, AGRC-EA, I, Operations During the Period, 8 May 45–30 Jun 47, pp. 28, 33.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

ning assumption of an 80-20 percent distribution of remains would not apply in the European Theater. Three reasons formed the basis for this opinion. First, the record of repatriation after World War I showed that only some 60 percent of remains were returned to the homeland. Second, comments by visitors and others interested in the problem indicated that the poll of next of kin would result in a lower percentage of repatriation. Third, the ease of pilgrimages to Europe by next of kin would encourage a greater number to leave their loved ones there for permanent interment.<sup>15</sup>

In discussing the proposed schedules for shipment of remains from Europe, Colonel Odell pointed out that if all operations were limited to cemeteries using only one port at a time, exhumation schedules could easily be adversely affected by climatic, highway, or railroad conditions. If, on the other hand, operations were conducted from two groups of cemeteries to two separate ports, the inability to work in one area would only partially affect progress and, if necessary, personnel could be moved from the adversely affected area to the unaffected region in order to meet scheduled production.<sup>16</sup> Colonel Odell recommended the consideration of a procedure incorporating these features so far as possible: (1) simultaneous evacuation through two ports, thus gaining the advantage of reducing the number of port calls while still permitting the necessary dispersion of field operating units; (2) disinterment for cemeteries to be governed by priority and time periods of cemetery groupments, with final detailed schedules to be drawn up by AGRC Headquarters; (3) any reduction in the number of ports operating simultaneously, any poll delays or lack of housing availability at cemeteries, or unalterable labor ceilings at any given burial ground must be compensated by an overall extension of operating time.<sup>17</sup>

As 1946 drew to a close, planning and discussion relating to the Return Program continued, including such matters as the responsibilities, functions, and operations of the Memorial Division, OQMG, the Overseas Theater Command, and the distribution centers. General agreement was reached during this period that in accordance with revised time schedules, the exhumation and shipment of remains would be performed simultaneously in the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean areas, and that the initial return of war dead would be from the Hawaiian Islands and the European Theater.<sup>18</sup> It was then expected that the first incoming remains would arrive in the United

<sup>15</sup> Ltr, Col J. C. Odell, CO, AGRC-EA to TQMG, 26 Nov 46, sub: Tentative Operation Schedules for the Return of WW II Dead Program, 293, Europe, Alex RC.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Hist, AGRC-EA, Ch. V, Operations (New Series), 8 May 45-30 Jun 47, pp. 306-7.

States during August 1947, an estimate which eventually proved to be premature by only two months. The current exhumation schedule was based upon the promise that ample caskets would be available by 1 May 1947. GRS officials generally believed that the major part of exhumation operations could be accomplished within an 18-month period.

#### *Problems of Return Program*

At the beginning of 1947, the GRS Command faced several important problems with regard to the Return Program, including the means of securing necessary manpower from the War Department, the procuring of indigenous labor and their pay scales, and the methods of transporting the deceased from cemeteries to the repatriation ports. In addition, during the early weeks of 1947, several basic planning factors remained unknown, thereby complicating matters immeasurably. For example, the Command possessed no firm indication of the exact percentage of remains which would eventually be returned from Europe. It could not hope to obtain this figure until the poll of next of kin ended and the results had been forwarded to the area. Since all indications showed that the final tabulation would not be known until after the Return Program had begun, GRS officials laid plans flexible enough to cover the possibilities of ratios of 80-20, 60-40, or 50-50 of return to overseas burial.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, at the beginning of 1947, the Command had not yet determined whether remains would be placed in caskets for storage under canvas at the cemeteries while awaiting removal to port or to a permanent site, or whether warehousing would be needed for storage of these caskets. Then, too, command exhumation and shipping schedules were based upon assumptions regarding the receipt of caskets and disinterment directives which were not yet firm. Finally, delays in casket production and a resultant retarding of operational plans loomed as a distinct possibility.<sup>20</sup>

The plan of the GRS Command at this time called for the issuance of disinterment directives by the OQMG to the Command within 90 days of the dispatch of the Letter of Inquiry to relatives. Such directives would be accompanied by a blanket concentration order to embrace all remains not covered individually for transfer to temporary plots within permanent cemeteries. Under this plan, the Command would not exhume any cemetery until directives had been received for 75 percent or more of total burials in that site. In addition, prior to the arrival of disinterment directives and the be-

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 515.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 516.

ginning of exhumations, a backlog of 20,000 caskets must be on hand in the European Area. After receipt of this large backlog, the Command expected to allow 45 days before any casketed deceased would be available for shipment to port or to a permanent burial ground.<sup>21</sup>

Early in 1947, however, OQMG officials indicated that while they concurred in general with the procedures outlined in the Command plan above, they foresaw instances in which a cemetery must be exhumed prior to the receipt of 75 percent of replies from next of kin. Furthermore, they did not agree with the proposal for building up a backlog of 20,000 caskets 45 days before any shipment of remains. They pointed out that a one-month supply of caskets would be discharged about 15 days before the first exhumations in a given cemetery and that production limitations and the need for a world-wide distribution of caskets would preclude the establishment of a 20,000-casket reserve in any one area or zone.<sup>22</sup>

Planners in OQMG headquarters also contemplated the loading of approximately 6,300 caskets per repatriation ship during the Return Program. They expected that these ships would call at from one to three ports on each trip to the European Theater, depending upon the number of ports in use at a given time and the phasing of the particular vessel in the operations schedule. Many vessels calling at European Theater ports were scheduled to visit Mediterranean and Africa-Middle East ports on the same voyage. OQMG policy in general favored the reduction of the number of ports used to the lowest practical number, and also advocated the overland shipment of remains from the Marseilles and southern areas of France to Cherbourg, thus eliminating a port of call in that area.<sup>23</sup> OQMG officials were willing for AGRC authorities to select the mode of transportation within the Theater, i. e., rail, truck, or barge so long as oceanic schedules were met and the means chosen was the most economical under these conditions. They agreed that disinterment directives for any given cemetery should contain a blanket directive to exhume remains not otherwise included in order to complete evacuation of a given cemetery.

#### *Selection of United Kingdom Port*

At about this time (early in 1947), the selection of a United Kingdom port for the Return Program engaged the attention of GRS officials, both in the OQMG and in the European Command. Until very near the close of 1946, OQMG officers had thought that

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 517.

<sup>22</sup> Memo, Col C. R. Hutchins, Mem Div, OQMG to CO, AGRC-ETA, 8 Jan 47, sub: Request for Information Regarding Return of WW II Dead, 293, Alex RC.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

Southampton would be utilized for the support of repatriation operations in the United Kingdom. Communications from AGRC Headquarters had recently indicated that London had been chosen as the United Kingdom port without notifying the OQMG. General Horkan, in a letter to the Commanding Officer, AGRC-ETA, dated 14 January 1947, gave his reasons for favoring Southampton for repatriation operations. First, he pointed out that a savings of two days' sailing time on each trip would result. Second, the much higher incidence of fog and mist in the Thames River would delay vessels unduly if London were the port. Third, since British policy had never favored return of its own war dead, the handling of American repatriation operations in the British capital might easily arouse adverse public reaction. General Horkan believed that suitable facilities could be acquired as needed at Southampton. The fact that AGRC officials had actually contracted for port facilities in London without advice or approval from the OQMG apparently caused considerable concern in the higher echelons of the OQMG.

Probably sensing this annoyance, Colonel Odell, CO, AGRC-ETA explained the actions of the GRS Command. He stated that in April 1946, AGRC representatives conferred in London with staff members of the Office, Chief of Transportation, U. S. Forces, European Theater Area. At these meetings, it was ascertained that the British Ministry of Transportation wished to cease all military operations in the port of Southampton in order that its facilities could be converted to normal civilian use. In view of the shortage of shipping facilities in the United Kingdom at that time and the desires of the Ministry of Transportation, AGRC authorities decided to enter into an agreement with the Port of London authorities to secure needed warehousing and berth space for the oncoming repatriation period, July-September 1947. Colonel Odell further explained that later inquiry (in November 1946) revealed the continuing existence of a critical shortage of pier and warehouse accommodations throughout the United Kingdom. Since a firm agreement had been made with Port of London officials and concurred in by the Theater Chief of Transportation, Colonel Odell recommended that the arrangement be allowed to continue. The AGRC-ETA would, however, under necessary instructions, take steps to cancel this agreement if OQMG officials could persuade the Chief of Transportation in Washington to accept responsibility for the provision of port facilities, including warehousing space for casketed deceased in the United Kingdom.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Memo, Hq AGRC-ETA to TQMG, 28 Jan 47, 1st Ind to Basic Ltr, 14 Jan 47, Horkan to CO, AGRC-ETA, sub: United Kingdom Port for The Return of World War II Dead, 323.3, GRS-Europe, Alex RC.

Upon receipt of this information, officials in Memorial Division, OQMG, felt that they were in no position to direct Colonel Odell to terminate the London agreement in view of the British desire to end all military activities at Southampton. In fact, they now took the attitude that all contractual arrangements in connection with the establishment and operation of AGRS ports should be undertaken by the European Command. They favored any arrangements to handle remains in the most economical manner possible consistent with efficiency and propriety.<sup>25</sup> They still expected that three ports would be used in returning the dead from the European Theater—Antwerp, Cherbourg, and London or Southampton, with the final decision on the latter devolving upon the European GRS Command. In short, the OQMG now felt that it should no longer be particularly concerned with port arrangements in the European area except in an advisory capacity and that AGRS ports could best be administered by a Port Headquarters activated in accordance with Table of Distribution 10-3-3, 7 January 1947, and augmented by technically qualified Transportation Corps personnel.<sup>26</sup>

Any further consideration of Southampton as a repatriation port finally ended in June 1947, when AGRC Headquarters reported to the OQMG that a survey of United Kingdom facilities had definitely eliminated its availability. The British Board of Trade, meanwhile, assisted AGRC officials in renegotiating with London Port authorities for facilities at Tilbury Docks, 27 miles east of the center of London.<sup>27</sup>

During this period, the Chief, Transportation Corps, European Command, realizing the total lack of Transportation Corps facilities at the three probable repatriation ports, shifted responsibility for port operations in the United Kingdom, Antwerp, and Cherbourg to AGRC Headquarters, a step of major significance in regard to the entire Return Program.<sup>28</sup> About this time, port facilities at Cardiff, Wales, had also become available for repatriation purposes. Cardiff lay 180 rail miles west of Cambridge. Negotiations began at once with London Port authorities for these facilities.<sup>29</sup> Memorial Division officials, upon receipt of this information, indicated their satisfaction with Cardiff as the repatriation port for the United Kingdom and promised to direct caskets there as soon as a firm

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<sup>25</sup> Memo, Col. Ira K. Evans, Mem Div, OQMG to CINC, European Command, 9 Apr 47, sub: Contractual Arrangements for Operation of AGRS Ports, 231.8-Europe, Alex RC.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Rad, Hq AGRC-EA to TQMG, 23 Jun 47, 323.3-Europe, Alex RC.

<sup>28</sup> Hist. AGRC-EA, I, Operations During the Period, 8 May 45-30 Jun 47, p. 49.

<sup>29</sup> Rad, AGRC-EA to TQMG, 11 Jul 47, 323.3-Europe, Alex RC.

commitment had been made between AGRC-EA and British authorities. Definite selection of Cardiff followed shortly, providing a generally satisfactory solution to a long-standing problem. Gen. Howard L. Peckham, who had replaced Colonel Odell as CO, AGRC-EA, on 1 May 1947, informed interested authorities in Washington of this development in a radio message sent in early August 1947 and added that negotiations then in progress indicated a firm commitment, making the facilities at Cardiff Port completely available for operations on or about 1 November 1947. The three repatriation ports of the European area—Antwerp, Cherbourg, and Cardiff—were thereby definitely established only a few weeks before the initial shipment of remains from Europe to the New York Port of Embarkation.

#### *Delay in Casket Delivery*

While the question of final selection of a United Kingdom Port for use during the Return Program demanded considerable time and thought, perhaps the most serious situation concerning GRS matters stemmed from the long delay in casket delivery. GRS organizations in Europe found it extremely difficult to organize properly without a firm repatriation schedule, and none of the local commanders wished to encumber themselves with unnecessary overhead far in advance of actual return operations. The same uncertainty hampered GRS officials in making arrangements for port facilities. Since most of the ports, both in Britain and on the Continent, had been severely battered during the war, storage space at the docks was very limited, and local authorities were unwilling to set aside precious space for the GRS program and then have it lie idle because of failure of caskets to arrive.<sup>30</sup> The basic needs for proper operation of the Return Program in mid-1947 appeared to be: as much advance information as possible regarding the receipt of caskets, and the firm scheduling of actual repatriation operations. If these needs were met, GRS officers and personnel could obtain and distribute equipment, arrange for space, obtain necessary manpower, and arrange for port facilities.<sup>31</sup>

Late in July, The Quartermaster General felt that this problem would soon be resolved satisfactorily. In a message to General Peckham, he stated that "we appear to be out of the woods now on caskets" and expressed the hope that other aspects of this matter would soon be clarified. Furthermore, he expected to send to GRS

<sup>30</sup> Ltr, Maj Gen Edmond H. Leavey, Hq AGRC-EA to TQMG, 2 Jul 47, 293-Europe, Alex RC.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

Headquarters, European Area, a reasonably firm operations schedule for the ensuing 3 months.<sup>32</sup>

### Actual Operations

#### *Henri-Chapelle*

Planning for repatriation activities now gave way to actual operations. The Return Program began in the European Area on 27 July 1947 with a special ceremony at Henri-Chapelle Cemetery just before the commencement of exhumations preparatory to shipment of remains to Antwerp and later return to the United States, or storage for those scheduled for overseas interment until the permanent cemetery there was completed.<sup>33</sup> Leaders of the Belgian Government joined with the U. S. Army and Diplomatic Corps in this Sunday ceremony, which also marked the closing of the cemetery to visitors. The first shipload of approximately 5,600 American remains, then interred in Henri-Chapelle, was expected to leave Antwerp during the first week of October 1947.

The actual exhumations began the next day, 28 July, and continued until all remains in Henri-Chapelle had been disinterred, casketed, and processed. This operation received top priority within the Command since the deadline for the first shipment was a short one. During the period from 28 July until the initial group of remains departed for the United States, this operation revealed many problems and deficiencies which had not been anticipated. The situation was understandable since this effort constituted the first of its kind or magnitude in the European Theater.<sup>34</sup>

Perhaps the most critical problems involved the supply of needed items, the matter of storage space, and the shortage of licensed embalmers and assistant embalmers for the processing of remains. In order to overcome the latter weakness, AGRC officials were forced to commence disinterments at Henri-Chapelle with many unlicensed embalmers, although they had earlier urgently requested the OQMG to send qualified personnel to Europe.<sup>35</sup>

In reply to General Peckham's urgent message regarding this situation, General Horkan explained that despite every effort to secure qualified people by advertising and by contacting mortician schools, not enough persons could be recruited. While regretting the unavoidable delay in sending embalmers, General Horkan as-

<sup>32</sup> Ltr, Horkan to General H. B. Peckham, CG, AGRC-EA, 23 Jul 47, 319.25-GRS-Europe, Alex RC.

<sup>33</sup> Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Jul-30 Sep 47, I, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>35</sup> Ltr, Peckham to Horkan, Chief, Mem Div, OQMG, 30 Jul 47, 231.29-GRS-Europe, Alex RC.

sured Theater officials that the situation had arisen despite every effort to avoid it. He added that GRS officials in the Pacific area were encountering even more difficulty than those in Europe.<sup>36</sup>

Another vexing problem stemmed from the arrival of repatriation caskets in an improper shipping case. This error necessitated changing all shipping cases to the proper type and employing considerable additional labor, time, and equipment.<sup>37</sup> Despite these obstacles, 7,060 remains in Henri-Chapelle Cemetery were disinterred, processed, prepared, casketed, and shipped to the Antwerp Port for storage before the deadline date for shipment to the United States. Of these remains, a total of 5,060 were placed aboard the USAT *Connolly* by 30 September 1947, just four days before it, the first repatriation ship from the European Theater, sailed for New York.<sup>38</sup>

#### *Antwerp Ceremony*

A highly impressive ceremony, planned and organized by the AGRC-EA with assistance from the American Embassy, the Belgian Army, and Antwerp city officials, preceded the departure of the first shipment of American war dead from the European continent. In attendance were important dignitaries of the Belgian Government, high American Army officers, and over 30,000 reverent Belgian citizens. The crowds massed in the grand plaza of Antwerp heard addresses by General Lucius D. Clay, Robert Grillon, President of the Belgian Senate, and American Ambassador Alan G. Kirk. General Clay, standing before the coffin of one of the soldiers said: "We have not yet found the lasting peace for which these men died in their youth. We must determine that free men everywhere should stand together in solid front to ensure a world in which there is a lasting peace, in which the dignity of the individual is recognized and maintained." Robert Grillon of Belgium pledged his country to care for the graves of those who remained "as if their tombs were our children's."<sup>39</sup>

After prayers by chaplains of the Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish faiths, the speakers laid wreaths at the foot of a catafalque in the square. In the nearby cathedral towers, all the bells pealed. An infantry squad fired three volleys and buglers sounded taps. Then military pallbearers lifted the symbolic casket from the catafalque to a caisson. Flanked by a Belgian and an American guard of

<sup>36</sup> Ltr, Horkan to Peckham, CG, AGRC-EA, 12 Aug 47, 231.29-GRS-Europe, Alex RC.

<sup>37</sup> Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Jul-30 Sep 47, I, p. 99.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>39</sup> *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 5 Oct 47. In Newspaper Clippings File, Historical Br, OQMG.



FIGURE 11. *This symbolic casket represented American war dead in ceremony at Antwerp, Belgium, 4 October 1947, just preceding first repatriation shipment from Europe.*

honor, the coffin was borne to the transport, decked with floral wreaths, which waited at the pier. Here, a brief ceremony took place, whereupon the casket was carried solemnly onto the ship while the national anthems of both nations were played. Shortly afterwards, the ship sailed, carrying within its hold the first group of American dead from Europe to return to their native soil.

#### *St. Laurent*

While preparations for the first shipment of war dead had been under way in Belgium, similar activities were taking place in France. Preliminary operations began in mid-August 1947 with the completion of plans for processing and casketing points at the St. Laurent Cemetery and Cherbourg casket storage areas. By 20 August, an



FIGURE 12. *This flag-draped casket was included in the first shipment of war dead to the United States for reburial in cemeteries designated by relatives.*

initial shipment of 975 overseas burial caskets, 1,800 repatriation caskets and 28 tons of equipment had been unloaded at Cherbourg. The interim-type caskets were immediately dispatched to St. Laurent Cemetery and to the warehouse in Cherbourg. Additional embalming fluid, hardening compound, metallic liners, blankets, mattress covers, and other needed items were also made available for early use.<sup>40</sup>

Early in September, AGRC Headquarters announced that the Return Program in France would begin with a Benediction Ceremony on Sunday, 14 September, at St. Laurent Cemetery prior to closing that burial ground for exhumation and casketing operations. St. Laurent would thus become the second American cemetery in the European area to be closed for disinterment operations in connection with the Return Program. Despite an overcast sky and light rain, several thousand French citizens from the Normandy invasion area attended the solemn rites, together with national and religious leaders of France and civilian, diplomatic, and military

<sup>40</sup> Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Jul-30 Sep 47, p. 103.

representatives of the United States.<sup>41</sup> After addresses by high dignitaries of both nations, ceremonial wreaths and floral tributes were presented.

Exhumations commenced at St. Laurent on 16 September, with three Field Operating Sections employed. Two casketing points were used—one at Cherbourg for the deceased to be sent to the United States, and the other at St. Laurent for those who were to rest eternally in the permanent cemetery there. As the remains were disinterred and positively identified, they were moved to the proper casketing point. Those for whom no disinterment directive had been received rested in above-ground temporary storage in a prefabricated canvas mausoleum while awaiting definite instructions from next of kin.<sup>42</sup> At the Cherbourg casketing point, remains were placed in caskets and stored for loading aboard the repatriation ship in accordance with their designated distribution center destination in the United States.

The exhumation of remains from St. Laurent Cemetery ended on 30 October, with a total of 3,808 disinterred. On 27 October, meanwhile, similar operations began at La Cambe Cemetery and terminated 30 days later with a total of 4,539 disinterred and transferred to the casketing points at St. Laurent and Cherbourg.<sup>43</sup>

On 4 November 1947, following appropriate ceremonies conducted by French and American officials and chaplains of the major faiths, the USAT *Robert F. Burns* sailed from Cherbourg with the first shipment of war dead from French soil, consisting of 1,052 remains. The ship then moved to Antwerp where an additional group of remains formerly interred at Henri-Chapelle numbering about 3,150 and representing the second shipment from this port, were placed aboard. After shipside services, the *Robert F. Burns* departed on 9 November with a total of some 4,200 deceased aboard, bringing the number of war dead thus far returned to the homeland to approximately 9,800.<sup>44</sup>

### *Related Operations*

Meanwhile, in reply to a report from the Theater on the sailing of the *Connolly* from Antwerp, Col. E. Busch, Memorial Division, OQMG, noted that the use of the crane method of hooking

<sup>41</sup> (1) *Ibid.*, p. 104. (2) AGRC General Press Release 116, 14 Sep 47, 319.25-Europe, Alex RC.

<sup>42</sup> (1) Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRC-EA, 1 Jul-30 Sep 47, p. 104. (2) Rpt, GRS and Repat Opns, AGRC-Europe, 1 Oct 47, p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 Oct-31 Dec 47, pp. 122-23.

<sup>44</sup> AGRC General Release #141, 7 Nov 47, 014.33; KCRC-AGRC-Europe, Repatriation.

into the four side handles of the shipping cases had sometimes caused damage to the handles or even ripped them from the cases. Colonel Busch recommended the substitution of a spreader arrangement whereby the shipping cases would be gripped on the underside by bars, thereby avoiding contact with the side handles entirely.<sup>45</sup>

Before the end of 1947, other European Theater cemeteries underwent initial exhumations preparatory to repatriation or permanent burial of their war dead, including Lisnabreeny, where such operations began on 22 October; Épinal, beginning on 2 November; Bloisville, starting on 23 November; and Varois and St. Juan, where such activity commenced during December.<sup>46</sup> To care for these deceased, especially from Épinal, plans went forward to establish another casketing point at Antwerp by 1 December 1947. GRS officials expected to ship remains from Lisnabreeny to Cambridge by mid-November for above-ground storage in a hanger building there.<sup>47</sup>

In the closing weeks of 1947, a total of thirteen Field Operating Sections, the casketing point at Cherbourg and the newly activated one at Antwerp all were making their contribution to the repatriation effort. Disinterment directives had finally been received for Epinal and La Cambe Cemeteries while remains from Lisnabreeny had been shipped to Cambridge as planned and placed in above-ground storage.<sup>48</sup>

The following figures show the progress in the Return Program at the beginning of 1948:<sup>49</sup>

Cemetery	Total processed and casketed	Shipped to United States	Casketed stored pending final interment	Casketed stored pending final DD's	Balance awaiting shipment
Henri-Chapelle	17,334	8,760	3,856	3,721	997
St. Laurent	3,808	1,909	1,786	113	
La Cambe	4,493	896	2,814	2,205	578
Lisnabreeny	148		26	55	67
Bloisville	621		99	353	169
Varois	174			174	
St. Juan	19			19	
Épinal	1,996		401	763	859
Totals	28,593	11,565	8,982	7,403	2,670

<sup>45</sup> Ltr, Busch to Col Carl W. Raguse, AGRC-EA, 13 Oct 47, 319.25-GRS-Europe, Alex RC.

<sup>46</sup> Rpt of Opns. Hq AGRC-European Area, I, 1 Oct-31 Dec 47, pp. 71-72.

<sup>47</sup> Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRC-Europe, 1 Nov 47, p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 Dec 47, p. 4.

<sup>49</sup> Rpt of Opns, AGRC-Europe, I, 1 Oct-31 Dec 47, pp. 80-81.

In addition, a considerable backlog of cases for processing and casketing existed at several European Area cemeteries, with the total reaching over 11,000, the large majority of which were found at Bloisville and Épinal, each having over 5,000 in this category.

Despite these noteworthy accomplishments, GRS officials, both in Washington and in overseas theaters, realized that in order to meet the goal established by Memorial Division, OQMG, of 50,000 remains repatriated to the United States by 30 June 1948, an increase in shipments of deceased must be forthcoming. The OQMG pointed out to the Commanding Officer, AGRC-EA, that over 60 percent of these 50,000 remains must be returned from Europe. While emphasizing the urgency of meeting this goal, OQMG officials cautioned the Theater that no lowering of standards should accompany an accelerated rate of processing and shipping war dead.<sup>50</sup> Memorial Division then set a tentative quota of 31,012 remains to arrive in New York during the first six months of 1948. To attain this goal, it would be necessary for the European GRS Command to take certain actions. First, the AGRC-EA must, as far as possible, give priority in processing and casketing to remains scheduled for return to the United States, although "spot" exhumations were to be avoided. Second, shipment of casketed remains to ports must be accelerated in order to assure maximum loads on every repatriation ship. Third, each ship must return at least the numbers indicated on the existing schedules, and more if possible, since these schedules were then under revision to meet the total quota. Finally, Hamm and Limey cemeteries would need to be exhumed in advance of dates previously indicated.<sup>51</sup>

Replying to Memorial Division's letter of 23 January 1948, General Peckham, CG, AGRC-EA, stated that in order to meet the quota indicated, any one of four methods, or a combination thereof, could be used in the Theater. The first would entail the expansion of the working force from the current 13 to 26 Field Operating Sections with corresponding increases in supplies and budgetary allowances. The second method would require an increase in the proportion of disinterment directives calling for repatriation from the current 45 percent to approximately 75 percent of the cemetery population. Selective disinterment and selective processing constituted the third and fourth means of meeting the established quota.<sup>52</sup>

General Peckham emphatically rejected any notion of adopting

<sup>50</sup> Ltr, Col E. Busch, Mem Div, OQMG to CG, AGRC-EA, 23 Jan 48, sub: Target for Return of Remains Through 30 Jun 48, 293-GRS-Europe, Alex RC.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Ltr, Hq AGRC-EA to TQMG, Att: Chief Mem Div., 5 Feb 48, Sub: Target for Return of Remains Through 30 Jun 48, GRS-Europe, Alex RC.

the latter two courses as utterly impractical and fraught with danger to accurate identification of the deceased. He proposed the adoption of the first method, i. e., a sharp increase in the working force at the various cemeteries. Doubling the number of Field Operating Sections would necessitate the addition of 156 embalmers, who would be recruited from the United States and sent to Europe by air transportation. Implementation of this proposal would also require a marked acceleration of disinterment directives from Washington to take care of the additional cemeteries to be exhumed. General Peckham added that the second method, involving an increase in the proportion of disinterment directives indicating return to the United States, would be necessary under any circumstances. In summation, then, he recommended a combination of the first and second methods as the best solution to the problem of meeting an admittedly ambitious repatriation deadline.<sup>53</sup>

The OQMG agreed that selective exhumation and processing would not be undertaken but pointed out the impossibility of meeting the request for an additional 156 embalmers. Nevertheless, OQMG officials promised to send 20 embalmers by air on or about 1 March 1948.<sup>54</sup> They noted that the average weekly rate of processing and casketing remains for homeward shipment had reached 2,120 during the period from 12 October 1947 through 30 January 1948. Since this rate was established during a period which included the worst winter weather, OQMG officials believed that during the warmer months it could be increased even without an additional number of embalmers. With an increase of 20 embalmers, it was believed in Washington that the weekly average could be increased to about 2,850. In the event of favorable weather, OQMG officials hoped for a weekly "production" of as much as 3,275 remains.<sup>55</sup> If this total could be attained, 48,000 deceased would be prepared and casketed by the close of May 1948. Applying this production rate and the anticipated increased ratio of deceased to be returned to the homeland, Colonel Busch foresaw some 22,660 remains returned to the United States by the deadline of 30 June 1948. This total, added to 1,753 already sent to the homeland early in February, would bring the number to 24,413, or 6,599 short of the tentative goal for the European Area. It was believed that this shortage might be "made up" elsewhere.

The problem of returning 50,000 remains to the United States by mid-1948 received thorough discussion at the OQMG in Washington. General Horkan and other high officials in the Memorial Divi-

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Ltr, Col E. Busch, Mem Div, OQMG to CG, AGRC-EA, 13 Feb 48, sub: Target for Return of Remains Through 30 Jun 48, 293-GRS-Europe, Alex RC.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

sion maintained that accuracy in performing the task was more important than quantity production. They urged AGRC officials, however, to do everything possible to attain maximum production during the approaching months in order to leave as little as possible to do when winter returned.<sup>56</sup>

Memorial Division officials agreed that the only practical procedure was to make all exhumations 100 percent by plot and by cemetery. This method would place remains in three categories—those definitely scheduled for return to the United States, those which would remain overseas, and those in an unresolved status. The last of these categories caused the most official concern. It was felt, nevertheless, that exhumations must be completed in each cemetery or plot, even in those cases where no disinterment directives had been received. This procedure would at least insure that all deceased would rest above ground before the following winter.<sup>57</sup>

During the first quarter of 1948, exhumation operations continued at the European cemeteries.<sup>58</sup> Benediction ceremonies invariably marked the closing of these cemeteries for disinterment operations.

At Antwerp, a total of 4,043 remains were received for homeward shipment. During this period, five ships arrived there loaded with supplies for repatriation activities. At Cardiff, the port installations were completed, and caskets were received as well as other supplies needed for carrying out the program in the United Kingdom. In France, two shipments left Cherbourg during the early months of 1948—the first on 5 February when the USAT *Eric Gibson* sailed for the United States with 1,753 remains aboard; and the second, on 18 March, when USAT *John T. McCarley* departed with 2,671 deceased in its hold.<sup>59</sup>

With the AGRC exerting every effort to reach the goal set by OQMG for 30 June, the major obstacle to success was a continuing lack of technicians, especially embalmers, for the 20 Field Operating Sections.<sup>60</sup> In mid-March, the total shortage of embalmers in the AGRC-EA stood at 25.

During the spring, the tempo of repatriation activities increased, with preparatory operations proceeding simultaneously at several cemeteries, including Brookwood, Cambridge, Ste. Mere Eglise No. 2, St. James, Hamm, St. Avold, and Limey. In the United Kingdom, operations were particularly accelerated in April, with 1,080 casketed

<sup>56</sup>Ltr, Col L. R. Talbot, Mem Div, OQMG to CG, AGRC-EA, 8 Mar 48, sub: Return of WW II Dead Program, 293-Europe, Alex RC.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup>Hq AGRC-EA, Rpt of Opns, 1 Jan-31 Mar 48, pp. 140-43.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>60</sup>Memo, Brig Gen H. L. Peckham, AGRC-EA to TQMG, 24 Mar 48, sub: Program for Exhumation and Shipment of Remains, 293-GRS-Europe, Alex RC.

remains dispatched to Cardiff Port for storage and outshipment.<sup>61</sup> Meanwhile, the first of three Victory ships just assigned to AGRC-EA for the Return Program, the USAT *Lawrence Victory*, arrived in Antwerp on 11 April, carrying 1,900 empty caskets for that port and 2,500 caskets for later delivery at Cherbourg. On 28 April, this ship left Cherbourg, bearing more than 4,000 remains, which had been loaded at the two ports. Nearly two months later, on 17 June, the *Greenville Victory* sailed from Cherbourg with an additional 3,754 deceased aboard, bringing the total number of remains thus far outshipped from that port to 11,557.<sup>62</sup>

In the United Kingdom, the Return Program progressed at an increased pace. At Cambridge Cemetery, all remains had been disinterred, processed, and casketed by 2 June. A total of 3,038 deceased had been sent to Cardiff for return to the United States. Repatriation operations were completed at Brookwood by 28 May, and 1,965 remains were shipped to Cardiff for homeward transportation. The remaining 1,669 American deceased were sent to Cambridge Cemetery for storage.<sup>63</sup>

On 18 June 1948, an elaborate and impressive ceremony at Cardiff, witnessed by over 4,000 local citizens and conducted by high American and British officials, marked the first shipment of American World War II dead to be returned to the United States from the United Kingdom. Mr. Henry O. Ramsey, American Consul, delivered a brief address, honoring the 4,383 American dead resting in the hold of the *Lawrence Victory*.<sup>64</sup> Among the deceased were former members of the Eighth and the Ninth Air Force, as well as those of the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps.

Despite the many obstacles heretofore described, the AGRC was able not only to meet its goal of 31,012 remains sent to the United States by the end of June 1948, but actually surpassed that number. As of 9 July, the European Command had returned a total of 34,874 American dead. In addition, a total of 64,118 remains had been transported to the homeland from all AGRS commands, thus exceeding by a wide margin the goal of 50,000 repatriates.<sup>65</sup> The European total represented over 40 percent of some 83,500 eventually returned from this Theater and comprised 54 percent of the total repatriated by all commands at this time.

During the third quarter of 1948, five additional shipments of deceased left the ports of Antwerp and Cherbourg with a total of 12,977 deceased, bringing the number repatriated from Europe to

<sup>61</sup> Hq AGRC-EA, Rpt of Opns, 1 Apr-30 Jun 48, p. 3.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 166.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 158-59.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 160-61.

<sup>65</sup> D/A, Progress Rpt, Sec 3-C, Disposition of Remains, 30 Jun 48, p. 3.

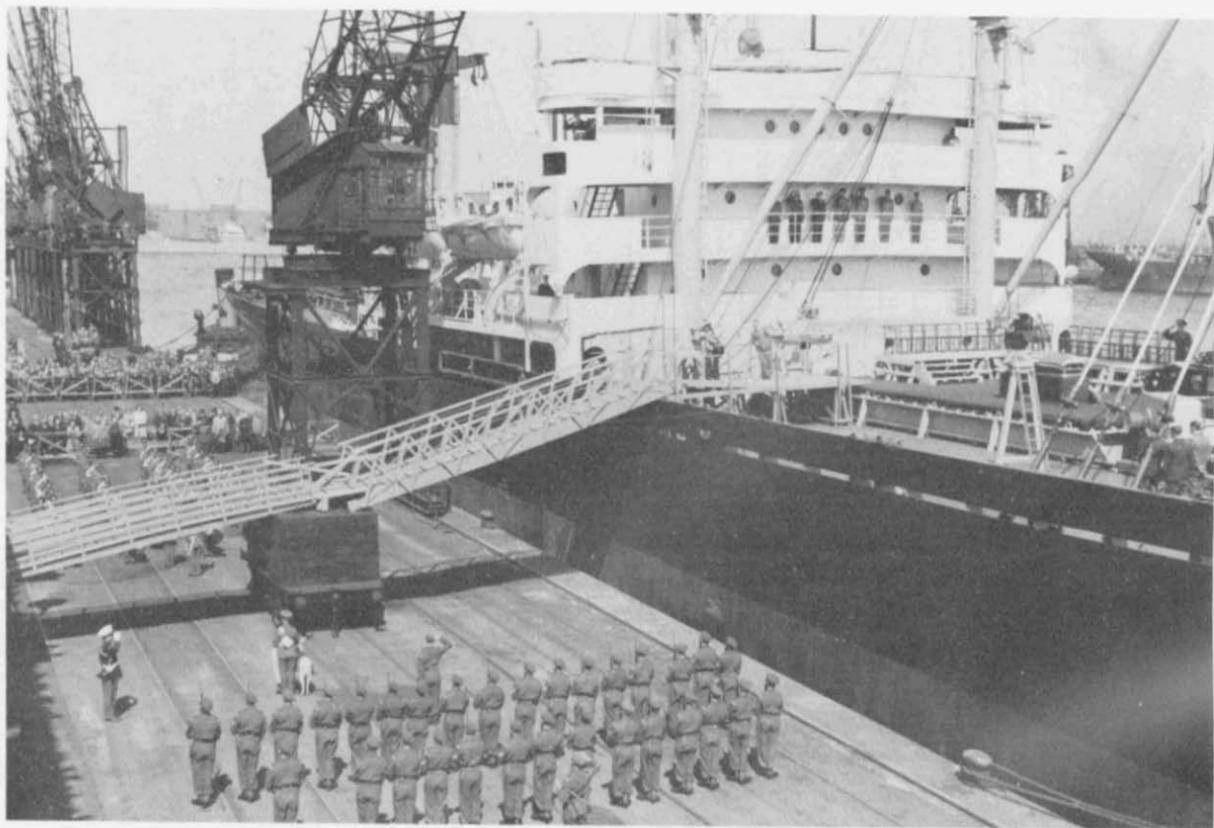


FIGURE 13. *Final salute at Cardiff, Wales, before USAT "LAWRENCE VICTORY" departed with initial group of deceased returned to the United States from the British Isles, 18 June 1948.*

47,851 by the end of September 1948.<sup>66</sup> At this time, processing and casketing operations were proceeding with no special difficulty at several European cemeteries and at the Antwerp and Cherbourg casketing points. At Cardiff, however, only a small number of remains were received, and no outshipments occurred at this port during this period.<sup>67</sup>

Continued good progress marked the Return Program during the closing months of 1948, although the peak of these operations had now passed and there was a gradual shifting of operational pressure from repatriation matters to grading and reinterment activities in the ten permanent cemeterial sites.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, during November, two outshipments of American war dead totalled 9,619, with the USAT *Carroll Victory* carrying 7,572 of this number in the largest single shipment from Europe so far accomplished. During this period, too, the last group of remains to leave the United Kingdom from Cardiff departed and this port was closed shortly thereafter.<sup>69</sup> By the end of 1948, nearly 62,000 deceased servicemen had arrived in the United States from the European Area, or considerably more than half the world total of 114,715 returned at that time.<sup>70</sup>

At the beginning of 1949, casketing operations preparatory to repatriation shipment or overseas burial were still in progress in one permanent site—Neuville-en-Condroz—and the Graves Registration Command still utilized the ports of Antwerp and Cherbourg, although strong suggestions had been advanced in favor of the exclusive use of Bremerhaven, Germany, for repatriation shipments, particularly as the number of remains designated for outshipment declined. Planning for the Return Program in 1949 and for its ultimate completion, as was the case in final interment operations, depended upon receipt of disinterment directives covering 100 percent disposition of remains. This was, of course, a factor over which AGRC-EA had no control.<sup>71</sup>

Good progress continued, however, during the early months of 1949. An outshipment from the United Kingdom took place on 10 January with the sailing of a transport from Liverpool carrying 175 deceased. Subsequent movements of American dead from the United Kingdom were to be made from Liverpool across the

<sup>66</sup> Hq AGRC-EA, Rpt of Opns, 1 Jul-30 Sep 48, p. 122.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 Oct-31 Dec 48, pp. 1-2.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>70</sup> D/A, Progress Rpt. Sec 3-C, Disposition of Remains, 31 Dec 48, p. 3.

<sup>71</sup> Hist, Hq AGRC-EA, Ch. III, Operations, pp. 7, 41, Departmental Records Branch, Alex RC.

English Channel to Cherbourg for later return home.<sup>72</sup> In February, 6,788 remains were sent to the United States from the combined ports of Liverpool, Cherbourg, and Antwerp. Another group of 2,918 remains departed from Antwerp during March on the USAT *Haiti Victory*.

By the end of August, when both the Cherbourg and Antwerp port facilities closed down, a total of 15,641 remains had been returned to the homeland in five shipments from Antwerp since the beginning of the year, while at Cherbourg, slightly over 3,800 deceased were shipped during this same period.<sup>73</sup> With the closeout of Antwerp and Cherbourg, a port unit was established at Bremerhaven to care henceforth for the diminishing numbers of remains destined for homeward shipment. Bremerhaven served as the repatriation port during the remainder of the GRS operations in the Theater.

### Recapitulation

In reviewing overall Return Program operations in the various zones of the Theater, certain observations may be made. Experiences in the First Zone indicated that the best procedure involved control by one headquarters section of all arrangements for transportation, completion of directives and convoy lists, and notification of cemeteries and the Port Unit at Antwerp. In this Zone, each unit concerned in the return of the dead was alerted at least one week in advance of shipment to the port. During actual disinterment activities in the cemeteries, the best method was to move all returning remains in wooden transfer cases to the Port Unit for casketing, thus eliminating the need for transporting heavy caskets to the cemeteries, then handling, reloading, and returning them to the port. At most cemeteries in the First Zone, trucks were used to move the deceased to Antwerp unless the cemetery was located more than one day's drive away.<sup>74</sup>

In the Second Zone, except for the initial shipment, all caskets used in the Return Program were received from the United States through Cherbourg. Returning remains moved by truck convoy from the various Zone cemeteries to the Port Unit at Cherbourg. Between November 1947 and June 1949, a total of 18,897 remains were shipped through this port en route to the United States.<sup>75</sup>

During most of the Return Program, the deceased in the Third Zone designated for repatriation, were transported by rail to the

<sup>72</sup> Hq AGRC-EA, Rpt of Opns, 1 Jan-31 Mar 49, p. 91.

<sup>73</sup> Hist, Hq AGRC-EA, Ch. III, Operations, pp. 179, 199, Departmental Records Branch, Alex RC.

<sup>74</sup> Hq AGRC-EA, Critique of Activities, Ch. III, Operations, p. 157.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

Antwerp Port for casketing and later shipment. The only exception to this procedure occurred at Grand Faily Cemetery, where 2,969 remains were sent to Hamm. Although the roller conveyor proved to be of great assistance in loading of remains on mortuary rail cars, the general opinion of GRS officials and workers was that individual hand labor probably provided the most efficient method in this particular operation. By July 1949, approximately 22,000 deceased had been, or were scheduled to be sent to Antwerp for return to the United States.<sup>76</sup>

Fourth Zone cemeteries, which covered those in the United Kingdom, were disinterred by special detachments of the AGRC-EA in preparation for repatriation or permanent overseas burial, as was the temporary burial ground at Malmö, Sweden. The population of these cemeteries was 9,725 remains. By July 1949, a total of 5,874 of this group had been, or were scheduled for, return to the homeland, the majority of which departed from Cardiff.

After mid-1949, only a comparatively small number of American war dead were returned to the United States. When the entire AGRS activity officially ended on 31 December 1951, remains repatriated from the European Theater numbered 86,828, which represented slightly more than half the world-wide total of 171,542 returned.<sup>77</sup> The AGRC-EA had thus carried out the largest return operation of any theater in the world.

Certain general conclusions and recommendations followed the completion of this large-scale operation. Some of the more important were:

1. Processing, reintering, and shipment of remains should begin only after enough next of kin have given disposition instructions to insure a continuous flow of disinterment directives to the field and to make possible a complete exhumation of each cemetery without long delays after this operation has begun.

2. Return Program plans should begin further in advance and in more detail than was generally done, particularly in regard to the requisitioning and stockpiling of supplies.

3. More staff officers from zone or higher headquarters should visit the field in order to familiarize themselves with the problems there.

4. Return Program schools should have been compulsory for all key personnel as well as for those actually engaged in field operations.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 145, 157-158.

<sup>77</sup> Statistical Review of Permanent Disposition of World War II Dead, p. 11.

5. In a few cases, especially in the First Zone, a tendency arose to overemphasize the meeting of quotas and deadlines in processing operations, thus jeopardizing the thoroughness of measures taken to detect and correct errors.

6. A standard method for records procedures should have been established and published by AGRC-EA. Each zone had its own method of accomplishing certain phases of records processing and this confused, rather than expedited, the overall records procedure.

7. The supply structure of an AGRS Area Command should be organized in such a manner as to insure the presence of adequate supplies before commencement of GRS operations.

8. Field Operating Sections should be reorganized in the future in order to attain greater flexibility in meeting changing conditions and procedures of the various phases of the overall GRS mission.<sup>78</sup>

Regardless of the merits of the basic concept of returning war dead to their native soil, the AGRC-EA performed a monumental task in the repatriation of over 86,000 American remains. Hundreds of officers, enlisted men, and technicians expended untold effort and time in carrying out this grim mission. From the time the deceased were first found, either shortly after death or months or years later by special search units, until they were placed aboard a repatriation vessel, much work was necessary, covering such activities as identification procedures, storage and transportation, the keeping of records, preparation of cemeteries, communication with next of kin, and countless other detailed duties.

Although cold, practical logic may have dictated the choice of leaving the American dead overseas in the beautiful, well-kept cemeteries of Europe and elsewhere, the sentimental desire of next of kin to have the earthly remains of their loved ones near them generally prevailed in post-World War II years, just as it had after World War I. This fact is demonstrated by the figures which show that over 86,000 recovered deceased in the European Theater were repatriated while about 60,000 fallen servicemen remained in Europe's ten permanent cemeteries. The very few other remains in Europe consisted either of unidentified dead or of unrecovered fatalities.

<sup>78</sup> Hq AGRC-EA, Critique of Activities, Ch. III, Operations, pp. 165-68.

## CHAPTER XII

# AGRS ORGANIZATION IN PACIFIC OCEAN AREAS AND ON THE ASIATIC MAINLAND

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### Introduction

Reorganization of Army forces in the Pacific Ocean Areas during April 1945, under GHQ, AFPAC, for the invasion of Japan, removed the causes of many complications that attended the creation of grave registration commands in the German war theaters.<sup>1</sup>

So long as administrative expediency urged consolidation in a single theater structure of all occupation forces assigned to Germany and Italy, the provision of an AGRS command which would correspond in area of responsibility remained a planning requirement. As heretofore related, this requirement was written on 26 October 1945 into the draft of a tentative War Department General Order which, along with other specifications, authorized the establishment of two large area commands, one embracing the European and Mediterranean Theater Area (AGRS-EMTA), the other the Pacific Theater Area (AGRS-PATA). It is important to emphasize again that this draft order reasserted a traditional doctrine of Army organization that had been overlooked when, on 8 September 1945, the War Department General Staff gave its approval to the "current" plan for disposition of the war dead, namely, that the prerogatives and responsibilities vested in theater commanders were indivisible and that, therefore, they "will be responsible for graves registration activities within their respective area commands, until such time as their commands are abolished."<sup>2</sup> It followed that the establishment of AGRS-EMTA was hypothetical, depending upon the consolidation of the European and Mediterranean theaters, while AGRS-PATA would be set up within an existing theater area.

The existence of three firm command structures in the Pacific war theaters left no doubt as to the distribution of AGRS commands. In addition to the area command—AGRS-PATA—which would be identified with AFPAC, separate zone commands were to be established within each of the areas assigned to the China and India-

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<sup>1</sup> Army Forces, Pacific (AFPAC) was established by direction of Joint Chiefs of Staff. (GHQ AFPAC GO No. 1, 6 Apr 45.)

<sup>2</sup> Incl. No. 1 to ltr, Col C. J. Blake, Chief, Mem Div to Opns Div, ASF, 26 Oct 45, sub: Establishment of AGRC in the Europe-Africa-Middle East Area. SPQUE File No. 320.3, Gr Reg Sv.

Burma Theaters. Furthermore, the procedure which would be followed upon inactivation of these theaters was now a settled matter of policy. In this eventuality, command responsibility would be transferred from the theater commander to The Quartermaster General, as Chief, American Graves Registration Service.

Seeking, no doubt, to avoid the confusion resulting from its oversight in approving the "current" plan, the War Department determined to consult the views of overseas commanders in regard to the amended scheme. Accordingly, on 3 November, the Army Chief of Staff apprised GHQ, AFPAC, of the contemplated establishment of two area and six separate zone commands. In requesting comment on the part of Brig. Gen. William F. Campbell, Chief Quartermaster, AFPAC, the message stated: "The purpose in establishing these commands is to provide for self-contained organizations capable of operating and administering the American Graves Registration Service outside the continental limits of the United States."<sup>3</sup>

Before examining General Campbell's recommendations, it should be realized that the combat forces which drove across the Pacific Ocean to the home waters of Japan differed widely in organization from the massive formations that invaded Europe and overthrew the land empire of Nazi Germany. Every successive stage in the advance toward the Japanese archipelago required a regroupment of forces and reassignment of command areas. Activation of AFPAC, together with two immense logistical commands—U. S. Army Forces, Western Pacific (AFWESPAC), and U. S. Army Forces, Middle Pacific (AFMIDPAC),—was but another adjustment to accommodate the circumstance of a changing situation. Only the surrender of Japan gave this change an appearance of finality.

Differences of a similar nature characterized the technical services, notably graves registration. As a matter of fact, the theater graves registration service of the Southwest Pacific was an indigenous growth, having its origin in the creation of the United States cemetery system in Australia and then in the adaptation of provisional units to the tactical conditions of amphibious warfare.<sup>4</sup> Graves Registration services of the South and Central Pacific areas came into existence under circumstances not unlike those applying in Australia and British New Guinea. In view of continuous reorganization and regrouping of graves registration details acting from time to time in support of amphibious task forces that spearheaded the advance into the western Pacific, and with only an occasional reinforcement of regularly constituted graves registration service com-

<sup>3</sup> Rad, NR:WX 80523, WARCOS to GHQ, AFPAC, 3 Nov 45.

<sup>4</sup> Cf Steere, *GR in WW II*, p. 33.

panies from the Zone of Interior, there was a tendency to regard this service as a provisional affair in a constant state of change.

The very nature of amphibious warfare further differentiated graves registration in the Pacific, making for a wide distribution of burial places that did not prevail in the tremendous land combats of continental Europe, where the co-ordinated efforts of collecting point systems attained remarkable efficiency in the removal of battlefield fatalities to centrally located Army cemeteries. A different course to the same end was taken in the Pacific; graves registration details of the garrison commands that followed in close support of amphibious assault teams not only completed the concentration of remains in single island cemeteries but participated with the Navy under terms of Joint Chief of Staff Memorandum No. 12, 17 February 1945, in the evacuation of island cemeteries that became isolated with shifts in the direction of attack.<sup>5</sup>

The magnitude of concentration activities as a specialized phase of graves registration in the Pacific Ocean areas was graphically described in a report of 11 October 1945 from the Commander-in-Chief, AFPAC, to The Quartermaster General. Initiated during 1943 in the Buna-Gona area of British New Guinea, the concentration program attained large proportions within a month following V-J Day. The remains of all cemeteries in British New Guinea, excepting the one at Port Moresby, were then exhumed and reinterred at Finschhafen. Those in Dutch New Guinea were in process of concentration to the same point, with somewhat more than half this phase of the program brought to completion. All cemeteries in the Netherlands East Indies were under orders to remove their dead to Finschhafen. Remains at Port Moresby were scheduled for shipment to Australia, where remains in the temporary cemeteries of the continental system founded in 1942 had been concentrated either at Rookwood in New South Wales, or at Ipswich near Brisbane, Queensland. The Cape Gloucester cemetery in New Britain had been closed upon completion of the recovery and reinterment of all isolated remains from known burial places. A similar situation existed in the Admiralty Islands, while the remains of all temporary cemeteries in the Northern Solomons had been concentrated in New Georgia Cemetery No. 1 preparatory to shipment to Finschhafen. Finally, the report stated that of the 52 listed cemeteries in the Philippines, 26 had been closed to burial and that 3—Manila No. 1, Manila No. 2, and Santa Barbara No. 1—had been designated as

<sup>5</sup> For detailed discussion of JSC Policy Memorandum No. 12, *Disinterment and Reinterment of Bodies Outside the Continental Limits of the United States*, see Steere, *GR in World War II*, p. 191 ff. (QMC Historical Studies No. 21, 1951.)

concentration points for Luzon, with Leyte No. 1, near Tacloban, serving for all temporary cemeteries in the southern islands of the Philippine Archipelago.<sup>6</sup>

Removal of the dead from remote islands and hidden places in the vast New Guinea jungle to large cemetery locations accessible to water transportation furthered the sort of program contemplated in the War Department plan for establishing Quartermaster Graves Registration Service commands in rearward regions of theater establishments expanding over large land masses. GHQ, AFPAC, took measures immediately after the end of hostilities to provide an administrative apparatus for supervision of graves registration activities that, although lacking the degree of centralization sought in Europe through transformation of the wartime graves registration service into a theater service command, was intended to serve the same purpose under conditions peculiar to the Pacific. Published 17 days after the capitulation of Japan,<sup>7</sup> AFPAC Regulations 30-30, 1 September 1945, charged the Commanding Generals, AFMIDPAC and AFWESPAC, with responsibility for the establishment and operation of a graves registration service within the areas of their responsibility. Finally, a GHQ order issued on 8 October to the Commanding Generals, Sixth Army, Eighth Army, XXIV Corps, and AFMIDPAC, required that "all Reports of Interment, Reinterment, establishment of cemeteries and Allied reports will be processed through the Central Graves Registration Records, Office of the Chief Quartermaster, Headquarters, United States Army Forces, Western Pacific."<sup>8</sup>

Continuation of the concentration of cemeteries, together with such organizational adjustments as were necessary to accelerate the program, only intensified an attitude that looked upon the problem of creating an AGRS area command in the Pacific as merely another adaptation to changing circumstances. At any rate, nobody at Manila or Tokyo professed any of the concern manifested at Paris and Frankfurt over delay either in the adoption of final policy de-

<sup>6</sup> Rpt, CINCAFPAC to CG, ASF (Attn: TQMG), 11 Oct 45, 1st Ind to Ltr, OQMG, ASF, File No. SPQYG 319.1, 25 Jul 45, sub: Burial Information. While not mentioned in this report, remains at the Army, Navy, Marine Cemetery, Guadalcanal, remained undisturbed until exhumed in November 1947 for shipment to Hawaii or repatriation from that point. Cf History AGRS-PAZ, 1946-1949, Vol. I, pp. 141-44.

<sup>7</sup> The Imperial Japanese Government broadcast on 14 Aug 45 its decision to accept Allied terms of surrender. Articles of capitulation were signed aboard the U. S. S. *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay on 2 Sep 45 (V-J Day).

<sup>8</sup> Ltr, AG 293 (8 Oct 45) QMC, Col C. Z. Shugart, Asst AG, to CG, Sixth Army, *et al.*, 8 Oct 45, sub: GR Records.

terminations or in the issuance of a War Department directive authorizing the establishment of such a command.<sup>9</sup>

In consequence of the ultimate decision against consolidation of the occupation forces in Europe under a single command, the tentative directive of 26 October was revised to the extent of including a seventh AGRS zone command for the Mediterranean theater area. Issued on 29 December 1945, as War Department General Order No. 125, the amended directive in no way altered provisions already made for the Pacific. The recommendations offered by General Campbell, Chief Quartermaster, AFPAC, thus applied to both directives. In keeping with the basic differences that characterized continental and oceanic graves registration practices, his views differed considerably from those held in Europe and indicated trends destined to direct along distinctive lines the whole course of AGRS history in the Pacific.

Briefly, General Campbell held that the existing military organization, the widely scattered distribution of land masses in the Pacific, and the difficulties of intervening water transportation urged the expediency of establishing three separate zone commands.<sup>10</sup> One, he recommended, should embrace the Central and South Pacific and function directly under the Commanding General, AFMIDPAC; a second, operating directly under the Commanding General, AFWESPAC, would be identified with the Southwest Pacific Area. A third zone would include Japan and Korea and become a responsibility of the Commanding General, Occupation Forces. Then, while conceding the desirability of direct correspondence between the War Department and each designated zone commander on all matters of administration, co-ordination, operations, and policy, he advised against the duplication of administrative, supply, and transport services.<sup>11</sup>

General Campbell's objection to any duplication of administrative and logistical services was predicated largely on the fact that both AFMIDPAC and AFWESPAC were logistical commands, having been established during July 1945 for the express purpose of supporting an invasion of Japan. Headquarters, U. S. Army Forces in Pacific Ocean Areas (HUSAFPOA), the predecessor command to AFMIDPAC, had served as the logistical agent of the Commander in Chief, Pacific Ocean Areas (CINCPOA); AFWESPAC took over the functions previously performed in the Southwest Pacific Area by

<sup>9</sup> See Ch. V, pp. 122-26, for correspondence between General Littlejohn, CQM, ETO, and Quartermaster General Gregory in reference to War Department policy determining establishment of AGRS overseas commands.

<sup>10</sup> Rad. QMA WFC/ADY mc, CINCAFPAC to WARCOS (for G-4), 11 Nov 45.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

U. S. Army Services of Supply (USASOS), absorbing its personnel and discharging its responsibilities. Actually, both were old establishments with new names.

Here, it would seem, is another case of insistence by policy makers that elements of the postwar AGRS must be integrated within existing military establishments, though all these establishments except those engaged in occupational missions had lost their reason for existence and were passing into disuse. Reorganization of the supply services involved in the activation of AFMIDPAC and AFWESPAC had been made in preparation for an assault that was never delivered. Like the services of supply in Europe after the collapse of Nazi Germany, they were destined to wither away through disuse. The problem, therefore, was not one of avoiding duplication but rather of assigning a certain portion of the service facilities to a new organization pursuing a new mission. Nevertheless, the concept of huge logistical commands that sustained the spearheads of amphibious attack and at the same time exercised command jurisdiction over vast ocean stretches, had its effect on postwar graves registration in the Pacific. With two notable exceptions, this function never was completely divorced from Quartermaster control.<sup>12</sup> Then there was the personal equation: General MacArthur was a zealous guardian of his prerogatives as a theater commander.

#### **Organization and Developments Under AGRS-PATA**

The War Department policy of organizing two area and six separate zone commands, as announced in its message of 3 November, prevailed insofar as the Pacific Theater was concerned. In formal compliance with General Order 125, which prescribed an area command, General MacArthur delegated "responsibility and authority for the performance of graves registration functions in the Pacific . . . to the Commanding General, American Forces, Western Pacific," and instructed that officer to appoint an area graves registration officer, who would "maintain the central records office of all Graves Registration Records of the Pacific Theater in accordance with directions issued by this headquarters."<sup>13</sup> The Theater Commander further directed that "three Graves Registration Sectors corresponding to the present territorial command jurisdiction," namely, the MIDPAC, WESPAC, and JAP-KOR Sectors, be formed. Direct communication on technical matters was authorized

<sup>12</sup> Developments in two later AGRS commands (PHILRYCOM and MARBO) brought about a complete separation of graves registration operations from Quartermaster control.

<sup>13</sup> Ltr, AG 293 (27 Feb 46) QM, GHQ, AFPAC to CGs, Eighth Army, AFMIDPAC, AFWESPAC, 27 Feb 46, sub: Area and Sector Graves Registration Officer.

between The Quartermaster General and graves registration officers of the area and sector commands.<sup>14</sup> In conformance with this delegation of authority, the Commanding General, AFWESPAC, designated Col. Lee M. Hester, QMC. as Commanding Officer, AGRS-Pacific Theater Area (AGRS-PATA), in March 1946, several weeks before the area command was formally activated.<sup>15</sup>

During the interval between issuance of the directive authorizing the establishment of AGRS-PATA and the activation of this command, the advancement of detailed planning in Washington for implementation of graves registration operations<sup>16</sup> required that AFPAC Headquarters formulate general policies which would govern the organizational expansion of AGRS-PATA and provide a basis for the development of operating procedures. AFPAC met this requirement by the issuance of a directive, dated 9 April 1946, to the three subordinate commands.<sup>17</sup>

After announcing as a basic doctrine that "policies controlling the activities of the Graves Registration Service within the theater will be exercised by the Commander in Chief through the Chief Quartermaster, General Headquarters, United States Army Forces, Pacific," the directive stated that "the area and sector graves registration officers will establish such organizations within their respective areas and/or sectors as may be necessary to accomplish their mission, consistent with authorized and available personnel."<sup>18</sup>

To this end, the Commanding Generals, Eighth Army, WESPAC, and MIDPAC were instructed to "make available to the Graves Registration Officers of their respective commands such personnel as may be required." The latter officers, in turn, received the following instructions:

"The Area Graves Registration Officer will maintain the central records office of all Graves Registration Records in the Pacific Theater Area and will exercise technical control over the graves registration activities of the sector. The Sector Graves Registration Officer will submit to the Area Graves Registration Officer such records and reports as he may require for the proper and efficient operation of this service.

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> History of AGRS-PATA and AGRS-FEZ, Feb 46 to Oct 47, p. 5. Hereinafter cited as Hist, AGRS-PATA.

<sup>16</sup> A summary of planning in OQMG was transmitted in a letter, TQMG to CINC, AFPAC, 11 Mar 46, sub: Repatriation Organization and Operations.

<sup>17</sup> Ltr, GHQ, AFPAC to CG, AFWESPAC, *et al.*, 9 Apr 46, sub: Plan of Operation, Graves Registration Service; KCRC-AGRS-AFPAC, 293.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

"Port offices will be established if and when necessary to operate graves registration supply points and to receive supplies and ship remains to the United States as called for by the Quartermaster General when repatriation operations are initiated."<sup>19</sup>

It is interesting to observe that the directive embodied certain measures taken during the postwar period to insure the continuity of graves registration organization in the Pacific, notably those specified in the AFPAC communication, issued 8 October 1945, which authorized the Commanding General, AFWESPAC, to establish a central graves registration unit in the Office of the Chief Quartermaster.

AFWESPAC General Order No. 138, issued on 10 May 1946, formally established AGRS-PATA. It specified that "The Chief Quartermaster, AFWESPAC, will take the necessary action to effect the establishment of AGRS-PATA," that "American Graves Registration personnel required as a result of this action will be provided from authorized troop strength of the commands concerned," and that "Effective 4 May 1946, Headquarters, American Graves Registration Service Area Command, Pacific Theater, is assigned Special Troops, AFWESPAC, and is further assigned for duty with Chief Quartermaster, AFWESPAC."<sup>20</sup> General Order 138 also defined the mission of this command by stating that AGRS-PATA "will maintain existing cemeteries, provide searching operations, and supervise repatriation of war dead from areas under WESPAC, MIDPAC, and JAP-KOR Sectors."<sup>21</sup>

It was believed that the subdivision of AGRS-PATA into three subordinate sectors (WESPAC, MIDPAC, and JAP-KOR) would insure prompt action in handling details pertaining to the whole AGRS program. Under this plan, the Pacific Theater Graves Registration Offices would retain general supervision of the three sectors. In the interest of swift action, however, it was considered important that both MIDPAC and WESPAC Headquarters be authorized to deal directly with the Office of The Quartermaster General on routine matters.

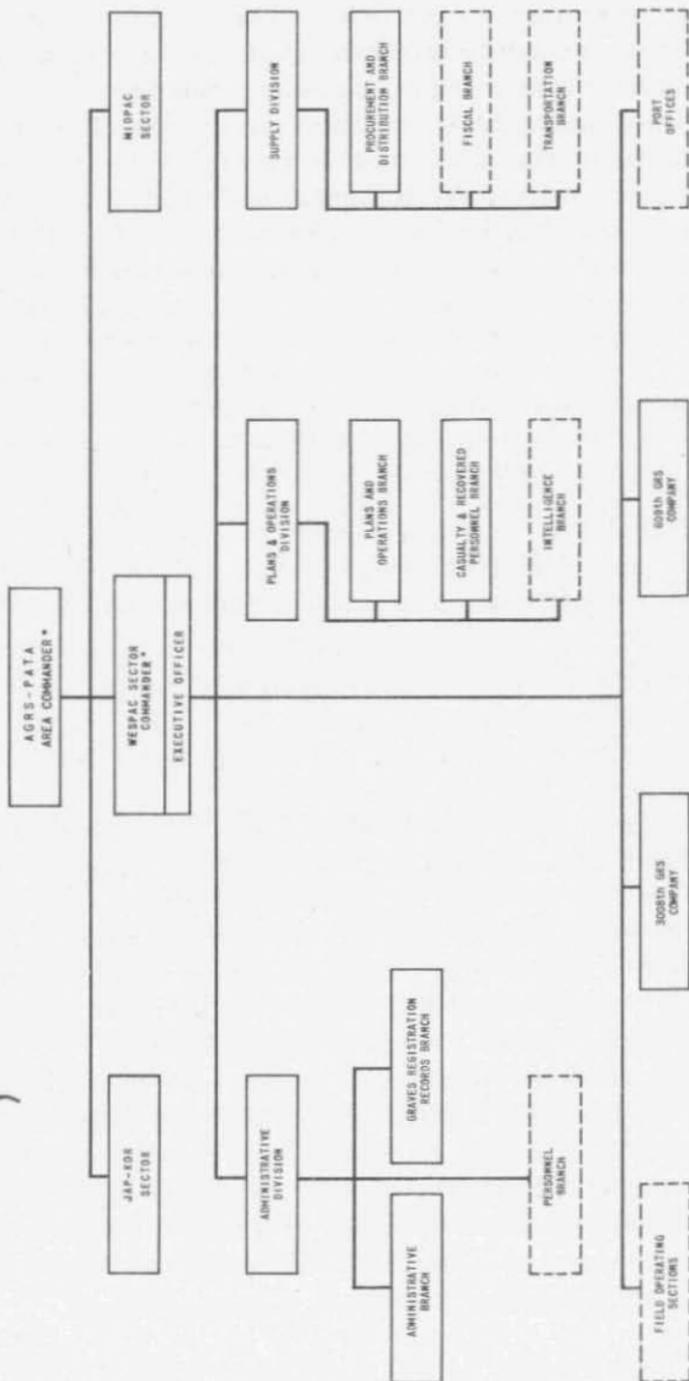
Owing partly to causes anticipated by General Campbell and partly to a perhaps unreasonably close identification of AGRS Sectors with the major subordinate commands, efforts looking toward development of a self-contained organization under the Commanding Officer, AGRS-PATA, fell short of expectations. The evidence of graves registration operators indicates that the Central Graves

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Hq AFWESPAC, GO No. 138, 10 May 46, pars. 5, 6, and 9.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 3.

ORGANIZATION CHART  
 AMERICAN GRAVES REGISTRATION SERVICE PACIFIC THEATRE



\* SEAL COMMANDER  
 --- OPERATIONAL UNITS TO BE ACTIVATED WHEN NECESSARY

8 MAY 1946

Registration Records Branch, OCQM, AFWESPAC, did not attain enough centralization and uniformity to facilitate the development of effective procedures in the field. The care and uniform maintenance of these records, which consisted generally of burial reports, casualty cases, locator cards, cemetery reference cards, and 293 (deceased personnel) files, constituted an important and necessary function of all graves registration commands. In the absence of an adequately centralized AGRS organization, the sectors tended to operate independently under chief quartermasters of the commands with which they were identified. It was observed that:

"The fact that the three Sectors corresponded identically with the three major commands made records difficult to collect. Consequently, the Sector operations somewhat resembled those of the independent commands to which they were so closely knit for logistic and administrative support. This situation was especially true for the entire life of AGRS-PATA. As a result, the small staff of the Commanding Officer, AGRS-PATA, concerned itself (average 10 officers for Hq AGRS and WESPAC Sector) during all of 1946 with a series of policy conferences and a few miscellaneous operations."<sup>22</sup>

Hasty demobilization further complicated the problems of graves registration officials, who already faced a severe personnel shortage, one which indeed continued during the whole period of AGRS-PATA. Finally, delays in establishing the sector commands introduced still more difficulties.

The Commanding General, AFMIDPAC, postponed for nearly a year the establishment of a graves registration organization as directed by the AFPAC letter of 27 February 1946. This long period of inactivity emanated from a general belief among AFMIDPAC officials that a separate graves registration organization was unnecessary. They thought that recruits for the repatriation program could be supplied from the personnel allotment of the Theater rather than from a special allotment, and that the Memorial Branch, OCQM, AFMIDPAC, could, with existing manpower and organization, adequately supervise graves registration activities. These officials felt, furthermore, that the 604th QM Graves Registration Company, which consisted of a headquarters organization and four platoons, could handle field operations satisfactorily with the help of additional technicians.<sup>23</sup>

In January 1947, Headquarters, AFMIDPAC at last published General Order No. 5, which established AGRS-MIDPAC.<sup>24</sup> A

<sup>22</sup> Hist, AGRS-PATA, p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, pp. 35-36.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

few weeks later, on 27 February 1947, the Quartermaster, Army Ground Forces, Pacific (AGFPAC),<sup>25</sup> was named Chief, AGRS-MIDPAC.

Another reason advanced in justification of inaction was the alleged overlapping of responsibility for operational matters between The Quartermaster General and the Commander, AFPAC—a situation which seemingly required a more precise interpretation of General Order No. 125. The foregoing thesis was considerably discredited when General Order No. 50, 29 May 1947, which superseded General Order No. 125, confirmed the establishment of the successor organization to MIDPAC. Furthermore, this failure to elucidate General Order No. 125 did not impede the subsequent organizational developments in the middle Pacific. Thus, it becomes quite obvious that no clarification was really necessary and that both the alleged ambiguity of General Order No. 125 and the overlapping of responsibility on operational matters may simply have served as convenient excuses for non-activity. At any rate, the formal establishment of a separate graves registration organization in MIDPAC came very late.

Graves Registration activities in the JAP-KOR Sector of AGRS-PATA came under the direct supervision of the Quartermaster, Eighth Army, who assumed the duties of Commanding Officer, AGRS-JAP-KOR. Problems in this Sector differed considerably from those in other Pacific areas. In the first place, war fatalities were limited to air casualties and deaths in prison camps, and it was necessary to establish and maintain only two cemeteries. In the second place, the Japanese had been enemies and were understandably reluctant to co-operate with AGRS officials and troops. Furthermore, the reduction of occupation troops in JAP-KOR during the months following V-J Day was accompanied by a corresponding decline in already small graves registration forces. By the spring of 1946, only three Graves Registration companies were operating in the Sector. Even this meager strength was scheduled for reduction to two platoons by 1 July 1946. Later developments forced an upward revision in estimates for needed manpower as higher authorities finally realized the scope and demands of the repatriation program.<sup>26</sup>

### Reorganization of AGRS Commands

Faulty graves registration organization in the Pacific was partly corrected by measures taken early in 1947 to unify the armed serv-

<sup>25</sup> Army Ground Forces, Pacific, replaced AFMIDPAC, effective 1 January 1947, and thereafter functioned independently of AFPAC, and of its successor, the Far East Command.

<sup>26</sup> Ltr, GHQ, AFPAC, 9 Apr 46, 1st Ind; KCRC-AGRS-AFPAC, 293.

ices under the Secretary of Defense and put them on a permanent peacetime footing. A rearrangement of command areas followed the creation of the Army Ground Forces, Pacific (AGFPAC), at Honolulu. With AGFPAC now separated from the former AFPAC Command, and with the simultaneous replacement of AFPAC by the new Far East Command (FEC), and four major subordinate commands: PHILRYCOM (Philippines and Ryukyu Islands), MARBO (Marianas-Bonins Islands), the Eighth Army (Japan), and the XXIV Corps (Korea), a corresponding AGRS reorganization became necessary. This was accomplished by first abolishing AGRS-PATA and replacing it by two zones—the Far East Zone (AGRS-FEZ) and the Pacific Zone (AGRS-PAZ) and by then formally establishing three subordinate sectors under AGRS-FEZ:<sup>27</sup>

- (a) PHILRYCOM Sector. (Corresponding to the territorial command jurisdiction of CG, PHILRYCOM plus Palau Island Group and New Guinea)
- (b) MARBO Sector. . . . . (Corresponding to the territorial command jurisdiction of CG, Marianas-Bonins plus Volcano Group)
- (c) JAP-KOR Sector. . . . . (Corresponding to the territorial command jurisdiction of CG, Eighth Army and CG, XXIV Corps)

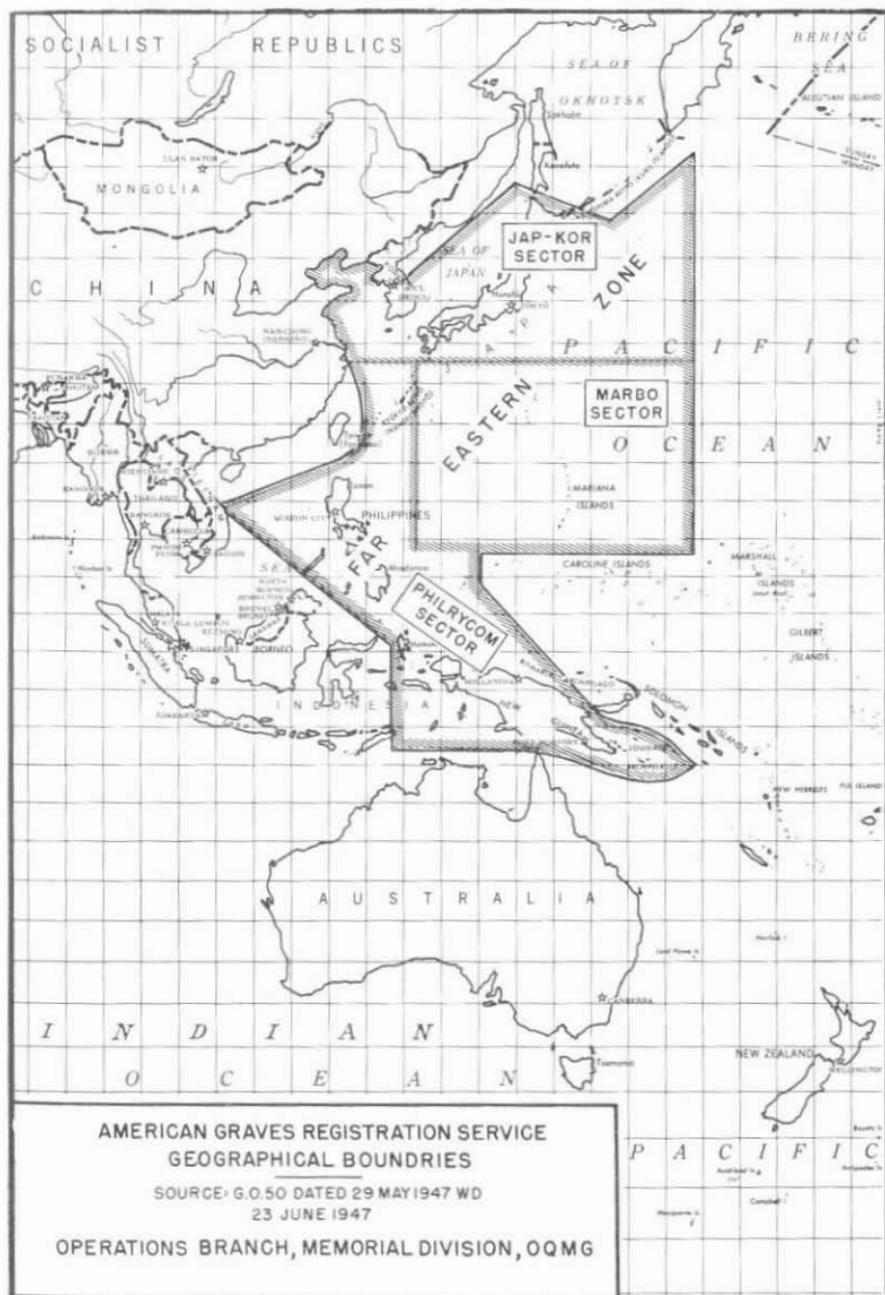
These moves complied with decisions made at the grave registration conference held at Tokyo early in February, which redesignated the areas of responsibility for the Pacific Commands. They also marked a shift from a single, overall AGRS area organization to smaller, more compact zonal establishments, theoretically more capable of carrying out the repatriation program.

#### **Organization and Developments Under AGRS-FEZ**

The Far East Zone bore responsibility for three specific activities—maintenance of temporary World War II cemeteries, provision for searching operations, and supervision of repatriation activities in its three sectors. As was the case in the establishment of AGRS-PATA, direct communication on technical matters was authorized between zone and separate sector commands and the OQMG. In the in-

<sup>27</sup> (1) Ltr, AG 293 (16 Jan 47) QMM, 24 Jan 47 to CG, Eighth Army, *et al.*, sub: Area and Sector GR Officers. (2) Hist, AGRS-PATA, Incl. 8. (3) PHILRYCOM GO 34, 22 Mar 47, sub: Establishment of AGRS-FEZ.

terest of economy of transportation, the Commanding Officer, AGRS-FEZ, had authority to move graves registration personnel within the Far East Command to accomplish a particular mission.<sup>28</sup>



<sup>28</sup> PHILRYCOM GO 34, 22 Mar 47.

*PHILRYCOM Sector*

The Commanding General, PHILRYCOM, inherited those responsibilities and powers regarding graves registration matters originally assigned the Commanding General, AFWESPAC, including current death activities. The zone and sector graves registration officers were to perform these duties in accordance with GO No. 125 and AFPAC Regulations 30-30, 1 September 1945, as amplified by subsequent and current instructions.<sup>29</sup> This assignment of overall supervision to PHILRYCOM was quite logical, since this command carried by far the main burden of the graves registration task in the Far East Zone. In fact, over two-thirds of the casualties in the Zone occurred within the limits of PHILRYCOM. Hence, its importance can hardly be overstressed.

On 12 March 1947, Col. James A. Murphey, who had succeeded Colonel Hester as Commanding Officer, AGRS-PATA, arrived at Manila and took charge of AGRS-FEZ. Immediately following his arrival, both AGRS Headquarters for the Far East Zone and for the PHILRYCOM Sector (also at Manila) were reorganized.<sup>30</sup> The most urgent task facing both zone and sector officials involved the completion of plans to obtain sufficient manpower, supplies, and transportation. Only 20 officers, most of whom eagerly awaited redeployment to the United States in the near future, were available to the two headquarters.<sup>31</sup> The shortage of manpower quickly forced a combining of Zone and Sector duties within the already understaffed sections of Sector Headquarters. By strengthening PHILRYCOM Sector to the maximum, graves registration officials hoped that the zone aspects of the program would be minimized in line with the meager effort which the available officers and men were able to provide. PHILRYCOM was considered so important that the Commanding Officer, AGRS-FEZ (Col. Murphey) assumed its command as an additional duty.<sup>32</sup> As elsewhere in the Pacific, it was hampered by uncertainty concerning availability of officers, men, and supplies and made only slow progress in carrying out the four major phases of the repatriation mission.

Shortly after Colonel Murphey took charge in Manila, he began to employ local civilians in an attempt to meet the huge demands of the AGRS program.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, by 1 October 1947, a peak of some 950 civilians was reached. This high figure corresponded quite closely with the zenith of AGRS activities in the Zone.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> For detailed organization of each, see Hist, AGRS-PATA, Incl. 10 and Incl. 11.

<sup>31</sup> Hist, AGRS-PATA, p. 10.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, Incl. 13.

*MARBO Sector*

In the MARBO area of AGRS-FEZ, the first few months of 1947 in that Sector were spent mostly in determining needs for manpower, supplies, and equipment. As in other Pacific regions, the shortage of trained officers and men constituted a perplexing problem. Throughout 1946, administrative duties had been carried out by only one officer and two enlisted men, who worked under the Western Pacific Base Command, a subordinate command under AF-MIDPAC and the immediate predecessor of MARBO. The rapid expansion of AGRS activities early in 1947 required additional manpower, and requests were submitted for more officers, enlisted men, and civilians.<sup>35</sup> At this time, tentative authorized strength at Sector Headquarters was 13 officers, 57 civilians, and no enlisted men.

Shortly thereafter, responsibility and authority for AGRS operations and current death activities shifted from the MARBO Quartermaster to the Sector Commander, by authority of MARBO Command General Order 29, 17 March 1947, which officially established AGRS-MARBO as a Special Staff Section of the MARBO Command. Henceforth, the Graves Registration Service controlled repatriation operations and had responsibility to the Commanding General, MARBO, for their successful execution.<sup>36</sup>

Although a few officers soon were assigned to Sector Headquarters, most of them stayed only long enough to complete their separation from the service. The first civil service employees, requested in February 1947, did not arrive until late July. In the long interim, an undermanned staff carried out AGRS operations as well as they could.<sup>37</sup>

By autumn of 1947, plans called for a strength of 31 officers and 71 enlisted men for AGRS-MARBO; no definite allotment was made for civilian employees, who then numbered 315. By the end of February 1948, the strength of the AGRS organization had increased rapidly to a total of 1,191 persons, including 77 officers, 65 enlisted men, and 1,049 civilians. The Sector continued to perform its duties without significant organizational change during the remainder of its existence.

*JAP-KOR Sector*

The Graves Registration organization in the JAP-KOR Sector maintained direct contact with Far East Zone headquarters, also located in Tokyo, through technical channels. This arrangement

<sup>35</sup> Hist, AGRS-MARBO Sector, FEZ, I, pp. 20-21.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

differed somewhat from that prevailing in the other two sectors of the Zone. In both PHILRYCOM and MARBO, it will be recalled, the Graves Registration Service operated under the Commanding General, but retained an entity apart from command duties. The distinctive arrangement in JAP-KOR simply followed a common pattern in the Far East Zone, wherein each sector organization was shaped to fit particular conditions. The situation in Japan and Korea differed from that found elsewhere, since the major mission comprised recovery of plane crash victims and deceased prisoners of war. The Eighth Army Quartermaster controlled AGRS affairs, just as had been the case when JAP-KOR formed a subordinate Sector under AGRS-PATA. In short, the Graves Registration Service in JAP-KOR never achieved independence as a separately functioning unit under the Commanding General of the Sector.

### *Manpower Problems*

During the summer and autumn of 1947, meanwhile, the problem of personnel requirements engaged the attention of high graves registration officials. In conformance with instructions from Far East Command Headquarters, a representative of AGRS-FEZ proceeded to Tokyo during June 1947 for a conference concerning manpower needs. Based upon information received in Washington by Colonel Murphey before his assignment as Commanding Officer, AGRS-FEZ, an estimate of only 139 officers for AGRS-FEZ had been submitted. Unfortunately, the staffs of FEZ and PHILRYCOM had grossly underrated the magnitude of the task at hand and were unable at the Tokyo conference to justify even this modest figure.<sup>38</sup> Consequently, the conference allotted only 79 officers. While this unhappy series of events unfolded, Colonel Murphey was attending a June graves registration conference in Washington and became much impressed with the urgency of the graves registration situation in the Far East Zone. The former estimates now seemed to him hopelessly inadequate to meet the proposed heavy schedules in the four phases of the repatriation program. When he returned to Manila, new appraisals were made and submitted to the General Staff, PHILRYCOM, for consideration. These revised estimates called for 157 officers and resulted in a manpower study by two disinterested officers from Headquarters, PHILRYCOM. In addition to increasing personnel authorizations significantly, the completion of this study probably marked the beginning of high-level understanding regarding the scope and importance of AGRS problems in the Far East Zone.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Hist, AGRS-PATA, p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

The following table, dated 22 September 1947 and submitted after the manpower study, indicated a requirement of 39 officers, 14 enlisted men, and 41 civilians for Zone and PHILRYCOM Sector Headquarters. It also called for increased personnel in field operations, i. e., Search and Recovery, Concentration, Identification, and Cemetery Maintenance, with indicated totals of 107 officers, 1,580 enlisted men, and 984 civilians. Logistical support, including the Remains Depot (adjacent to mausoleum), the General Base Depot and the Transportation Section, would require 11 officers, 135 enlisted men, and 224 civilians.<sup>40</sup> The table itself follows:<sup>41</sup>

TABLE 11—Manpower Requirements in the Pacific

	OFF	WO	Cont EM*	PS EM †	Civ	Total
Zone Headquarters	12	1	5		5	23
PHILRYCOM Sector HQ	27	1	9		36	73
Search and Recovery	85		450	824	600	1,959
Concentration	10		70	200	24	304
Identification	4		6			10
Cemetery Maintenance	8	1	30		360	399
Remains Depot	3		28	46	15	92
Base Depot	6	1	12		124	143
Transportation Section	2		10	39	85	136
Totals	157	4	620	1,109	1,249	3,139

\* Continental (U. S.) Enlisted Men.

† Philippine Scout Enlisted Men.

Those engaged in the study strongly urged the allotment of the foregoing personnel to the Far East Zone by 1 January 1948. To meet the total of 3,139 employees indicated in the table would necessitate an increase of 1,804 persons, covering all phases and categories, and a continuance of this level until at least the end of 1948.<sup>42</sup>

During the ensuing months, both military and civilian strength increased noticeably. By 31 January 1948, the number of persons engaged in AGRS operations in the Far East Zone and PHILRYCOM Headquarters reached 3,669, a figure which actually exceeded the total recommended in the manpower survey by 530 and which coincided with the peak graves registration workload in the Far East

<sup>40</sup> (1) The Remains Depot, where remains were held after processing for identification and pending final repatriation or overseas burial, thus served as an intermediate storage point between the recovery units and the port of shipment. (2) The Base Depot functioned as a general depot to supply AGRS-FEZ with necessary articles and equipment. Its operation closely paralleled those of a general supply depot in the United States. (3) The Transportation Section provided vehicle transportation for the operations of FEZ Headquarters and the PHILRYCOM Sector.

<sup>41</sup> Hist, AGRS-PATA, Incl. 15.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

Zone. As activities waned shortly afterwards, a reduction of civilian employees followed and a second manpower survey, made in February 1948, brought about a corresponding decline in military strength, beginning in April.<sup>43</sup>

*Proposed Transfer of AGRS Zonal Headquarters*

While manpower problems were engaging the attention of the Far East Command, the proposed transfer of Headquarters, AGRS-FEZ, from Manila to Tokyo also required consideration. Maj. Gen. George F. Moore, Commanding General, PHILRYCOM, heartily favored the proposal. In September 1947, he strongly expressed his belief that the physical location of Hq, AGRS-FEZ at Manila in a major subordinate command (PHILRYCOM), had definitely minimized the importance of graves registration activities and had probably hampered staff planning and co-ordination of operations. One of the chief advantages which should result from moving AGRS Headquarters to Tokyo, he pointed out, would be the direct, daily contacts of graves registration officials with various General and Staff Sections of GHQ, Far East Command. Furthermore, General Moore insisted that separation of Zone and Sector Headquarters would create those sharper lines of demarkation which should exist between actual operations and staff planning on a supervisory level. Finally, he recommended that "the Zone Headquarters be amalgamated into the Far East Command organization on the level of a 'Special Staff Agency,' with the Commanding Officer, AGRS-FEZ, representing the Commander in Chief on all matters pertaining to graves registration activities occurring within the Far East Command."<sup>44</sup>

It would appear that General Moore was simply attempting to shift command responsibility for graves registration activities in the Far East Zone to GHQ, Far East Command, thus reversing General MacArthur's earlier action in assigning this burden to the Commanding General, AFWESPAC, and later to the Commanding General, PHILRYCOM, in conformance with the policy then in effect of delegating all field operations to the most appropriate subordinate commander. In any case, General Moore's views soon evoked pointed comments from Brig. Gen. A. D. Hopping, former Graves Registration Officer, AGRS-PATA, who had become Chief Quartermaster, Far East Command, Tokyo. General Hopping acknowledged a certain merit in the proposed transfer but believed that this

<sup>43</sup> Hist, AGRS-FEZ, Pt. 3, Incl. 11.

<sup>44</sup> Ltr, Moore, CG, PHILRYCOM to CINCFE, 8 Sep 47, G/S Corres; KCRC-AGRS-Far East, 293.

move should have been made at a much earlier date. He doubted its wisdom at that time because of the virtual impossibility of transferring the central records office, (which served jointly both the Far East Zone and PHILRYCOM), from Manila to Tokyo. He also feared that separation of Zone Headquarters from the central records office might impair efficient operations. Since the PHILRYCOM Sector now carried most of the graves registration burden, General Hopping thought that a move to Tokyo at that late date was hardly advisable.<sup>45</sup> He therefore prepared a staff study advising against the proposed transfer. Concurrences by G-1, G-3, and G-4, Far East Command, with his recommendation resulted in abandonment of the project.

#### *AGRS as Special Staff Section*

Although General Moore's suggestion was rejected insofar as transfer of headquarters was concerned, his proposal for placing AGRS on a special staff level received more favorable consideration. In fact, as the repatriation program progressed, the desirability of such a move became more apparent. The increase in AGRS activity during 1947 had made the graves registration organization too large and complex to be controlled adequately by the parent Quartermaster service. A positive separation of the two services was highly desirable.<sup>46</sup> Accordingly, on 15 November 1947, the American Graves Registration Service, Far East Zone, became a Special Staff Section, Hq, PHILRYCOM, with no changes in duties, functions, and responsibilities. Colonel Murphey became Graves Registration Officer, Far East Zone, and the four troop units—the 557th QM Service Company, the 609th and 583rd Graves Registration Companies, and the 8122nd Service Detachment—then assigned to the Quartermaster and detailed for duty with the Graves Registration Service, were assigned directly to AGRS.<sup>47</sup>

This move placed the graves registration organization in PHILRYCOM on an independent basis, divorced from Quartermaster control. It has been noted that a similar separation of AGRS from Quartermaster supervision occurred in MARBO. In the JAPKOR Sector, it will be recalled, the graves registration organization never achieved such independence.<sup>48</sup> The Far East Zone continued under this organizational arrangement without significant change during the few remaining months of its existence, which ended in April 1948.

<sup>45</sup> Ltr, Hopping to Mem Div, OQMG, 24 Sep 47; KCRC-AGRS-Far East, 293.

<sup>46</sup> Hist, AGRS-PATA, p. 12.

<sup>47</sup> (1) Hist, AGRS-FEZ, I, p. 12. (2) PHILRYCOM GO No. 122, 14 Nov 47.

<sup>48</sup> Interv with Maj Robert G. Lay, Registration Br, Mem Div, OQMG, and John M. Fisher, Overseas Sec, Operations Br, Mem Div, OQMG, Oct 54.

### Organization of AGRS-Pacific Zone

AGRS-Pacific Zone (PAZ) first appeared briefly as the MIDPAC Sector, a subordinate command of AGRS-PATA. Then it was integrated as the American Graves Registration Service, Pacific Zone (AGRS-PAZ), into AGFPAC, a postwar tactical command mentioned previously in the discussion of the reorganization of command areas at the beginning of 1947. The formal establishment of AGRS-PAZ (and AGRS-FEZ as well) was officially confirmed by War Department General Order No. 50, 29 May 1947. Under this order, AGRS-PAZ, operating under the control of the Commanding General, AGFPAC, comprised areas formerly assigned to Hq, AFMIDPAC, and adjacent regions not otherwise assigned, including Australia but not the Marianas, Bonins, Volcano Islands, and the Palaus.<sup>49</sup> The Commanding General, AGFPAC, made AGRS-PAZ a subsection in the Office of the AGFPAC Quartermaster, who also served as Chief, AGRS-PAZ.<sup>50</sup>

The responsibilities and duties of the Chief, AGRS-PAZ, were not officially defined until 13 October 1947, when a Letter of Instructions finally was published, ordering him to operate his zone in accordance with directives issued by the Commanding General, AGFPAC, and higher headquarters, and to administer the repatriation program in compliance with Public Law 383.<sup>51</sup> He also bore accountability for the formulation of plans and policies needed in the proper accomplishment of the overall mission and held supervisory power over the activities of the entire Zone in carrying out its task.<sup>52</sup> The long delay in assigning responsibilities and duties to the Chief, AGRS-PAZ, resulted largely from inability of AGFPAC planners to foresee or appreciate the importance and vast scope of the repatriation program in the Pacific. The organizational structure of AGRS-PAZ was based on Technical Manual 10-281, published by the Memorial Division, OQMG. This manual also served as a guide in planning the activities of the various branches and divisions, except for minor changes made to conform with local conditions. In addition, Headquarters, AGRS-PAZ, published an Organizational Manual which circulated among the employees for purposes of orientation. This manual contained some modifications in the general arrangement proposed in TM 10-281, and indicated an organization composed of: (1) Headquarters, including a Zone Commander, Deputy Zone Commander, Executive Officer, Administrative Officer, and an Adjutant, and (2) the following major divisions:

<sup>49</sup> WD GO No. 50, 29 May 47.

<sup>50</sup> Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, p. 37.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Ltr, Hq AGFPAC to Chief, AGRS-PAZ, 13 Oct 47.

Administrative, Repatriation and Records, Plans and Operations, and Supply.

The Organizational Manual proved ineffective, since its information concerned AGRS-PAZ exclusively and failed to include an overall flexible arrangement which could encompass a constantly changing organization without frequent revision. Since TM 10-281 and Standard Army Organization Charts sufficed for informational purposes, the Organizational Manual soon was discontinued.<sup>53</sup>

The Pacific Zone busily performed its duties during the remainder of 1947 and into early 1948 with special emphasis upon concentration and search and recovery activities. With few organizational alterations, it continued to operate until the termination of the repatriation program, thus considerably outlasting its sister Zone, AGRS-FEZ. The zonal organization chart of August 1948 showed six divisions: Supply, Administrative, Repatriation Records, Hawaiian Distribution Center, U. S. Army Mausoleum (Schofield Barracks), and the 604th GR Company. Several months later, a chart dated 1 July 1949 showed the addition of a Cemeterial Division.

### **Organizational Developments on the Asiatic Mainland**

During the war, the 106th QM Graves Registration Platoon, operating under the United States Forces, China Theater (USF-CT), conducted graves registration activities. This platoon had a strength of only 2 officers and 11 enlisted men. Shortly after V-J Day, the 100th QM Graves Registration Platoon, composed of 1 officer and 6 enlisted men, was added to the graves registration forces.<sup>54</sup> On 31 December 1945, both platoons were inactivated and the American Graves Registration Service, China Zone (AGRS-CZ), was established under authority of GO No. 297, USF-CT, and in accordance with WAGO 125, 29 December 1945. Members of the former 100th and 106th QM Graves Registration Platoons comprised the new organization.

The mission of AGRS-CZ covered planning and directing of all activities relating to search and recovery of missing persons, current deaths, and repatriation of World War II dead. Capt. William J. Phillips, QMC, served as the first commanding officer and was soon succeeded by Maj. Rodney S. Wirtz, QMC. On 13 April 1946, Col. Charles F. Kearney, former Quartermaster, Services of Supply, China Theater, became Chief, AGRS-CZ, and held this post until the autumn of 1947, when graves registration activity in China was waning rapidly.

<sup>53</sup> Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, p. 38.

<sup>54</sup> AG 322, GR Policies; KCRC-AGRS-China, sub: AGRS-China Zone.

AGRS-CZ had to struggle at the beginning for its very existence. Because of heavy military and civilian losses through redeployment, it had only a handful of experienced men.<sup>55</sup> Relief did not come until the spring of 1946. On 22 April, AGRS-CZ absorbed the former China Theater Search Detachment, a unit which had hitherto operated under the Commanding General, China Theater, independently of AGRS-CZ. The two graves registration organizations, however, had maintained close liaison. Sometimes their missions overlapped, posing a vexing problem of duplicated effort, which contributed to the decision to combine them. Then, in May, AGRS-CZ gained control of the China Theater Adjutant General Casualty Report Section. With the addition of these units, the China Zone was now much better able to meet the sharp increase in its duties.<sup>56</sup>

The United States Forces, China Theater (USFCT), was dissolved at the end of April 1946, and AGRS-CZ passed to the control of the China Service Command, which within four months was also discontinued. On 1 September, pursuant to War Department Circular 265, AGRS-CZ came under the direction of The Quartermaster General, with the additional responsibility of administering all Army units stationed in Shanghai.<sup>57</sup> Territorial limits remained the same as those of the former China Theater.

During the remainder of 1946, the workload constantly increased. Operations in the Zone reached a peak early in 1947 when nearly 400 persons, both military and civilian, worked for the organization. At that time Colonel Kearney exercised control over these major divisions: Cemeterial, Search and Recovery, Supply, Operational Control, Engineer, and Fiscal.

In the spring of 1947, graves registration operations declined sharply, and AGRS-CZ suffered a drastic reduction in strength, losing the majority of its staff, both military and civilian. Its remaining mission consisted only of individual search and recovery and the proper identification of the dead. Accordingly, plans were initiated late in 1947 for closing out the China Zone and transferring responsibility for its residual tasks to the Commander in Chief, Far East Command. These plans became operative on 1 March 1948, when AGRS-CZ terminated its activities after an existence of two years and two months.<sup>58</sup>

In the India-Burma Theater, portions of the 49th Graves Registration Company, under the supervision of the Theater Quarter-

<sup>55</sup> Hist, AGRS-China Zone, p. 4.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

master, performed necessary wartime duties relating to the care of the dead. Although plans were made soon after V-J Day for closing the Theater on 31 May 1946, the graves registration task was only partially completed when that date arrived.

In anticipation of this situation, the War Department had already authorized the establishment of an AGRS Service Command by the Commanding General, United States Forces, India-Burma Theater (USF-IBT). Accordingly, GO No. 56, IBT, 6 February 1946, placed the theater graves registration service under the jurisdiction of the Theater Commander, with headquarters in New Delhi. Lt. Col. Edward F. Stanford-Blunden was designated Commanding Officer of the new organization.<sup>59</sup> Like graves registration commanders in other overseas areas, Col. Stanford-Blunden found the selection of his military and civilian staff a difficult problem, for both officers and enlisted men, like those elsewhere, held an option of remaining in the service or returning to the United States for discharge, with a large majority choosing the latter course.

Upon inactivation of the Theater, the Detachment, United States Army in India (DUSAI), was created to cope with residual activities. In this organization, the graves registration service functioned as a separate major but subordinate unit under the jurisdiction of DUSAI in residual matters and under the control of The Quartermaster General insofar as graves registration functions were concerned.<sup>60</sup>

On 1 June 1946, when the Theater was inactivated, the strength of AGRS stood at 46 officers, 1 warrant officer, 44 enlisted men assigned and 4 officers and 9 enlisted men attached. Skilled civilian employees, recruited locally, both British and Indian, numbered 184 and manual laborers totalled 36.<sup>61</sup>

The dissolution of DUSAI on 30 September 1946 marked the next significant organizational change. On the following day, the American Graves Registration Service, India-Burma Zone (AGRS-IBZ) was established by War Department GO No. 117, as an independent, self-contained organization, directly responsible to The Quartermaster General for accomplishing the graves registration program in all the former India-Burma Theater.<sup>62</sup>

The AGRS-IBZ functioned with an organization composed of the following key individuals: Commanding Officer, Executive Officer, Adjutant, Chaplain, Medical Officer, and Detachment Commander. It also included four major divisions—Administrative, Intelligence,

<sup>59</sup> Hist, AGRS-India-Burma Zone, Sec. II, Ch. I, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, Ch. IV, p. 17.

Operations, and Supply, each containing subordinate branches. With the discontinuance of DUSAI, the following additional sections were delegated to AGRS-IBZ: Adjutant, Fiscal, Judge Advocate General, Procurement, Engineer, and Supply and Disposals.<sup>63</sup>

After fulfilling the various activities relating to care of World War II dead and their final repatriation, the Zone began planning for transfer of residual responsibilities to the Far East Command. On 31 March 1948, AGRS-IBZ was inactivated, after completing a long and arduous mission, and its records were transferred to the custody of the PHILRYCOM Zone.

### Creation and Organization of AGRC-Far East Area

Late in 1947, when the date for inactivation of the graves registration organization in both the China and the India-Burma Zones was fast approaching and it became obvious that AGRS operations thereafter would be limited to individual searches of a sporadic rather than a sustained character, the Department of the Army faced two alternatives: first, the maintenance of search and recovery detachments in China and India-Burma; second, the assignment of responsibility to the Far East Command for completion of the graves registration task.<sup>64</sup>

The first alternative was discarded as wasteful of manpower, supplies, and equipment. The Memorial Division, OQMG, therefore initiated action which culminated in the dispatch of a Department of the Army letter, dated 8 December 1947, to the Commander in Chief, Far East, recommending that his command assume responsibility for residual operations in both the China and India-Burma Zones until all deceased were either recovered and evacuated or declared unrecoverable.<sup>65</sup> During subsequent exchanges of communications regarding the problem, the Far East Command promised to provide AGRS-FEZ with more technicians should it be made responsible for residual activities. Nevertheless, the Command finally requested in a radio of 12 March 1948 that it not be assigned this additional duty. Its attitude was predicated on existing and anticipated shortages of men, equipment, and supplies for search parties.

General Horkan, Chief, Memorial Division, considered these objections invalid. He cited the recent transfer of 15 officers and 13 enlisted men to the Far East Command from the two zones in question and recommended that the Far East Command assume

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17-21.

<sup>64</sup> (1) Hist, AGRS-FEZ, I, p. 36. (2) Memo, Gen Horkan, Chief, Mem Div, OQMG to Dir of Logistics, G/S, 16 Mar 48, sub: Reassignment of Oversea Responsibilities.

<sup>65</sup> Hist, AGRS-FEZ, Pt. 3, Incl. 16A.

control of residual AGRS activities in both the China and the India-Burma Zones on 1 April 1948. He also favored the creation of an enlarged AGRS Area Command to meet this new responsibility.<sup>66</sup> In accordance with General Horkan's recommendations and by authority of CINCFE Radio CS-59603, 1 April 1948, responsibility for residual operations in the China Zone was delegated to the Commanding General, Eighth Army.<sup>67</sup> At the same time, responsibility for these activities in the India-Burma Zone passed to PHILRYCOM.<sup>68</sup>

The increased burdens assumed by AGRS-FEZ were reflected in CINCFE Radio ZX 44355, 6 April 1948, which redesignated its three sectors as zones. In the same vein, PHILRYCOM General Order 32, published on 3 May 1948, authorized three actions. First, it formally established AGRS-PHILRYCOM as a Zone (AGRS-PRZ) and appointed Colonel Willard L. Smith as Commanding Officer, charging him with the performance of graves registration functions "within his assigned area in accordance with current directives of the Commander-in-Chief of the Far East, and in accordance with current or subsequent directives from PHILRYCOM Headquarters."<sup>69</sup> The territorial jurisdiction of AGRS-PRZ corresponded to that of PHILRYCOM, with the addition of the Palau Group, New Guinea, and the former India-Burma Zone. In the second place, General Order Order 32 transferred to AGRS-PRZ the four Quartermaster units assigned to AGRS-FEZ in November 1947. Finally, the PHILRYCOM Graves Registration Section, comprising the personnel of Headquarters, AGRS-FEZ, was designated as a Special Staff Section, PHILRYCOM Zone. Col. James A. Murphey, until then Commanding Officer of AGRS-FEZ, became Graves Registration Officer on the Special Staff of the Commanding General, PHILRYCOM.<sup>70</sup>

The establishment of the American Graves Registration Service Command, Far East Area (AGRC-FEA), under General Order No. 26, issued 16 April 1948, signaled the formation of larger AGRS area commands, a development which resulted largely from waning repatriation operations in China and India-Burma, where, in the spring of 1948, residual activities could easily be absorbed by AGRC-FEA. General Order No. 26 specified that AGRC-FEA, operating under the control of the Commander in Chief, Far East Command, included those regions formerly comprising the China

<sup>66</sup> Memo, Gen Horkan for Dir of Logistics, G/S, 16 Mar 48, sub: Reassignment of Oversea Responsibilities.

<sup>67</sup> Memo, GHQ, FEC for CG, Eighth Army, 31 Mar 48; KCRC-AGRS-China, 293.

<sup>68</sup> Hist, AGRS-FEZ, Pt. I, p. 39.

<sup>69</sup> Hist, AGRS-PZ, 1 Apr-30 Sep 48, p. 4.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

Theater, the India-Burma Theater, the Far East Command and "contiguous areas not otherwise assigned, less Australia, and plus the Marianas, Bonins, Volcano Islands, and the Palau Group."<sup>71</sup>

AGRC-FEA, with its three subordinate zone commands, operated until the close of the entire program, which occurred at the end of 1951. During this period, few changes took place within the organization. In the summer of 1948, AGRS-PHILRYCOM became AGRS-Philippine Command (AGRS-PHILCOM), since all graves registration operations in the Ryukyu Islands had ended. Still later, during 1950, all AGRS activities in the PHILCOM Zone were shifted to the Pacific Zone (AGRS-PAZ), thus terminating graves registration operations in the Philippine Islands.<sup>72</sup> No reorganization of any particular importance occurred in either the MARBO or JAP-KOR Zones during remaining AGRS activities.

### Conclusion

In retrospect, it appears that one of the most costly and consistent errors committed by high-level planners and policy makers in dealing with graves registration organization in Pacific areas and on the Asiatic mainland arose from a tendency to underestimate the magnitude and difficulty of the task involved in carrying out the repatriation program in all its phases. Too often, manpower estimates were inadequate, and lack of training in the highly technical aspects of the program caused delays and difficulties. Too rapid demobilization in the Pacific, as elsewhere, created severe shortages of trained officers and men and posed perplexing problems for graves registration planners. Then, too, the very nature of the task hindered efforts looking towards a fully staffed AGRS organization in the Pacific and on the Asian mainland. This factor affected similar endeavors in Europe and North Africa, but in the Pacific, the more primitive conditions, the tropical climate, and the remote mountain, jungle, and island terrain rendered even harder the task of organizing and carrying on graves registration activities.

In general, the peak of efficiency in Pacific graves registration operations was reached after the replacement of the AGRS-PATA organization by two zones—FEZ and PAZ. This fact would seem to justify General Campbell's contention that a smaller, less centralized setup was preferable to one, large centralized command. On the other hand, AGRS-PATA never actually constituted a highly centralized organization, largely owing to its constant

<sup>71</sup> WD GO No. 26, 16 Apr 48.

<sup>72</sup> Interv, OQMG Historian, with John M. Fisher, OQMG, 11 Oct 54.

deficiency of trained officers and men. Similarly, its major subordinate commands lacked fully satisfactory personnel. The shift from AGRS-PATA to two organizations—FEZ and PAZ—did not stem from recognized defects in the PATA structure but from changes in Pacific tactical commands. It is true that the major subordinate commands under AGRS-FEZ enjoyed a rather rapid buildup after their creation early in 1947, but this increased manpower and higher productivity may have resulted as much from a logical continuation of the progress which had begun almost imperceptibly under AGRS-PATA as from the creation of two AGRS commands. Since no positive evidence exists that “decentralization” to two commands accounted for the greater efficiency which occurred after their creation, no final conclusion can be reached.

In any case, after the decline in graves registration operations had begun, D/A General Order 26 restored an overall AGRS organization in the Pacific (AGRC-FEA) which continued to exist until the end of the program. At the same time, AGRS-PAZ continued to function separately until the conclusion of Pacific graves registration activities.



## CHAPTER XIII

# CONCENTRATION OPERATIONS IN THE PACIFIC AND ASIA

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### Introduction

During the bitter years from Pearl Harbor to the surrender of Japan in Tokyo Bay, over 80,000 American fighting men gave their lives in the Pacific and on the Asiatic mainland in order to overthrow the Japanese Empire. These fallen warriors rested in temporary cemeteries and in isolated graves throughout the vast area involved in this effort. The magnitude of the task of concentrating into a few major burial grounds those who had fallen was vividly illustrated by the list of cemeteries and burials maintained by Memorial Division, OQMG. This list, based on reports available in March 1946, showed a grand total of 65,487 U. S. burials, scattered through 201 cemeteries. Of this total, 61,656 rested in 133 Pacific area cemeteries, 2,801 in 59 burial points in the India-Burma Zone, and 1,030 in 9 cemeteries in the China Zone.

The largest concentrations of the dead were found, naturally, in those regions where the heaviest fighting had occurred. Strategic considerations had determined the sites of the greatest battles of the Pacific war. After immobilizing the American fleet at Pearl Harbor, the Japanese overran the Philippine Islands, the Dutch East Indies, and Malaya, rich in oil, tin, and rubber, and moved southeastward into New Guinea, and deep into the Solomon Islands. This thrust brought the Japanese within bomber range of the lines of seaborne supply between Oahu and Australia, where an offensive force under General MacArthur was being assembled. Drastic counter action became an acute necessity in order to avoid a long detour to the south from Hawaii through the Samoan and Fiji Island groups. Although hardly prepared in 1942 to seize the offensive in the Pacific, Admiral William F. Halsey's forces of the South Pacific Command struck at Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands while Army units under General MacArthur moved northward from Port Moresby in extreme southeastern New Guinea towards the north coast of that tropical island. This double-barreled offensive across New Guinea and upward through the Solomon Islands from Guadalcanal to New Georgia and thence to Bougainville had as its ultimate objective the reduction or isolation of the great Japanese naval and air base at Rabaul on New Britain Island in the Bismarck Archipelago. Neutralization of this strategic point not only deprived the Japanese of

offensive capabilities in the South Pacific but also opened the northern coast of British and Dutch New Guinea to attack by amphibious assault forces of General MacArthur's Sixth Army and the supporting Seventh U. S. Fleet. After establishing a great base at Finschhafen, thereby shortening his sea communications with Hawaii and the United States, General MacArthur closed the Bismarck Sea by seizure of the Admiralty Archipelago (including the two main islands of Manus and Los Negros) and then, in 1944, continued his movement along the northern coast of New Guinea. He occupied Hollandia and Cape Sansapor, together with the offshore islands of Wakde, Biak, and Noemfoor, and finally took Morotai, midway between Cape Sansapor and Mindanao. At these advanced bases he marshalled the assault force that stormed ashore at Leyte. Identified with many celebrated feats of arms—the Admiralties, Buna, Finschhafen, Hollandia, Biak, Leyte, and Luzon, among others—MacArthur's path of conquest was marked by the graves of nearly 40,000 Americans.

While MacArthur drove relentlessly northwestward towards his ultimate objective—the conquest of Japan itself—American naval forces and supporting Army ground units opened an offensive in the Central Pacific with devastating and successful attacks on the Gilbert and Marshall Islands. Directed from Admiral Nimitz's Headquarters in Honolulu, these assault forces quelled Japanese garrisons in savage encounters on Tarawa, Kwajalein, and Eniwetok atolls. They then traversed a wide oceanic expanse to the Mariana Islands, winning Saipan in a bloody battle. Nimitz next turned southward to the Palau Islands in order to cover MacArthur's right flank in his advance towards the Philippines. Then, seeking a way station for crippled B-29 bombers on the return flight from Japan, an amphibious Marine task force stormed onto Iwo Jima, and in an action of tremendous violence, overwhelmed the Imperial Japanese Marine regiments which had been picked to defend that position. The final advance brought American units into the Ryukyu Islands, on the very doorstep of Japan, where the bitter battle of Okinawa was fought.

Like General MacArthur's path of advance to Manila, the line of Admiral Nimitz's triumphal drive to the southern islands of the Japanese Empire was strewn with the graves of Americans who had paid the price of victory with their lives. Some 30,000 remains lay in temporary military cemeteries reaching from Tarawa, in the mid-Pacific to the island of Zamami Shima, in the East China Sea, off the coast of Okinawa.

In contrast to the heavy losses in Pacific fighting, those on the

Asiatic mainland were largely confined to flights of American airmen over the Himalayas between China and India and on bombing missions to Japan from interior Chinese bases. Only one ground action stands out—the capture of Myitkyina in Burma—by the 5307th Composite Unit, consisting of 2,997 officers and men, popularly known as “Merrill’s Marauders.” During the long, arduous trek through the jungles and over the mountains of Burma, they fought 5 major and 30 minor engagements, which culminated in victory at Myitkyina—a truly notable feat of arms. Those who died in this gruelling campaign lay in quickly improvised battlefield cemeteries in Burma.

As indicated in the preceding chapter, the first phase of the repatriation program involved the completion of cemeterial consolidations undertaken during hostilities and continued in the immediate postwar period. The assignment of territory to graves registration commands in the Pacific did not correspond precisely with the operational lines described above. For example, AFMIDPAC encompassed not only the Hawaiian, Gilbert, Marshall, Mariana, and Bonin Islands which lay in the line of operations undertaken by Naval forces under Admiral Nimitz, but also included the Solomon Islands, which had formed geographically a part of General MacArthur’s path of reconquest in the western Pacific.

### **Operations in AFMIDPAC**

#### *Early Postwar Developments*

At Honolulu, where the first fatalities had occurred during the attack on Pearl Harbor, it was apparent on V-J Day that the bulk of concentration of the deceased in AFMIDPAC must yet be accomplished, although a few small island cemeteries had been consolidated during the war and some local garrison commanders had already established procedures which closely followed those set forth in the Army-Navy Joint Policy Memorandum of 19 February 1945, which dealt specifically with concentration activities in various theaters of operation throughout the world. The AFMIDPAC area included two distinct types of cemeteries which presented differing disinterment problems when bodies were exhumed preparatory to concentration of remains into a few centralized points. One group of cemeteries included battlefield burials. The second type comprised base command cemeteries in areas, such as New Caledonia and the Samoan Islands, where no fighting had taken place. In these localities, garrison forces at the base commands maintained the burial places. In general, concentration operations proved more

difficult in battlefield cemeteries, where many scattered interments were often made in haste and where records were either incomplete or missing.

During September 1945, graves registration activities carried out by AFMIDPAC included the exhumation of 14 bodies at Bora Bora in the Society Islands, and their subsequent reinterment in the larger Naval Cemetery at Tutuila, in the Samoan group. In addition, AGRS forces moved nearly 1,200 remains from burial places on Espiritu Santo and Efate in the New Hebrides group and from Tulagi and Russell Island in the Solomons, to the Army, Navy, and Marine Cemetery on Guadalcanal, which served as the concentration cemetery of the Solomon area, with the exceptions of New Georgia, Rendova, and Bougainville. The deceased at these three points eventually were moved to the Finschhafen cemeteries in New Guinea. Late in October 1945, the Allied Military Cemetery at Suva, Fiji Islands, received the dead from nearby Sambeto Valley Cemetery. Shortly thereafter, AGRS moved 51 remains from two small burial grounds to Tutuila, Samoa.<sup>1</sup>

During November, elements of the 604th QM Graves Registration Company removed and reinterred in the Schofield Barracks Cemetery, Oahu, seven bodies from the Island of Molokai—an activity which constituted the first postwar concentration in the Hawaiian Islands. After this small operation, a detachment of the same organization, consisting of the Commanding Officer and 25 men, departed from Oahu on 13 December on a more extensive mission. Their objective involved the disinterment and transfer to Oahu of approximately 60 remains from Palmyra, Christmas, Canton, and Fanning Islands, which lay south of Hawaii. The dead from these four points arrived in Honolulu on 24 January 1946 and were buried in Schofield Barracks Cemetery. Experience gained in these activities proved valuable in subsequent major concentration operations on Tarawa.<sup>2</sup>

#### *The Tarawa and Subsequent Operations*

The first large-scale concentration operation in the mid-Pacific occurred during the spring of 1946. In accordance with concentration orders contained in Headquarters, Army Forces, Mid-Pacific (HAFMIDPAC) Movement Order No. 24, dated 28 January 1946, about 50 men of the 604th QM Graves Registration Company pre-

<sup>1</sup> (1) Hist, AGRS-Pacific Zone (AGRS-PAZ) 1946-49, I, p. 20. (2) Rad, AFMIDPAC to WD for QMG, 12 Oct 46. (3) App, E, Incl. 1, Exhumation and Concentration Chart.

<sup>2</sup> Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I pp. 20-21.



FIGURE 14. *General view of USAF Cemetery at Efate, in the New Hebrides group.*

pared for a voyage from Honolulu to Tarawa, New Zealand, the Fiji and Samoan Islands.<sup>3</sup>

On 21 February 1946, the unit sailed from Oahu aboard the USAT *Lawrence Phillips*, a small freighter built in 1917, which offered only crude accommodations. The first destination was the Tarawa Atoll, a group of bleak and barren dots of land, on which many Marines had fought and died in the short space of 72 hours. This British atoll, occupied by American garrison forces during the war, was returned to its former jurisdiction following V-J Day.

During the journey, the Naval Dental Officer conducted classes in tooth charting, which later proved highly valuable, since this method was almost the only available means of identifying the badly decomposed remains found on Tarawa. The ship arrived at Betio, Tarawa, on 4 March. A large quonset hut was utilized for storage of equipment and supplies. The thatched frame huts, which quar-

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

tered the unit, were in such poor condition that two days' work was necessary to render them livable.<sup>4</sup>

The most important business confronting the unit was the selection of a cemetery site which would serve as the concentration point for over 1,000 dead dispersed through the atoll. A suitable location was found on the western end of the island near the old chapel of war days, and named Lone Palm Cemetery. Following this accomplishment, the Army Garrison Forces Commander, the British Administrator (who had jurisdiction over civil affairs since the return of the atoll to the British after the war), and the Commanding Officer of the 604th QM Graves Registration Company, conferred and made all necessary arrangements for acquisition of the land at no expense to the United States Government. These officers also laid plans for the recovery of remains interred on Apamama and Nauru Islands, which lay approximately 100 miles southeast and 500 miles southwest of Tarawa, respectively, and for their later reinterment in Lone Palm Cemetery. The British Resident Commissioner tendered the services of His Majesty's launch *The Margaret* at no cost to the United States. The offer was accepted and the subsequent round trip to Apamama required 2 days. Eleven bodies were exhumed on Apamama and then reinterred at Tarawa. The plan to move the dead from Nauru Island was postponed, and a later search and recovery expedition located the remains there.<sup>5</sup>

After these arrangements had been made, the AGRS unit began to clear Lone Palm Cemetery of trees. The D7 bulldozer was in such poor condition that it broke down after only four days. Since neither mechanics nor spare parts were available, natives completed the task by hand.<sup>6</sup> When Lone Palm Cemetery was finally ready to receive remains, the 604th QM GR Company faced the formidable task of disinterring, identifying, and reintering the numerous dead scattered over the atoll. Because of the large number of fatalities and subsequent hurried burials, most deceased servicemen rested in graves near points where they died.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, the atoll contained approximately 43 separate burial sites, the majority of which were located on Betio Island.

Several factors added to the difficulties of locating and identifying the Tarawa dead. In some cases, the Marines had constructed a monument directly above a body or group of remains. In other instances, no remains could be located beneath monuments. Again,

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>6</sup> (1) *Ibid.* (2) App. B, Incl. 16, pp. 2-3.

<sup>7</sup> In describing the Tarawa operation, the word "grave" is synonymous with "cemetery" or "burial ground."

some memorial graves bore crosses with names but contained no deceased. Sometimes, later investigations located these individuals in cemeteries on the opposite side of the island.<sup>8</sup>

After the conquest of the atoll, an attempt had apparently been made to beautify Grave 33. The original crosses were removed and lined up in rows parallel to the airstrip. Identifying landmarks were disturbed, rendering the location of original rows and graves doubly difficult. The Marines' custom of erecting memorial graves adorned with markers for all missing personnel further complicated the situation. After two days of excavating at Grave 33, the workers had recovered no remains. Father O'Neill, who had buried Marine dead on this site shortly after the battle, suggested that a search be made for traces of the three original rows of graves, which were supposed "to run diagonally to certain tree stumps." After a series of excavations, the diggers discovered, first, the middle row, and then the other two, but they recovered only 129 remains of an alleged total of 400. Most of the dead had been buried as they fell; even cartridges and hand grenades had not been removed from their bodies. The grenades constituted a hazard since the handles, almost disintegrated by this time, usually came off upon removal from remains. One grenade actually detonated, but no injuries resulted.<sup>9</sup>

Grave 26 presented similar problems. AGRS workers dug under grave markers but found no remains. Upon advice from Father Kelly, they made a narrow trench across the length of the cemetery and so located the rows containing the deceased. As in Grave 33, unexploded grenades were discovered on many of the 123 located bodies.

Graves 14 and 27 may be described as monument cemeteries. In the former grave, the 41 remains were finally located under the monument. Grave No. 27, located outside the large quonset hut which served as the base theater, reportedly contained 40 dead. AGRS workers removed the monument and excavated to a depth of seven feet, but found no remains. Explorative diggings and trench excavations started throughout the area, but all efforts proved fruitless. They could find "no remains, no remnants of equipment, nor any other debris that could have indicated a burial place."<sup>10</sup>

In all cases, every means of identification, including tooth-charting whenever possible, was exhausted before bodies were reinterred.

<sup>8</sup> Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, pp. 24-25.

<sup>9</sup> (1) *Ibid.*, p. 26. (2) Memo, Lt. I. Eisensmith, QMC, CO, 604th QM GRS Co, to Chief, Mem Br, QM Sec, AFMIDPAC, 3 Jul 46, pp. 3-4; KCRC-AGRS-Far East, 319.1.

<sup>10</sup> (1) Same as fn. 9 (1), pp. 26-27. (2) Same as fn. 9 (2), p. 5.

AGRS workers placed an identification tag and a copy of the Report of Reinterment in a sealed bottle for burial with the remains. In addition, they erected a marker at the head of each grave, together with an identification tag and a 2-inch by 4-inch metal tag showing the name, rank, and serial number of the deceased. Unidentified dead were designated as "Unknown X. . . ." <sup>11</sup>

Late in May 1946, after completion of the whole arduous mission, some 532 recovered remains from the 43 burial places rested in Lone Palm Cemetery after receiving full military honors. As a result of the Tarawa operations, the Commanding Officer, 604th QM GR Company, offered several recommendations to the Chief, Memorial Branch, AFMIDPAC. These suggestions, in part, follow:

(a) That identification tags be made of stainless steel, monel metal, or some other noncorrosive metal. The letters on the tags should be embossed, and not etched. This will facilitate identification at a later date if and when disinterment is found necessary.

(b) All web and personal equipment be stenciled with name, rank, and serial number.

(c) That each and every serviceman wear identification tags around his neck, and either an identification bracelet on his wrist or an identification card on his person. In this way some identification will be found if the person is killed and dismembered.

(d) A unified system of burial procedure for all services should be followed.

(e) All burial report forms should be the same for all services.

(f) All service personnel should have *some* GRS training. By doing this, it is felt that the conditions found on Tarawa would not recur.

(g) That a health record similar to the one used for Navy and Marine Corps personnel be used for all Army personnel. . . .<sup>12</sup>

After leaving Tarawa, the 604th QM Graves Registration Company operated in base command cemeteries rather than in battle-field burial grounds. Exhumation operations, preparatory to moving remains to Honolulu, henceforth occupied the time and effort of this unit, which proceeded southward to New Zealand. There, the 604th QM Graves Registration Company exhumed 74 remains from the Great War Memorial Cemetery, Karori, Wellington.

This burial place closed on 11 July 1946. The next day, the company exhumed a total of 113 American dead from the Waikumete

<sup>11</sup> Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, pp. 27-28.

<sup>12</sup> Memo, Lt. I. Eisensmith, QMC, CO, 604th QM GRS Co, to Chief, Mem Br, QM Sec, AFMIDPAC, 3 Jul 46, pp. 12-13; KCRC-AGRS-Far East, 319.1.

Cemetery in Auckland, New Zealand. Mr. John Scarfe, a reporter for the *New Zealand Observer*, provided a vivid account of this operation in the issue of 17 July 1946. He expressed the viewpoint of a foreign observer on the entire policy of returning the dead to their homeland. His comments, in part, follow:

Sweating American soldiers were dragging soggy corpses out of the ooze at Waikumete Cemetery, Auckland, last week. Thus, 113 dead Americans began their last ride to a permanent resting place, following the decision of the U. S. Congress. . . .

It was a gruesome scene.

In a tree-lined plot were opened graves. Coffins lay around to receive the decomposed dead. Shovels were rammed into mounds of mud piled beside the holes, and desolate white crosses stuck askew in the ground.

In dungarees and gum-boots, the grave-gang worked. They were an average looking crew. . . . There were city men and smalltown boys. In green-cloth denims, rubber gloves and heavy boots, they pried from the sticky earth reluctant bodies which had lain there for two and three years.

They were obeying orders.

The U. S. Congress had spoken. With very natural sentiment, it had ordered the disinterring of American dead overseas. But Congress did not have to do the job.

Young men did, and not many of them liked it, for this is not the first crop of corpses they have plucked from foreign soil. Nor will it be the last . . .

Doubtless, mothers of fallen soldiers will in some way assuage their grief if their sons come back to them. At least, they can place flowers on their graves and feel a closer communion with their loved ones. But it will serve only to reopen old wounds. . . .<sup>13</sup>

From New Zealand, the unit proceeded to Suva and removed 137 deceased from the Allied Military Cemetery. By the middle of August, the unit had finished exhumations in the two Samoan cemeteries. One of these, the United States Naval Cemetery (Mopa Souga), served as a place of concentration for remains in the Samoan Islands and contained 242 bodies. The other cemetery was the Satalo Naval Cemetery where 17 fallen servicemen rested. Both cemeteries closed officially on 17 August. The dead from Samoa as well as those from the Fiji Islands and New Zealand were transported to Hawaii, where reinterment took place during the period from 26 August to 9 September 1946.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> USMIDPAC File, Vol. 4, Supplement.

<sup>14</sup> Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, pp. 30-31.

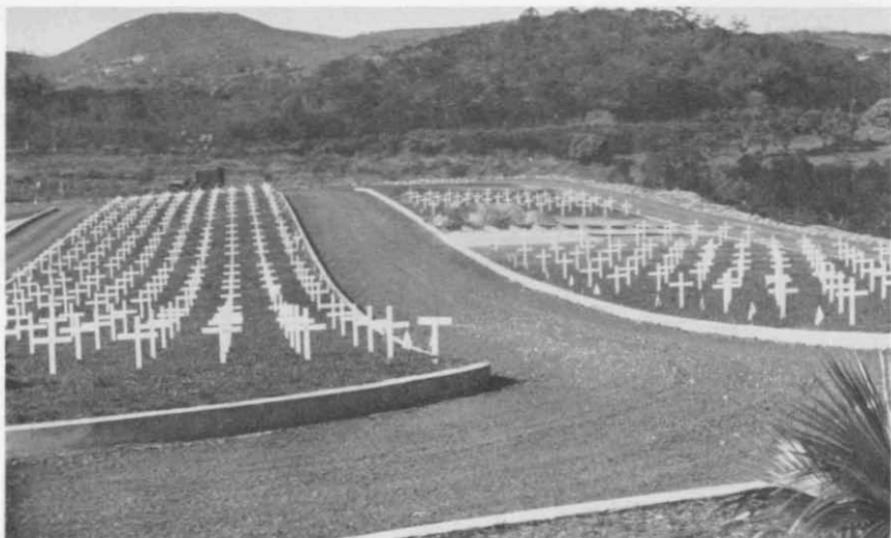


FIGURE 15. *General view of American Military Cemetery, Noumea, New Caledonia. (Taken from rear.)*

The largest and final phase of operations in the South Pacific occurred at Noumea, New Caledonia, where 557 Americans were disinterred at the base cemetery. The first bodies from New Caledonia were scheduled originally to arrive at Honolulu by 20 September 1946, with the remainder due in mid-October. As matters developed, the last shipment from New Caledonia arrived on 15 November. All the remains were reinterred at Schofield Barracks Cemetery.<sup>15</sup>

The removal, late in August 1946, of 243 American deceased from Ulithi to Guam for reburial constituted an important step towards early fulfillment of necessary concentrations. Those who carried out this mission included the officers and men of LST No. 803, a detail of 23 additional men from the Naval Supply Center on Guam, a Navy Dental Officer, two photographers, and a civilian embalmer. This operation represented the first concentration of deceased in the area which later became the MARBO Sector of AGRS-Far East Zone. Located in the Caroline Islands, Ulithi had served as a fleet anchorage in the western Pacific during preparations for the attacks on Iwo Jima and Okinawa. It also served as a base where the fleet could replenish its supplies, rest its crews, and repair damages. The dead interred in its military cemetery mostly came from hospital ships; a few were drowning casualties from the nearby recreation centers.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Rpts, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-MIDPAC, 30 Jun 46; 30 Nov 46, 319.1.

<sup>16</sup> Hist, AGRS-MARBO Sector, FEZ, 1947-48, I, pp. 14-15.

Although it had been estimated that 30 to 40 days might be required to disinter and transfer the remains to the ship, the task was completed much ahead of schedule, thanks to the employment of native laborers. This rapid progress evoked a formal commendation on 3 September 1946 from Capt. Robert J. McBroom, Quartermaster, Western Pacific Base Command. Eight days later, the dead from Ulithi all rested in Agat Cemetery on Guam.

On 13 September, Captain McBroom communicated the findings of the Ulithi mission to the Commanding General, WPBC. The more important of them follow: (1) Three additional weeks would have been necessary to complete the mission, except for the valuable assistance of 35 natives; (2) the work slowed down 60 percent following the lunch period, indicating that the period of extreme afternoon heat should be devoted to swimming and recreation and that long work hours were inadvisable; (3) adequate funds should be provided for the purchase of beer and cigarettes; (4) any future expedition should carry two dental officers and two dental technicians; (5) the availability of motorized transportation should be determined before departure on any future mission and mechanics, bulldozer operators and truck chauffeurs should accompany all such expeditions; (6) burial bags should be standard equipment, since, because of their flexibility, they could be lowered into graves, the remains transferred thereto and then lifted by ropes, thus saving the workers from having decayed flesh and liquefied remains spilled on them; (7) a medical officer should accompany all future expeditions, since infections were a constant danger; (8) an advance party should precede the main expedition, and should map out requirements, type of burial grounds, docking facilities, and the like; (9) sufficient Class "X" clothing should be provided to permit each member of the mission to burn the clothing at the end of a working day; (10) ample quantities of heavy rubber and leather gloves were necessary; (11) all future workers assigned to this type of duty should be accompanied by enough officers to supervise operations properly; (12) services of civilian embalmers were superfluous on this kind of expedition because of the advanced state of decomposition of the remains.

In August 1946, it was announced that disinterments at battlefield cemeteries on Wake Island and in the Gilberts and Marshalls would begin by October and end in late December. The cemeteries in the latter two archipelagoes were located on Tarawa, Jaluit, Makin, Majuro, Kwajalein, and Eniwetok. The dead were to be removed to Oahu. After accomplishment of this concentration, all deceased AFMIDPAC servicemen would rest in eight localities—Hawaii, Guam, Saipan, Tinian, Palau, Guadalcanal, Angaur, and Iwo

Jima.<sup>17</sup> These plans were impeded because funds were unavailable for the manufacture of temporary caskets. A recommendation made by Headquarters, AFMIDPAC, that these remains be stored above ground in warehouses on Oahu while awaiting repatriation encountered opposition in Washington. The Director, Memorial Division, OQMG, disapproved any idea of above-ground storage for long periods except where burials could not be made because graves were filled with water.<sup>18</sup>

#### *Above-Ground Storage*

Headquarters, AFMIDPAC, insisted, with the concurrence of the CINC, AFPAC, that its plan for above-ground storage in metal-lined, hermetically sealed burial boxes, was both feasible and necessary, particularly since by this time no further space was available in the existing Oahu cemeteries.<sup>19</sup> As the concentration from Wake Island and the Marshalls-Gilberts area was still stalemated, AFMIDPAC again urgently requested the funds needed to buy burial boxes for above-ground storage.

Memorial Division, OQMG, therefore gave further consideration to the proposal. Late in October, it partly reversed its previous stand by granting permission to both AFMIDPAC and the CINC, AFPAC, for above-ground storage for not more than 90 days.<sup>20</sup> A few days later, the War Department amended this action by authorizing above-ground storage on Oahu of some 1,750 remains from the Marshalls and the Gilberts and from Wake Island until the beginning of the repatriation program, "Providing that no odor is forthcoming from the stored remains."<sup>21</sup> Other stipulations were that the bodies be stored in a building of suitable size and structure, with bars or heavy screens to prevent illegal entry; that the building have an American guard at all times; that it be suitably marked as a mausoleum; that proper fire protection and precautions be maintained; that a rigid inspection schedule be maintained, and that an American flag be flown above the building.<sup>22</sup>

As a result of these actions, the Quartermaster, AFMIDPAC, requested the assignment of three 10,000 square-foot warehouses, to be available 30 days before the arrival date (1 January 1947) of the remains from Wake and the Gilberts and Marshalls. After considerable negotiation, Building 1092, Area R, Schofield Barracks, was

<sup>17</sup> Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, MIDPAC, 31 Aug 46, 319.1.

<sup>18</sup> Rad, Dir, Mem Div, OQMG to CINC, AFPAC, and CGs, AFMIDPAC and AFWESPAC, 16 Sep 46, sub: Storage of Remains Above Ground, 293.

<sup>19</sup> Rad, AFMIDPAC to WD for QMG, 24 Sep 46, 293.

<sup>20</sup> Rad, Opns Br, Mem Div to CINCAFPAC and CG, MIDPAC, 29 Oct 46, 293.

<sup>21</sup> Ltr, Mem Div, OQMG to CINC, AFPAC, 5 Nov 46, sub: Storage of Remains, 293.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

assigned to the Quartermaster for temporary use as a mausoleum. It was officially designated as Mausoleum 1.<sup>23</sup>

Shortly afterwards, the Office of The Quartermaster General stated that no time limit would be established for above-ground storage, thus reversing completely its earlier policy.<sup>24</sup> Plans were then drawn up for the use of additional buildings at Schofield Barracks for housing the incoming deceased from the China Zone, who were scheduled to arrive in Honolulu late in May 1947. After lengthy negotiations with Ordnance officials, Warehouse 1091, Area R, Schofield Barracks, was assigned to AGRS as Mausoleum 2.<sup>25</sup> AGRS-PAZ next requested the assignment of Buildings 6101 and 6102 at Schofield Barracks, the former structure to be used for storage of final-type caskets and shipping cases preparatory to final exhumations due to begin on 1 September 1947, and the latter structure for the storage of casketed remains before their shipment on repatriation vessels. Assignment of Building 6101 to AGRS-PAZ became effective on 1 June 1947, and that of Building 6102 on 9 June 1947. These two buildings comprised Mausoleum 3.<sup>26</sup>

Usual storage practices were followed in these mausoleums, both for caskets containing deceased and for empty caskets. The latter were stacked six high with sufficient dunnage to permit use of materials-handling equipment. Those holding remains were stored four high, also with sufficient dunnage for materials-handling equipment. Cremated remains were stored at Mausoleum 1 in a columbarium, which contained recesses of suitable size for individual urns and which was covered by ceiling-high sliding doors. The mausoleum also featured indirect lighting, comfortable furniture, and an altar where services were held when desired by visiting relatives.<sup>27</sup>

It is noteworthy that the establishment of mausoleums in Hawaii to accommodate the deceased from the Gilberts-Marshalls-Wake Island area, as well as later remains from other points, was not unique in the Pacific nor on the Asiatic Mainland. As will be shown later, mausoleums were created at such points as Manila, Yokohama, Saipan, Barrackpore, and Shanghai. In other words, the above-ground storage system became commonplace for Pacific war dead awaiting repatriation.

<sup>23</sup> (1) Hist, AGRS-PAZ, II, pp. 170-71. (2) *Ibid.*, App. F, Incl. 3, Memo, G-4 to QM, AFMIDPAC, 7 Jan 47, sub: Building No. 1092, Schofield.

<sup>24</sup> Ltr, Col. Ira K. Evans, Mem Div, OQMG to CG, AGFPAC, 5 Mar 47, Hist, AGRS-PAZ, II, App. F, Incl. 5.

<sup>25</sup> Hist, AGRS-PAZ, II, pp. 172-73.

<sup>26</sup> (1) Memo, Colonel O. W. Humphries, AGRS-PAZ, G-4, 7 May 47. (2) Ltr, CO, Schofield Barracks to CO, AGRS-PAZ, 27 May 47. (3) Memo, CO, Schofield Barracks to CO, AGRS-PAZ, 3 Jun 47; Hist, AGRS-PAZ, II, App. F, Incls 7, 8, 9.

<sup>27</sup> Hist, AGRS-PAZ, II, pp. 186-87.

*Marshalls-Gilberts Disinterments*

While plans were being made for above-ground storage in Hawaii, the 604th QM Graves Registration Company departed from Oahu in November 1946 and began disinterment operations in the Marshall and Gilbert Islands. Its first task, the exhumation of the dead from Lone Palm Cemetery, Betio Island, Tarawa Atoll, proceeded smoothly, and on 13 January 1947, 532 deceased from this atoll arrived at Oahu and were placed in the recently established Army Mausoleum 1 at Schofield Barracks. By this time, the 604th QM Graves Registration Company had moved to other islands in the Marshall and Gilbert groups. During January and early February, it exhumed bodies from cemeteries on Makin, Majuro, and Kwajalein. About 650 remains from these atolls arrived in Hawaii on 6 March 1947 and were moved to Mausoleum 1 on the following day to await further identification. Upon completion of its mission in Kwajalein, the unit proceeded to Eniwetok and Wake Island, where they exhumed some 556 remains, which in turn, reached Hawaii on 8 April 1947.<sup>28</sup>

In the following month (May), the concentration situation in AFMIDPAC is revealed by these figures showing the number of remains in each cemetery:<sup>29</sup>

TABLE 12—*Concentration Progress in Mid-Pacific*

Cemetery	No. of remains
<b>HAWAIIAN ISLANDS</b>	
Schofield Barracks Cemetery	2,424
Schofield Mausoleums (Nos. 1 and 2)	4,320
U. S. Army Cemetery, Homelani, Hawaii	144
U. S. Army Cemetery, Makawao, Hawaii	133
U. S. Army Cemetery, Makaweli, Kauai	74
Halawa Naval Cemetery, Oahu	1,509
Nuuanu Cemetery, Oahu	348
Mokapu Cemetery, Kaneohe, Oahu	18
Total	8,970
<b>GUADALCANAL</b>	
Army, Navy, Marine Cemetery	3,365
<b>AUSTRALIA</b>	
USAF, Ipswich	1,406
USAF, Rookwood	465
Total	1,871
Grand total	14,206

<sup>28</sup> (1) AGRS Newsletter, March 1947, Pacific Zone. (2) Rpts, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-PAZ, 28 Feb 47; 31 Mar 47, 319.1.

<sup>29</sup> Memo, Col. O. W. Humphries, for CofS-AGFPAC, 21 May 47, Hist, AGRS-PAZ, I, App. E, Incl. 12, Pt. 10.

### *Plans for Final Disinterment Operations in AGRS-PAZ*

Originally, final disinterment operations had been envisioned as commencing in Hawaii, Australia, and Guadalcanal during the early summer of 1947 and as being finished by the end of August. It was planned to use 13½ Field Operating Sections (FOS) for the Hawaiian exhumations. These Sections were mobile units, which, operating under a zone command, performed the actual work of disinterment, identification, preparation and casketing of remains for return to the United States or permanent burial overseas. The Commanding Officer, known as Master of the Section, was responsible to the Zone Commander for the performance of the unit. In addition to the Master of the Section, an FOS included two inspecting officers, one chief clerk, and four operations teams, each composed of a supervising embalmer, technical assistants, a truck driver, a guard-convoyer, a checker, and laborers.<sup>30</sup> After completion of activities in the Hawaiian Islands, plans called for 8 Field Operating Sections to proceed to Guadalcanal while 3½ such units moved on to Australia. Because of a continuing shortage of qualified officers and enlisted men and the delays in receiving caskets from the United States, these plans did not materialize. The initial exhumations in the Hawaiian Islands preparatory to the first shipment of the dead to the United States on the *Honda Knot* did not begin until 11 August 1947. Final disinterments in Australia, Guadalcanal, and nearby small PAZ cemeteries did not start until after the *Honda Knot* had sailed from Honolulu on 30 September 1947. These operations constitute a part of the chapter concerning repatriation of the Pacific war dead to the United States.

### **AFWESPAC and PHILRYCOM Operations**

Concentration of remains in General MacArthur's wartime command, the old Southwest Pacific Area, involved more than 40,000 dead left along the path of conquest from Port Moresby to Manila. As previously indicated, concentration activities in this area were well underway just before V-J Day. The war dead were being removed from temporary burial places to eight large cemeteries: Finschhafen in New Guinea, Ipswich and Rookwood in Australia, and Manila No. 1 and 2, Santa Barbara No. 1, Leyte No. 1, and Batangas in the Philippines.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> TM 10-281, pp. 11-12.

<sup>31</sup> (1) Ltr, Hq USAFWESPAC, OCQM to TQMG, Wash, D. C., 9 Aug 45, sub: Grave Location Information; KCRC-AGRS-Far East, 293. (2) Rpt, Official Travel, Lt Col Mavo A. Darling, Jul-Sep 45, p. 35, 314.6.

*Initial Planning and Accomplishments*

Late in 1945, important decisions were made in planning for the concentration of the dead in the western Pacific. Both USAF Cemetery Manila No. 1 and Batangas No. 1 would be consolidated into Manila No. 2, since the latter cemetery had been selected as the site to be recommended to the American Battle Monuments Commission as a national cemetery for those not repatriated. Actual implementation of this plan awaited the final decision of the next of kin. At any rate, AFWESPAC assumed that all unrepat-riated deceased under its territorial jurisdiction would be reinterred in one USAF cemetery, which would be designated as a permanent military cemetery.<sup>32</sup>

Some of the most bitter battles of the war in the Southwest Pacific Area had occurred in the Philippines where disinterment operations began in December 1945 at Camp O'Donnell and Cabanatuan, two Prisoner of War Cemeteries. In these burial places lay many of those who had survived the Death March but later died of disease or maltreatment. At first the prisoners had interred their comrades in single graves, but as they became weaker, they buried a day's toll of dead in a single large grave. This mode of interment rendered later identification difficult in most cases although tooth charts and information supplied by returned Prisoners of War and Filipino civilians proved helpful. By February 1946, both Camp O'Donnell and Cabanatuan cemeteries were disinterred and the remains placed in USAF Cemetery Manila No. 2. The closing of these two burial places exemplified the continuing concentration program in the old Southwest Pacific Area, wherein all located war dead were being moved into the above-mentioned large cemeteries.<sup>33</sup>

WESPAC Sector of the newly organized AGRS-PATA<sup>34</sup> reported in July 1946 that much progress had been made in consolidation of cemeteries under its widened jurisdiction, which now included the Philippine Islands, New Guinea, Australia, the Ryukyu Islands, and smaller islands of the Southwest and West Central Pacific area. Since V-J Day, AGRS forces had concentrated bodies from some 125 cemeteries of varying sizes throughout WESPAC into 20 USAF cemeteries and one Prisoner of War burial ground. The names and location of these 21 cemeteries were:<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> (1) Hist, AGRS-PATA, Feb 46-Oct 47, p. 4. (2) 4th Ind to Basic Ltr, 25 Jul 45, Hq USAFWESPAC to TQMG, 23 Nov 45; KCRC-AGRS-FEC, 293.

<sup>33</sup> Same as fn. 32(1).

<sup>34</sup> Details concerning organization of AGRS-PATA may be found in the preceding chapter.

<sup>35</sup> Rpt, GR and Repat Opns, AGRS-PATA, 31 Jul 46, 319.1.

1. USAF Cemetery No. 1, Sydney (Rookwood), Australia.
2. USAF Cemetery, Ipswich No. 1, Brisbane, Australia.
- 3-7. USAF Cemetery, Finschhafen Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, Finschhafen, New Guinea.
8. USAF Cemetery, Leyte No. 1, Palo, Leyte, P. I.
9. USAF Cemetery, Batangas No. 1, Batangas, Luzon, P. I.
- 10-11. USAF Cemeteries, Manila Nos. 1 and 2, Manila, Luzon, P. I.
12. USAF Cemetery, Santa Barbara No. 1, Luzon, P. I.
13. 1st Marine Division Cemetery, Okinawa.
14. 6th Marine Division Cemetery, Okinawa.
15. 7th Division Cemetery, Okinawa.
16. 76th Division Cemetery, Okinawa.
17. 96th Division Cemetery, Okinawa.
18. Island Command Cemetery, Okinawa.
19. Ie Shima Cemetery, Okinawa.
20. Zamami Shima Cemetery, Okinawa.
21. Luzon POW Cemetery, Canlubang, Luzon, P. I.

This same July report indicated that graves registration officials planned no further consolidation of WESPAC Sector cemeteries, since they mistakenly presumed that all 21 cemeteries would be in existence at the start of final repatriation. Consequently, little concentration took place in this region during the latter part of 1946.

#### *Tokyo AGRS Conference*

The AGRS conference, which began in Tokyo on 5 February 1947, was called to consider, among other matters, plans for future AGRS activities in the Pacific. It was attended by Memorial Division representatives, including Col. I. K. Evans and by top graves registration officers of the various Pacific areas. The conferees discussed in detail the subject of further concentration of cemeteries before repatriation and considered the following transfers of remains in furtherance of the concentration program: Finschhafen and Palau to Manila, Ie Shima and Zamami Shima to Okinawa, Tinian and Iwo Jima to Saipan, and Korea to Yokohama.

Colonel Evans remarked that general opinion favored the evacuation of the deceased from Finschhafen and Palau cemeteries before repatriation, either to mausoleums, whose sites had not yet been determined, or to Manila No. 2. The conferees felt that these concentrations should terminate as soon as possible since any long delay would cause serious future operational difficulties resulting from lack of facilities at these locations. Col. William D. Campbell, Quartermaster, GHQ, Far East Command, justified plans for

immediate removal of bodies in the Finschhafen cemeteries to Manila in the following manner:

The job of moving Finschhafen to Luzon is a major operation. The reasons why it should be done now instead of later are that in a year from now there will be no docks; there will be no highways, and if we wait a year it will require probably an engineer construction battalion to go in there with Field Operating Sections in order to get the bodies out. If we start working on it now, we would probably stretch it over a period of six or eight months to get the bodies out before the return of the dead from this command starts . . . There are approximately ten thousand bodies concerned.

He opposed any plan to reinter the Finschhafen remains at Manila No. 2, favoring their placement above ground. Colonel Evans agreed that the idea of a mausoleum was sound and more economical, but added that if reinterment became necessary, the Finschhafen dead should be reburied in Manila No. 2.<sup>36</sup>

The conferees also observed that the rainy season at Finschhafen would soon begin and thus coincide with the proposed concentration. It was pointed out, however, that the Finschhafen cemeteries were all located in one area, were well sheltered, and possessed good drainage. Maj. H. W. Beard, QMC, PHILRYCOM, stated that "if we could get started within the next thirty days, we could get a good deal of the work done before the heavy rains start, and the nature of the remains that are there are such that the water will not present a hardship in getting them out."

Those attending the conference further determined to remove the dead from Ie Shima and Zamami Shima to Okinawa. They also considered related problems such as the availability of caskets, and of transportation, labor, and mausoleum space in Manila. Approval for both the Finschhafen and Palau operations was received on 3 March 1947 from General Headquarters, Far East Command, and forwarded to OQMG for final action. A War Department radio message of 6 March gave clearance for the projects and was redispached to major Pacific commands on 11 March 1947.<sup>37</sup>

The conferees agreed that Tinian deceased should be moved to Saipan as soon as possible. They also hoped to remove the Korean dead to Yokohama by mid-September 1947, thus freeing AGRS personnel in Korea for duties elsewhere. The presence of postwar dead in the Korean cemetery prevented an immediate concentration to Yokohama.

<sup>36</sup> Conf, GR Repat Program for WW II Dead, 5 Feb 47, pp. 5-7; KCRC-AGRS-FEC, 322 (Staff Conferences).

<sup>37</sup> Rad, Mem Div, GHQ, FEC to PHILRYCOM, 25 Mar 47; KCRC-AGRS-FEC, 293.

*Finschhafen Operation*

All concentration operations planned at the Tokyo conference were carried out more or less simultaneously. The largest single concentration task in the Western Pacific involved the movement of over 11,000 remains from the five Finschhafen cemeteries to Manila.

The vast majority of deceased consisted of Americans who had perished in New Guinea and on adjacent islands, particularly the Admiralties. The first AGRS contingent arrived at Finschhafen on 10 May 1947 aboard the LST 914. Unloading operations and arrangements for living quarters consumed five days. Disinterment activities started on the 15th, just as the rainy season arrived in New Guinea. During the operations, rainfall, amounting to 15 inches weekly, severely handicapped the workers. Thus, despite the assurances advanced at the Graves Registration Conference at Tokyo, the constant rains proved to be a real burden. Perhaps the necessity of using the docks and highways in New Guinea while they were still available justified this effort during the worst of the monsoon season but there can be little doubt that the timing of the operation was unfortunate from the viewpoint of the AGRS workers. During disinterment activities, water tables in the cemeteries rose to very high levels, water flowed into the graves, and drainage work became necessary. Hospital tents, which were utilized during the operation, proved inadequate to protect those working at the graves. Often the workers encountered water and mud shoulder-high and roads and bridges that had been washed out overnight by torrential rains. Shipping and supply problems added to the troubles of the workers. Four months were required to requisition and receive needed items from Manila. Since Finschhafen was the last port of call on the AGRS run to New Guinea, any shortages of foodstuffs and other necessities were felt most acutely there.<sup>38</sup>

During the operations, all remains were placed in a temporary morgue while awaiting transportation to Manila. The original morgue, situated near the cemeteries, proved inadequate and a new one was built about 400 yards from the outloading dock and half a mile from the cemeteries. Here a 24-hour guard maintained vigil over the deceased. The first group of 105 remains departed from Finschhafen on 21 May 1947. Seven other shipments followed between 2 July and 7 December. The latter date marked the last departure of remains from Finschhafen. Thus, despite many hardships, discomforts, and discouragements, the AGRS installation

<sup>38</sup> Hist, AGRS-FEZ, 1 Oct 47 to 31 Mar 48, Pt. 3, Incl. 21 A, 15 Apr 48, sub: Finschhafen Concentration Activities.

completed its formidable task. It was officially closed when all personnel left Finschhafen on 22 March 1948.<sup>39</sup>

### *Palau Islands and the Philippines*

The movement of the dead from the Palau Islands (Peleliu, Angaur, Ngesebus, etc.) to Manila ended considerably before the Finschhafen operation terminated. The disinterment of Palau cemeteries began shortly after receipt of official approval of the plans drawn up at the Tokyo Graves Registration conference. By the end of June 1947, all those who died in the Palau Islands (approximately 1,667) rested in Manila Cemetery No. 2.

While concentration operations progressed at Finschhafen and in the Palau Islands, similar activities were underway in the Philippine Islands, where 441 remains in Batangas Cemetery were exhumed during March and April 1947 and removed to Manila No. 2. An adjustment of AGRS boundaries in May resulted in the transfer of the two concentrated Australian cemeteries (Ipswich and Rookwood) to the control of the Pacific Zone (PAZ) and the simultaneous transfer of the Palau Island Cemeteries, where the dead were then being disinterred, to the jurisdiction of the Far East Zone (FEZ). Consequently, by 30 June 1947, the remaining cemeteries under PHILRYCOM control were located at Finschhafen in New Guinea; on Luzon and Leyte in the Philippine Islands; and on Okinawa in the Ryukyu Islands.<sup>40</sup>

In June, the AGRS Conference in Washington, D. C., following the earlier proposals made at the Tokyo conference, decided to concentrate all remains in the Far East Zone into mausoleums for above-ground storage before final repatriation or permanent overseas burial.<sup>41</sup>

Nichols Field, near Manila, where the hangars could be used for above-ground storage of the dead, provided the most logical site for a mausoleum in PHILRYCOM. During the summer of 1947, the Air Force was in the process of releasing that field to PHILRYCOM, and AGRS officials made arrangements for the transfer of space as the large hangars were vacated. At the same time, negotiations with the Philippine Government were underway to secure permission for above-ground storage of remains formerly interred in Finschhafen and Palau cemeteries. This request was granted early in September, and shortly thereafter the deceased from several PHIL-

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Although Okinawa was an integral part of PHILRYCOM, the operations there were the responsibility of the Commanding General, RYCOM.

<sup>41</sup> Hist, AGRS-PATA, p. 17.

RYCOM cemeteries were concentrated in the new AGRS Mausoleum.<sup>42</sup>

One such concentration to the Mausoleum took place from Manila Cemetery No. 1. Located 2½ miles north of Manila, this cemetery was opened for burials soon after American liberation forces entered the city in February 1945. The first interment occurred on 8 February. A total of 1,481 Americans, 84 Filipinos, 2 British, and 68 Japanese deceased rested here. The transfer of remains to the Manila Mausoleum began on 22 September 1947 and ended on 29 October 1947. Japanese dead were removed during August to the Prisoner of War Cemetery Canlubang No. 1, located 35 miles south of Manila. The whole area formerly occupied by Manila Cemetery No. 1 was soon leveled off by a bulldozer from the Ordnance Service Center.<sup>43</sup>

The deceased in USAF Cemetery Santa Barbara No. 1 were exhumed and moved to the Mausoleum during the fall of 1947. Santa Barbara No. 1, established in January 1945, had provided a burial place for the dead in the northern portion of Luzon. It served as a concentration cemetery for numerous small battlefield burial grounds, including San Fabian, Binloc, Bayambang, Binlonan, Binmaley, Rosales, and Lingayen, all in Pangasinan Province, and Santiago, Bambam, and Tarlac, all in Tarlac Province. From the date of establishment until final disinterment, this cemetery held a total of 5,196 Americans, 311 Allied, 43 civilian, and 531 Japanese dead. On 15 September, disinterment of Japanese remains began. This operation ended on 18 October, and all enemy deceased were sent to Manila and later reinterred at the POW Cemetery Canlubang No. 1. Exhumations of remains for shipment to the Manila Mausoleum commenced on 20 October. Local labor performed the initial work, but later the arrival at Santa Barbara No. 1 of a group of 84 employees from USAF Cemetery Manila No. 2, accelerated the rate of progress. Typhoons and heavy rains twice delayed disinterment operations, but work was finally completed on 24 December. A bulldozer from Clark Field leveled off the area on 15 January 1948, and it was released to the Corps of Engineers on the same day.<sup>44</sup> Thus, all Luzon cemeteries were now closed, with the exception of Manila No. 2 and the Bataan Memorial Cemetery, which are treated separately at a later point in this chapter.

On the island of Leyte, the scene of General MacArthur's first battle for reconquest of the Philippines, disinterment activities com-

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, Incl. 34.

<sup>43</sup> Hist, AGRS-FEZ, 1 Oct 47 to 31 Mar 48, Pt. 3, Incl. 18.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, Incl. 19A.

menced in Leyte Cemetery No. 1 during the autumn of 1947. The persons engaged in this task at its inception included 62 civilians, 1 American embalmer, 1 officer, and 2 enlisted men. At the peak of activities in November 1947, a total of 320 Filipinos, 4 American embalmers, 2 officers and 6 enlisted men were employed.

During its existence, which covered the period from 15 March 1945 to the date of final disinterments, Leyte No. 1 received the deceased from all Visayan Islands (Negros, Samar, Cebu, Panay, Masbate, etc.) and from Mindanao. As a result of these operations, this cemetery contained 9,996 remains, including 8,569 Americans.

Unfortunately, final disinterment operations occurred during the rainy season on Leyte, often forcing the men to work in waterlogged graves. Despite such obstacles, the first shipment of remains departed for Manila on 15 November and the entire task was completed with a final shipment exactly two months later. The last graves registration workers sailed from Leyte on 7 February 1948.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, early in 1948, all Philippine Island concentrations into the Manila Mausoleum had been accomplished, with the exception of Manila No. 2, where exhumations began late in 1947, only to be halted by the receipt at Headquarters, PHILRYCOM, of a CINCFE radio message dated 18 November, ordering the cessation, at least temporarily, of these operations in order to reduce fire hazards incident at that time to above-ground storage. Consequently, exhumations were discontinued and beautification efforts resumed. About 11,000 crosses were painted and open graves, caused by the last disinterments, were filled in prior to the Christmas season.<sup>46</sup> The deceased in Manila No. 2 rested there until their removal to the Mausoleum in the summer of 1948.

#### *Bataan Memorial Cemetery*

Before leaving the Philippine Islands, it would seem appropriate, in recognition of the great sacrifices made by the Philippine Army during World War II, to relate the interesting story of the establishment of Bataan Memorial Cemetery. All Americans buried in Bataan were removed before the end of 1946. This operation involved exhumations from 11 different burial plots or cemeteries and the recovery and concentration of bodies from all discoverable scattered burials. The 11 localities in which Filipino nationals still rested after removal of all American dead presented an unsightly appearance and lacked the dignified atmosphere which the American

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, Incl. 20.

<sup>46</sup> *Hist*, AGRS-FEZ, 1 Oct 47 to 31 Mar 48, pp. 39-40.

and Philippine Governments both deemed proper for the burial places of their war dead.<sup>47</sup>

An inspection of the 11 sites revealed a shocking state of affairs. Many individual grave markers were missing, knocked down, or disarranged. Some of the burial places were so badly overgrown that they were scarcely recognizable as cemeteries. In Cabcaben Cemetery, largest in Bataan, not only was neglect plainly apparent, but definite evidence of vandalism existed. About 30 graves had been opened, probably by ghouls seeking valuables and gold teeth. Obviously, prompt action was necessary to concentrate all these burials at a single place where they would be properly reinterred and safeguarded.<sup>48</sup>

Maj. Gen. George F. Moore, Commanding General, PHILRYCOM, initiated action by sending a letter on 19 March 1947 to the Chief of Staff, Philippine Army. Following a series of conferences between AGRS and Philippine Army representatives, recommendations were made to the Philippine Secretary of National Defense for a new burial site in the municipality of Pilar, Bataan Province, about 4 miles southwest of Balanga, the provincial capital. Because of its accessibility and its location on the last line defended on Bataan before the surrender in 1942, the site seemed particularly appropriate for a memorial cemetery. Acceptance of this proposal was communicated on 14 April to the Commanding General, PHILRYCOM.

On the same day, Philippine Army troops for the project were chosen and given instructions. Preparation of the site proceeded with vigor, and the cemetery was laid out according to standard procedures of the American War Department. The workers graded, landscaped, and surrounded the site with a 3-foot picket fence. They seeded the area with native grasses, beautified it with native shrubs, and erected a suitable flagpole.

When these preparations had progressed sufficiently, actual concentration of the dead began. All remains were processed and placed in caskets prior to reinterment, according to AGRS standards. Every effort was made to identify those previously buried as unknowns. All graves received standard crosses and metal plate grave markers, and a complete record of all burials was kept and delivered to the Philippine Army.<sup>49</sup> The project ended early in July 1947, with the reinterment of 2,013 deceased. At a formal ceremony held on the 15th, the Bataan Memorial Cemetery was transferred to the

<sup>47</sup> Ltr, Hq AGRS-FEZ to TQMG, Washington, D. C., 2 Sep 47, sub: Termination of AGRS Bataan Activities with Completion of Bataan Memorial Cemetery; KCRC-AGRS-PHILCOM, 293.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

custody of the Philippine Commonwealth. High military officials of both governments participated in the final tribute to the departed Filipino comrades-in-arms.

### *Ryukyu Islands Operations*

It will be recalled that the Graves Registration Conference at Tokyo in February 1947 also made plans for concentrations in the Ryukyu Islands. Shortly after the Commanding General, PHILRYCOM, approved these plans, the removal of the dead from Ie Shima and Zamami Shima cemeteries into Okinawa was ordered. Work would begin on 21 April 1947 with a tentative completion date of 1 August. Disinterment activities on Ie Shima actually started on 19 June, with Lt. Edward G. Hines, 10 enlisted men and 2 Filipinos performing the necessary duties. When the project was completed on 7 July, a total of 402 remains had been moved to the USAF Island Cemetery on Okinawa, where they were reinterred in Plot 1. On 5 August, the same team proceeded to Zamami Shima, where it disinterred 813 bodies and sent them to Okinawa for burial in Plots 1 and 6. The task on Zamami Shima ended on 7 October.<sup>50</sup>

The body of the famous war correspondent, "Ernie" Pyle, was among those transferred from Ie Shima to Okinawa. Mr. Walker Stone, of the Scripps-Howard newspapers, which Pyle had represented, expressed displeasure over this move. The Commanding General at Okinawa explained that the transfer was not an isolated case but only a part of the entire program in the Pacific. Nevertheless, certain publishers steadfastly maintained that such activities were not in harmony with the wishes or intention of the American people nor of Congress. They asserted that Mrs. Pyle opposed the removal of her famous husband from Ie Shima. Despite this adverse criticism, the Far East Command believed that the entire concentration of the dead to Okinawa fully conformed with War Department plans and directives.<sup>51</sup>

By the end of March 1948, concentration operations in the widespread PHILRYCOM Sector had been about 64 percent completed. The remaining 36 percent of remains not yet consolidated rested on Okinawa and in Manila Cemetery No. 2. Elsewhere in the southwest Pacific, concentration activities had virtually ended.

### **MARBO Operations**

It will be remembered that the Mariana and Bonin Islands originally were assigned to the old MIDPAC Sector of AGRS-PATA,

<sup>50</sup> Hist, AGRS-PATA, Incl. 12, sub: Historical Narrative Rpt, AGRS Activities, Ryukyus Command.

<sup>51</sup> Rad, CG, PHILRYCOM to WD (Attn QM), 31 Jul 47; KCRC-AGRS-FEC, 293.



FIGURE 16. *Wreath placed at grave of "Ernie" Pyle at Ie Shima, Ryukyu Islands, prior to removal of remains to the "Punchbowl."*

and that preliminary concentration accomplishments in this region included the removal of the Ulithi deceased to Saipan in August and early September 1946. At the beginning of 1947, the Mariana-Bonin Islands (MARBO) were separated from MIDPAC and placed under the newly created Far East Command. It will also be recalled that officials at the Tokyo Conference decided to remove the dead from both the Iwo Jima and the Tinian cemeteries to Saipan as quickly as possible. Capt. Robert J. McBroom, Executive Officer, AGRS-MARBO, had attended the conference and upon his return to Guam, prepared immediate plans for such an operation.<sup>52</sup>

The MARBO Sector faced an enormous Graves Registration task. A total of over 12,000 deceased lay in the ten cemeteries

<sup>52</sup> Hist, AGRS-MARBO Sector, FEZ, 1947-48, pp. 17-18.

under its control. AGRS officials estimated that of these remains, about 80 percent would be repatriated. The following table illustrates the manner in which the bodies were distributed:<sup>53</sup>

TABLE 13--*Distribution of Remains in MARBO*

Island	Name of cemetery	Identified	Unknowns	Total
1. Guam.....	ANM Cemetery #1, Asan.....	597	35	632
2. Guam.....	ANM Cemetery #2, Agat.....	1,585	92	1,677
3. Guam.....	ANM Cemetery #3, Agana.....	546	21	567
4. Saipan.....	2d Marine Division.....	1,379	47	1,426
5. Saipan.....	4th Marine Division.....	1,094	42	1,136
6. Saipan.....	27th Division Cemetery.....	1,395	35	1,430
7. Iwo Jima.....	3d Marine Division.....	937	12	949
8. Iwo Jima.....	4th Marine Division.....	2,148	67	2,215
9. Iwo Jima.....	5th Marine Division.....	2,196	34	2,230
10. Tinian.....	American Cemetery #1.....	617	10	627
		12,494	395	12,889

On 6 March 1947, General Headquarters, Far East Command, recommended to The Quartermaster General that the first repatriation from the Far East Command should be made from Saipan, including the dead from Iwo Jima and Tinian. GHQ further proposed that after this initial shipment, the next movement should start from Guam. Repatriation in the MARBO Sector would thus be completed before similar activities were begun in PHILRYCOM. This plan had the further advantage of releasing MARBO Graves Registration forces for concentration duties in the larger PHILRYCOM Sector.<sup>54</sup> But actually, nearly a year elapsed before the initial shipment departed from Saipan. The fulfillment of the plans was thereby delayed far beyond original expectations.

Meanwhile, in April 1947, target dates were established for the movement of the Iwo Jima and Tinian cemeteries to Saipan. The Iwo Jima operation was scheduled to begin on 15 May and end by 30 October 1947. The Tinian concentration would start on 10 November and end by 1 January 1948.<sup>55</sup>

On Saipan during April, AGRS officials acquired a mausoleum site preparatory to receipt of remains from Iwo Jima and Tinian. By June, the mausoleum, consisting of three Ordnance warehouses, neared completion, and responsibility for its establishment, care and

<sup>53</sup> Ltr, Hq MARBO Cmd, OQM to CG, MARBO Cmd, 24 Jan 47, 687.

<sup>54</sup> 1st Ind to Basic Ltr, 27 Nov 46, GHQ, FEC to TQMG, 6 Mar 47, KCRC-AGRS-FEC, 293.

<sup>55</sup> Rad, CG, MARBO to CG, PHILRYCOM, 18 Apr 47, 293.

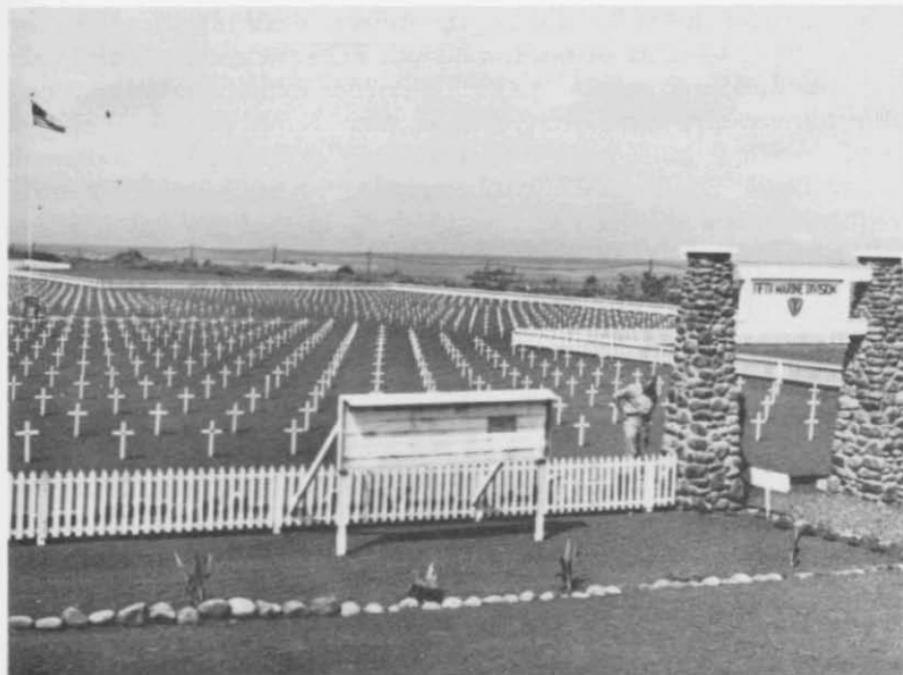


FIGURE 17. *Flag flies peacefully over Marines who died in battle for Iwo Jima.*

supervision, was delegated to the Commanding Officer, Army Garrison Force, Saipan.<sup>56</sup>

#### *Iwo Jima, Tinian and Guam Exhumations*

Iwo Jima provided a logical starting point for AGRS activities, since the Army Garrison Forces there were being inactivated. Furthermore, AGRS possessed no shipping facilities—a fact which necessitated the utilization of regularly scheduled shipping runs from Guam to Saipan to Iwo Jima and return. Supplies for the operation on Iwo Jima came from Guam by LST, since landing craft constituted the only means of shipping supplies without ferrying them from ship to shore.<sup>57</sup>

The 8036th Field Operating Section (FOS) undertook the task of concentrating the Iwo Jima dead to Saipan. Embarkation from Guam took place on 18 May 1947. The three officers attached to the unit bore responsibility for orienting the men and for drawing necessary supplies, which came from different depots and which were sent directly for loading aboard LST 803. Because of inex-

<sup>56</sup> Memo, Hq AGRS-MARBO, to CO, Army Garrison Force, APO 244, 31 May 47, sub: Establishment of Army Mausoleum; KCRC-AGRS-MARBO, 632.

<sup>57</sup> Hist, AGRS-MARBO Sector, FEZ, 1947-48, p. 38.

perience and shortness of time, the officers were not sure, even by sailing time, whether or not the 8036th FOS possessed all necessary supplies and equipment. Later experience demonstrated that certain unnecessary goods were carried, such as 500 pounds of cotton, while needed items were totally missing or carried in too small quantities. The supply of rubber gloves, for example, fell short of requirements and infections resulted from lack of protection.<sup>58</sup>

The 8036th FOS reached Iwo Jima on 22 May. Since it had not been expected to arrive so soon, changes and adjustments of original plans occurred, but within a period of three weeks, the 108 men in the unit were operating a mess hall, a motor pool, a headquarters, and working in the cemeteries. Exhumations took place in the following sequence: the 5th Marine Division Cemetery, the 3d Marine Division Cemetery, and the 4th Marine Division Cemetery.<sup>59</sup>

The Iwo Jima project constituted a rugged introduction to the MARBO concentration program. The workers were generally untrained for their task, and recent typhoons had shifted the terrain of the cemeteries. Disinterment of the 5th Marine Cemetery started early in June. This cemetery was composed of volcanic ash, and the first graves opened had sunk to a depth of from 8 to 10 feet. The ash proved exceedingly unstable, and graves often caved in after being excavated to a depth of about 3 feet. In such cases the men were forced to start their task again from the beginning. Often when the workers had dug down 6 feet or more, they became afraid that the walls would collapse. For protective purposes, a rope was suspended in the grave so that the workers could extricate themselves should a cave-in occur. After the collapse of a grave which buried a Filipino laborer to his shoulders, it was decided that the use of a bulldozer provided the best means of continuing the exhumations without endangering life. The bulldozer cleared the ground to about 2 feet above the deceased, and the last 2 feet were then dug by hand in order not to disturb the remains.<sup>60</sup>

During the Iwo Jima operation, morale suffered as a result of excessive heat, muddy drinking water, scarcity of entertainment, restriction of beverages to soft drinks, and generally unpleasant working conditions. Despite such handicaps, operations continued at a rapid rate, and by early August the first shipment of 892 remains had arrived at Saipan. The project terminated by mid-September, with over 5,000 bodies removed from Iwo Jima, and an advance party departed for Tinian. As a climax to the difficulties,

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41-43.

no ship arrived to remove the weary unit for nearly three weeks after the end of AGRS activities.<sup>61</sup>

In sharp contrast to the experiences on Iwo Jima, the Tinian exhumations proceeded without great obstacles. Disinterment of the 627 dead required only five days. Morale during the Tinian operation reached a high level since the men had plenty of clean water, more recreational facilities, and more comfortable working conditions. In addition, the Commanding Officer of Tinian provided movies, ice cream, a special AGRS beer garden, and boat transportation to nearby Saipan.<sup>62</sup>

When AGRS operations ended on Iwo Jima and Tinian, plans and suggestions for additional cemeterial consolidations in MARBO, although rather well advanced, apparently conflicted. Some officials favored moving the Okinawa dead to Manila, while others preferred an Okinawa-to-Saipan concentration. Col. James Murphey, Commanding Officer, Hq AGRS-FEZ, favored Saipan as the concentration point for the Okinawa deceased. He advanced three reasons for this point of view. In the first place, he believed that a considerable saving in personnel could be made by eliminating another repatriation point. Secondly, facilities on Saipan were adequate to handle this operation. Lastly, he asserted that facilities on Okinawa for above-ground storage or the establishment of a mausoleum were most inadequate.<sup>63</sup>

Before final settlement of this issue, the Commanding General, MARBO, requested the War Department to approve the transfer of the dead from the three Guam cemeteries to Saipan. One justification for such action arose from a total lack of warehouse space on Guam for possible use in above-ground storage of deceased. In fact, AGRS Headquarters, MARBO, had already moved to Saipan in July 1947 in order to obtain more adequate housing, more storage space, and improved harbor facilities.<sup>64</sup>

After receipt of War Department approval for the transfer,<sup>65</sup> the 8264th FOS (which had been activated on 11 July 1947 under operational control of the Graves Registration Officer, Headquar-

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>63</sup> Ltr, Hq AGRS-FEZ, to Col L. R. Talbot, QMC, Mem Div, OQMG, 30 Sep 47; KCRC-AGRS-FEZ, 687.

<sup>64</sup> Rad, CG, MARBO to CG, PHILRYCOM, 10 Oct 47; KCRC-AGRS-MARBO, 687.

<sup>65</sup> The Guam to Saipan concentration took place despite the fact that at that time, Guam was under serious consideration as a possible site for a permanent overseas cemetery. These exhumations on Guam thus became necessary in any case, since the proposed permanent cemetery must later conform in design and layout to plans of the American Battle Monuments Commission, which eventually would assume custody of such a cemetery.—Interview with Carl Allbee, Mem Div, OQMG, 14 Feb 55.

ters, MARBO, at the same time that the 8036th FOS was discontinued) departed from Saipan, on LST 246, reaching Guam with its three cemeteries, on 28 October 1947. Exhumations commenced six days later at Agana Cemetery. Test pits indicated that this operation would be a short one since the terrain consisted of fine coral sand. The workers encountered no particular difficulties and finished their task within three days. Exhumations at Asan Cemetery began on 10 November. Heavy rains and sticky soil slowed progress and the workers were constantly obliged to scrape thick lumps of mud from their shovels. Before the Asan project terminated, test pits were dug at the third cemetery—Agat—revealing a high water table in the lower corner of the cemetery and fairly dry conditions in the upper portions. Disinterment activities at Agat started on 21 November. Continuing heavy rainfall hampered the work considerably, but other problems arose. In several cases, the dog tags on the deceased did not coincide with the grave markers or the alphabetical rosters. Another difficulty arose from the burial of remains in several plots at a depth of 6 to 10 feet, forcing the workers, equipped with cleats, to be lowered on tent poles, while they hunted for remains. Operations continued until late December, and on the 30th of that month, final shipment of the Guam dead to Saipan took place.<sup>66</sup>

#### *Okinawa—Saipan Concentration*

The question of shifting the Okinawa dead to Manila or Saipan was finally resolved in favor of Saipan late in 1947.<sup>67</sup> The proposed plan of operation for this concentration called for the use of the 9105th Technical Service Unit, QMG, for the “exhumation, shipment, identification, processing, final-type casketing, and repatriation” of Okinawa dead.<sup>68</sup> This unit comprised five complete Field Operating Sections and one incomplete Section. Gen. A. D. Hopping, Quartermaster, Far East Command, suggested that three full Sections and part of the incomplete one be sent to Okinawa and that the other two units and the remainder of the incomplete Section stay on Saipan for casketing there.<sup>69</sup>

In February 1948, General Hopping approved the removal of some 10,000 remains in the six USAF cemeteries on Okinawa to the Saipan Mausoleum, which was then ready for use. He also determined that PHILRYCOM would bear full responsibility for open-

<sup>66</sup> Hist, AGRS-MARBO Sector, FEZ, 1947-48, pp. 64-67.

<sup>67</sup> Ltr, QM, FEC, to CO, AGRS-FEZ, 22 Dec 47, sub: Repatriation of Okinawa World War II Dead, 293.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

ing and closing the Okinawa cemeteries and for final restoration operations there, while MARBO would assume the custody of the remains when they reached Saipan. It was expected that this plan would minimize any conflicts of authority and responsibility during this joint PHILRYCOM-MARBO project.<sup>70</sup>

One of the features of the operation involved the use of the old Naha Quartermaster area on Okinawa as a temporary mausoleum and processing laboratory. AGRS took immediate steps to put this area in readiness by sending trained personnel and needed supplies. The 9105th Technical Service Unit began exhumations on 10 March in the 7th Division Cemetery. The total number of remains in the six Okinawa cemeteries included the following:

(1) Island Command Cemetery (Included remains from Ie Shima and Zamami Shima cemeteries)-----	3,969
(2) 77th Division Cemetery-----	770
(3) 6th Marine Division Cemetery-----	1,698
(4) 96th Division Cemetery-----	875
(5) 7th Division Cemetery-----	1,453
(6) 1st Marine Division Cemetery-----	1,478
Total-----	10,243

The terrain of Okinawa consisted mostly of a combination of heavy clay and coral rock, which rain hardened into a stiff substance almost as solid as granite. Consequently, the work progressed slowly in wet weather since the coral adhered to the clay and had to be picked out by hand before the men could probe deeper. Another AGRS problem involved transportation of laborers from a work camp, 12 miles distant. Moving remains from the outlying cemeteries to the processing laboratory likewise entailed many miles of travel. Because of a shortage of spare parts, motor maintenance provided an ever-present worry.<sup>71</sup>

No particular difficulties arose during the exhumation of the 7th Division Cemetery and the work was terminated by mid-April. Operations at the 1st Marine Cemetery, which began on 16 April and ended on 3 May, proved surprisingly simple, for the graves were well placed and in close alignment with the crosses. By contrast, during operations in the 6th Marine Division Cemetery between 5 May and 23 July, AGRS workers in some cases excavated to a depth of more than 12 feet through coral rocks before they located the remains. While looking for unknowns, the men some-

<sup>70</sup> Rad, CINCFE to CG, PHILRYCOM and CG, MARBO, 17 Feb 48; KCRG-AGRS-MARBO, 687.

<sup>71</sup> Okinawa Opn, Hist, AGRS-MARBO Zone, Mar 48-Feb 49, pp. 12-13; KCRG-AGRS-MARBO, 314.7.

times had to open as many as four graves before finding the remains sought. In one case, 84 graves were opened in order to locate an unknown. Water and mud in the 96th Division Cemetery hampered disinterment attempts there.<sup>72</sup>

The LST 916 transported the dead from Okinawa to Saipan. Four trips were made, the first one in May and the last on 17 August 1948. This final shipment arrived at Tanapag Harbor, Saipan, on the morning of 23 August. Unloading of the remains ended on the following day. The dead were moved by convoy to the mausoleum storage points for final type processing. Of the more than 10,000 remains transferred, 9,888 were identified and 342 were unknowns.<sup>73</sup>

#### *Abandonment of Guam as Cemetery Site*

Because of adverse action by Congress, meanwhile, the original plan to establish a national cemetery on Guam was abandoned.<sup>74</sup> MARBO dead, whose next of kin indicated preference for overseas burial, were henceforth kept at the Saipan Mausoleum until a national cemetery site finally was chosen. The 27th Division, 2d Marine, and 4th Marine Cemeteries on Saipan, however, were undisturbed until actual repatriation drew near.

#### **JAP-KOR Operations**

This Sector included Japan and Korea and represented the heart of the enemy empire, whose final defeat had cost so many American lives. Since no ground combat occurred here, American deaths resulted from plane crashes over Japan and Korea or in adjoining waters, or else occurred in prison camps. Burials were on a comparatively small scale. Although some favorable consideration had been given in 1946 to suggestions looking to removal of the 156 remains in Seoul Cemetery, Korea, to Saipan or Okinawa, no final decision on the matter was reached until February 1947, when officials at the Tokyo Graves Registration conference agreed to transfer the deceased during the coming summer from Korea to Yokohama, a concentration point for the dead in Japan.<sup>75</sup> By the close of June, the task had been concluded with all remains from Korea exhumed and reburied in USAF Cemetery, Yokohama.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>73</sup> Final Hist Rpt of Tempo USAF Cems, Ryukyu Islands, 23 Sep 48, AGRS-PHILCOM Zone, pp. 5-9; KCRC-AGRS-PZ.

<sup>74</sup> The House Appropriations Committee in Report 1420 approved all amounts requested by OQMG except for the establishment of a National Cemetery at Guam. See AGRS Newsletter, March 1948, p. 4.

<sup>75</sup> 1st Ind, GHQ, FEC to TQMG, Wash, D. C., 6 Mar 47; KCRC-AGRS-FEC, 293.

<sup>76</sup> Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-FEZ, 30 Jun 47, 319.1.

In the autumn of 1947, General Hopping recommended the concentration of the deceased from both the Yokohama and the Okinawa cemeteries, with approximately 2,027 and 10,243 remains respectively, at Manila by January 1948.<sup>77</sup> He believed that such an operation would accelerate the entire program in the Far East Zone and facilitate the early release of civilian and military personnel for other duties in search and recovery and identification activities. Yokohama and Okinawa would be eliminated as repatriation points, thereby simplifying supervision of zonal activities. In addition, the five widely separated ports of call in the Western Pacific would be reduced to three—Manila, Saipan, and Guam.<sup>78</sup>

Because of these recommendations, Headquarters, Eighth Army, ordered the disinterment, preparation, storage, and shipment of all remains in the Yokohama Cemetery to the Manila Mausoleum.<sup>79</sup> Those scheduled for removal to Manila included about 1,140 knowns, 610 unknowns, and 366 who had been cremated. The operations would begin about 10 November and end before 15 December 1947. After disinterment, the remains were destined for above-ground storage until the entire plan had been approved by OQMG.<sup>80</sup>

Other features of the plan for disinterment and concentration of remains to the Mausoleum at Manila included the preparation of disinterment reports at the Memorial Division, Office of the Quartermaster, Headquarters, Eighth Army, and the completion of such reports at the grave site; placement of an emergency medical tag on each casket or bundle of remains at the grave site, including name and serial number on tags of known deceased and numbers on tags of unknowns; placement of new identification tags or embossed plates on the outside at the foot of each casket and the attachment of a duplicate tag to the outside wrapping at the head of the remains after processing for identification, together with all old tags.<sup>81</sup>

On 10 November 1947, the Mobile Identification Team from Headquarters, AGRS-FEZ, Manila, began exhumations in the USAF Cemetery at Yokohama. One hundred Japanese laborers were used in the work. Four enlisted men from the 108th QM

<sup>77</sup> In the case of Okinawa, it has already been seen that this proposal failed, since the Okinawa dead went to the Saipan Mausoleum to await final repatriation or overseas burial.

<sup>78</sup> Rad, CINCFE to Dept of Army (Mem Div), 23 Oct 47, sub: Cemetery Consolidations, Okinawa and Yokohama; KCRC-AGRS-Far East, 687.

<sup>79</sup> Opns Dir No. 1, Hq Eighth Army, 6 Nov 47, sub: Disinterment and Concentration of Remains, no file No.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

Graves Registration Company acted as labor supervisors and marked all individual remains before their removal from the grave site.<sup>82</sup> OQMG disapproval of the plan for concentration of these remains in Manila meant that they would be sent either to Saipan or to the United States in January 1949.<sup>83</sup> In the meantime, the deceased would remain above ground in a temporary mausoleum at the USAF Cemetery at Yokohama.<sup>84</sup> As matters actually developed, after each remains was processed by the temporary Identification Laboratory at Yokohama Cemetery, graves registration workers wrapped it individually in craftex paper, then labeled, tagged, and laid it in a numerically designated casket for proper placement in the mausoleum. Each casket had an embossed tag attached at the head containing thereon the name of the deceased. After receipt of official approval of above-ground storage was received from the CINCFE, all remains already so stored were wrapped with a shelter half in addition to the craftex paper. The last remains processed by the Identification Laboratory was stored on 8 January, just ten days before the disinterment team left Yokohama. By that time, the processed casketed remains were stored on racks in the fireproof building formerly used as the identification laboratory.<sup>85</sup>

### Concentration Activities on the Asiatic Mainland

The China and India-Burma Theaters comprised the two great mainland areas of Asia where significant AGRS activities took place during and after World War II. Although fatalities in these vast regions were far fewer than in the Pacific, AGRS faced many problems peculiar to large land areas where the dead were widely scattered.

#### *China Theater and Zone Operations*

In China, the United States forces during World War II consisted mostly of technical missions, combat liaison teams, and widely dispersed Air Force units which operated in an area over half the size of the United States. Before the American Graves Registration Service, China Zone (AGRS-CZ), was activated at the end of 1945, the double task of searching for and concentrating American war dead in centralized cemeteries had already begun. During combat operations, the Air Ground Aid Section of the China Theater

<sup>82</sup> (1) Hist, AGRS-FEZ, 1 Oct 47 to 31 Mar 48, Pt. I, p. 85. (2) *Ibid.*, Pt. III, Incl. 3, sub: Final Rpt on Yokohama Operation.

<sup>83</sup> The reason for this change of plans is obscure, but it is likely that the abandonment of Guam as a possible national cemetery may have been related to this action.

<sup>84</sup> (1) Hist, AGRS-FEZ, 1 Oct 47 to 31 Mar 48, I, pp. 85-86. (2) *Ibid.*, Incl. 2B.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, III, Incl. 3, pp. 3-4.

returned survivors of air crashes to their home bases. The 106th QM Graves Registration Platoon worked with this Section, locating and registering remains and graves of scattered American dead and in many cases centralizing bodies into more convenient spots.<sup>86</sup>

Concentration activities during and after the war were fraught with countless difficulties. Often, centralization of isolated burials proceeded slowly because AGRS technicians were lacking and locations of fatal airplane crashes were inaccessible. In some cases, six weeks were required for AGRS units to travel to an isolated burial place, disinter the remains, and transport them to a spot from which they could be moved by air or truck to a military cemetery.<sup>87</sup>

Just before V-J Day, on 11 August 1945, Hq, Services of Supply, USF, China Theater, issued Memorandum 38, which served as a basis for future AGRS operations. It stressed the point that all burials would be made with a full realization of their temporary nature and based upon the assumption that all bodies would be returned eventually to the next of kin in the United States or moved to permanent military cemeteries overseas. The memorandum also included instructions for transporting the dead to the most accessible temporary burial grounds. It listed the following temporary American Military Cemeteries in China:

<i>City or Village</i>	<i>Province</i>
Kunming .....	Yunnan
Paoshan .....	Yunnan
Mopanshan (Chengtu) .....	Szechwan
Kweiyang .....	Kweichow
Yang Tong (Kweilin) .....	Kwangsi

Responsibility for the operation of these cemeteries rested upon the Base Section Commander within whose area they were located.

A few days later, on 20 August, Hq, SOS, recommended to the Army Chief of Staff the activation of three additional graves registration detachments to recover solitary burials and centralize all remains in China either at Kunming or Chengtu. These two locations were chosen as major concentration points because they already contained by far the largest number of graves in the China Theater. Kunming had served during the war as a hub of American military activities and as a base for General Chennault's air operations. Chengtu marked the site of staging fields for B-29 bombers and the cemetery there received many of the fatalities incurred on B-29 bombing missions. The centralization of all located

<sup>86</sup> Hist, AGRS-CZ, Ch. I, pp. 2-4.

<sup>87</sup> 1st Ind. Hq, SOS, USF in CT to CG, Rear Echelon, USF in CT, 7 May 45, to Basic Ltr, 20 Mar 45, sub: Disinterment and Reinterment of Bodies Outside the Continental Limits of the U. S., 687.

remains in Kunming or Chengtu had the additional advantage of simplifying future concentration at Shanghai, preparatory to repatriation or permanent overseas burial.<sup>88</sup>

In addition to the military cemeteries in China, there were also the Prisoner of War Cemetery at Mukden, the Hungjao Road Cemetery located in Shanghai, and the Marine Corps Cemeteries at Tientsin and Tsingtao. AGRS officials generally felt that Shanghai provided the logical place for a national cemetery since it was certain to become the headquarters for future AGRS operations and since it met the general requirements governing the selection of collection points outlined in the directive of 19 February 1945.<sup>89</sup> The burial of all current death remains at Shanghai after 1 October 1945 constituted a step in anticipation of that city's future role in graves registration matters.

The major problems confronting AGRS-CZ when it was activated on 31 December 1945 embraced the recovery, reinterment, and concentration of isolated burials and the recovery and interment of current death remains. In addition, AGRS-CZ assumed responsibility for the establishment and care of American cemeteries in China.<sup>90</sup> The new agency operated under the direct supervision of the Theater Quartermaster.

The Cemeterial Division formed the nucleus of AGRS-CZ. Throughout 1946 and early 1947, it engaged primarily in maintenance of temporary cemeteries and in consolidating, processing, and identifying the dead found by search and recovery teams.<sup>92</sup> In the spring of 1946, Col. M. V. Turner of the OQMG, and Maj. R. S. Wirtz of AGRS-CZ, conducted inspections at Chengtu and Kunming, verified the plot sheets for these two cemeteries, and corrected discrepancies.<sup>93</sup>

In August 1946, officials attending a conference held at the Office of the Chief of the Transportation Division, AAF, in Washington, decided that the Air Transport Command (ATC) would carry necessary graves registration technicians from Shanghai to both Kunming and Chengtu, to prepare the dead at these two points for air shipment to Shanghai. When the deceased were ready for movement, ATC would furnish sufficient aircraft to complete the mission. AGRS representatives at the conference thought that approximately six C-54 trips would suffice for the transportation of all

<sup>88</sup> Memo, Hq SOS, USF, CT for ColS, 8 Oct 45; KCRC-AGRC-China, 322.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>90</sup> GR Policies; KCRC-AGRS-CZ, 322.

<sup>92</sup> Hist, AGRS-CZ, Ch. II, p. 7.

<sup>93</sup> Rpt, GR and Repat Opns, CZ, 31 May 46, 319.1

Chengtou and Kunming dead to Shanghai. The total number of remains included 847 at Kunming and 294 at Chengtu.<sup>94</sup>

In the meantime, AGRS established a temporary mausoleum in Shanghai to store the deceased. On 12 September, 435 containers with remains and ashes, located by search and recovery teams in Formosa and South China, reached Shanghai. By the close of that month, AGRS workers had disinterred a total of 180 remains at Mukden. These were all sent to Shanghai by air transport during October.<sup>95</sup>

After completing the Mukden project, the AGRS Cemetery Maintenance Team moved on to Tientsin and started exhumation activities at the Marine Corps Cemetery in accordance with an agreement with the Navy. When the Tientsin exhumations ended, the 43 remains were transported to Tsingtao aboard a Naval LSM and stored in a naval building under a Marine Corps guard.<sup>96</sup> The Cemetery Maintenance Team arrived in Tsingtao on 18 December 1946 to exhume 37 remains, but frozen ground, Christmas, and a 5-day holiday observed in January during the Chinese New Year combined to delay the start of exhumation operations. By early February, however, the task had been completed, and on 3 March, a Navy tanker bearing the bodies from Tientsin and Tsingtao arrived in Shanghai, where they were placed in the Remains Depot.<sup>97</sup>

By late 1946, AGRS had formulated definite plans for evacuation of the Kunming and Chengtu cemeteries. A Field Operating Section was organized and trained for this important task. Officials anticipated that the unit would proceed to Kunming early in January 1947 or whenever sufficient advance supplies arrived in that city. Bad weather had already delayed the shipment of needed items to both Kunming and Chengtu, but despite this handicap and other obstacles, the unit was able, thanks to air-lifted supplies, to begin exhumations at Kunming late in February. On 6 March, the first load of remains moved by air to Shanghai.<sup>98</sup> On 19 March, the FOS finished its exhumation task and moved on to Chengtu, where bad weather and wet ground so slowed the work that 11 days were required to exhume 287 graves. At Kunming, the same group of workers had exhumed nearly four times that number in only 18 days.

<sup>94</sup> Ltr, Hq AAF, Washington, D. C., to CG, ATC, Wash, D. C., 28 Aug 46, sub: Air Transportation for AGRS Movement of Remains of American Pers. in China; no file No.

<sup>95</sup> (1) Rpt, GR and Repat Opns, CZ, 30 Sep 46, 319.1. (2) Ltr, AGRS-CZ to OQMG, Washington, D. C., 17 Jun 47, 323.3.

<sup>97</sup> Hist, AGRS-CZ, Ch. V, p. 21.

<sup>98</sup> Rpt, GR and Repat Opns, CZ, 28 Feb 47, 319.1.

The entire operation and future of AGRS-CZ changed abruptly on 12 March 1947, when Col. Charles F. Kearney, Chief of the organization, summoned his staff to the conference room at Headquarters and threw a bombshell into the group by reading a War Department directive inspired by the increasingly unstable political situation in China. The salient points of this message were: the evacuation to Hawaii of all deceased personnel in the China Zone; evacuation of half the officer, enlisted, and United States civilian personnel to Hawaii; cancellation of plans for establishment of a Central Identification Unit; the evacuation of all remains to Hawaii on the troop ships *General Weigle* and *Admiral Benson*, scheduled to arrive in Shanghai on 13 and 16 April; the immediate concentration of all remains at Shanghai, above ground; personnel and remains, including those at Kunming and Chengtu, to be ready for shipment by 13 April 1947; all burials in Shanghai Cemetery to be exhumed and boxed immediately; records of all remains to accompany the last shipment to Hawaii and records cross-indexed to show storage space location with the former burial location.<sup>99</sup>

Colonel Kearney at once issued instructions to insure compliance with this sweeping directive. His orders provided for temporary curtailment of search and recovery activities and the shifting of all available employees to the Cemeterial Division to help carry out the huge but short-term task of evacuation. Search and recovery workers arriving in Shanghai from the field in consequence were immediately assigned to the Cemeterial Division. Graves Registration officers and men throughout the entire Zone were required to toil the long hours necessary to accomplish the mission within the allotted time.

In order to carry out the assignment efficiently, the Cemeterial Division was reorganized into four major sections: Maintenance, Repatriation, Records, and Control. The Maintenance Section had direct control of all cemeteries in China and accomplished exhumations through Field Operating Sections for identification purposes and for shipment to Shanghai. The Repatriation Branch prepared the bodies for shipment and took charge of all current deaths in the Zone. The Records Section maintained a record of all activities, including detailed information concerning each grave. The Control Section co-ordinated the functions of the other three and maintained diplomatic contacts in matters pertaining to the disposition of the dead.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>99</sup> (1) Hist, AGRS-CZ, Ch. VI, pp. 25-26. (2) Opns Rpt, AGRS-CZ, 21 May 47, Pt. II, pp. 8-9, 323.3.

<sup>100</sup> Hist, AGRS-CZ, Ch. VI, pp. 28-29.

Shortly after receipt of the evacuation directive, a new Field Operating Section was established in Shanghai. During seven working days and nights, it disinterred remains in the Military Cemetery at Shanghai and moved them to the Remains Depot, where they were placed in a huge steel and concrete warehouse on the Hwangpoo waterfront. Here they were processed, with AGRS workers toiling on a round-the-clock schedule.<sup>101</sup>

During the peak of operations, 17 officers and 48 enlisted men worked with the Cemeterial Division. By 6 April, the processing of the dead had ended, and the next day, preparation for loading the vessels began. All shipping cases were rechecked to minimize the possibility of error. By 9 April, loading preparations were finished.

The USAT *General Weigle* arrived in Shanghai on the following day and the task of placing the remains aboard was completed three days later. On 18 April, military and civilian personnel scheduled for evacuation to Hawaii went aboard the USAT *Admiral Benson*. The intent of the directive of 12 March had now been accomplished; only search and recovery units stayed in the China Zone to carry on AGRS operations.<sup>102</sup>

During the entire period of concentration activities in China, AGRS teams exhumed and removed a total of 2,583 remains to Shanghai for later repatriation. Seven deceased were not disinterred from the Hungjao Road Cemetery in Shanghai. Five of this group did not come under provisions of Public Law 383. The sixth body was to be shipped to Hawaii later, and the seventh was that of a soldier whose family resided in Shanghai.<sup>103</sup>

The following breakdown shows by cemeteries the number of graves exhumed and remains removed:<sup>104</sup>

TABLE 14—*Cemeteries in China Zone*

U. S. Cemetery	Graves	Remains Removed
Kunming .....	837	856
Chengtu .....	282	321
Mukden .....	252	261
Tientsin .....	43	43
Tsingtao .....	37	37
Shanghai .....	431	517
Remains Depot .....		548
Totals .....	1,882	2,583

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>102</sup> Opns Rpt, AGRS-CZ, 21 May 47, Pt. II, pp. 14-15, 323.3.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>104</sup> Rpt, GR and Repat Opns, CZ, 30 Apr 47, p. 1, 319.1.

After the evacuation, search and recovery missions were again emphasized. From time to time, until AGRS-CZ was deactivated early in 1948, small numbers of dead arrived at Shanghai for storage in the Remains Depot where they awaited shipment to Hawaii. In June, for example, 15 deceased arrived from the field as a result of search and recovery efforts. In September, only eight newly recovered remains reached Shanghai. As deactivation day approached, search and recovery activities rapidly waned, and only an insignificant number of dead arrived. For all practical purposes, the story of concentration operations in China had come to a close with the sailing in April 1947 of the *General Weigle* and the *Admiral Benson*.

### *India-Burma Operations*

In this Theater, the deceased lay in remote, isolated graves or in cemeteries which were too inaccessible for proper maintenance. The chief job was to exhume the widely scattered remains and transfer them to established burial places. After the fierce fighting in the Burmese jungles and mountains, which finally ended with the capture of Myitkyina by the famed "Merrill's Marauders," a detachment of enlisted men from the graves registration platoon at Ledo proceeded to this area and aided in the concentration of some 750 combat dead in a temporary military cemetery at Myitkyina. Throughout Burma, about 95 percent of isolated combat burials were recovered and assembled in temporary military burial grounds.

Shortly before V-J Day, Headquarters, United States Forces, India-Burma Theater, (USF-IBT) assigned to the Commanding General of each Advance, Intermediate, and Base Section the supervision and operation of the Graves Registration Service within his command area, including proper interment of the dead, determination of identities, preparation of burial forms and records, and maintenance of temporary cemeteries. In turn, each Commanding General was instructed to appoint a graves registration officer who would be directly responsible to him for all these activities. Four concentration points for the theater dead had already been tentatively selected. They were located at Karachi (New Malir) and at Barrackpore and Kalaikunda in India (about 15 miles north and 80 miles west of Calcutta respectively), and at Myitkyina in Burma.<sup>105</sup>

Just after V-J Day, the War Department directed that, in anticipation of eventual repatriation, immediate action be taken toward

<sup>105</sup> Cir No. 71, Hq USF, IBT, 22 Jun 45; KCRC-AGRS-IBT, 293.

concentrating all burials at points adjacent to transportation facilities or ports. Col. E. J. McAllister, the Theater Quartermaster, accordingly made tentative plans for concentration of some 2,500 remains from about 40 different localities. He recommended that:

- (a) American Military Cemeteries at New Malir, Kalaikunda, Barrackpore, India; and Myitkyina, Burma, be designated as concentration cemeteries.
- (b) The 970th and 971st QM Supply Detachments (total 4 officers and 88 enlisted men) be available to the Graves Registration Service to assist in the concentration.
- (c) India-China Detachment-Air Transport Command (ICD-ATC) make available aircraft for transporting these remains . . . Rail transportation requirements cannot be met due to War Department policy that sealed caskets may not be used in Overseas Theaters.<sup>106</sup>

On 17 October, Colonel McAllister estimated that completion of the project would require from 60 to 90 days. On that same day, the Commanding General, USF, IBT, directed the Commanding General, India-China Division, Air Transport Command, (COM-GENICDATC) to concentrate in Kalaikunda approximately 1,300 deceased, of whom 450 came from the Advance Section, 500 from the Intermediate Section, and 350 from the Base Section. He also directed the reinterment at Barrackpore of some 150 dead from South Burma and southern India and the transfer of 75 remains from Agra and other western localities to New Malir. It was estimated that the equivalent of two C-47 cargo planes would be needed daily for 60 days to transport remains. The program further required the expansion of the Kalaikunda Cemetery to a capacity of 2,000 graves.

On 18 October, the Theater Quartermaster ordered the employment of the 970th QM Supply Detachment for the removal of remains from Bhamo to Myitkyina. Upon completion of this task, the group proceeded to Shingbwiayang to transfer the dead to Kalaikunda. As matters actually developed, remains from Shingbwiayang were first concentrated at Myitkyina and only later at Kalaikunda. The Theater Quartermaster also directed the 971st QM Supply Detachment to work in Tezpur Cemetery and then in Jorhat, removing remains to Kalaikunda. When these projects were finished, both detachments were to work in cemeteries in the Base Section area. When this phase of their activities had been concluded, the units would proceed to the Advance and Inter-

<sup>106</sup> Memo, Col E. J. McAllister for CofS, G-3, G-4, 17 Oct 45; KCRC-AGRS-IBT, 293 (Concentration Plan-1945-47).

mediate Sections, where they would evacuate the dead from the Ledo and Panitola Cemeteries to Kalaikunda.<sup>107</sup>

The fulfillment of the overall plan for concentrating India-Burma remains into four major cemeteries did not progress without opposition. On 2 November 1945, Gen. Walter K. Wilson, Hq, Intermediate Section, USF, IBT, offered the following alternatives to the War Department concentration scheme:

- (a) That all burials in Burma be concentrated at Myitkyina. This includes moving the Shingbwiyang Cemetery to Myitkyina.
- (b) That burials now at Ledo remain there and that the Ledo Cemetery be made a permanent installation.
- (c) That burials now at Panitola remain there and that the Panitola Cemetery be made a permanent installation.

General Wilson advanced several reasons for recommending these alternatives. In the first place, movement of a large number of deceased at that time would be avoided. At some later date, the dead could be moved directly to ports, reducing the possibility of mistakes in identity. In the second place, the number of qualified workers needed to transport large numbers of remains was not then available, owing to the continuing manpower shortage in the theater. In the third place, suitable coffins for large-scale movement were not obtainable. Lastly, General Wilson pointed out that some of the deceased in Burma had died of communicable diseases and their disinterment by inexperienced workers might constitute a health hazard.

Five days later, on 7 November, Lt. W. M. DeLoach, Commanding Officer of the 105th QM Graves Registration Platoon, noted that existing concentration plans necessitated two disinterments prior to final repatriation. He also mentioned the shortage of workers for any extensive graves registration activities, but agreed that Tezpur and Jorhat Cemeteries should be consolidated since neither was readily accessible to Calcutta by rail.

At a conference held on 18 November at Hq, Intermediate Section, Chabua, many aspects of graves registration problems were discussed, including the concentration program. On 20 November, at a meeting held in the office of General Wilson, the conferees drew up a tentative schedule and agreed to send an evacuation team to Tezpur at once and a receiving team to Kalaikunda. Thus, despite objections and counter-proposals, the overall plan for consolidating American dead went into effect late in November 1945.

On 28 November, the first shipment of remains from Tezpur

<sup>107</sup> Memo, QM for G-3, 18 Oct 45; KCRC-AGRS-IBT, 319.1.

arrived at Kalaikunda. Two days later, the exhumation team commenced operations at Jorhat, where the cemetery contained 93 American dead. The older graves held only bones and debris. All bodies had been buried in wooden caskets, which remained intact in recent graves, but which often had disintegrated in older graves. The earth was relatively dry at the surface and moderately moist at the level of the caskets. The deceased were flown for reinterment to Kalaikunda, where expansion of the cemetery had begun.

Work began at the Panitola, Assam, Cemetery on 4 December 1945. Located in a damp area where the water table often rose above the casket level during the monsoon season, the cemetery contained 366 Americans, a few of whom may have died from infectious diseases. After exhumations, the deceased were placed in new caskets and sent by air to Kalaikunda. At Ledo, Assam, disinterment of the 394 remains commenced in mid-December. Upon completion of this project, the dead were also flown to Kalaikunda.

At this time, the Myitkyina Cemetery received bodies from both Shingbwiyang and Namphakka Cemeteries, the former containing 63 remains and the latter 127. This concentration proceeded under the direction of 2d Lt. Charles E. Chambliss. The remains, kept in a well-ventilated warehouse, were reburied at a rate of about 12 daily.<sup>108</sup>

The Theater Quartermaster meanwhile requested permission to exhume all bodies in the New Malir Cemetery for subsequent reburial at Kalaikunda. He pointed out that such an operation would reduce the number of concentration cemeteries in the Theater to three—Kalaikunda, Barrackpore, and Myitkyina. The New Malir Cemetery contained 98 deceased, with 64 more scheduled for reinterment there from cemeteries at Agra, New Delhi, Bombay, Lalitpur, Kamptee, Jullunder, Bhusaval, and Deolali.<sup>109</sup>

Colonel McAllister believed that New Malir could be evacuated within four days and thus worked satisfactorily into the concentration schedules. He also observed that the exhumation of this cemetery would eliminate the necessity of retaining personnel for maintenance purposes. Furthermore, remains in those localities previously scheduled for transfer to New Malir could be flown directly to Kalaikunda. Early in 1946, the Commanding General, India-Burma Theater, gave permission for carrying out these plans.

At about this time, Colonel McAllister proposed the evacuation of the Myitkyina Cemetery and the reinterment of its 759 remains

<sup>108</sup> Rpt of Inspection, IBT, sub: Transfer of American Bodies from Outlying to Central Cemeteries-Sanitary Aspects; KCRC-AGRS-IBT, 293 (Burial Concentration Plan).

<sup>109</sup> Memo, Col E. J. McAllister, QM for CofS, G-3, G-4, 14 Dec 45; KCRC-AGRS-IBT, 293 (Burial Concentration Plan).

in the Calcutta area, thereby eliminating the difficulties that would be involved in moving caskets to Myitkyina. Moreover, this scheme complied with the War Department policy of concentrating the dead in port areas.<sup>110</sup> Major General Terry, Commanding General, India-Burma Theater, decided to carry out Colonel McAllister's suggestion.

A few officers in the Intermediate Section expressed concern over the dangers to land transportation during the coming monsoon season. They pointed out that the Bhamo-Myitkyina truck road would become impassable, that flood waters would suspend barge traffic on the Irrawaddy River, and that the Burma railways had not recovered from the havoc of wartime bombing. An airlift offered the best solution, but the Army Transport Command gloomily estimated that the re-establishment of an air route between Myitkyina and Calcutta would require at least a month.

Despite all these dire predictions, the 971st QM Supply Detachment began exhumations at Myitkyina immediately and soon completed this phase of its mission. A total of 240 remains moved by air to the Calcutta area by the middle of January and the others were placed in caskets as soon as they became available. This activity terminated early in February and all recovered dead from Burma lay in Kalaikunda Cemetery.

While the Myitkyina exhumations progressed, all New Malir remains were in the process of concentration to Barrackpore Cemetery. This operation marked a reversal of earlier plans to transfer the New Malir dead to Kalaikunda. All other registered burials in India were in the midst of concentration either to Barrackpore or Kalaikunda Cemeteries. Officials expected that all such operations would terminate by the end of February 1946.<sup>111</sup> On 15 February, the concentration of burials in the Theater was 86 percent completed. Of a total of approximately 2,337 remains scheduled for centralization at the beginning of the program, some 2,016 had been disinterred from various localities and reburied in the Calcutta area. Approximately 321 scattered dead still awaited transfer and reburial.<sup>112</sup>

Late in February 1946, AGRS published detailed plans for the location, exhumation, and transfer of these scattered remains, mostly in isolated graves in Southern Burma, Thailand, the Netherlands East Indies, and French Indo-China. A survey team would

<sup>110</sup> Memo, Col E. J. McAllister for CG, IBT, 2 Jan 46; KCRC-AGRS-IBT, 293 (Burial Concentration Plan).

<sup>111</sup> Rad, CG, IBT to SERVQMG, 7 Feb 46; KCRC-AGRS-IBT, 293 (Burial Concentration Plan).

<sup>112</sup> Fld Progress Rpts and Recaps, 1946; KCRC-AGRS-IBT, 319.1.

proceed to Bangkok, Thailand, and after gathering pertinent information from British Graves Registration officials, would go into the Bangkok-Moulmein Railroad area. Upon completion of exhumation operations in this area and in and about Rangoon, the party would fly by RAF plane to Sumatra and Java to survey those regions. If political conditions permitted, the group would then visit other islands in the Netherlands East Indies. The team would arrive in Saigon, French Indo-China, in April. The recovered dead in all these areas would be transferred by air or ship to Singapore.<sup>113</sup> The Singapore Cemetery was under British control, but arrangements were made with the Chief, Imperial War Graves Commission, to use a portion of it for temporary burial of American dead. In Singapore, the Liaison Detachment of USF, IBT, estimated that as many as 700 remains might be located, identified, and reburied in Southeast Asia.<sup>114</sup>

In accordance with these plans, AGRS officers and men undertook to concentrate Southeast Asian remains in the American Section of the Singapore Cemetery. An unfortunate accident marred these operations. Early in May, the ATC was requested to furnish a plane to carry Graves Registration teams and to airlift remains. Upon arrival in Singapore, the plane was recalled to Calcutta. En route, it picked up graves registration workers at Bangkok and both personnel and remains at Rangoon. After leaving Rangoon on 17 May, the plane disappeared and doubtless crashed to its doom in the Bay of Bengal. On board were 3 officers and 3 enlisted men and at least 37 bodies from the Rangoon Cemetery and from solitary graves in South Burma, as well as complete survey reports made throughout French Indo-China and the Netherlands East Indies.<sup>115</sup>

During May 1946, the concentration of burials from Indian cemeteries into Barrackpore and Kalaikunda ended. At this time 60 remains lay in British military cemeteries in Burma but were to be later removed to Barrackpore. Destined for Barrackpore, too, were about 200 isolated burials and victims of plane crashes in India, Burma, Siam, and the Netherlands East Indies. The temporary American plot at Singapore could accommodate approximately 300 of these deceased.<sup>116</sup>

When the India-Burma Theater passed out of existence on 31

<sup>113</sup> Ltr, Capt Donald L. Rider, QMC, to CG, Liaison Det, Hq, USF, IBT, 20 Feb 46, sub: Recommended Plans for Location and Exhumation of Isolated American Burials in Singapore Area; KCRC-AGRS-IBT, 293 (Burial Concentration Plan).

<sup>114</sup> Memo, IBT to G-1, 21 Mar 46, sub: Graves Registration; KCRC-AGRS-IBT, 293.

<sup>115</sup> Hist, AGRS-IBZ, Summary, AGRS-IBT, p. 5.

<sup>116</sup> Rad, CG, IBT to SERVQMG, 1 May 46; KCRC-AGRS-IBT, sub: Burial Concentration Plan, 293.

May 1946, a total of 1,204 deceased rested at Barrackpore; these, with 2,026 remains at Kalaikunda, gave a total of 3,230 burials for India.<sup>117</sup> As matters later developed, the plans to transfer the dead from Southeast Asia and the Netherlands East Indies to the Singapore Cemetery were abandoned in September 1946, and all Southeast Asian dead were transported to Barrackpore Cemetery for reinterment prior to final repatriation.

Although Graves Registration operations after the activation of AGRS-IBZ centered on search and recovery, identification, and repatriation of all deceased, two major concentration operations were undertaken in the autumn of 1947. As early as January of that year, plans had been formulated for the evacuation of remains from both Kalaikunda and Barrackpore Cemeteries to a mausoleum, to be established at Barrackpore at the time of the disinterment, where all remains would rest until the repatriation ship arrived at Calcutta. Because of the monsoon season, extending from May to September in India, AGRS officials determined that the evacuation of these two cemeteries should wait until fall. Because of the inadequate rail and road net out of Kalaikunda, it was decided that bodies from that cemetery would be moved by air. Housing for the six Field Operating Sections to be employed in the evacuation also presented a problem. As no hotel accommodations were available, tents near the cemetery site would serve as quarters for the men.<sup>118</sup>

General planning was based upon the assumption that all remains in the Zone would be repatriated on one vessel and that loading operations would take place some time in November or December 1947. Plans also called for the daily exhumation, preparation, and casketing of 40 remains for each of the six Field Operating Sections. At this rate, 24 working days would be required to complete the entire project in both cemeteries. With allowance for holidays and other delays, it was estimated that the entire mission could be accomplished in 30 days.<sup>119</sup>

In the summer of 1947, the War Department directed the Commanding Officer, IBZ, to prepare all remains in India for shipment to Honolulu with the evacuation scheduled for completion by 15 January 1948.<sup>120</sup> Before putting its plans into effect, AGRS officers

<sup>117</sup> Hist, AGRS-IBZ, Summary, AGRS-IBT, p. 5.

<sup>118</sup> Ltr, Hq AGRS-IBZ to OQMG, Washington, D. C., 11 Feb 47, sub: Tentative Operational Schedule for the Return of World War II Dead Program, 293.

<sup>119</sup> Memo, Hq AGRS-IBZ, 11 Feb 47, sub: Plan to Accomplish GRS Mission in IBZ; KCRC-AGRS-IBZ, 293.

<sup>120</sup> Ltr, WD to CO, IBZ and CG, AGFPAC, 1 Jul 47, sub: Change of Mission, AGRS-IBZ; KCRC-AGRS-IBZ, 322 (Organizations and Tactical Units).

instructed all military personnel and key civilians at Zone Headquarters in Calcutta in the problems of the program.<sup>121</sup>

Exhumations at Kalaikunda commenced on 15 September 1947. This cemetery contained eight plots of 250 graves each. Because of the high water level in the low end of the cemetery and because the wooden caskets were more than half-filled with sediment and water, it became necessary to wash and scrub mud from each remains. In order that all remains might be delivered to the mausoleum in the best possible condition, drying racks of fine mesh window screen were devised. Remains were placed upon these racks and dried in the open air and sunshine. Personal effects and identification media were wrapped and tied separately either in hessian cloth or blanket pieces and then placed with the rest of the remains in a duffle bag or barracks bag to which was attached a mimeographed cardboard tag containing pertinent information. The remains were then ready for air shipment.<sup>122</sup> The last body departed late in October and the workers then flew to Calcutta to begin exhumation at Barrackpore Cemetery. The ground formerly occupied by Kalaikunda Cemetery was ready to be replanted in paddy.

Barrackpore Cemetery, located in the former Governor of Bengal's palatial grounds on the banks of the Hoogly River, served as the resting place of approximately 1,500 war dead. Its flowery shrubs and trees attracted people throughout the area. Exhumations began on 30 October. The task ended two weeks later, considerably ahead of schedule. The daily exhumations at Barrackpore and Kalaikunda averaged 119 and 105 respectively. On 21 November, the last prepared remains reached the Barrackpore Mausoleum, where approximately 3,500 India-Burma dead rested until the arrival of the *Albert M. Boe*, the repatriation ship which carried them to Honolulu or to the United States.

### Conclusion

When all major concentration activities throughout the Pacific areas had terminated, a total of over 70,000 remains had been moved into more centralized, accessible burial places or to mausoleums, where they awaited final repatriation or permanent overseas interment. This notable accomplishment had required weeks and months of unpleasant, arduous toil on barren Pacific atolls, in hot, swampy jungles, and in rugged and remote spots throughout the

<sup>121</sup> Special Rpt, Lt Col E. F. Stanford-Blunden, 29 Nov 47; KCRC-AGRS-IBZ, no file No.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

vast Pacific and on the Asiatic mainland. The following figures represent the approximate number of remains at each locality after concentrations had been concluded and just prior to repatriation operations:

Manila Mausoleum.....	30,387
Saipan (including 10,243 from Okinawa).....	23,132
Honolulu (including 2,583 from China).....	14,206
Yokohama.....	2,027
Barrackpore Mausoleum, Calcutta.....	3,500
Total.....	<u>73,252</u> (approximate)

As can be observed, the largest concentrations occurred in the Southwest Pacific Area, along the death-strewn line of conquest from Port Moresby to Manila. The smallest number of fatalities occurred, oddly enough, in the Japan-Korea area. Regardless of where deaths and subsequent concentrations took place, the heroic efforts of AGRS officers and men had paved the way for the final step in the Return of the Dead of World War II Program—permanent overseas burial or interment in native American soil of those who had paid the ultimate price for victory.