

# GERMAN ASSESSMENT OF THE US 2<sup>ND</sup> DIVISION

## Lieutenant von Buy, Interrogating Officer

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### Details of Organization:

- I. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Brigade belongs to the Marine Corps which existed in the United States during peacetime; the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Brigades are said to be still in America.
- II. The prisoners made conflicting statements concerning the allotment of machine guns. They maintain, for instance, that in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Brigade, each regiment, beside its three infantry battalions, has also a machine gun battalion consisting of 4 platoons, each platoon having 12 guns. In addition, each brigade has one brigade machine gun battalion. According to a captured order of the 26<sup>th</sup> American Division (NO 7 No. 3228, 8 June 1918), the 25<sup>th</sup> Division shows but one machine gun company to each infantry regiment; no machine gun battalion, as claimed for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division. Should the conflicting statements of the prisoners prove to be true, the difference between these statements and the captured document may perhaps be explained in that the Marine Corps belonged to the peacetime army of the United States and is armed according to different standards than the 26<sup>th</sup> Division which was organized during the war from the National Guard.

### Division History:

From the middle of March until the middle of May, units of the American 2<sup>nd</sup> Division were placed in line in the Moulainville sector (Verdn) for instruction; they were relieved by an unknown French division. The troops then arrived in the area of Vitry-le-Francois by rail, where they remained about 5 days. Thence, the entire division was shifted by rail, by way of Coulommiers—St-Denis—Pontoise into the area southwest of Beauvais; the 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment was in Chars, 7 kilometers northwest of the town of Marines on the railroad Pontoise-Beauvais. The 9<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiments moved into billets at Marines.

In this area, the division lay 8 days at rest. Exercises on a large scale or by higher units did not take place, only small isolated field exercises, grenade throwing and target practice. Several long marches (hikes) were made for the training of the troops.

### On May 31

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Brigade was alerted and entrucked in French trucks (20 men or 10 officers in 1 truck). The 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment departed first and, moving by way of Beaumont—Luzarches—Ermenonville (west of Nanteuil)—Le Plessis-Belleville—Meaux, reached Lizy-sur-Ourco where, after an 18 hour ride, they were detrucked. The 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment followed next by the same route; while the 9<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiments apparently chose the route from Beaumont by way of Ecoeu—Gonesse—Aulnay (suburb of Paris)—Les Clayes—Meaux, into the area of La Ferte-sous-Jouarre, where they detrucked.

During the night of June 2–3, the 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment was placed in line as the first regiment of the division; the other units gradually took over their sectors to the south.

### Combat Value:

The American 2<sup>nd</sup> Division may be rated as a very good division, if not even as an attack unit. The various attacks by both of the Marine regiments were carried out with vigor and regardless of losses. The moral effect of our firearms did not materially check the advance of the infantry. The nerves of the Americans are still unshaken.

### Replacements:

The personnel may be considered excellent. They are healthy, strong and physically well-developed men from 18–20 years old who, at present, lack only the necessary training to make them into a very worthy opponent.

The spirit of the troops is fresh and one of careless confidence. A characteristic expression of one of the prisoners is “we kill or get killed.”

### Method of Attack:

During both attacks on Belleau Wood, executed by 1 to 2 battalions, the following attack formations were observed: 3 to 4 skirmish lines at distances of about 30 to 50 paces between lines; fairly close behind these came separate assault groups in column of platoons. They were well equipped with rapid fire weapons and hand grenades. The assault groups worked their machine guns to the front and had orders to penetrate the German position at some weak point, open out to the flanks and attack the stronger sectors from the rear.

Company strength:      Total strength:      5 officers, 250–260 men  
                                 Trench strength:      4 officers, 220–230 men

No furloughs granted.

#### Casualties:

In the Marine brigade very high; one prisoner estimates the losses at 30–40%. The 9<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> Regiments have suffered fewer losses.

#### Details concerning positions:

No statements obtainable. The prisoners were hardly able to state where they had been in position. According to their indications the foremost line consists only of rifle pits, about 1 meter deep, at present without wire obstacles. The organization of the rearward positions is unknown.

#### Miscellaneous:

The confiscated German liner *VATERLAND* is said to have received new machinery in America and landed recently as a transport with 14,000 men.

#### Morale:

In general, the prisoners made a wide-awake, agreeable impression; but they seem entirely disinterested in military matters. They were intentionally kept ignorant of certain things by their superiors, for instance, most of them have never seen a map. They are unable to designate villages or roads along their route of march. They have confused ideas concerning the organization of their units. One prisoner insisted that his brigade had 6 regiments and his division 24.

For the time being, they still view the war from the standpoint of the “Big Brother” who is coming to the aid of his distressed brothers and sisters, and who is being received everywhere with a friendly welcome. However, a certain moral basis is not lacking; the majority of prisoners stated with obvious unconcern that they and come to Europe to defend their fatherland. Only a few of the men are genuine Americans by ancestry, the majority is of German, Dutch, or Italian parentage; but these half-Americans who, with few exceptions, were born in America, and who never before had been in Europe, consider themselves unhesitatingly as genuine sons of America.