

~~File Copy - Do Not Use~~

---

MARINE CORPS HISTORICAL REFERENCE PAMPHLET

---

A BRIEF HISTORY OF  
THE 5th MARINES



---

HISTORICAL BRANCH, G-3 DIVISION  
HEADQUARTERS, U. S. MARINE CORPS  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

---

REVISED 1968

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE 5TH MARINES

by

Major James M. Yingling, USMC

Printed 1963

Revised 1968

Historical Branch, G-3 Division  
Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps  
Washington, D. C. 20390



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20380

PREFACE

"A Brief History of the 5th Marines" is a concise narrative of the activities of that regiment since its initial organization over a half-century ago. Official records and appropriate historical works were used in compiling this chronicle, published for the information of those interested in the events in which the 5th Marines participated.

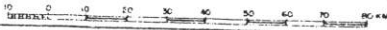
Acknowledgement is made to the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, for permission to reproduce the map appearing on the inside front cover.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "R. G. Owens, Jr.", is positioned above the typed name.

R. G. OWENS, JR.  
Brigadier General, U. S. Marine Corps  
Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3

Reviewed and approved: 9 April 1968

# MAJOR OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS A. E. F.



## LEGEND

YPRES-LYS  
19 AUG - 11 NOV 1918



SOMME  
8 AUG - 11 NOV 1918



AISNE-MARNE  
18 JULY - 6 AUG 1918



OISE-AISNE  
18 AUG - 11 NOV 1918



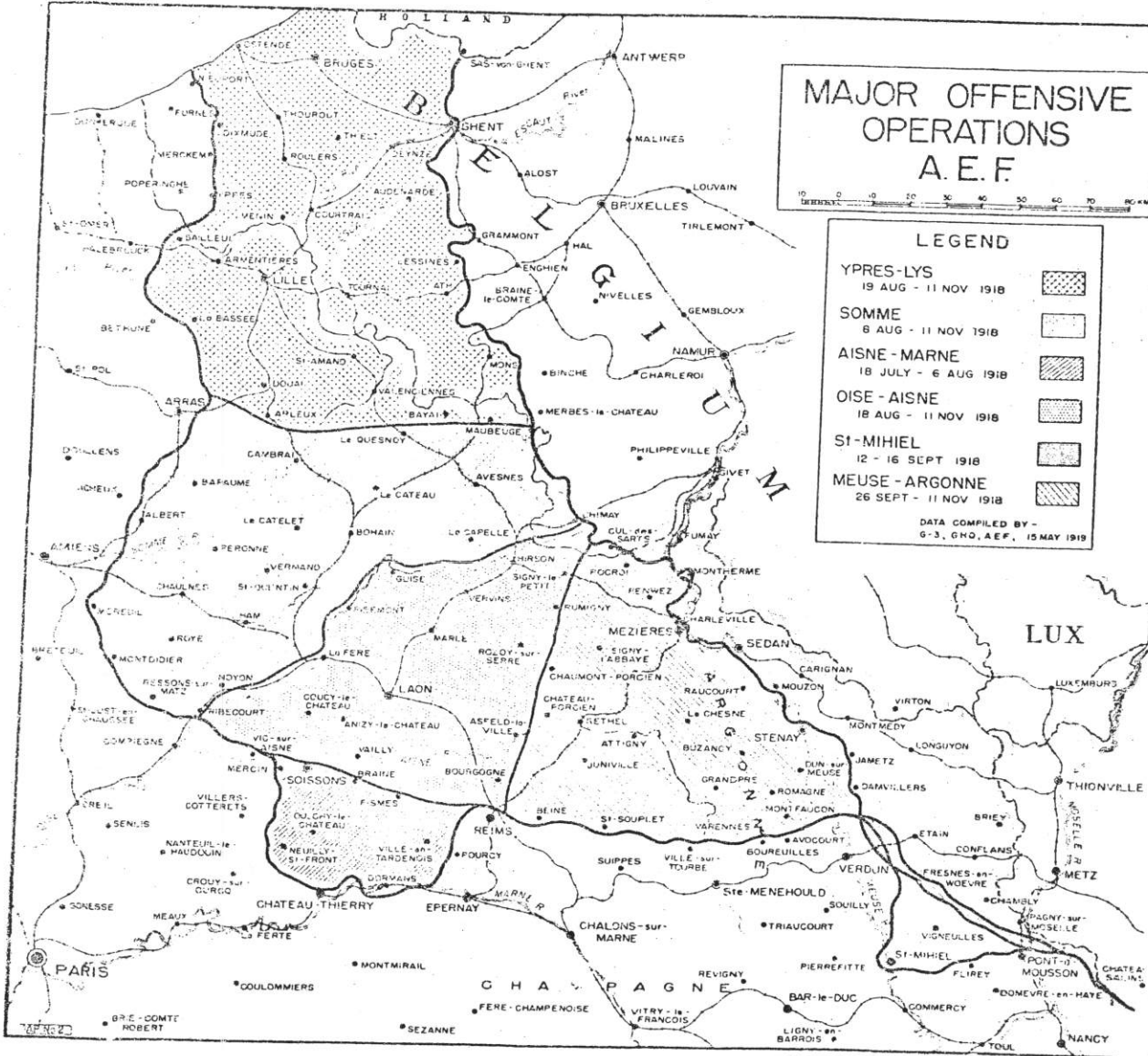
ST-MIHIEL  
12 - 16 SEPT 1918



MEUSE-ARGONNE  
26 SEPT - 11 NOV 1918



DATA COMPILED BY -  
G-3, G.H.Q. A.E.F., 15 MAY 1918



## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE 5TH MARINES

By

Major James M. Yingling, U. S. Marine Corps

### The Beginning

In the second decade of the 20th Century, United States foreign policy, especially the Monroe Doctrine, was undergoing severe tests in several Caribbean countries. President Wilson had warned foreign powers against intervention in the internal affairs of these troubled nations, and also had advised that we would recognize no head of state who had achieved his status without benefit of constitutional process. In 1913, a revolutionary coup that overthrew the elected government of Mexico ushered in a period of political instability that was matched in both Haiti and the Dominican Republic. By the middle of the following year, conditions had not improved, so President Wilson ordered American military forces, including Marines, into these countries to help restore law and order.(1)

To help meet the need for additional Marine units, the 5th Regiment was formed. On 13 July 1914, at Vera Cruz, Mexico, three companies--the 44th Expeditionary, and the 45th and 46th of the Marine Corps' Expeditionary Force, Special Service Squadron--and a headquarters (Field and Staff) were organized under Major Carl Gamborg-Andresen, as the 1st Battalion, 5th Regiment.(2) On that day, the battalion embarked on the transport USS Hancock for movement to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, which it reached on 19 July.

During the latter half of July, Field and Staff, 5th Regiment and the 2d Battalion were activated at Norfolk. This battalion was composed of the 37th Company, recently returned to the States after a tour of China duty, and the 47th and 48th Companies made up of Marines from East Coast duty stations.(3) On 30 July, the Norfolk-formed portion of the regiment sailed for Guantanamo on the Hancock.

On 4 August, the Norfolk contingent landed at Guantanamo, and eight days later the regiment, commanded by Colonel Charles A. Doyen, reembarked on the transport to fulfill its first mission as a stand-by force in Dominican waters.(4) Until the latter part of October, the regiment moved to points of unrest along the republic's coast. Gradually, the Dominican government became less faltering and promised to remain stable.

In Haiti, however, financial difficulties caused by rebel actions shook the administration. The 5th, immediately dispatched to Port-au-Prince, arrived there on 31 October. When the situation improved, the regiment, still embarked, departed for its Cuban base. On 23 November, the 5th reembarked and touched at several Caribbean ports during the next three weeks. By then, the United States considered the political situation in the troubled countries sufficiently improved to order the Hancock north to Philadelphia.

After disembarking at the navy yard, the regiment was disbanded on 24 December 1914.(5) Two companies, the 37th and 45th, were detached to East Coast stations. All other units were dissolved, and the Marines thereof were returned to their former duty stations insofar as it was practicable.(6) Although the 5th Regiment no longer existed, its name had been established in a part of the Western Hemisphere, and soon the regiment's reputation would be known throughout a large portion of the world.

### World War I

Officially, the United States entered World War I on 6 April 1917. Late in May, President Wilson directed the Secretary of the Navy "to issue the necessary orders detaching for service with the Army a force of Marines to be known as the Fifth Regiment of Marines...."(7), and, within 16 days, the regiment, completely organized and ready for active service, was sailing for France.

The rapid organization, equipping, and embarkation of this force was the product of considerable forethought. Major General Commandant George Barnett had strongly contended that Marines should be sent to Europe's Western Front. Accordingly, he conducted liaison with various War Department agencies to collect the information necessary to organize and equip a Marine expeditionary force. General Barnett's efforts began to bear fruit when, on 16 May, the Secretary of War asked President Wilson for a Marine regiment, equipped as infantry, for duty in France.(8) Anticipating approval, General Barnett recalled overseas troops, and organized them into battalions of the 5th Regiment. By 25 May, the 1st Battalion was organized at Quantico, and eight companies from the West Indies area were en route to Philadelphia to form the 2d and 3d Battalions.

The 1st Battalion was composed of the 15th Company from Pensacola and the 49th, 66th, and 67th Companies from the Norfolk area.(9) The 23d Company, recalled from Haiti, and the 43d, 51st, and 55th Companies returned from Cuba, constituted the 2d Battalion after debarking at the Philadelphia Navy Yard on 30 May.(10) On the same date, the 16th Company from Haiti and the 8th, 45th, and 47th Companies from the Dominican Republic

arrived at Philadelphia to form the 3d Battalion. A liberal sprinkling of recruits was necessary to bring the companies up to the 200-man level of enlisted strength.

A familiar name appeared at the top of the regimental listing, for on 7 June Colonel Doyen again assumed command. Other headquarters personnel were assembled at the navy yard in Philadelphia. Recruits made up about 95 percent of Headquarters Company. Supply Company and regimental Field and Staff were formed by drawing upon various posts and stations from the East Coast, with a fairly large percentage of recruits being included.

Embarkation of the regiment began on 8 June 1917, when the headquarters organizations boarded the Hancock.(11) On this date, the 1st Battalion arrived in Philadelphia from Quantico and embarked on the USS DeKalb three days later. The band and the 2d and 3d Battalions moved by rail and ship to New York, where on the 13th, they embarked on the USS Henderson. Colonel Doyen, with staff and selected headquarters personnel, transferred from the Hancock to the Henderson on the 14th. Shortly thereafter, the Henderson and DeKalb departed for France. The venerable Hancock, with the remaining Marines of the regimental Headquarters and Service Companies, was obliged to wait until a slower moving convoy stood out of New York Harbor for St. Nazaire, France.(12)

En route to France, Marines were kept busy with compulsory shipboard drills; guard mount; inspections of men, equipment, and living spaces; target practice; maintenance of clothing and equipment; and duties as ships' lookouts and gun crew members. As if in return for the Marines' services, the Navy inoculated the regiment.

The voyage across the Atlantic was accomplished without loss of life from enemy causes. The 1st Battalion on DeKalb arrived at St. Nazaire in western France on 26 June. On the following day, the Henderson, with the 2d and 3d Battalions and Colonel Doyen and staff, moored alongside the DeKalb. The late-starting Hancock put into port on 2 July. By the 3d, the entire regiment was together in camp southeast of the city.(13)

President Wilson had directed that the 5th was to serve as part of an Army force, so the regiment was assigned to the 1st Division. Service as a part of this division consisted of training for most of the regiment, but included providing units for Lines of Communication (Service of Supply) duty.(14) Until mid-February 1918, about one-third of the regiment was on detached duty not involving combat training.

On 15 July, the regiment, minus those detached duty units, moved to the vicinity of Gondrecourt, an area in eastern France to the rear of the proposed American sector, for its initial training as a part of the 1st Division. On the 21st, units of

6th Groupe de Chasseurs Alpins, considered by the French to be among the finest units in their Army, were assigned as instructors for the regiment. Instruction was centered around the various phases of offensive and defensive trench warfare, including trench construction, grenade throwing, bayonet fighting, gas mask drill, weapons firing at land targets and airplanes, and artillery and artillery-infantry demonstrations.(15) The regiment retained responsibility for training in physical fitness, sanitation, close order drill, and small arms range firing. During this first period of training, many military dignitaries visited the regimental area. These included General Pershing, Commanding General of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF); the 1st Division commander; and General Petain, the Commander in Chief of all French Forces. Just prior to the close of the training at Gondrecourt, units of the French 151st Infantry took over as instructors for the regiment.

In September, the 5th was reassigned to serve with the 2d Division(16) and moved south 22 miles (35 kilometers, 1 kilometer=5/8 mile) to Bourmont. In October, the regiment became part of the 4th Brigade of Marines, one of the two infantry brigades in the 2d Division.(17) In December, regimental maneuvers were conducted after the battalions had been trained in the relief of units in trenches and had held joint maneuvers with French troops.

By mid-November 1917, the Marine Brigade's 6th Regiment (less the 2d Battalion) had reached France. These battalions performed Lines of Communication duty until January 1918, when the regiment moved to the 2d Division area. Here, both the 5th and 6th trained, first with battalion, then regimental exercises. After the 2d Battalion of the 6th arrived in mid-February, the Marine brigade commander was able to exercise his force as a tactical unit for the first time. On 8 March, the last brigade maneuver took place, for upon its completion, the 2d Division was ordered to the front. Before leaving, however, the 4th Brigade adjusted its organization to bring the 6th Machine Gun Battalion up to its four gun-company strength.(18)

During mid-March the 4th Brigade departed Bourmont for the front line trenches in the quiet Toulon Sector (see map, inside front cover) just southeast of Verdun.(19) Initially the 5th Regiment occupied the trenches centered around Les Esparges, 12 miles southeast of Verdun, and the 6th, those around Bonchamp, immediately to the left (north). In these areas Marines put to use against a live enemy the lessons they had learned in the training areas against a simulated or an imaginary foe. The procedure each regiment used was to have one battalion enter the trenches, opposite the German lines, remain for a specified time, then take relief from one of the two reserve battalions. Reserve troops, meanwhile, kept busy improving and repairing existing trenches and dugouts, digging new trenches, and stringing and repairing barbed wire entanglements. On the night of



19-20 April 1918, after the 5th had moved into the Bonchamp line, the enemy launched a raid during a battalion relief, but a determined effort by the 45th Company (3d Battalion) forced the Germans to retire.(20) This engagement was the regiment's first close contact with the enemy, and the outcome served notice that the Marines had learned their lessons well.

The 5th departed the Toulon Sector in mid-May, and proceeded to the Gizors training area, 38 miles northwest of Paris. Here, the regiment engaged in 10 days of open warfare training under the most satisfying conditions--the terrain was adequate, the surroundings beautiful, the weather enjoyable, liberty available, and spirits high. This, then, was the setting in the regiment, when suddenly on 30 May, the 2d Division, assigned to the French XXI Corps, French Sixth Army, received orders for movement eastward to stem the flow of onrushing Germans, whose surprise advance from the heretofore quiet Reims Sector threatened the very heart of Paris.(21)

Retreating Allied soldiers and fleeing civilians choked the suburban Paris roads on which the 5th motored.(22) After reaching Meaux, 25 miles northeast of Paris, the regiment continued the move by foot. Marching was made most difficult by the heavy loads on the backs of the Marines, the long grades over the dusty roads, the intolerably hot weather, and the sight of the physically tired and visibly dejected French soldiers who were in general retreat. When one French officer ordered a Marine officer to join the retreat, legend has it that Captain Lloyd W. Williams, of the 51st Company, 2d Battalion(23) startled the Frenchmen with, "Retreat hell, we just got here."

On 2 June, the 5th's battalions occupied reserve and forward positions, north of the Marne River and west of Chateau-Thierry, to assist the 2d Division in organizing the XXI Corps line and in covering the withdrawal of French units still engaged. By the 4th, the last of the withdrawing elements had passed through the Marine lines. During that day the 2d Battalion of the 5th repulsed by accurate rifle fire two enemy attempts to pursue the French through the battalion's positions. It appeared that these setbacks handed the Germans caused them to halt their advance, for they then began to redeploy troops for defense.

The Sixth Army ordered the XXI Corps to make two attacks on 6 June. The first, in which the 5th's 2d Battalion took part, was successful in straightening the corps front. The second was planned to reduce the German salient into the left of the 2d Division. Since the Marines held this portion of the line, the division ordered the 4th Brigade to execute that mission. The designated objective, known at that time as Bois de Belleau (Belleau Wood, probably named for the town of Belleau, just to the north) was to involve the Marines in one of their most famous fights.

19-20 April 1918, after the 5th had moved into the Bonchamp line, the enemy launched a raid during a battalion relief, but a determined effort by the 45th Company (3d Battalion) forced the Germans to retire.(20) This engagement was the regiment's first close contact with the enemy, and the outcome served notice that the Marines had learned their lessons well.

The 5th departed the Toulon Sector in mid-May, and proceeded to the Gizors training area, 38 miles northwest of Paris. Here, the regiment engaged in 10 days of open warfare training under the most satisfying conditions--the terrain was adequate, the surroundings beautiful, the weather enjoyable, liberty available, and spirits high. This, then, was the setting in the regiment, when suddenly on 30 May, the 2d Division, assigned to the French XXI Corps, French Sixth Army, received orders for movement eastward to stem the flow of onrushing Germans, whose surprise advance from the heretofore quiet Reims Sector threatened the very heart of Paris.(21)

Retreating Allied soldiers and fleeing civilians choked the suburban Paris roads on which the 5th motored.(22) After reaching Meaux, 25 miles northeast of Paris, the regiment continued the move by foot. Marching was made most difficult by the heavy loads on the backs of the Marines, the long grades over the dusty roads, the intolerably hot weather, and the sight of the physically tired and visibly dejected French soldiers who were in general retreat. When one French officer ordered a Marine officer to join the retreat, legend has it that Captain Lloyd W. Williams, of the 51st Company, 2d Battalion(23) startled the Frenchmen with, "Retreat hell, we just got here."

On 2 June, the 5th's battalions occupied reserve and forward positions, north of the Marne River and west of Chateau-Thierry, to assist the 2d Division in organizing the XXI Corps line and in covering the withdrawal of French units still engaged. By the 4th, the last of the withdrawing elements had passed through the Marine lines. During that day the 2d Battalion of the 5th repulsed by accurate rifle fire two enemy attempts to pursue the French through the battalion's positions. It appeared that these setbacks handed the Germans caused them to halt their advance, for they then began to redeploy troops for defense.

The Sixth Army ordered the XXI Corps to make two attacks on 6 June. The first, in which the 5th's 2d Battalion took part, was successful in straightening the corps front. The second was planned to reduce the German salient into the left of the 2d Division. Since the Marines held this portion of the line, the division ordered the 4th Brigade to execute that mission. The designated objective, known at that time as Bois de Belleau (Belleau Wood, probably named for the town of Belleau, just to the north) was to involve the Marines in one of their most famous fights.

There were several reasons why the Battle of Belleau Wood was significant. As a defensive position, the objective was a natural--tall hardwoods, erupting from heavy underbrush and secondary growth, grew abundantly; a deep ravine cut the southern portion of the wood; throughout Belleau wound a great variety of contours in the form of sharply-rising knolls, jagged boulders, and huge stones, adorned with moss; the relatively open terrain over which the 5th had to advance to get into the wood afforded the Marines little concealment, while giving the defenders excellent observation. Maps of the area were inaccurate and incomplete. French intelligence had advised that the Marines' objective was lightly held, but they were wrong. The 461st Infantry Regiment, 1,169 strong, with orders to hold at all costs, garrisoned the bastion. In addition, the enemy had devised an effective, protective artillery barrage to support his ground defense, which contained hundreds of mutually-supporting automatic weapons positions, cleverly concealed in trees, behind rocks and piles of freshly-cut wood, and in the numerous depressions throughout Belleau.

Fighting for Belleau Wood began at 1700 on 6 June 1918, when the 3d Battalions of the 5th and 6th Regiments attacked simultaneously, each in four successive skirmish lines. The enemy greeted Major Benjamin S. Berry's 3d Battalion, 5th Regiment advancing over the open ground west of the wood, with heavy fire from hidden positions. A few of his Marines actually reached the wood's edge but had to be withdrawn before dark. The Sixth's 3d Battalion secured a foothold in the southern portion of the objective and took the nearby town of Bouresches. The 2d Battalion made the next major 5th Regiment attack on Belleau Wood. During the period 11-15 June, the battalion secured the northwest corner of the wood and withstood infantry, artillery, and gas attacks. The Marines had been compelled to bayonet the enemy in many of his positions in the wood, so tenacious and well-constructed was his defense. A large detachment from regimental headquarters contributed significantly to the success of this attack and defense.

The 7th Infantry Regiment began to relieve the 5th Regiment in the lines on 16 June. While out of the front lines, the 5th received personnel and equipment replacements, and by the 21st was ready to continue the mission of securing the objective. During the 5th's absence from the front, the 7th Infantry had made some progress in the wood against the Germans, who had replaced the remaining original defenders with elements of the 87th Infantry Division.

On 23 June, the 3d Battalion attacked to complete the capture of the northern portion of Belleau, the only part then in enemy hands. After a slight advance, the Marines ran into heavy machine gun fire and the protective artillery barrage. Unable to dig into the rocky ground, and taking heavy casualties, the battalion returned to its lines. Two days later, with the same

tactical plan, but with an increased amount of artillery preparation, Major M. E. Shearer's group struck out again. This time, it took less than five hours to drive the enemy from the objective.

In taking about half of Belleau Wood, the 5th Regiment suffered almost 2,000 killed and wounded, but it played a major role in initiating a German retreat that was to continue until the war ended. Meaux was saved from almost certain capture and the threat to the capital city itself was wiped out. In recognition of the magnificent fighting by the entire Marine Brigade in Belleau Wood, the French Sixth Army ordered that in future official correspondence (including maps) the famous wood would bear the name, Bois de la Brigade de Marine. Additionally, the brigade received a French Army citation for its gallant fighting.

Early in July, the 2d Division proceeded to a support area behind the Chateau-Thierry lines. After 11 days, the division, assigned to the French XX Corps, Tenth Army, motored and marched generally west, then north, to the huge Forest of Villers-Cotterets, to take part in the offensive against Soissons by cutting, at Vierzy, the only rail line within the enemy's Marne River salient.

This time the battlefield in front of the 5th was fairly open country, dotted with strongly built farms, an occasional village or quarry, and several ravines. Waist-high wheat fields abounded in the attack zone. En route to its attack positions, midway between the towns of Villers-Cotterets and Soissons, the regiment met with considerable misfortune. The movement to the line of departure was delayed by muddy roads. The night of 17-18 July was so dark that each man had to hold on to the Marine in front of him. The 5th was the last of the attacking regiments to arrive at the line of departure, and the rear units of the two assault battalions had to double time to get into position for the attack. Early on the 18th, however, the regiment, with the 3d Battalion in support, moved out eastward from the northeastern edge of the forest. On the 5th's right was the 3d Brigade, and on the left was the French 1st Moroccan Division.

Initially, the advance was vigorously opposed by the enemy, and close-in fighting was required to maintain the attack. Some of the Germans had taken up sniping positions in trees, but the sharp-shooting Marines effectively dealt with this enemy attempt to disrupt the attack. When the advance had cleared the woods, tanks joined the attack and progress became rapid. After the initial objectives were taken, the attack was to veer to the right about 45 degrees, or to a southeasterly direction. Some elements of both the 1st and 2d Battalions failed to make the change. The 17th Company on the regimental left continued to move eastward and helped the Moroccans seize the town of Chaudun, about six miles southwest of Soissons. Three of the 2d Battalion's

