

French Military Intelligence Interpreter Team

by Andre Fraysee, Division HQ

The French Military Intelligence Interpreter (MII) Team was attached to the 100th Infantry Division Headquarters during its European operations. MII personnel were US soldiers of every branch of service from corporals to captains who could speak and understand French and had been given Top Secret clearance. We were sent to Camp Ritchie in Maryland. [This has since become the bomb proof (??) Emergency Command Center.] There, we had our Intelligence Corps basic training. Successful graduates were shipped to the Whittington Barracks in England to be assigned to a team and undergo further training.

The Table of Organization and Equipment called for a team to be made up with a captain, a lieutenant, a master sergeant, a tech sergeant, a staff sergeant, and a sergeant, with two jeeps and two trailers. The officers were armed with .45-caliber pistols and the EM with .45-caliber submachine guns, the “grease gun,” a practical combat weapon, but nothing like the obsolete Thompson “Chicago Piano” that this ex-small-arms instructor had grown to love.

Sometime in the fall of 1944, just before boarding an LST for France, our captain got himself reassigned to Military Intelligence (MI) Headquarters in England. As a 2d lieutenant becoming Team Chief, I had dreams of getting a promotion, and was given another 2d lieutenant as a replacement for myself. The EM were all at their highest TO&E grade.

After an uneventful trip across the channel, we wended our way through utter chaos to MI Field Headquarters at Le Vésinet. After a long period of waiting, at last we were assigned to the 100th coming up from Marseilles and joined them just in time to take part in their first campaign.

In a short time, Lt. Col. Reinecke, Div G-2, split the team with Lt. Goulet, the tech sergeant, and the staff sergeant being assigned to the large Counter Intelligence (CIC) team and that was the last I ever saw of them. M/Sgt Boivert, Sgt. Greenberg, and I continued with our original mission of working with the French Forces of the Interior (FFI) and any French-speaking person who could furnish useful tactical information.

For example, we picked up maps and plans of the Maginot Line of forts and pillboxes such as Schiesseck, Hohenkirkel, and so on, which were manned by the Germans, as well as how much ammo, and of what kind they had, what German units were involved, and the like. How much of this got to the guys who needed it most, I'll never know.

I once got some info I got to use. Near Litzelstein or La Petite Pierre, depending on whether you were using a German- or French-based map, I got up a hill with a DIVARTY forward observer and a Frenchman. There, I used what I had learned in Field Artillery OCS to help adjust fire on some camouflaged German positions.

Col. Reinecke must have been satisfied with us, because he asked MI Headquarters to promote Goulet and me. In a couple of weeks, he received a reply that 2d lieutenants on the same time could not be promoted at the same time, and he had to choose which one was to get it first. In a couple of weeks, I finally made it to 1st lieutenant and later heard that Goulet got his.

When the Division breached the Siegfried Line, the Team was sent back to Le Vésinet, that is, all except me. I was kept on and became the Liaison Officer between the 100th and General Guillaume's 3d Algerian Rifle Division. I was with them when they liberated what was left of the Stuttgart Zoo. That evening, I had venison for dinner with German champagne at the General's mess and learned that the few Zoo deer that had survived the war had mysteriously disappeared.

When the war ended, I was detached but not to go back to Le Vésinet. Instead, I went forward to Berlin where they needed French interpreters for the Allied Control Council of American, British, Russian, and French members.

I stayed in the Intelligence branch until I retired in July 1969. While on assignment at the then-Intelligence Center, Ft. Holabird, MD, I met Major General Prather who, as Col. Prather, was the 100th's Chief of Staff.

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