

CHAPTER XVII

AGRS OPERATIONS IN THE AFRICA-MIDDLE EAST ZONE

Introduction

To appreciate the accomplishments of the American Graves Registration Service in the Africa-Middle East Zone (AMEZ), it is necessary at the outset to know the peculiarities of the Zone which made its problems differ from those elsewhere. First, it encompassed one of the largest geographical regions in the world, extending across the huge African continent from Dakar to Aden and from Capetown to Cairo, thence along the lonely, barren islands off the coast of Arabia and encompassing Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and the Holy Land. Secondly, the widely scattered, unlocated, and isolated deceased—though relatively few in number—added to the problem which faced the small AGRS organization upon its formal activation on 1 June 1946, when the Africa-Middle East Theater (AMET) went out of existence. Thirdly, the lack of preparation for the new graves registration activities before the Theater's inactivation posed an obstacle to early progress. Still another problem arose from scarcity of adequate communication facilities, which, in turn, was caused by the great distances involved.

Before activation of AGRS-AMEZ, the OQMG took certain preliminary steps in preparation for that development. One such move occurred on 29 April 1946 with the departure from the OQMG of Col. Clarence J. Blake, former Chief of the Memorial Division, who was to head AGRS-AMEZ, and two assistants—Capt. Glenn W. Rogers, and 1st Lt. James R. Stirling, for AMET Headquarters in Cairo, Egypt.¹

The three officers arrived at their destination on 2 May, equipped with little knowledge of what they faced in Africa. What they found was even less promising than their most meager expectations. The Theater was rushing close-out activities and its operations concerned only liquidation. The recently organized GRS Headquarters in Cairo consisted of only 2 officers and 6 civilian employees, all with limited experience in graves registration work which they had practically abandoned pending the arrival of Colonel Blake.²

¹ AGRS-AMEZ History, 1 May 46–1 Nov 47, Bk. 1, p. 11.

² Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-AMEZ, 30 Jun 46, p. 3.

They had, however, forwarded a requisition for much needed GRS personnel as authorized on the original Table of Organization from Memorial Division. Only a few vehicles and scanty supplies had been earmarked for GRS use, cemeteries were in the hands of men, many of whom had not been paid for months, and who lacked equipment and supervision. In several instances, Theater Headquarters did not even know if certain of the widely scattered cemeteries within its confines were receiving any maintenance nor did they know how to contact the caretakers.³ Cemeterial records in Cairo were incomplete and inaccurate, listing only 19 military burial grounds in the Theater, although there actually were 21 U. S. Military cemeteries within its boundaries. Such was the sad state of AGRS affairs which the officers from the OQMG encountered upon their arrival.

On 4 May, after packing all records, Colonel Blake, his assistants, and Maj. Henry R. Leffingwell, who had been in charge of AGRS records at Cairo, flew to Algiers to establish AGRS Headquarters there. Acute situations in three important fields—real estate, supply, and personnel—faced these men. Local property owners were almost universally adamant in negotiating rental agreements because of alleged misuse of their properties by Allied Forces during the war. As a result of inadequate advance planning by Theater Headquarters, Colonel Blake and his officers were unprepared to submit firm supply requisitions. Consequently, nearly 80 percent of the items, acquired of necessity from residual teams at Casablanca, Oran, and Algiers, proved to be of doubtful value. A critical personnel situation also existed. The four officers, with a few local inexperienced clerks, simply could not handle the increasing backlog of graves registration work.⁴

When Hq, AGRS-AMEZ, was activated officially on 1 June 1946, one wing of the war-worn Hotel St. George, Algiers, had been secured for billets, mess, and officers. Two garages served temporarily for storage, although efforts were underway to store supplies at Casablanca, Oran, and Algiers. By this time, a mechanic and a few laborers had been employed and contact established with nearby cemeteries. No attempt had yet been made to get in touch with the more remote cemeteries, because of the acute supply and real estate problems, the almost complete lack of transportation facilities, and the continuing manpower shortage.⁵

The day after establishment of AGRS-AMEZ, Capts. O. G. Stutzman and P. F. Hazelbaker and WAC Lt. Lois A. Price arrived from

³ AGRS-AMEZ History, 1 May 46-1 Nov 47, Bk. 1, p. 12.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Memorial Division, OQMG, adding needed strength to the young organization. Both captains had long wartime experience in the ETO and Persian Gulf Commands, respectively. Captain Stutzman became Plans and Operations Officer and Captain Hazelbaker directed supply and transportation matters. Lt. Price took charge of Administration and Personnel. During the next few days, ten additional officers arrived, including medical, finance, and liaison officers, and a chaplain.⁶ AGRS-AMEZ now possessed sufficient officer strength to initiate preliminary activities. The organization acquired local civilians as clerks, drivers, and mechanics, and sent requisitions for badly needed supplies and equipment to the OQMG. Major Leffingwell departed for Washington to hasten the shipment of these items.

Despite these steps, progress during most of June 1946 seemed painfully slow. The new officers and staff required much orientation with the unfamiliar work. By the end of June, AGRS Headquarters had contacted only 12 of the 21 cemeteries. Slow advancement of repair work in the St. George Hotel forced both officers and enlisted men to occupy the same room. Lack of spare parts handicapped local mechanics in their efforts to repair vehicles that should have been in the salvage yard.

During July, by contrast, a period of definite progress began in several urgent fields—the establishment of cordial relations with French civil and military authorities, the acquisition of necessary real estate, the sorting and cataloguing of a confused mass of records from defunct AMET commands, and the control and maintenance of the Zone's widely scattered military cemeteries. The first three of these undertakings were achieved in the immediate vicinity of AGRS Headquarters. The problems of zonal cemeteries required field trips and inspections.

Early in July 1946, Captain Stutzman, with two assistants, undertook the first such inspection mission, which required "hitchhiking" by available air transport to faraway Senegal, Liberia, and Nigeria by way of Casablanca. After inspecting the military cemeteries at Harbel, Liberia; at Lagos, Nigeria; and at Dakar, Senegal, French West Africa, and contacting those in charge of cemeterial maintenance, the group returned by plane to Algiers, on 6 August.⁷ This mission accomplished several purposes. It resulted in the establishment of actual as well as nominal AGRS control over the distant cemeteries of West and South Africa. It revealed Harbel and Lagos Cemeteries to be in satisfactory condition, but showed, by contrast, poor maintenance and care at Dakar, which the local com-

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 20-21.

mander promised to remedy at once through weekly inspections.⁸ Perhaps the most valuable achievement was the accumulation of information which definitely indicated a need for air support of future concentration and repatriation operations. Graves registration authorities indeed were convinced of the impracticability of any attempt to ship remains to the United States from such remote points as Dakar, Harbel, and Lagos, since commercial carriers were then unavailable and, in any event, were too slow. AMEZ Headquarters accordingly requested the OQMG to send a minimum of three planes with crews for graves registration work.

During the busy month of July, another inspection trip took place. Colonel Blake and Captain Hazelbaker "thumbed" a ride with a photographic crew mission to cemeteries at Tripoli, Benghazi, Heliopolis (near Cairo), and Teheran, Iran. They found both Tripoli and Benghazi Cemeteries practically abandoned and in deplorable condition. Heliopolis was under maintenance by the Detachment, U. S. Army in the Middle East (DUSAME), and Teheran, which operated under the nominal control of the American Military Attaché there, was in good condition and proved to be an exceptionally beautiful spot.⁹

Before the end of the summer of 1946, all 21 cemeteries had been contacted and brought under actual control of AGRS Headquarters. That organization now boasted a strength of 19 officers, 3 enlisted men, 23 U. S. civilians, and some 200 native clerks, drivers, mechanics, caretakers, and laborers. Only two of the officers were located outside Algiers Headquarters—Lt. Russell Phillips, at Casablanca, and Lt. Daniel Gleason at Oran. Preparatory activities now were superseded by major graves registration operations.

Major Operations

Concentration of AMEZ Deceased

Before describing concentration activities in AMEZ cemeteries, it is necessary to regress in time to appreciate the earlier efforts of the Theater to reduce the number of small and widely scattered burial places.

More than a year before creation of the Zone, an AGO letter, dated 19 February 1945, directed the Commanding General, AMET, to undertake efforts looking to the reinterment of isolated American deceased in military cemeteries.¹⁰ Later in the year, a small unit

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

⁹ (1) *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24. (2) Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-AMEZ, 31 Jul 46, p. 3.

¹⁰ AGRS-AMEZ History, May 46-Nov 47, Bk. 1, p. 9.

began the removal of American remains by plane from 16 scattered burial grounds throughout West and South Africa (Accra, Monrovia, Walvis Bay, Capetown, Port Elizabeth, Leopoldville, and a number of smaller cemeteries) to Lagos and Harbel Cemeteries. Somewhat later, during October 1945, the deceased from Massirah, Aden, Gura, Khartoum, and El Genina Cemeteries were reinterred in Heliopolis.¹¹

By this time, AMET officials had received approval from Memorial Division, OQMG, of a theater plan to consolidate all recovered American war dead into 19 military cemeteries.¹² Theater Headquarters subsequently notified TQMG that this scheme had been modified slightly to include the burial ground on the Firestone Rubber Plantation at Harbel, Liberia, since care and maintenance there appeared to be on a very high standard.¹³ This move increased the number of temporary military cemeteries to 20. Theater officials also informed The Quartermaster General that 18 of these military cemeteries enjoyed close accessibility to water and land transportation. The other two, Gafsa and Tebessa, were located at points about two or three hundred miles inland, but could be maintained satisfactorily by assigned caretakers and through periodic inspections.¹⁴ Graves registration officers felt that remains from these inland points could later be moved directly to the proper port without undue confusion or delay.

The plan for concentration had been carried out by 15 November 1945 when practically all located remains rested in the 20 established cemeteries.¹⁵ The greatest numbers of deceased lay in North Africa, particularly in Tunisia, where American and British forces had compelled the Nazis to surrender unconditionally in May 1943. Before creation of AGRS-AMEZ, the addition of Teheran Cemetery had brought the number of military burial places to 21.¹⁶

With the Zone now activated and growing in numerical strength, and with all cemeteries now under control of Headquarters, graves registration officials planned the first concentration operations under

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

¹² Ltr, Brig Gen H. W. Beyette, Mem Div, OQMG to CG, Hq AMET, 17 Sep 45, sub: Concentration of Remains in Temporary Cemeteries in AMET, 314.6, Opns Br, Mem Div, OQMG.

¹³ Ltr, Hq AMET to TQMG, 8 Oct 45, sub: Concentration of Remains in Temporary Cemeteries in AMET, 293, Opns Br, Mem Div, OQMG.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ A radio message, from CG, AMET, to the WD, dated 17 December 1945, stated that a unit was completing the transfer of the remaining deceased from South and West African points to Lagos and that final consolidations should be terminated by mid-January 1946.

¹⁶ AGRS-AMEZ History, 1 May 46-1 Nov 47, Bk. 1, p. 10.

zonal auspices. Since the recent inspection trips had revealed that Tripoli and Benghazi Cemeteries were in the most urgent need of attention, Captain Rogers, accompanied by Mr. C. James Enright, departed on 20 August 1946 for those points to see what could be done to remedy conditions.¹⁷

After visiting the burial site at Tripoli and gathering information from a small detachment of Army Transport Command personnel still stationed at Mellaha Air Base, Captain Rogers and Mr. Enright pushed on to Benghazi to disinter the remains there and later transport them by plane to Heliopolis. Upon reaching Benghazi on 28 August, the men found a "dead" city. None of the former Italian colonists or shopkeepers were in evidence. The population consisted of about a 100 British troops, 10,000 Nazi prisoners, and bedraggled Arabs. The U. S. Cemetery lay in the center of a huge wall-enclosed field. The British aided the graves registration unit by putting 30 German prisoners to work excavating the graves. The remains were later stored in a warehouse at the airport. A C-47 plane arrived on 4 September and transported the 49 deceased to Cairo where they were reburied in Heliopolis cemetery with an appropriate ceremony conducted by the Headquarters chaplain.¹⁸ With the initial concentration under zonal control successfully completed, Captain Rogers on 11 September disinterred the 29 American dead at Tripoli and transported them by plane to the United States Military Cemetery El-Alia near Algiers for reburial.¹⁹

Experiences gained in the Tripoli and Benghazi concentration operations stressed the necessity for air transportation as the most practical and economical method of consolidating the dead into accessible locations, preferably in port areas. Graves registration officials also believed that a plane of the L-5 type would prove valuable in the inspection of cemeteries and sector installations.²⁰

During September 1946, GRS officials at Headquarters planned a more extensive concentration project, involving the removal of American dead from Dakar, Harbel, and Lagos Cemeteries and their reinterment at Casablanca, a future repatriation port. This operation would also include the transfer of 44 unknowns from Lagos to Algiers for identification processing.²¹ Realizing that the best flying weather at both Lagos and Harbel occurred during December and January, GRS planners hoped to carry out the concentration mission there at that time. They also expressed concern over the

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁸ (1) *Ibid.*, p. 27. (2) Rpt. GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-AMEZ, 30 Sep 46.

¹⁹ AGRS-AMEZ History, p. 27.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

²¹ (1) *Ibid.*, p. 33. (2) Rpt. GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-AMEZ, 30 Sep 46.

unsettled political situation in Iran and proposed an early removal of American deceased from Teheran Cemetery.²²

While awaiting clearance from the OQMG for necessary air support in carrying out the Dakar-Harbel-Lagos concentration operation, Zone Headquarters made definite plans for the removal of American remains from Teheran and Heliopolis Cemeteries and subsequent interment at Oran.²³ On 14 December, AMEZ Headquarters received official approval for necessary air support, thereby enabling GRS authorities to schedule disinterment operations at the three West African cemeteries, beginning about 11 January and ending by the close of February 1947. They also expected to begin similar activity in Teheran and Heliopolis Cemeteries during March, with the deceased in these two burial grounds to be reinterred at El-Alia rather than Oran, as formerly planned. This change of plans stemmed from a belief that El-Alia offered better transportation facilities, proximity of supplies, and more economical use of personnel. All estimates were based upon the assumption that the first C-47 plane would become available by 4 January 1947.²⁴

During the closing weeks of 1946, the overall picture of graves registration work brightened considerably. Operational procedures became better co-ordinated and the arrival of additional officers in mid-December brought personnel strength to the point where the immediate problems of identification and concentration could command most of the resources and energy of the organization.

After arrival of the C-47 plane from Naples on 4 January 1947 and the completion of necessary arrangements for graves registration supplies, Captain Rogers and Mr. Enright departed from Zone Headquarters and reached Dakar on 16 January. They secured proper local authorization for disinterment of the Cemetery, employed Senegalese laborers, and procured vehicles from the residual team.²⁵

The exhumation of the 61 deceased at Dakar progressed in a fairly satisfactory manner despite petty annoyances. Officers supervised native mechanics for an hour or so each morning while they grunted, hammered, and pushed vehicles around the parking yard in an effort to get one started. Because the base at Dakar was scheduled to close out in a few days, all maintenance had ceased and baling wire had replaced spare parts. With the aid of the entire plane crew, who worked in the cemetery and helped prepare

²² Ltr, Col. C. R. Hutchins, Mem Div, OQMG to Dir, SS&P, WDGS, 25 Nov 46, sub: Air Transportation for Movement of Remains in AMEZ, 293, AGRS-AMEZ, Alex RC, hereinafter cited as AMEZ, Alex RC.

²³ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-AMEZ, 30 Nov 46.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 31 Dec 46, p. 2.

²⁵ AGRS-AMEZ History, 1 May 46-1 Nov 47, Bk. 1, pp. 28, 33.

the remains for shipment, the project at Dakar was finished and the plots rehabilitated in just one week. The remains from this cemetery reached Casablanca by plane on 25 January.²⁶

Captain Rogers and Mr. Enright next moved to the Harbel Cemetery in Liberia, adjoining Roberts Field, the American Air Base. The unique reception which the graves registration detachment received there took them completely by surprise. The Commanding Officer showed utter indifference to the GRS mission and the Executive Officer manifested an attitude of total non-co-operation. Furthermore, the Adjutant displayed open hostility. Faced with this unfavorable situation, Captain Roberts appealed to the manager of the Firestone Plantation for aid. Although the Firestone employees showed willingness to help, the third day found Captain Rogers and Mr. Enright still without a jeep or any other vehicle. In desperation, Captain Rogers ordered his plane to Casablanca, more than 2,000 miles away, to bring back a jeep.²⁷

When disinterment operations finally began at Harbel, the workers found that many of the bodies had been given first class burials in sealed, metal caskets enclosed in large outer cases of mahogany. The condition of the remains need not be elaborated upon except to stress that they were very difficult to handle, since in several instances both casket and outer box had developed leaks and were well filled with water by seepage from the surrounding wet clay soil. Handling human remains, lying amidst wood, metal, and water at the bottom of a 7-foot excavation proved extremely distasteful to the laborers.²⁸ Despite these disagreeable features and the difficulty in securing sufficient native laborers and necessary vehicles, the work continued and 27 of the 74 remains had been flown to Casablanca by 11 February.²⁹ The others arrived there by the end of the month.

After completing the arduous task at Harbel, the unit moved on to Lagos, Nigeria, the cemetery most remote from Algiers Headquarters. Because of the fine co-operation of local officials, the American Consulate, and the Baptist Mission, the project was completed in record time. The 89 identified remains were flown to Casablanca during March and reinterred there, while the 44 unknowns arrived at El-Alia Cemetery, Algiers, on 16 March, for identity processing.³⁰

²⁶ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-AMEZ, 31 Jan 47, p. 1.

²⁷ AGRS-AMEZ History, Bk. 1, pp. 35-36.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

²⁹ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-AMEZ, 28 Feb 47, p. 2.

³⁰ (1) *Ibid.*, p. 3. (2) AGRS-AMEZ History, 1 May 46-1 Nov 46, Bk. 1, pp. 37-38.

Certain standard procedures had been used during the concentration operations in the three West African cemeteries. Semi-decomposed remains were always carefully wrapped in a clean mattress cover, and put in a metallic liner. Workers then sealed the liner with cement and rubber waterproof and placed it in a clean, dry airlift box for transport. Remains which had completely decomposed were deposited either in a human remains pouch, transport type, or wrapped in a clean blanket and placed in an airlift box for transport. Graves registration workers took sanitary precautions in each case by using disinfectants and deodorants. AMEZ officials planned to use these same procedures in the fast-approaching removal of dead from Middle East Cemeteries to Algiers and of Tunisian unknowns to Tunis.³¹

During March 1947, meanwhile, some 65 unknown remains from the Moroccan area reached the United States Cemetery at El-Alia after processing at the mobile identification point there. At this time, groups of 10 and 14 unknowns from United States Military Cemeteries at Constantine and Tebessa also were transported to El-Alia for processing and reinterment.³² Other GRS workers were exhuming remains from Heliopolis Cemetery for later transfer and reburial at El-Alia.

By April, remains both at Heliopolis and Teheran were ready for air transportation to El-Alia. Captain Rogers again was in charge of the concentration operation and had two C-47 planes at his disposal. Mr. Russell Miller assisted him on these projects, since Mr. Enright was engaged in identification activities at Algiers. The actual work of exhuming, preparing, and shipping the deceased had become routine and in spite of the great distances involved, the major portion of the task had ended successfully by 18 April 1947. Some 385 remains from Heliopolis and 100 of the 249 deceased from Teheran then rested in El-Alia Cemetery.³³

At this time, Zone Headquarters requested TQMG to grant authority for evacuating and transporting American dead from four North African cemeteries to the U. S. Military Cemetery at Tunis, Tunisia. The four burial grounds were Gafsa, Hadjeb-el-Aioun, Tebessa, and Souk Ahras—all located between 150 and 300 miles from the port of Tunis. Motor, rather than air, transportation was suggested. In addition, GRS officials proposed the concentration of the 383 deceased from Constantine Cemetery into El-Alia,

³¹ Ltr, Hq AMEZ, to Mem Div, OQMG, 18 Mar 47, sub: Transport of Remains, 468, AMEZ, Alex RC.

³² Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-AMEZ, 31 Mar 47, p. 2.

³³ (1) *Ibid.*, 30 Apr 47, p. 2. (2) AGRS-AMEZ History, 1 May 46-1 Nov 47, Bk. 1, p. 38.



FIGURE 33. *View of temporary American Military Cemetery, Heliopolis, Egypt.*

Algiers. They believed that the 4-cemetery project could be completed in 2 months and estimated that the Constantine undertaking would require but 2 weeks.³⁴ They also emphatically asserted that immediate evacuation to ports of the deceased from scattered and isolated cemeteries would be far more economical than making the "long haul" after actual repatriation had begun. They also pointed out that closer supervision and better maintenance would be provided at Tunis and El-Alia than in smaller and less accessible burial grounds.³⁵

Early in May 1947, the OQMG granted AMEZ officials the necessary authority to proceed with these concentration plans. The consolidation of the dead into Tunis and Algiers constituted, in the opinion of GRS officers, the first major step in repatriation operations, since the burial of all AMEZ deceased in North African port areas was necessary before actual return operations could begin.³⁶

³⁴ (1) Ltr, Hq AGRS-AMEZ to TQMG, 15 Apr 47, sub: Concentration of Cemeteries, 687, AMEZ, Alex RC. (2) Ltr, Hq AGRS-AMEZ to TQMG, 22 Apr 47, sub: Request for Authority to Concentrate Constantine Cemetery, 687, AMEZ, Alex RC.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Rads, OQMG to CG, AGRS-AMEZ, 1 May, 7 May 47, 687, AMEZ, Alex RC.

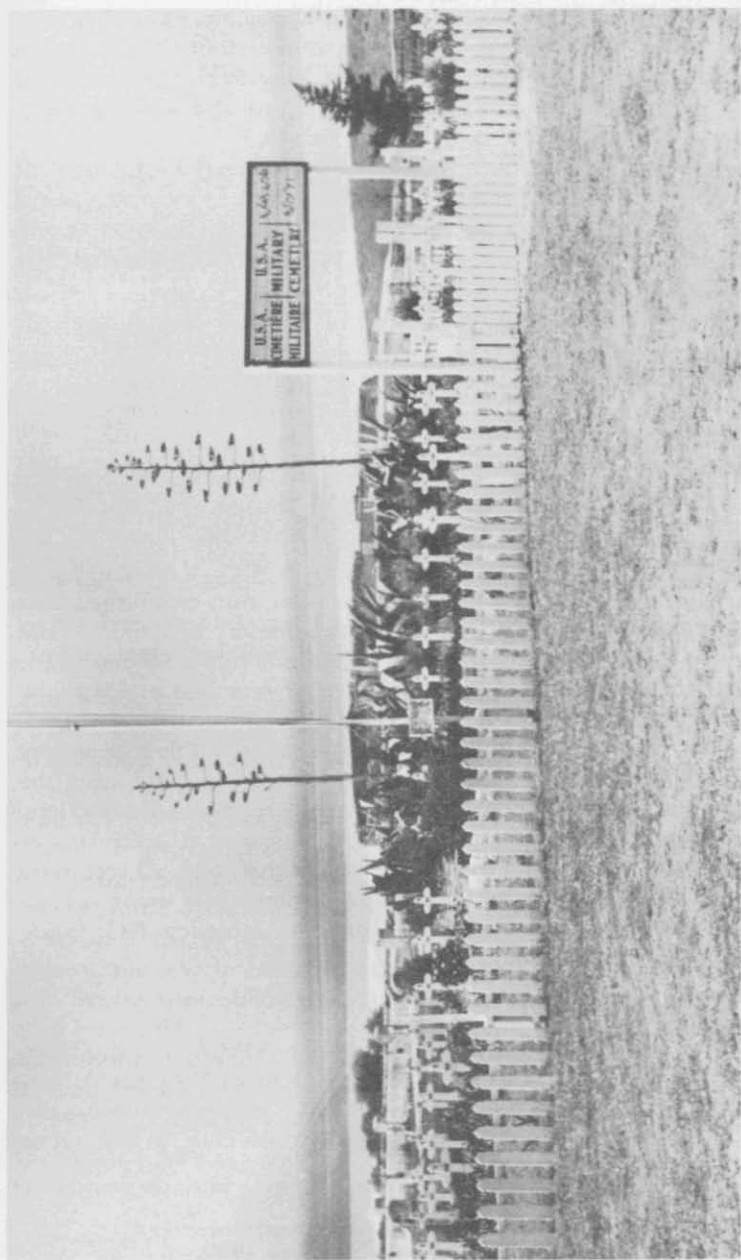


FIGURE 34. Entrance to temporary American Military Cemetery, Port Lyautey, French Morocco.

While plans for carrying out these newly authorized concentrations were readied, the deceased (108) from Ft. Kasba, near Port Lyautey, French Morocco, arrived at the military cemetery in Casablanca by motor transport. Two days later, on 14 May 1947, the balance of remains from Teheran arrived in Algiers by air and were buried in El-Alia Cemetery, terminating that project.³⁷

From May through September 1947, all remaining American burial grounds in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia were evacuated and the deceased therefrom transported by truck to a "port" cemetery for reburial. The cemeteries involved and the completion date of each operation were:³⁸

- Constantine into El-Alia, 25 May 1947.
- Hadjeb el Aioun into Tunis (Residual), 27 May 1947.
- Tebessa into Tunis (Residual), 13 June 1947.
- Souk Ahras into Tunis (Residual), 17 June 1947.
- Gafsa into Tunis (Residual), 12 July 1947.
- Ksar Mezouar into Tunis (Residual), 22 August 1947.
- II Corps into Tunis (Residual), 25 August 1947.
- Beja into Tunis (Residual), 15 September 1947.
- Fedala into Casablanca, 18 September 1947.

In Algeria and Tunisia, graves registration units established field camps and completed evacuation of one cemetery at a time. The entire concentration activity moved along quite smoothly during the summer months and was completed, for all practical purposes, by the end of September 1947. Only one unusual incident occurred, when thieves somehow eluded guards and entered Tunis Cemetery one September night. They opened three graves and stole the mattress covers in which the deceased were wrapped. Fortunately, they did not disturb the remains.³⁹

Before any repatriation caskets arrived in the Zone, all recovered dead (7,087) rested in the four North African port areas. They were distributed in the following manner: Casablanca, 883; Oran, 1,090; El-Alia, 1,603; Tunis, 3,511.⁴⁰

Search and Recovery

Several months before activation of AGRS-AMEZ, in compliance with a War Department directive dated 6 October 1945, the Africa-Middle East Theater conducted a systematic search for missing deceased and for information which might furnish clues to isolated or

³⁷ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-AMEZ, 31 May 47, p. 2.

³⁸ Rpts, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-AMEZ, May through September 47.

³⁹ AGRS-AMEZ History, 1 May 46-1 Nov 47, Bk. 1, pp. 38-39.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 39.



FIGURE 35. *Wooden crosses at Fedala Cemetery mark the graves of 84 Americans who died during the landing operations in North Africa.*

unreported burials. Teams, composed of 1 officer and 2 enlisted men in North Africa, and of 1 officer and 3 enlisted men in the Middle East region, carried out this project. They visited and sought "leads" in all cities and villages within operational radius of Casablanca, French Morocco; Algiers and Oran, Algeria; Tunis, Tunisia; Tripoli, Tripolitania; Benghazi, Lybia; Heliopolis, Egypt; Khartoum, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan; Gura, Eritrea; and Aden, in Aden. They also explored the islands off the coast of Tunisia.⁴¹

To facilitate the coverage of isolated areas beyond operational control, the search teams negotiated with the national gendarmerie and British-controlled area police and obtained their co-operation. As a result, the searchers visited remote villages and scattered Arab communities in the hope of gaining knowledge of deserters or unreported burials.

The search teams experienced little difficulty in entering areas throughout Africa. Both local police and native populations gave ready co-operation and valuable assistance. The entire project ter-

⁴¹ Ltr, CG, AMET to The Adjutant General, Wash., D. C., 15 Dec 45, sub: European Casualty Clearance Plan, 293, AMEZ, Alex RC.

minated on 15 November 1945, with no additional information uncovered as to missing persons or isolated burials. The Theater estimated, however, that approximately 30 undiscovered and probably unrecoverable remains lay within its limits.⁴² During the remaining months of the Theater's existence, several special investigations were undertaken, based upon specific inquiries or upon pertinent information which reached Theater Headquarters.

For some time after activation of AGRS-AMEZ, little search activity took place, since organizational matters and concentration plans and operations consumed most of the efforts of graves registration personnel. In late 1946, an intensive campaign began, looking to the recovery of all isolated deceased for whom no records then existed in AMEZ files. The most exhaustive search operations occurred in the Tunis area, where war casualties had been heaviest. AGRS officials solicited information from all State Department representatives in this region and from French and British graves registration organizations. With the co-operation of the Tunisian Government, the searchers utilized all possible publicity media—radio, newspaper, posters, etc.—in their appeals for clues concerning isolated burials. This project did not entail a sweeping area search, such as the one undertaken and completed under Theater auspices late in 1945, but was based mostly upon specific clues obtained from various sources.⁴³ A typical search team consisted of 1 junior officer, 1 War Department civilian, 1 interpreter, and guides hired locally as the need arose. Zone officials hoped to complete search activity by the close of March 1947 but realized that some cases would probably continue into the repatriation period.

Search efforts in Tunisia resulted in the location of the unrecorded graves of 12 American and several Allied deceased. Because of the small number of unlocated remains now estimated to rest in the Zone, the Commanding Officer, AGRS-AMEZ, requested approval from the OQMG to terminate further search operations. But he added that "every effort will be continued toward locating and recovering the remains of specific individuals where clues are obtainable from record screening, local officials, or local inhabitants."⁴⁴

A sharp increase in possible recovery cases changed this picture early in March 1947. Instead of concurring in the request to end search activities in the Zone, the Memorial Division, OQMG, di-

⁴² (1) *Ibid.* (2) Tech Mem No. 16, Hq AGRS-AMEZ, sub: Tentative Plan for Searching and Recovery Activities in AMEZ, 293, AMEZ, Alex RC.

⁴³ (1) AGRS-AMEZ History, 1 May 46-1 Nov 47, Bk. 1, p. 46. (2) Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-AMEZ, 30 Nov 46, p. 3.

⁴⁴ 1st Ind, Hq AMEZ to TQMG, 22 Jan 47, in reply to Basic Ltr, OQMG to CO, AGRS-AMEZ, 10 Jan 47, 293, AMEZ, Alex RC.

rected Col. Whitfield W. Watson, who replaced Col. Blake as Commanding Officer, AGRS-AMEZ, on 11 February 1947, to carry on such operations until all efforts had been expended on each unresolved case.⁴⁵

Accordingly, searching continued and by the end of April 1947, nine more remains had been located in the Zone. At this time, AGRS records indicated a total of 88 recoverables in AMEZ, many of which lay at extreme distances from Algiers Headquarters. In fact, a close study of the Isolated Burials Map at Headquarters showed that these allegedly recoverable remains were thinly scattered in an area roughly 4,500 miles long and 3,500 miles wide, encompassing 15 different countries from Turkey to the tip of South Africa and from Liberia to Iran.⁴⁶ The use of aircraft apparently provided the only possible means of transporting bodies from such distant burial places, although a lack of adequate bases for landing and refueling of planes at those points posed an additional complication.⁴⁷

Undaunted by these obstacles, Captain Rogers and two assistants departed by AMEZ plane on 18 May 1947 to recover isolated burials from Egypt, the Sudan, Eritrea, and Aden. Rogers, who remained in Cairo while the others proceeded southward, experienced some difficulty in obtaining local authorizations and clearances. Minor Egyptian officials, acutely conscious of their greater independence since the recent evacuation of British troops from their country, proved to be rather intractable.⁴⁸ Captain Rogers nevertheless recovered seven remains from that region. Elsewhere, search officers found a more co-operative attitude and recovered eleven deceased from Aden in Saudi Arabia, one from Khartoum in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, and a current deceased from Asmara, Eritrea.⁴⁹

Further search missions were scheduled for the immediate future in Turkey, Iraq, and Iran. Completion of these operations would leave approximately 50 isolated burials extending all along the eastern, southern, and western coasts of Africa.⁵⁰ On 21 May, Hq, AGRS-AMEZ forwarded a letter to OQMG requesting provision of a suitable vessel to transport these scattered remains to a central point.

During the June grave registration conference at Washington, D. C., Memorial Division officials disapproved as impractical and

⁴⁵ (1) AGRS-AMEZ History, Bk. 1, p. 39. (2) 2d Ind. OQMG to CO, AMEZ, 11 Mar 47, to Basic Ltr, 10 Jan 47, 293, AMEZ, Alex RC.

⁴⁶ AGRS-AMEZ History, Bk. 1, p. 46

⁴⁷ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-AMEZ, 30 Apr 47, p. 3.

⁴⁸ See fn. 46, above.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁵⁰ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-AMEZ, 31 May 47, p. 3.

too expensive any proposal to use water transportation in AMEZ since it involved numerous transfers between ship lines, which could easily result in the loss or misplacement of remains and required additional manpower over a prolonged period of time. The conferees also concluded that landing facilities and supply bases were located at sufficiently frequent intervals to permit searching of the African continent by plane.⁵¹ They favorably considered a plan which called for a single flight completely circumnavigating Africa for recovery purposes.⁵²

Shortly after the conference, search missions already scheduled for AMEZ began with the departure by plane on 13 July of a small unit from Algiers. This group disinterred five isolated remains in Turkey and returned them without incident to El-Alia for reburial. At about the same time, Lieutenant Stirling and Mr. Enright departed for Iraq and Iran on perhaps the most difficult and least successful recovery undertaking involving isolated dead in this Zone. After landing to refuel at Habbaniya Airport near Bagdad, Iraq, on 11 July in a shade temperature of 121°, the men spent the entire following day at Basra, dashing about in the terrific heat, rousing people from their "siestas," poring over ill-kept records, and asking many questions in a futile effort to locate three or four isolated remains reportedly buried in that vicinity.⁵³ No separate graves, markers, plots, rows, nor records had been maintained at the Basra Cemetery. Periodic flash floods had leveled burial mounds, making individual graves indistinguishable. Even if the unit had been able to locate and disinter the remains, the local custom of giving clothing of the dead to the poor reduced the possibility of identification to almost nothing.⁵⁴

One other remains reportedly rested at Shiraz, some 4,500 feet up in the mountains of Iran. If a plane could not land there, the unit would be forced to cross the Persian Gulf by native boat to Bushire and then make a 2-day ride into the mountains through the country of the Kashkai, a nomadic people noted for valuing a gun far above a human life. Consequently, it was decided to fly over Shiraz and inspect the area from the air. When the C-47 reached its destination, the investigators found the short dirt landing strip in better condition than expected and the pilot made a perfect landing. The British Consul co-operated with the GRS unit, which, although delayed in obtaining clearances from the Iranian authorities and

⁵¹ Ltr, Hq AGRS-AMEZ, 7 Jul 47, sub: Isolated Burials, AMEZ, 314.6, AMEZ, Alex RC.

⁵² Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-AMEZ, 30 Jun 47, pp. 2-3.

⁵³ (1) *Ibid.*, 31 Jul 47. (2) AMEZ History, Bk. 1, pp. 47-48.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

forced to work in choking dust, located and identified the sought remains and returned with it to Zone Headquarters, thereby completing search and recovery operations in the Turkey-Iraq-Iran area.⁵⁵

While the foregoing recovery missions were in progress, AMEZ Headquarters formulated plans for undertaking the complete circumnavigation of the huge African continent by plane. This project represented the most ambitious as well as the final, area-wide search and recovery effort in the Zone. On 24 August, Captain Rogers, with an assistant, departed on this long journey aboard an AMEZ plane with a crew of five. The flight circled Africa by way of Egypt, the Sudan, Kenya, Mozambique, Union of South Africa, thence northward through the Belgian Congo, Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Morocco, and back to Algiers. The flight covered 17,000 miles and lasted 5 weeks and 2 days, ending on 7 October. The searchers encountered no trouble with local authorities, and State Department representatives rendered immense aid whenever necessary. Thorough preparations and the past experience of Captain Rogers were vital factors in the successful accomplishment of a hazardous mission which recovered 59 remains from 11 different localities.⁵⁶

By the end of October 1947, grave registration authorities considered the entire Zone to have been completely covered except for certain sections of the Tunisian area, where investigative operations resumed after curtailment during the summer's concentration, identification, and casket unloading activities.⁵⁷ These efforts resulted in the recovery of nine additional remains by early 1948. When AGRS-AMEZ closed out its activities at the end of April 1948, officials estimated that 41 unlocated remains still lay within the Zone. After the Mediterranean Zone assumed residual operations for the former Africa-Middle East Zone, only a few recoveries, based upon specific data, took place.

Selection of a Permanent Overseas Cemetery in AMEZ

Even before the creation of AGRS-AMEZ, Theater officials had tentatively decided that only one permanent overseas cemetery would be established in this area and had already provisionally selected a location near Tunis, Tunisia. Although flat, this site possessed good drainage and a favorable location near the sea, just off the main road near the former city of Carthage. Other assets

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

⁵⁷ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-AMEZ, 31 Oct 47, pp. 4-5.

included scenic beauty, a background of hills, and historic interest.⁵⁸

Shortly after AGRS-AMEZ commenced operations, officials in both Memorial Division, OQMG, and in Zone Headquarters gave further thought to the problem of a permanent zonal cemetery or cemeteries for about 3,500 remains. Early in September 1946, Colonel Blake, CO, AGRS-AMEZ, favorably described Teheran Cemetery and suggested that Memorial Division, OQMG, consider it, among others, as a possible permanent overseas burial ground. In reply, General Horkan informed Colonel Blake that a decision had been made to establish only one such memorial in AMEZ, and pointed out that approved policy called for a limited number of permanent overseas cemeteries throughout the world in order to reduce cost and facilitate cemeterial maintenance and administrative control.⁵⁹ Furthermore, Memorial Division officers believed that Teheran Cemetery was too small and remote to justify its permanent use. In fact, they had already eliminated from serious consideration all except three sites—Oran, El-Alia, and Tunis.⁶⁰

Since the final choice in this matter might not be determined for some time, Memorial Division officials found it necessary to make tentative selection of a residual cemetery in order to provide a basis for proposed repatriation plans and schedules. Following the example of former Theater officials, they chose the Tunis Cemetery for this purpose. It was picked because the largest number of remains lay in the port areas of North Africa, because the port of Tunis was scheduled to be in operation for the longest period of time, and because this region was associated with the bitter fighting during the last days of the North African campaign.⁶¹ In addition, these officials believed that the residual cemetery would very likely be selected as the permanent overseas military burial ground in AMEZ, although some sentiment existed at Zone Headquarters for the Oran site.⁶²

Before the end of 1946, General Eisenhower, then Chief of Staff, had expressed his preference for Tunis and had specifically indicated that Oran should not be considered. Based upon his desires, OQMG officials determined to select Tunis. General Horkan informed Colonel Blake of this decision in a message dated 24 December 1946. He added that it was planned to select a new site at

⁵⁸ Ltr, Hq AMET to TQMG, 26 Mar 46, sub: Plan for GR Activities, AMET File.

⁵⁹ Ltr, Brig Gen George A. Horkan, Mem Div, OQMG to CO, AGRS-AMEZ, 22 Oct 46, 687, AMEZ, Alex RC.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Memo, Col C. J. Blake, CO, AGRS-AMEZ to Horkan, Mem Div, OQMG, 23 Nov 46, 333.1, AMEZ, Alex RC.

Tunis, near ancient Carthage, since the location of the existing Tunis Military Cemetery was considered unsatisfactory for permanent use. General Horkan asked that Zone Headquarters express its views on the matter and to recommend suitable alternate locations, if necessary.⁶³

Finally, on 17 April 1947, after considerable delay, AMEZ Headquarters indicated that "the vicinity of Carthage, Tunisia, is considered the most satisfactory for the location of the cemetery."⁶⁴ Furthermore, AMEZ Headquarters informed TQMG that local French authorities had offered their co-operation in the acquisition and development of such a site. The message failed, however, to mention a request of 3 April from Memorial Division, OQMG, urging immediate selection of a site and the procurement of all possible engineering data. Memorial Division therefore dispatched another radiogram to AMEZ, again urging quick action on the matter. This message assured zone officials that there would be no objection to the submission of more than one alternate location. In view of the long delay in obtaining positive action, however, Memorial Division officials now believed that final plans for an overseas burial ground could not be completed before the start of actual repatriation operations. In consequence, they suggested that AMEZ authorities investigate facilities in the Tunis area for above-ground storage pending consummation of plans.⁶⁵ In response to this pressure for action and to provide a temporary resting place while the final choice of a permanent site was being made, AMEZ officials obtained a plot near the Tunis port and designated it as U. S. Military Cemetery, Tunis Residual.⁶⁶ It contained space for approximately 2,000 graves.

In the summer of 1947, Lt. Col. D. K. Donelson, Memorial Division, OQMG, and Mr. Markley Stevenson, War Department consultant, departed for Europe and the Africa-Middle East Zone in order to represent the OQMG in discussions with ABMC members and with overseas graves registration representatives as to the selection and development of the permanent site near Carthage.⁶⁷ Arriving in Tunis on 19 August, Colonel Donelson and other members of the party, including Brig. Gen. Thomas North, Secretary,

⁶³ Ltr, Horkan to CO, AGRS-AMEZ, 24 Dec 46, sub: Permanent Overseas Cemeteries, 687, AMEZ, Alex RC.

⁶⁴ Ltr, Lt Col Earl B. Wadsworth, Hq AGRS-AMEZ to TQMG, 17 Apr 47, sub: Permanent Overseas Cemeteries, 687, AMEZ, Alex RC.

⁶⁵ Rad, Mem Div, OQMG to CO, AGRS-AMEZ, 13 May 47, 687, AMEZ, Alex RC.

⁶⁶ Ltr, Hq AGRS-AMEZ to TQMG, 28 May 47, sub: U. S. Military Cemetery, Tunis Residual, 687, AMEZ, Alex RC.

⁶⁷ Ltr, Horkan, Chief, Mem Div, OQMG to CO, AGRS-AMEZ, 27 Jun 47, sub: Completion of Arrangements for Permanent Cemeteries in ETA, Italy and Africa, 687, AMEZ, Alex RC.

ABMC, were met by Col. W. W. Watson, CO, AGRS-AMEZ, Maj. Henry R. Leffingwell, CO, Tunis Area, and Capt. O. G. Stutzman, Plans and Operations Office, Hq, AGRS-AMEZ. The entire group then made a tour of temporary cemeteries at Beja and Ksar-Mezouar near Tunis.

On 20 and 21 August, they inspected sites around Tunis itself and finally determined that a plot called "Site A" was most suitable for a permanent cemetery. It had a high elevation overlooking the excavated Roman Theater and other ruins of Carthage, three beautiful views of the Mediterranean Sea, and faced the Carthage Cathedral and the city of Tunis. A nearby plot, called "Site B," was to be an alternate site if test borings proved Site A to be unsuitable or if the French *Service d'Antiquities* should object because of its archaeological importance.⁶⁸

The Memorial Division officials, upon receipt of this report, agreed to these choices.⁶⁹ They suggested that AMEZ authorities prepare a map showing the exact boundaries of the land desired, and then send this information to the French Government and to local French authorities in Tunisia. General Horkan proposed the use of either the local contract or the purchase and hire method in the development of the area selected. Since the Memorial Division realized that AMEZ personnel might be unable to prepare the chosen site for permanent interments before the beginning of repatriation operations, they suggested the possibility of employing either open or closed storage near the site for the remains on hand until they could be interred in final locations.

Plans for using Site A received a crippling blow when the French Antiquities Service advised AMEZ officials that it would not be available because excavation had revealed that it contained ancient ruins. Despite this development, Colonel Donelson and General North believed that AMEZ should still request its use from the French and Tunisian governments with the privilege of accepting Site B, if absolutely necessary.⁷⁰

Correspondence among interested officials during the ensuing weeks revealed a difference of opinion about the best way to proceed. Col. L. R. Talbot, Memorial Division, OQMG, disagreed with General North and Colonel Donelson, maintaining that an attitude of

⁶⁸ Inspection Rpt, Lt Col Donelson and Markley Stevenson, Tunis Area, U. S. Military Cemetery Site Survey, August 1947, 333.1, AMEZ, Alex RC.

⁶⁹ Ltr, Horkan, Chief, Mem Div, OQMG to CO, AGRS-AMEZ, 8 Sep 47, sub: Acquisition of Permanent Cemetery Sites, 687, AMEZ, Alex RC.

⁷⁰ Ltr, Lt Col D. K. Donelson to Col W. W. Watson, CO, AGRS-AMEZ, 18 Sep 47, 687, AMEZ, Alex RC.

persistence in asking for Site A would only antagonize the French and might lead to the additional loss of Site B. Since both General North and Mr. Markley Stevenson had agreed that Site B was perfectly suitable for a permanent cemetery, Colonel Talbot believed that "We should abandon all thought of Site A and make an immediate request for Site B."⁷¹ He also urged quick decision in the matter in order that the architect might proceed with necessary plans.

Meanwhile, AMEZ officials already had obtained permission from Tunisian authorities to make test borings on the proposed Site B. Findings there indicated that no rock or other obstructions were present to hinder cemeterial operations. Since the ground at Site B was then in preparation for planting crops in December 1947, some AMEZ officials feared that its use might cause a loss to the owner and thereby involve added expense.⁷² Nevertheless, on clearance of the site by the French Antiquities Service, Gen. H. L. Peckham, CG, Hq, AGRC-EA, requested the American Ambassador in France to open formal negotiations for its acquisition. On 10 January 1948, The Quartermaster General urged quick French approval in order that work might begin.

One month later, on 10 February 1948, while still awaiting French action, Lt. Col. Earl B. Wadsworth, who had succeeded Colonel Watson as Commanding Officer, AGRS-AMEZ, on 10 October 1947, requested The Quartermaster General to send a consulting engineer representing the ABMC to Carthage Cemetery before 1 April 1948 to make a final review of plans for its development. He also informed TQMG that if grading plans were received by 15 February, burials could begin about 1 April and the cemetery would be ready for transfer to the ABMC by 1 June. This last possibility depended upon the receipt of instructions from the OQMG to bury all unresolved or non-reply cases in AMEZ before 1 March 1948.⁷³

In response to this request, which had been transmitted to him by Colonel Talbot, OQMG, General North, ABMC, stated that he believed the necessary operations at the chosen locale could be accomplished without further visits by ABMC personnel. He indicated, nevertheless, that Col. William A. Walker of the Commission would

⁷¹ 2d Ind, Talbot, Mem Div, OQMG to CG, AGRC-EA, 17 Nov 47, to Basic Ltr, Hq AGRS-AMEZ to CG, AGRS-EA, 13 Oct 47, 687, AMEZ, Alex RC.

⁷² Ltr, Capt Max M. Misener, Hq AGRS-AMEZ to CG, AGRC-EA, 12 Nov 47, sub: Acquisition of Permanent Cemetery Site-Carthage, 687, AMEZ, Alex RC.

⁷³ Ltr, Lt Col E. B. Wadsworth, CO, Hq AGRS-AMEZ to TQMG, 10 Feb 48, sub: ABMC Representative in AMEZ, 687, AMEZ, Alex RC.

probably visit North Africa about 1 May in order to familiarize himself with the situation and to answer any questions.⁷⁴

Although opposition arose in certain French quarters to the whole project, a reduction in the amount of land requested for a permanent cemetery apparently helped overcome objections, since such a curtailment helped the French *Bureau des Anciens Combattants* buy the land without exceeding its appropriations.

In mid-March 1948, Colonel Wadsworth cabled the OQMG that Site B would be available immediately for preparatory operations. Further action depended upon the receipt of long-overdue ABMC grading and layout plans. Meanwhile, a temporary workshop and open storage area had already been established in order to facilitate forthcoming activities.⁷⁵

Before actual operations commenced on Site B, AGRS-AMEZ was inactivated, effective 30 April 1948, and all residual matters henceforth became the responsibility of AGRS-MZ. Colonel Talbot, Memorial Division, meanwhile had visited the Carthage area and received further assurances from a local representative of the French Government that no objection existed to any construction activity which grave registration officials and workers might wish to perform.⁷⁶

Shortly after deactivation of AGRS-AMEZ, TQMG received a copy of a letter from the American Ambassador to France transmitting a note from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, granting the United States a right of entry, effective 15 June 1948, for operations at the U. S. World War II Cemetery to be established at Carthage.⁷⁷ After this action, grading and other preparatory operations commenced, continuing until late in August.⁷⁸

Actual interment of World War II dead finally began in Carthage Military Cemetery on 14 September 1948. Those interred in this site included deceased whose next of kin had expressed preference for overseas burial, and all recovered unknowns. Burials were made each week day, Monday through Friday, averaging 48 daily, with the three major faiths represented in the conduct of solemn rites for each of the deceased.⁷⁹ By the end of 1948, a total of 1,077 Amer-

⁷⁴ Ltr, General North, ABMC to Col E. Busch, Mem Div, OQMG, 19 Feb 48: sub: ABMC Representative in AMEZ, 687, AMEZ, Alex RC.

⁷⁵ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, 31 Mar 48.

⁷⁶ Ltr, Colonel Talbot, Mem Div, OQMG to General Horkan, Chief, Mem Div, OQMG, 1 May 48, 333.1 Mediterranean Zone (MZ), Alex RC.

⁷⁷ 3d Ind, Hq AGRC-EA to TQMG, 25 Jun 48, to Basic Ltr, Talbot, Mem Div, OQMG to CG, AGRC-EA, 19 Mar 48, 687, AMEZ, Alex RC.

⁷⁸ (1) Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-MZ, 31 Aug 48. (2) History AGRS-MZ, 1 Oct 47-30 Jun 50, p. 15.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 30 Sep 48.



FIGURE 36. *Aerial view of North Africa American Military Cemetery near Carthage and 10 miles northeast of Tunis, Tunisia.*

icans rested in the cemetery, which eventually received the official designation of North Africa American Cemetery and Memorial. Six months later, at the close of June 1949, just before Carthage Cemetery was turned over to ABMC on 1 July, the number interred had increased sharply to 2,816. At the same time, official estimates placed the number of unlocated dead in the former Africa-Middle East Zone at only twenty.⁸⁰

Repatriation from AMEZ

Graves registration officials gave consideration to tentative plans for eventual repatriation of deceased from the Zone, according to wishes of the next of kin, soon after establishment of AGRS-AMEZ.

⁸⁰ (1) *Ibid.*, 30 Jun 49. (2) The latest official figure of deceased in Carthage Cemetery showed 2,834 buried there—Interv, Colonel Mitchell, ABMC, 16 Nov 55. (3) Inf. Bull. No. 2, 23 Jan 50, Mem Div, sub: Status of U. S. Military Cemeteries and Overseas Natl Cemeteries.

At that time (July 1946), those in AMEZ Headquarters favored the use of several ports for future homeward shipments, including Cairo, Tunis, Algiers, Oran, Casablanca, Dakar, Harbel, and Lagos.⁸¹ Subsequent developments lowered this number by half. In fact, as will be recalled, the early removal of the dead from Harbel, Dakar, and Lagos to Casablanca eliminated those points as possible repatriation ports. The transfer of remains from Heliopolis Cemetery to El-Alia during the spring of 1947 removed Cairo from further consideration, reducing the repatriation ports to four—Casablanca, Oran, Tunis, and Algiers. All of these ports possessed adequate deepwater berths for ships, dockside facilities for unloading supplies and caskets, and port warehouses for the storage of remains ready for shipment.

Before the end of March 1947, AMEZ officers initiated preparations for repatriation operations by obtaining necessary clearances, permits, and assistance from proper local authorities. No complications arose and agreement was reached that all repatriation operations would proceed under French Colonial administration.⁸² Through negotiations, enough warehouse space was also obtained at the four repatriation ports to assure proper storage of remains. At Casablanca, graves registration forces acquired ample living space at the Cazes air base, and surplus warehouses, formerly used by the Air Transport Command, served as morgues. At Oran, only about 30 percent of maximum storage requirements were available at the cemetery, necessitating a tentative agreement for use of commercial storage space in the port area. Adequate morgue space at Algiers was obtained in a former Allied military depot adjacent to El-Alia Cemetery and close to the port. At Tunis, about half the needed storage space had to be procured on a commercial basis. Because of high rental costs and the shortage of suitable space, GRS authorities made every effort to acquire the loan of surplus Allied military depots in the Tunis area.⁸³

During April 1947, the OQMG advised AGRS-AMEZ Headquarters that caskets and disinterment directives would arrive during September 1947, that exhumations preparatory to repatriation would commence in October, and that casketed remains would be homeward bound by January 1948. Based upon these tentative schedules, AMEZ officials drew up the following plan for employment of FOS units during disinterments: ⁸⁴ ½ FOS at Casablanca, ½ FOS

⁸¹ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-AMEZ, 31 Jul 46, p. 2.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 31 Mar 48, p. 5.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 30 Apr 47, p. 5.

at Oran, 1 FOS at Algiers, 2½ FOS at Tunis. It was expected that disinterment operations would proceed simultaneously at the four ports.

By August 1947, when concentration of remains from all AMEZ cemeteries into the four port areas was nearing completion, Memorial Division, revising to somewhat later dates its estimates of operations, informed AMEZ that caskets to support repatriation activities would be shipped aboard the USAT *Robert F. Burns* in the following numbers for arrival on the approximate dates indicated: 2,642 at Tunis, 22 October 1947; 1,624 at Algiers, 31 October; 1,123 at Oran, 6 November; and 911 at Casablanca, 10 November. The balance of required caskets would reach Tunis about 24 January 1948.⁸⁵ Exhumation operations would be accomplished in the period from January through March 1948. All remains scheduled for repatriation to the United States were to be returned in a single shipment after loading at the North African ports between 14 and 30 April.⁸⁶ The OQMG authorized the use of 5½ Field Operating Sections and one Port Headquarters for this planned operation. It emphasized that AMEZ Headquarters must request any necessary additional personnel at once to be assured of an adequate staff before repatriation activities commenced.

At this time, General Horkan advised zone officials that disinterment directives would be sent 30 days before disinterment operations started in any given cemetery. He also assigned AMEZ the responsibility of transporting remains, destined for overseas burial, overland from the port areas of Casablanca, Oran, and Algiers to the proposed permanent cemetery. He stated that operations in the Mediterranean Theater had been scheduled to follow those in AMEZ in order that the transfer of technicians and supplies from one area to another might proceed smoothly and efficiently.⁸⁷

Near the end of August, Col. Whitfield Watson, CO, AGRS-AMEZ, submitted plans to TQMG, which called for only two burial grounds in the Zone after the initial shipment of remains to the United States. One of these would, of course, be the permanent site near Tunis. The other would be a residual cemetery which would be used mostly for interment of remains for which no final disposition had yet been indicated. Because of their temporary nature, these burials were not to be casketed until final disposition was determined.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Rad, Mem Div, OQMG to CO, AGRS-AMEZ, 8 Aug 47, 293, AMEZ, Alex RC.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Ltr, Colonel Watson, CO, AGRS-AMEZ to TQMG, 28 Aug 47, sub: Casket Distribution, 293, AMEZ, Alex RC.

In view of this plan, it appeared desirable that only a minimum of caskets be unloaded in the ports of Casablanca, Oran, and Algiers, while many remains would be flown uncasketed to Tunis pending final action. In fact, only those remains earmarked for the permanent overseas cemetery or for repatriation would be casketed at Tunis. Colonel Watson suggested that the original figures for caskets at the three above-mentioned ports would be excessive and requested authority to unload at each port only those caskets which were believed to be necessary.

As matters actually developed, the USAT *Robert F. Burns* discharged a total of 6,314 caskets and repatriation supplies at the four ports from 10 to 24 October 1947. The quantity and type of caskets unloaded at the various ports were as follows:⁸⁹

Port	Repatriation type	Interim type
Casablanca	440	0
Oran	540	0
Algiers	750	0
Tunis	2,406	2,178
Total	4,136	2,178
Grand total		6,314

Aside from normal, expected occasional scuffing of shipping cases, the only damage to caskets occurred at the port of Tunis where ships gear accomplished unloading operations. Laborers performed in a generally satisfactory manner, except for a tendency toward rough handling. The unloading rate at the four ports averaged 53 caskets per hour.⁹⁰

With the necessary caskets now delivered, the next major objective was final preparation for homeward shipment of deceased whose relatives had indicated their desire for repatriation. Exhumation and casketing of these remains comprised the two essential preparatory steps which must be accomplished before arrival of the repatriation ship at each of the North African ports. In January 1948, AMEZ officials received instructions to ship a minimum of 2,500 remains to New York before 30 June in an effort to meet a worldwide target of 50,000 deceased returned to the United States by that date.⁹¹

Before these instructions were received, exhumations had already begun in the four port cemeteries. At Tunis, the equivalent of two

⁸⁹ Ltr, Hq AGRS-AMEZ to TQMG, 17 Nov 47, sub: Report on Receipt of Caskets, 468, AMEZ, Alex RC.

⁹⁰ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-AMEZ, 31 Oct 47, p. 5.

⁹¹ Ltr, Mem Div, OQMG to CO, AGRS-AMEZ, 23 Jan 48, 293, AMEZ, Alex RC.

Field Operating Sections performed the necessary functions, while the other three points each had the equivalent of one FOS. By the end of January 1948 the following exhumations had been accomplished:⁹²

TABLE 20—*Exhumation Accomplishments in Africa-Middle East Zone*

Cemetery	Exhumations	Unres. Cases	U. S. Casketed	P. B. Casketed
Casablanca	305	0	142	163
Oran	610	219	247	144
El-Alia	676	331	214	131
Tunis	1,246	225	479	542
Total	2,837	775	1,082	980

In addition, some 438 remains were prepared for burial and then transported uncasketed by air from Casablanca, Oran, and El-Alia to Tunis, where they were stored while awaiting permanent interment. Meanwhile, on 2 January, the *Robert F. Burns* again visited Tunis, this time discharging 959 repatriation-type caskets, bringing the total number of caskets delivered in AMEZ to 7,273.⁹³

During January, the USAT *Joseph V. Connolly*, which had been scheduled to serve as the repatriation ship for AMEZ, burned at sea and was lost to the Return of the Dead Program. The USAT *Barney Kirschbaum*, an unconverted Liberty Ship, took its place. OQMG plans called for this vessel to leave New Orleans early in March 1948 with a load of caskets for Naples and for Tunis, where it would arrive about 10 April. From Tunis, the itinerary included Algiers, Oran, and Casablanca in that order, before the ship returned to New York with its cargo of war deceased early in May.⁹⁴

By the end of March, there was further evidence of solid progress towards full readiness for the arrival of the repatriation ship. In the first place, a total of 1,353 remains destined for overseas burial had been transferred to Tunis, where they were casketed and stored in a morgue pending burial at Carthage Cemetery. In the second place, deceased from the four remaining AMEZ cemeteries for whom no disinterment directive had been received (over 3,200) had also been sent to Tunis for above-ground storage while awaiting final disposition instructions. Lastly, all deceased scheduled to return to

⁹² Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-AMEZ, 31 Jan 48, p. 5.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ 3d Ind, D/A, OQMG to CO, AGRS-AMEZ, 30 Jan 48, to Basic Ltr, Hq AGRS-AMEZ to TQMG, 6 Dec 47, sub: Operational Schedules for the Return of WW II Dead Program, 293, AMEZ, Alex RC.

the United States lay casketed in morgues at the four North African ports in the following numbers:⁹⁵

Casablanca	434
Oran	520
Algiers	441
Tunis	1,196
Total	2,591

A quick comparison of these figures with those submitted at the end of January shows that the number of casketed remains destined for repatriation had risen from 1,082 to 2,591 or had more than doubled in a period of two months.

The USAT *Barney Kirschbaum* arrived in April 1948, first stopping at Tunis, where the largest single group of deceased was placed aboard. From there, the ship moved to Algiers. Here, Zonal Headquarters had planned brief but impressive rites before departure. All but six remains were placed aboard the *Kirschbaum* before the ceremony. These six were delivered to the main square of Algiers on Sunday afternoon, 25 April, where they lay in state under a joint guard provided by the French and by the Commander of a U. S. Navy ship, which was then in port. On the next morning, an impressive ceremony took place, which included addresses by local dignitaries and high GRS officials. Following this solemn occasion, the deceased were transported to shipside where a second, but briefer ceremony occurred before the six remains were loaded aboard ship. Shortly after noon, the *Kirschbaum* departed for Oran and Casablanca to pick up the balance of those to be repatriated.⁹⁶

On 1 May 1948, by coincidence the day when AGRS-AMEZ was inactivated and its residual duties transferred to the Mediterranean Zone, the *Barney Kirschbaum* left Casablanca with over 2,600 remains. No other important repatriation shipments were made thereafter from AMEZ. A small number of cases which required later repatriation were shipped to the Mediterranean Zone for inclusion in homeward journeys from that area. After departure of the *Kirschbaum*, graves registration activities closed down at Casablanca, Oran, and Algiers, but at Tunis, work continued on the interment and establishment of the permanent cemetery there and on care and custody of unresolved remains which still lay in the morgue.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-AMEZ, 31 Mar 48, p. 5.

⁹⁶ Ltr, Col L. R. Talbot, Mem Div from Hq AGRS-MZ, to OQMG, 1 May 48, sub: Letter No. 4, 333.1, MZ, Alex RC.

⁹⁷ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-AMEZ, 29 Feb 48; 31 May 48.

Conclusion

On the whole, AMEZ forces performed quite commendably in this, the largest in land area, of all AGRS zones. The fact that only an estimated 20 remains were unlocated in this vast region over a year after inactivation bore testimony to the painstaking care with which GRS personnel operated, especially since war dead in AMEZ were more widely scattered than in most zones.

The movement of the deceased from such distant points as Teheran, Dakar, and Lagos into the North African port cemeteries reflected wise planning, since repatriation was accomplished in one voyage by the simple expedient of having the ship move from port to port along the coast. The extensive use of air transportation for both concentration and search and recovery activities provided another feature of the graves registration story in this Zone. Again, the decision to utilize aircraft for long hauls rather than slow water or motor transportation proved to be a correct one.

The activity which appears, in retrospect, to have dragged out for an unreasonably long period involved the final selection and preparation of the permanent overseas cemetery at Carthage, Tunisia. Not until 4½ months after deactivation of AMEZ did the first interments occur in the permanent overseas cemetery of the Zone. Another rather outstanding weakness was the poor condition, apparently resulting from neglect, of several cemeteries at the time of activation of AGRS-AMEZ. Under Theater control, such burial grounds as Benghazi and Tripoli, were in a rundown state. AMEZ officers remedied this situation as quickly as possible by evacuating the dead from both cemeteries. Lack of foresight and planning on the part of the AMET Command were the apparent causes of these circumstances.

CHAPTER XVIII

ORGANIZATION AND OPERATIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA

The Mediterranean Theater, which extended from the shores of Sicily to the Swiss and Austrian borders of northern Italy and from the islands of Corsica and Sardinia to the Black Sea, had been the scene of many bloody battles as the American and Allied forces struck northward against Axis troops in a successful attempt to eliminate Italy from the war. The path of conquest was marked by the resting places of over 40,000 men who gave their lives in this Theater during the bitter struggle.

Shortly after V-E Day in Europe, there were within the limits of the Mediterranean Theater 26 U. S. Military Cemeteries, 14 of which were located on the Italian mainland, 4 in Sicily, and 1 each in Sardinia, Corsica, Greece, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Rumania, and the island of Vis in the Adriatic off Yugoslavia.¹ Of approximately 31,875 recovered American dead in these cemeteries, only about 3½ percent were classed as unknowns, attesting to the high efficiency of wartime identification efforts in this area.

Organizational Developments

In rather sharp contrast to the difficulties surmounted in establishing a postwar graves registration organization in the European Theater, those encountered in adapting the Mediterranean Graves Registration Service to requirements of a separate zone command permitted a relatively simple transition. Similar objectives were sought in each area, but the method adopted in one differed quite markedly from that pursued in the other.²

Both commands anticipated fundamental changes of the theater structure with the ending of hostilities. The dislocation of headlong demobilization hampered planning programs in both areas. These very circumstances, however, tended to simplify rather than

¹ Historical Narrative, American Graves Registration Service, Mediterranean Zone, 1 Apr 46-1 Oct 47, p. 15, hereinafter cited as Hist, AGRS-MZ, 1 Apr 46-1 Oct 47.

² See Ch. V, Organization of AGRC, European Theater Area, particularly analysis of Brig Gen James Younger's report on difficulties attending establishment of Theater Graves Registration Command in Europe.

complicate the problem at Mediterranean Headquarters. Since it was then expected that the Mediterranean Theater would either be inactivated or combined with the European Theater at an early date, there was no occasion to speculate on future organizational changes other than those which would effect the liquidation or transfer of an existing establishment. Actual consideration of long-range projects, including provisions for a self-contained graves registration command, devolved upon general staff sections in Paris and Frankfurt.

Relative rates of progress in the development of graves registration programs from the initiation of hostilities in both theaters also tended to produce a more favorable situation on the Italian peninsula. In the first place, a greater part of battle fatalities occurred there before D-Day in Europe. Concentration of remains had thus been further advanced in Italy, while the load of cemeterial maintenance was correspondingly lighter than in continental Europe.

In the next place, the Mediterranean Theater was not confronted with the difficult task of conducting large and hastily planned evacuations of American remains from considerable regions of enemy territory about to be relinquished to forces of the Allied nations or from those temporary military cemeteries that had been established in occupational zones assigned to United States Army Forces.³ Concentration operations in the Mediterranean, as will be shown, were carefully planned and methodically executed by trained personnel. Because of this combination of circumstances, graves registration forces in this area avoided many of the burdens which hampered the forces in western Europe during the transitional period from war to peace. It would, however, be most inaccurate to describe the relatively placid course of events in Italy as one of marking time.

The first significant step toward setting up a provisional graves registration command occurred in July 1945, when plans were made for assigning officers and enlisted men then available for such duties to a single overhead unit. The scheme was unique in view of its lack of application elsewhere. At any rate, the 2621st Graves Registration Unit (Ovhd) was activated on 1 August 1945 for the purpose of continuing GRS activities after redeployment of troops from Italy. Originally allowed an aggregate of 180 effectives, the unit actually mustered 24 officers and 194 enlisted men. The latter category was absorbed from the 602d and 3044th GR Companies, which were inactivated in the autumn of 1945. Officers came largely from the COMZONE staff sections and the two theater GR companies. Lt.

³ *Ibid.*

Col. E. B. Wadsworth served as Commanding Officer of the new unit, which had a two-fold mission—first, to care for all U. S. Military Cemeteries and locate and recover all isolated American dead, and second, to prepare for the future repatriation program.⁴

Several detachments of the 2621st GRU (Ovhd), notably those engaged in cemeterial maintenance, continued work without shift of location or change in operating procedure. In this respect, the absorption as elements of the 2621st GRU (Ovhd) amounted to little more than a change in the form of administrative supervision.

For graves registration operational purposes, the Mediterranean Theater was divided into an Area Headquarters at Caserta and two field operating or zone headquarters, located at Naples and Florence. Zone 1 included Italian territory south of a line drawn through Rome, while Zone 2 extended from this line to the northern frontiers of Italy. Subordinated to area headquarters, the zone establishments assumed responsibility for co-ordinating the operations of sector units, each one of which had its headquarters detachment at a temporary military cemetery. These units bore responsibility for cemetery maintenance and recovery of isolated remains. Corresponding to the number of temporary military cemeteries in Italy, there were 14 such sector units—7 in Zone 1, 6 in Zone 2, and 1 under direct control of a field area headquarters at the U. S. Military Cemetery, Nettuno, better known as Anzio.⁵

On 6 November 1945, Theater area headquarters was moved to Rome and assigned to the Rome Area Command for administrative and logistic support. The detachment working under the direct supervision of Headquarters, 2621st GRU (Ovhd), which also served as area headquarters, conducted maintenance operations at Anzio, together with limited search and recovery activities in the immediate vicinity. Comprising 1 officer, 26 enlisted men of the 2621st GRU (Ovhd) and a varying force of Italian laborers, this detachment organizationally closely resembled those operating under the two zone headquarters.

Authorization given by WD GO 125, 29 December 1945, to establish a separate AGRS Zone Command embracing the Mediterranean Theater area and contiguous territories, became effective by transferring the 2621st GRU (Ovhd) from the Rome Area Command to the American Graves Registration Service, Mediterranean Theater Zone (AGRS-MTZ), the establishment of which was announced in theater orders as "a separate major command," effective 1 April

⁴ (1) Memo, Col J. M. Lamont, CQM, MTOUSA to Major Laperre, Theater GRS Officer, USFET, 26 Sep 45. (2) Hist, AGRS-MZ, 1 Apr 46-1 Oct 47, p. 15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

1946.⁶ The new command obtained its officers and enlisted men from the 2621st GRU, and thus the Table of Organization for AGRS-MTZ was originally the same as that of its parent unit.

Col. E. B. Wadsworth assumed command of AGRS-MTZ on 1 April 1946 at the Rome Headquarters. He became responsible for: (1) development of policies and procedures; (2) co-ordination of field operations and technical supervision of all matters included within the scope of the graves registration function; (3) maintenance of all U. S. cemeteries in the theater area; (4) care of current death cases beginning on 1 July 1946; (5) maintenance of the principal office of records; (6) co-ordination and liaison with the principal office of AG Casualty Branch, MTOUSA, in processing all unresolved battle casualties.⁷

Apart from necessary changes in nomenclature, the chain of command and basis of the territorial organization underwent no radical alteration. Headquarters, 2621st GRU (Ovhd), which formerly functioned as area headquarters, now furnished the nucleus of a zone headquarters establishment. In addition, there were two Field Headquarters—one at Naples and the other at Florence, with 14 subordinate sectors, as formerly. These sectors, however, were short-lived, since they were discontinued in May 1946.

In July 1946, Lt. Col. Franklin E. Scott succeeded Colonel Wadsworth as Commanding Officer.⁸ Colonel Scott remodeled the headquarters structure, secured an increase in personnel allowances and laid the foundations of an establishment which later included on the staff level, an Executive Officer, Adjutant, Inspector General, Chaplain, and a Medical and Dental Officer. Under his supervision, nuclei of four operating divisions were also formed—Liaison, Administrative, Plans and Operations, and Supply.⁹

During August 1946, Field Sector Units (FSU) 1 and 2, AGRS-MTZ, were activated to replace the two Zone or Field Operating Headquarters. These two FSU units assumed responsibility for cemeterial maintenance and other GRS operations in southern and northern Italy, respectively.¹⁰ The headquarters for FSU No. 1 was located at Naples and had, under its jurisdiction, the four Sicilian cemeteries, and those in Corsica, Sardinia, and Greece, in addition to those in Italy south of Rome. FSU No. 2 headquartered

⁶ (1) *Ibid.*, p. 24. (2) MTOUSA GO No. 45, 16 Mar 46.

⁷ Hist, AGRS-MZ, 1 Apr 46-1 Oct 47, pp. 24-25.

⁸ AGRS-MTZ GO No. 4, 8 Jul 46.

⁹ AGRS-MTZ, Organizational Chart, 17 Apr 47, shows these four divisions. See Incls 5 and 6, Hist, AGRS-MZ, 1 Apr 46-1 Oct 47.

¹⁰ AGRS-MTZ GO No. 6, 10 Aug 46.

at Florence and controlled the six cemeteries north of Rome.¹¹ FSU No. 2 transferred its headquarters in June 1947 to Leghorn, following the AGRS Supply Storage Warehouse, which had moved early in that year from Florence and became known as the Leghorn Storage Point.¹²

Something more than mere rearrangement of elements on an organizational chart and new designations accompanied these changes. Zone Headquarters was contemplating the eventual establishment of a self-contained command with logistical facilities actually functioning under its own control whenever MTOUSA should be inactivated. Colonel Scott explained that: "We activated our Field Sector Units and established them as similar to companies, giving them full authority to carry out their own administration, supply, and other requirements which will require no change during the repatriation program. A central supply system was established in our warehouse at Florence. We are shipping our various supplies by rail almost 100 percent which allows us to keep motor vehicles off the road . . . the operation of our repatriation is our major future commitment. We are tied up in the repatriation program to the ports. Under present plans we will operate with four ports, Leghorn, Bari, Palermo, and Naples."¹³

Early in September 1946, Col. George King assumed command of AGRS-MTZ, and Colonel Scott became the Executive Officer. During October, the 2621st GRU (Ovhd) was redesignated the 7109th GRU (Ovhd) and the personnel transferred automatically. The new unit served the same purpose as the old one, including operational supervision of the U. S. Military Cemetery, Nettuno, Italy. Colonel King tightened administrative control over AGRS-MTZ. He set up very definite staff responsibilities and accepted nothing short of full devotion to duty. He proved to be a great believer in economy in both personnel and materiel, and encouraged the use of native workers in as many positions as possible, even including technical activities. In many instances, he replaced cemetery teams with competent Italian civilians. Colonel King personally campaigned against any action which might reflect unfavorably upon his command. Under his direction, native employees showed a marked increase in work production in the cemeteries.¹⁴

On 10 February 1947, plenipotentiaries of the Allied Nations initiated the treaty of peace with Italy and, subject to formal ratifi-

¹¹ Hist. AGRS-MZ, 1 Apr 46-1 Oct 47, p. 28.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹³ Transcript of AGRS Staff Conference, 30 Sep 46, Incl. 2, Hist. AGRS-MZ, 1. Apr 46-1 Oct 47.

¹⁴ Hist. AGRS-MZ, pp. 29-30.

cation on 1 April, restored peaceful relations with the former Fascist associate of Nazi Germany. In anticipation of this formality and the consequent military evacuation, AGRS-MTZ hastened final measures for completion of a self-contained organization, both in the administrative and logistical spheres.¹⁵

During March, the GRS command attained a strength of 48 officers, 16 warrant officers and 168 enlisted men, thus falling somewhat short in commissioned personnel of a proposed table of organization based upon estimates prepared by the OQMG in January 1947 which recommended 62 officers, 6 warrant officers and 87 enlisted men.¹⁶ Theater Headquarters recommended acquisition of a Chaplain, Judge Advocate, and an additional Medical Officer. On the assumption that this request would receive approval, Tables of Organization were drawn up and grades and rating allocated for every anticipated position. These tables specified an aggregate of 931, including 67 officers, 87 enlisted men, 144 War Department civilians and 628 other civilian employees, largely Italian, assigned to the Zone Headquarters staff and the four operating divisions (Administrative, Liaison, Plans and Operations and Supply), to two port offices (Leghorn and Naples), and to the Yugoslavia Detachment.¹⁷

For various reasons, Ratification Day (R-Day) was deferred, postponing from time to time the date originally set. Finally, the Allied nations ratified the Italian Peace Treaty on 15 September 1947. This meant that troops in the Theater other than residual would be out of Italy on or before R plus 90 and that AGRS-MTZ would be self-supporting on R plus five.¹⁸

Ratification Day or "R-Day," found the graves registration service in the Theater busy making last-minute plans to function as an independent major command. On that date (15 September 1947), this Command was redesignated as American Graves Registration

¹⁵ See planning papers approved by Hq AGRS-MTZ, 21 Apr 47, under the title, Plans for Operations of American Graves Registration Service-Mediterranean Theater Separate Zone Command, with annexes A to O.

¹⁶ Ltr, OQMG to CO, AGRS-MTZ, 7 Jan 47, cited in Hist, AGRS-MZ, 1 Apr 46-1 Oct 47, p. 35.

¹⁷ (1) Tentative Table of Organizations, AGRS-MTZ, 17 Apr 47, Incl. 5, Hist, AGRS-MZ, 1 Apr 46-1 Oct 47. (2) Although some tentative plans had been made at the time of activation of FSU No. 1 and FSU No. 2 to form a third such unit for work in the Balkan area, they were never carried out, and the Balkans were administered by a staff officer or a few selected enlisted men based on the American Legation in Belgrade and funded from Zone Headquarters in Rome. The Yugoslavia Detachment performed search and recovery operations and maintained the U. S. Military Cemetery at Belgrade.

¹⁸ Hist, AGRS-MZ, 1 Apr 46-1 Oct 47, p. 40.

Service, Mediterranean Zone (AGRS-MZ), and established under the control of The Quartermaster General in Washington. At the same time, Colonel King, CO, AGRS-MTZ, assumed command of the newly designated organization.¹⁹ The slight change in designation denoted a significant shift of organizational relationships. First, the new setup became a command responsibility of TQMG. Second, Zone Headquarters was placed under the New York Port of Embarkation for supplies, a provision which became effective on R plus five.²⁰

AGRS-MZ received authorization for 45 officers, 5 warrant officers, and 87 enlisted men, or somewhat less than the allowance proposed in the tentative TO of 17 April 1947.²¹ Final touches in rounding out the new organization were left to MTOUSA Headquarters. Twelve days after establishment of AGRS-MZ and issuance of its first General Order, a Theater Order directed discontinuance of AGRS-MTZ and transfer of its personnel to AGRS-MZ. Then, since the new command now had its own allocation of grades and ratings, the 7109th GRU (Ovhd) was inactivated with the completion of the changeover.²² Early in October 1947, Colonel Whitfield Watson succeeded Colonel King as Commanding Officer of AGRS-MZ.

At the time of activation of AGRS-MZ, there were 15 United States Military Cemeteries in existence in the Mediterranean Zone, which became the responsibility of the new organization. Four official detachments were established within AGRS-MZ: Rome, Naples, Leghorn, and Yugoslavia. Each detachment bore responsibility for the following cemeteries:²³

<i>Rome Detachment</i>	<i>Naples Detachment</i>	<i>Leghorn Detachment</i>	<i>Yugoslavia Detachment</i>
Nettuno	Paestum	Follonica	Belgrade
Tarquiniia	(Mt. Soprano)	Vada	
	Bari	Castelfiorentino	
	Avellino	Mirandola	
	Naples	Pietramala	
	Carano	(Mt. Beni)	
	Marzanello Nuovo		
	R. Fratelle		

¹⁹ (1) WDCSP Cable, WX 86220, to CG, MTO, 15 Sep 47. (2) AGRS-MZ GO No. 1, 15 Sep 47.

²⁰ Hist, AGRS-MZ, 1 Apr 46 to 1 Oct 47, pp. 86-87.

²¹ Ltr, TQMG to CO, AGRS-MZ, 23 Sep 47, sub: Establishment of AGRS Mediterranean Zone as an independent zone, 323.3 Alex RC.

²² MTOUSA GO No. 154, 27 Sep 47, cited in Hist, AGRS-MZ, p. 87.

²³ (1) Hist, AGRS-MZ, p. 90. (2) See Steere, QM Historical Studies No. 21, p. 91, for map showing wartime cemeteries in Mediterranean Theater of Operations.

On 1 December 1947, AGRS-MZ was redesignated as the 9107th Technical Service Unit, QM Corps, American Graves Registration Service, Mediterranean Zone (9107th TSU—QMC, AGRS-MZ). With few exceptions, the organization of Headquarters remained basically unchanged.

Major graves registration activities began at a time considerably preceding the establishment of AGRS-MZ and continued under the direction of this organization until the termination of the GRS program in the Mediterranean area.²⁴

Major Graves Registration Operations

Concentration of Remains

During the autumn of 1946, the GRS Command devoted much attention to cemeterial concentration operations in order to reduce the total number of burial grounds in the Zone and to bring remains in scattered cemeteries closer together, thus simplifying the forthcoming Return Program effort. In a 6-month period between November 1946 and May 1947, the major portion of concentration operations in this Zone was accomplished as indicated in the following tabulation:²⁵

TABLE 21—*Concentration Accomplishments in Mediterranean Zone, November 1946-May 1947*

Disinterred Cemetery	No. U. S. Remains	Transferred to	Month—Year
Sofia, Bulgaria	81	Nettuno	Nov. 1946
Vis, Yugoslavia	29	Belgrade	Dec. 1946
Athens, Greece	117	Nettuno	Jan. 1947
Bastia, Corsica	294	Nettuno	Jan. 1947
Cagliari, Sardinia	124	Nettuno	Jan. 1947
Cappuccini, Malta	31	Nettuno	Mar. 1947
Licata, Sicily	179	Paestum	Apr. 1947
Gela, Sicily	1,195	Paestum	Apr. 1947
Palermo, Sicily	408	Paestum	Apr. 1947
Caronia, Sicily	658	Paestum	Apr. 1947
Total	3,116		

Remains from the cemeteries in Bulgaria, Greece, Corsica, Sardinia and Malta were transferred to Nettuno, Italy, by C-47 aircraft and truck convoy. Those in the other cemeteries were transferred to their new resting places by rail and trucks. In

²⁴ After 1 May 1948, AGRS-MZ assumed residual GRS responsibility for the geographical area of the former Africa-Middle East Zone, which was inactivated at that time.

²⁵ Hist, AGRS-MZ, Apr 46 to Oct 47, pp. 32-33, 46-52, 82.

Nettuno and Paestum Cemeteries, they were buried in exactly the same grave location order as they had been originally in the former cemeteries—plot for plot, row for row, and grave for grave. Careful planning preceded these operations, including opening of graves in advance of the arrival of remains and thorough orientation and schooling of GRS personnel who carried out the task.²⁶ The completion of concentrations left under GRS jurisdiction only cemeteries on the Italian mainland and the cemetery at Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

While most of the concentration operations in the Mediterranean Zone proceeded in a routine manner, with no particular problems to differentiate them from similar undertakings elsewhere, a few observations may be made about activities in certain of these burial grounds. The removal of remains from Corsica, Sardinia, Athens, and Sofia, for instance, required numerous C-47 flights to Italy. Approximately 16 trips were made from Corsica—8 each from Sardinia and Athens, and 3 from Sofia.²⁷ This happened because remains were transported in prefabricated boxes. Fewer trips would have been made if remains had been transported in pouches. The condition of remains did not preclude this alternative or one similar.

The Sicilian operations represented a notable achievement. Despite numerous problems, which arose in transferring nearly 2,500 deceased from four different cemeteries to Paestum, Italy, it was accomplished in a short time. Preliminary planning for removing the dead from Sicily began in November 1946 when Colonel Talbot, who accompanied General Horkan on an inspection trip through the Zone at that time, recommended that the four cemeteries in Sicily be studied with the thought of either moving the deceased to Paestum, south of Naples, or concentrating them in one location on the island before repatriation operations began. Late in January 1947, Colonel King informed General Horkan that "we are now considering the desirability of moving the remains from the cemeteries in Sicily and concentrating them in one of our cemeteries close to the Naples Port."

The implementation of this plan began with the assembling of vehicles, supplies, personnel, and the activation of a provisional Field Operating Section (Sicily) at FSU No. 1, Naples, on 26 March 1947. The FOS was made up of 4 officers, 14 enlisted men, 4 War

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

²⁷ (1) Ltrs, AGRS-MTZ, sub: Plan for Athens Cemetery Movement, 10 Dec 46, sub: Movement Plan for U. S. Military Cemetery, Bastia, Corsica; Movement Plan for U. S. Military Cemetery, Sardinia, both 20 Dec 46, 293, Med Zone, Alex RC. (2) Rpt, GR and Repat Opns, AGRS-Mediterranean, 30 Nov 46, 319.1.



FIGURE 37. *United States Military Cemetery, Paestum, Italy.*

Department civilians, laborers obtained locally at each military cemetery, and necessary supplies and transport.²⁸

Supply vehicles arrived in Rome from Leghorn on 27 March and proceeded to Naples to join the convoy which departed on 28 March for Gela, Sicily, and arrived there on 30 March. On the following day, the unit set up a Base Camp at Gela Cemetery and moved burial boxes by truck to Licata Cemetery, originally established by units of the 48th GRS Company in July 1943, and now the first

²⁸ Hist, AGRS-MZ, 1 Apr 46-1 Oct 47, Incl. 4, Summary of Sicilian Disinterment Opns, 9 May 47, p. 2.

Sicilian cemetery scheduled for disinterment. Operations began on 1 April at Licata, with some 40 laborers performing the disinterments. Several difficulties were encountered. Markers often were not at the true center of the grave, with the result that remains were sometimes found as much as two feet to the side. GRS personnel also discovered that they could not stencil burial boxes because the stencil machines were issued in unserviceable condition. As a substitute, the unit used grease pencils for marking the outside of the boxes. Despite obstacles, the Licata disinterment terminated on the second day, and 178 remains, together with burial records and transfer lists, were sent to Paestum, where the deceased were reinterred in the U. S. Military Cemetery there.²⁹

On 3 April, disinterment activities began simultaneously in four plots of Gela Cemetery, which had not received burials since July 1943, when the invasion of Sicily began and when the First Infantry Division, Seventh Army, started interring battle dead there. A Disinterment Team, composed of 1 War Department civilian embalmer, 2 enlisted men, and 10 Italian laborers, worked in each plot. Because of time lost on account of a 3-day religious holiday, the teams worked 12 hours a day for 6 days, disinterring about 180 remains daily. Supply shortages resulting from the issue of many unserviceable items hampered the administrative operation of the camp set up near the cemetery. All personnel were provided with 10 in 1 rations during the Gela and Licata phases as an economy measure. This situation, coupled with 12-hour work days and faulty supplies, presented a serious challenge to the supervisory personnel. Despite these difficulties, the operation was carried out with a minimum of personnel difficulty and with commendable results. The Gela operation ended on 12 April, with nearly 1,200 remains disinterred and en route to the Italian mainland by rail and ferry for reburial at Paestum.

The FOS unit then moved on to Palermo and on 14 April began removing some 404 deceased. Operations proved more difficult than at either Licata or Gela because of huge boulders and hard soil, which sometimes caused partitions between graves to collapse, thus seriously complicating the task. No tent camp was needed, for the GRS unit was billeted at FSU No. 1, Sicily, Sector Headquarters Building. On 16 April, an advance detail departed for Caronia to set up camp there. The following day, the Palermo disinterments ended and the last shipment of remains and records departed on the 18th.³⁰

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

At the U. S. Military Cemetery, Caronia, Sicily (originally opened by the 48th GRS Company on 16 August 1943), the operation proceeded under even more severe handicaps. The misalignment of grave markers, coupled with the high water level, necessitated working in water-logged graves where remains were not fully skeletonized. This situation had not been encountered prior to this time. For this reason, the remains needed more processing, and additional disinfectants were secured from FSU No. 1, Naples. Despite these difficulties, the actual operations would have been finished on 26 April except for the delay in the arrival of a full boxcar of transfer boxes which had been sidetracked en route from Naples. As matters developed, a total of some 658 remains finally left Caronia on 30 April for Paestum.

In summarizing the Sicilian operations, it may be stated that the problems encountered stemmed from several causes, the most apparent of which were: (1) Hasty planning carried out by relatively inexperienced officers; (2) A daily timetable for delivery or outshipment of remains which actually exceeded the capacity of the operating personnel to perform; (3) Emphasis upon speed and economy, thereby impairing operational efficiency; (4) Inadequacy of subsistence; (5) Poor condition of vehicles, owing to lack of maintenance, which, in turn was caused by lack of sufficiently trained men. On the other hand, rail transportation of empty burial boxes to the cemeteries and transfer of deceased to Paestum by train ferry had been well organized and co-ordinated.³¹

Several recommendations for future improvements emerged from the operations in Sicily. It was suggested: (1) that all Field Operation Section personnel receive thorough training before assignment to an FOS, including some practical experience under competent supervision; (2) that all FOS workers exercise closer supervision in exhumation and graveside recording; (3) that fewer disinterments per disinterring team be required so as to reduce the chance for error and allow more time for complete checking and screening of each grave; (4) that supplies be properly inventoried before a field operation and that all equipment be set up and checked for operability; (5) that each officer, enlisted man, or civilian permanently or temporarily assigned to an FOS be carefully indoctrinated in good supply discipline, and (6) that closer contact be kept between each FOS, the FSU Headquarters, and AGRS Hq, Rome, through frequent inspections by qualified officer inspector personnel.³²

One further concentration operation now remained before all

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

American deceased in the Zone rested in Italy. Because of the difficulty in obtaining entry for GRS personnel into Yugoslavia, approximately 683 remains still lay in Belgrade Cemetery as 1947 drew to a close. During the autumn, however, plans were well advanced for the removal of these fallen Americans. Early in December, Zone Headquarters indicated that supplies and equipment for evacuation of Belgrade Cemetery would be sent there before 15 December and that the deceased would be moved to the U. S. Military Cemetery, Naples. Memorial Division, OQMG, recommended to Zone Headquarters officials that the remains be processed, placed in a repatriation-type casket and stored above ground after arrival at Naples pending later repatriation or permanent overseas burial.³³

The actual evacuation of the deceased from Belgrade to Naples was completed on 24 January 1948. The conclusion of this project had now placed all recovered dead in the Mediterranean Zone either in cemeteries or in above-ground storage on the mainland of Italy. The evacuation of Belgrade Cemetery also served as prelude to final disinterments in the Zone, which were confined to Italy and which constituted an essential part of preparations for final repatriation operations.

Search and Recovery

When the 2621st GRU (Ovhd) was activated on 1 August 1945, one of its responsibilities embraced the recovery of isolated American war dead. Search and recovery efforts under the supervision of the 2621st GRU (Ovhd) proceeded through the use of pamphlets and circulars distributed to the population in each area under investigation and through radio broadcasts asking for information about isolated American graves or burials. Search and recovery teams also utilized reports on isolated burials obtained from local civilian or German military records and from statements by parish priests and Italian carabinieri.³⁴ Since most of the isolated graves lay in the upper Po River Valley, where numerous air crashes had occurred, much search and recovery effort was directed to this area.

The Air Force Casualty Clearance Detachment, activated on 15 December 1945, worked closely with graves registration search units, being assigned on 7 April 1946 to AGRS-MTZ.³⁵ Its mission was to continue the casualty clearance program which the 12th and 15th Air Forces had begun, including attempts to locate and identify the air crewmen carried on official records as "Declared Dead by War

³³ Rad, Mem Div OQMG to Hq AGRS-MZ, 16 Dec 47, 293, Med Zone, Alex RC.

³⁴ Hist, AGRS-MZ, 1 Apr 46-1 Oct 47, p. 16.

³⁵ MTOUSA Ltr, AG 370.5/030, 3 Apr 46, sub: Assignment of Unit, cited in Hist, AGRS-MZ, p. 26.

Department" or "Missing in Action." The Detachment had six teams which operated after the war in northern Italy and in the Balkans. It was discontinued on 7 August 1946, and its surplus personnel were assigned to the 2621st GRU.³⁶

In the Balkans, the Communist governments placed all sorts of obstacles in the path of graves registration forces. The teams could not enter these countries without previous clearances, which took weeks and even months of diplomatic maneuvering to obtain. In June 1945, just after V-E Day, no reply had been received from Yugoslavia or Albania to a request sent in May asking that GRS personnel be permitted to enter these countries. Negotiations had been underway since February with Bulgaria and Rumania for the right to enter these countries. Only from Hungary had the requested clearances been received.³⁷

Intensified diplomatic action through the Allied Control Commission in Bulgaria and Rumania, the United States Mission in Yugoslavia, and the OSS Mission in Albania soon brought better results, and by the autumn of 1945, GRS units were able to conduct necessary operations in all Balkan countries except Albania. Even in the latter country, GRS personnel received permission for a brief visit during September 1945 to investigate air crashes. No recoveries resulted from this effort. Hungary and Rumania even helped AGRS forces establish temporary cemeteries at Budapest and Bucharest. These two burial grounds were subsequently transferred to the control of AGRS-Europe (AGRS-ETA), as of 1 July 1946.³⁸

In Yugoslavia, search and recovery activities were marked by intermittent co-operation and close, rigid control which hampered GRS efforts. In the summer of 1946, for example, sanitation laws prohibiting disinterments were put into effect and strictly enforced as to GRS operations, bringing concentration and recovery activities to a virtual standstill. One year later, these laws were waived and the Yugoslav Government even offered to furnish workers to hasten the termination of the GRS program. Largely owing to this changed attitude, search and recovery in Yugoslavia was almost completed by the end of 1947, opening the way for the evacuation of over 400 American remains for later reburial in Italy.³⁹ Meanwhile, in Bulgaria, search units had recovered some 81 remains, which were transferred to Nettuno in November 1946 after evacuation of the cemetery at Sofia.⁴⁰ Outside the Balkan area, approxi-

³⁶ Hist, AGRS-MZ, 1 Apr 46-1 Oct 47, p. 26.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

mately 32 remains of Naval deceased on the island of Malta were located and recovered during December 1946, marking another success in GRS efforts. Elsewhere in the Zone, most sweeping search area operations ended during the early months of 1947, setting the stage for a final attempt to locate isolated deceased who might have escaped detection. This concluding operation covered widely scattered regions, including Greece, and the Islands of Vis, Corsica, Sardinia, and Sicily. The monthly Graves Registration Report for February 1947 provided a comprehensive picture of search and recovery in Mediterranean areas as well as an estimate of the work remaining to be accomplished and the expected termination dates, as follows:

TABLE 22—*Estimate of Search and Recovery Problem, Mediterranean Zone*

Place	No. unrecovered dead	Termination date
Bulgaria.....	As of 1 November 1946 considered to be searched and swept.
Corsica.....	44	1 March 1947
Italy (including Sicily, minor islands and surrounding seas).	5,775	1 July 1948
Greece.....	70	1 March 1947
Sardinia.....	59	1 March 1947
Yugoslavia.....	438	1 November 1948
	(Based on known casualties and reported last-sighted cases. There was reason to believe that an additional 300-500 casualties in Yugoslavia had not yet been found.)	
Total.....	6,386	

A final effort to locate isolated deceased in Sicily was scheduled to begin on 1 June 1947. Two teams, before departing, were to be provided with a card file on each unrecovered remains and a map upon which the probable place of death was plotted. Similar search operations were scheduled for Sardinia, Corsica, Vis, Greece, and the Italian mainland.⁴¹

Meanwhile, on 9 May 1947, a special staff conference was held at Headquarters, AGRS-MTZ. One of the most important items on the agenda pertained to the oncoming search and recovery effort which zone officials hoped would complete that phase of their mis-

⁴¹ Ltr, Hq AGRS-MTZ to TAG, 29 May 47, sub: Termination of GR Search and Recovery Operations in Greece, the Islands of Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, and Vis, 293, Med Zone, Alex RC.

sion. Col. Franklin Scott, Executive Officer, AGRS-MTZ, declared that "searching and recovery in Italy and surrounding islands must be completed by 1 November 1947," 7 months before the former deadline of 1 July 1948. He emphasized that search and recovery must take precedence over all other activities during May and June 1947 since favorable weather usually prevailed in the Zone at that time of year.

Mr. E. C. Mussatti, Chief, Investigation and Research Branch, AGRS-MTZ, stated that "we are going to divide the Theater in the same way that the events of war have divided the area." Since Sicily was the first place in which American Armed Forces fought and died in this Theater, it would be the first to undergo a final search. Mr. Mussatti believed that not less than 400 unrecovered remains lay in Sicily, about half of which would probably never be found.⁴²

Mr. Mussatti further indicated that two search teams would work in Sicily for approximately 1½ months, following closely the battle lines of the Army nearly four years before. Each team would keep a mimeographed sheet by which it could furnish information to people from whom clues might be received. He strongly emphasized that "we are searching for individuals and not at random."⁴³ He also emphasized that the task of search units comprised not only the location of remains but also the determination of which ones had already been recovered and interred as unknowns. He again asserted that "area searching is a thing of the past and we are expected now to submit cases for the individuals and not for areas."⁴⁴ To ease the task of determining which of the listed unrecovered casualties had already been interred as unknowns, AGRS Headquarters had plotted on a map the probable place of recovery or death of all listed unknowns.

At this same meeting, Mr. L. V. Durling, Investigation and Research Branch, spoke to the conferees about the importance of correct compilation of all data pertaining to individual casualties recovered and areas searched. He stressed the fundamental importance of maintaining a complete record of investigation submitted by field units to area Headquarters, and from Headquarters to the War Department, on each unrecovered casualty, setting forth the fact that "the area given by this Headquarters as to place of casualty has been searched and the body could not be recovered."⁴⁵ Mr.

⁴² Minutes of Special Staff Meeting, 9 May 47, Incl. 4, Hist, AGRS-MZ, 1 Apr 46-1 Oct 47.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Durling stated that a file would be maintained at area Headquarters, listing alphabetically all unrecovered dead, which would be a duplicate copy of one sent to the field. This file would contain all available information about deceased. He also declared that a map would be kept at area Headquarters and, upon receipt of field reports outlining areas and localities searched for specific remains, these places would be marked so as to indicate the area covered from week to week. Headquarters could thus determine the number of positive, pending, and negative results on a weekly basis and the areas yet to be covered. Upon completion of the final search and recovery mission in Sicily, Hq, AGRS-MTZ, would furnish the OQMG with a case history for all casualties which had been determined to be unrecoverable.

With these well-laid plans now completed, two search units, each composed of an officer and a War Department civilian, departed for Sicily on 4 June 1947. Armed with information on about 500 casualties known to have been lost in Sicily and vicinity, these small units remained in Sicily for nearly 2 months, recovering 15 remains.⁴⁶ In view of the fact that the casualties in Sicily had occurred four years previously and that search parties had visited the island earlier, officials at Headquarters considered this result quite reasonable. Since no battle history was available to these teams, much information had to be gathered from civilians. The searchers also found that the majority of Air Corps cases offered little chance for recovery since most of these losses occurred at sea.⁴⁷

Several interesting observations can be made from the experiences of search teams in Sicily. In the first place, nearly all Sicilians held a very high opinion of the Americans. In villages and small towns, people followed the search units or stood by, watching them with great admiration. In fact, their enthusiasm for the Americans and their desire to aid often caused the Sicilians to give guesswork information and inaccurate statements which actually hindered progress. Nevertheless, the searchers tracked down all "leads."⁴⁸ Sometimes the information proved to be accurate, remains often being discovered as a result of fragmentary facts obtained from illiterate people rather than from data furnished by public officials. Statements by illiterates were carefully recorded even if the informants claimed that they could not make an "X" as signature. Often searchers visited every house in an area, since the people frequently did not reveal clues to local authorities. When asked why the burial

⁴⁶ Hist, AGRS-MZ, 1 Apr 46-1 Oct 47, p. 128.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 133-34.

of an American had not been so reported, one Sicilian replied that such information had not been considered important.⁴⁹

As the Sicilian search and recovery mission terminated in mid-July 1947, search operations also ceased in other Mediterranean areas, including Greece, Corsica, Sardinia, and Vis, where search efforts had been undertaken simultaneously with those in Sicily, but about which little information is now available. From Sicily, the teams moved to the Naples-Paestum-Salerno area on the Italian mainland to investigate some 130 fatalities suffered in that region and on the neighboring islands. The search teams, now comprising 1 officer, 4 enlisted men, and 2 Italian interpreters, visited all towns in this area and followed every "lead" to completion. During this operation, which lasted until early September, ten remains were located and interred in the nearest U. S. Military Cemetery.⁵⁰

On 16 September 1947, three teams proceeded to the Volturmo-Cassino-Anzio area, where an estimated 1,000 unrecovered dead lay, and worked in the vicinity of Minturno, St. Pietro Pozzilli, and Isernia, recovering 13 remains, 10 of which were classified as unknowns.⁵¹ By the end of September, search operations were also in progress in the Rome area. Outside Italy, such activity continued only in Yugoslavia, where 83 remains had thus far been found, with 72 more cases pending. At this time, total recoveries in the Zone since April 1947 amounted to nearly 500, with some 200 more considered still recoverable.⁵² In northern Italy, from mid-April to the end of October 1947, the Mirandola Detachment's search teams had located some 97 remains. Efforts to recover World War II dead in this region had extended along the Apennines to the lofty Alps and from the plains of the Po Valley to the Adriatic Sea. Each case presented a different situation—from climbing steep mountain trails in search of the unrecovered dead of air crashes to combing sandy sea beaches for those who might have been washed ashore.⁵³

Diverse conditions also arose in the two mountain ranges. The Apennines contained the remains of Ground Force casualties, some lying unburied in mined areas or standing in isolated foxholes with full equipment two years after fighting had ceased, sometimes with a submachine gun still pointed at the enemy and helmet still intact on the head. In the Alps, on the other hand, all cases involved air crew members who had crashed to their deaths above the timber

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 134-35.

⁵⁰ (1) *Ibid.*, p. 129. (2) Rpt GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-Mediterranean, 31 Aug 47.

⁵¹ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-MZ, 30 Sep 47.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Hist, AGRS-MZ, 1 Apr 46-1 Oct 47, pp. 135-36.

line. Search teams located their bodies resting in the ever-present Alpine snow where few men had ever trod. In such cases, pack mules and carts were utilized to remove the remains over the rough and rugged trails. Sometimes, even the animals became exhausted and fell.⁵⁴

In one particularly interesting case, a search team encountered difficulty in locating the remains of an American soldier who had died in the Po River Valley while a prisoner of the Nazis. The team members failed to obtain any information about him from the local inhabitants. Just as they were about to leave the area, a small boy appeared and asserted that he knew where the American was buried. The lad then led the team to the exact spot, and the body was exhumed. The explanation for this situation stemmed from the fact that, though the Nazis had forbidden civilians to be away from home after dark, an order intended to halt Partisan activities, the boy had been out and saw the burial of the American soldier on the night he died.⁵⁵

In Yugoslavia, an intensive search and recovery effort during the summer months extending from June through September yielded a total of some 317 American war dead, almost doubling recoveries resulting from all previous similar operations in that country.⁵⁶

As 1948 began, search and recovery activities in the Zone had been completed insofar as designated areas were concerned. Only scattered isolated recoveries, based upon specific information, still remained to be investigated.

Establishment of Permanent Overseas Cemeteries

As early as March 1946, officials at Theater Headquarters gave some consideration to the question of a site for a permanent military cemetery in the Mediterranean area. At that time, it was believed that there were altogether some 32,000 deceased servicemen in the Theater, not counting about 9,789 missing for whom no records of burial existed. The missing included airmen forced down at sea, ground casualties from bomb explosions, deceased in remote mountain areas, and the like. Officials estimated that not more than 5,000 of this group would ever be recovered, which would bring the total number of Mediterranean Theater burials to about 37,000. Based on the premise that about 80 percent of this group would eventually return to their homeland, graves registration planners

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 136-37, taken from personal account, Capt Robert W. Campbell, 21 Oct 47.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

faced the problem of interring somewhat more than 8,000 war dead in permanent graves.⁵⁷

The question of commemorating the site of different numerical Army designations was not involved since only the Fifth Army had operated throughout Italy from Salerno to the Po Valley and the Alps. Even at this early date, the Anzio area, where a long, fierce struggle raged from January to May 1944, received favorable consideration as an appropriate location for a permanent American military cemetery. At that time, the Nettuno Cemetery provided a resting place for over 6,700 Americans who had lost their lives in the protracted Anzio operations. The proximity of Anzio and Nettuno to the city of Rome, their historic and sentimental aspects, and the availability of land on both sides of the existing burial ground, led the Theater GRO to propose that OQMG authorities give favorable consideration to this site.⁵⁸

The situation relative to the matter remained quiescent until the American Battle Monuments Commission, at a meeting on 19 November 1946, requested The Quartermaster General to furnish a list of places then under consideration as permanent cemeteries. In reply, Quartermaster General Larkin enclosed a tentative list of proposed overseas cemeteries in all parts of the world. It included two Mediterranean points—Nettuno and the vicinity of Florence.⁵⁹ Some divergences in sentiment existed in OQMG circles on the matter, however. Some officials in the Memorial Division favored only Nettuno as an overseas American cemetery in the Mediterranean Theater, especially if not over 30 percent of the deceased remained in Italy. On the other hand, if overseas burials exceeded 40 percent of the total, they would favor the addition of a second permanent memorial, preferably in the Florence area, always a popular region for tourists and visitors.⁶⁰ In any case, The Quartermaster General requested the ABMC to make known its own recommendations for the location of overseas cemeteries on a world-wide basis not later than 15 February 1947 in order that the War Department might request Congress for sufficient funds to acquire necessary property.

Differences of opinion between the OQMG and the ABMC, which had originally suggested five permanent sites in the Zone,

⁵⁷ Exhibit 1, attached to Ltr, Col E. B. Wadsworth, GRO, MTO, to ASF, OQMG, 15 Mar 46, sub: Repatriation Organization and Operations, Plan of.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Incl. to Ltr, Larkin to Brig Gen Thomas North, ABMC, 9 Dec 46, 687, Overseas Cemeteries, Alex RC.

⁶⁰ Ltr, Col Ira K. Evans, Chief, Mem Div, OQMG to CO, AGRS-MTZ, 11 Dec 46, 687, Med Zone, Alex RC.

were finally settled at a joint meeting held in April 1947 between representatives of both agencies. Agreement was reached on the establishment of two overseas cemeteries in Italy—Nettuno and Florence—for the American deceased who were not repatriated.⁶¹

During the summer of 1947, Lt. Colonel D. K. Donelson, Memorial Division, OQMG, and Mr. Markley Stevenson, Architect and War Department Consultant, visited the European, Mediterranean, and Africa-Middle East Theaters for the double purpose of representing the OQMG in discussion with the ABMC and overseas theater and zone officials and of inspecting proposed cemeterial sites. In the Mediterranean Zone, the specific reasons for their visit were: (1) to select a location near Florence for a permanent cemetery with a maximum capacity of approximately 7,500 graves; (2) to arrive at an understanding with the ABMC as to the manner in which the Florence and Nettuno sites would be developed and to establish the major axes; (3) to furnish the local commanders with plot plans for final burials.⁶²

Early in August, Lt. Colonel Donelson, Mr. Stevenson, Colonel King, CO, AGRS-MTZ, Colonel Scott, Executive Officer, AGRS-MTZ and Maj. Robert B. Crayton, Director, Plans and Operations Division, inspected sites in the vicinity of Florence. On 9 August, General North and his group, representing the ABMC, arrived at Florence and examined Sites A to G on the ensuing two days.⁶³

Following this inspection, ABMC and OQMG representatives discussed the merits and drawbacks of each point visited, finally deciding upon Site E, located about six miles south of Florence on State Highway No. 2, as the most practical location. It possessed the essential features desirable for a U. S. Military Cemetery and enjoyed the greatest accessibility of any place considered.

The inspection team then visited the U. S. Cemetery at Nettuno on 14 and 17 August. After checking for adequacy, topographical features, and boundaries set forth in existing plans, they concluded that additional land must be procured beyond existing cemeterial boundaries. They also requested more data concerning such matters as the location of trees and obstructions. Despite the presence of a temporary cemetery on this land, the inspectors anticipated no

⁶¹ 1st Ind, OQMG to CG, USAF, MTO, 31 Jul 47, to Basic Ltr, CG, Hq MTO to TQMG, 18 Jul 47, sub: Interments in Permanent Oversea Cemeteries and New National Cemeteries Outside the Continental Limits of the United States, 687, Med Zone, Alex RC.

⁶² Ltr, Brig Gen George A. Horkan, Chief, Mem Div, OQMG to CG, USAF, MTO, 27 Jun 47, 687, Med Zone, Alex RC.

⁶³ Travel Rpt, Lt Col D. K. Donelson, 6 Aug 47-22 Aug 47, Atchmt to IRS, Mem Div to TQMG thru Exec Officer, OQMG, 9 Sep 47.

major difficulty in establishing a permanent overseas cemetery there and ABMC representatives agreed to develop grading plans without further delay.⁶⁴

Shortly thereafter, Lt. Colonel Donelson requested the Commanding General, MTOUSA, to initiate action for the acquisition of the selected area near Florence for cemeterial purposes. He also asked that a more detailed topographical survey be made of Site E, before ABMC submitted plot and grading plans to MTOUSA.⁶⁵ Early in September, General Horkan, Chief, Memorial Division, OQMG, informed the Commanding Officer, AGRS-MTZ, that "there is no precedent for obtaining land in foreign countries for permanent cemeteries except the experience that was gained in France after World War I."⁶⁶ He recommended that AGRS officials at Zone Headquarters prepare maps of the property to be acquired at Site E south of Florence and of land presently occupied by Nettuno Cemetery, and such additional property as might be necessary there, for submission to the Italian Government through local State Department channels. Since outright purchase of property in foreign countries was contrary to the policy of the United States, General Horkan apprised Zone Headquarters that this land "would have to be made available to the United States Government tax free and to be used in perpetuity." Finally, he urged that all possible steps be taken to expedite preliminary arrangements for obtaining the necessary sites and the facilities for their development.

In answer to Lt. Colonel Donelson's request late in August for a detailed topographical survey of the Florence site, MTOUSA Headquarters informed the Commanding General, AGRC-EA, on 14 October 1947 that this survey had been completed and the results transmitted separately. This message also stated that because of the imminent closeout of MTOUSA and the termination of its right of requisition for Italian property for military use, no action had been taken toward acquisition of the land.

Even after activation of AGRS-MZ in September 1947 as an independent Zone under control of The Quartermaster General, further delays prevented any early establishment of permanent cemeteries at Nettuno and Florence. An engineer survey at the proposed Florence site incorrectly indicated the wooded areas to be at a lower elevation than they actually were, thus delaying AGMC approval of the burial layout and grading plans. Progress was further retarded

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Ltr, Lt Col Donelson to CG, Hq MTO, 26 Aug 47, sub: U. S. Military Site, Florence Area, 687, Med Zone, Alex RC.

⁶⁶ Ltr, Horkan to CO, AGRS-MTZ, 10 Sep 47, sub: Acquisition of Permanent Cemetery Sites, 687, Med Zone, Alex RC.

by disagreement between OQMG and ABMC over the final location of the axes of the permanent site at Nettuno. Finally, on 19 January 1948, after this matter had been resolved, the American Ambassador in Rome began proceedings with the Italian Government for the acquisition of perpetual rights to this property. On 27 April 1948, the Genio Civile granted permission for occupancy of the site. Armed with this authority, AGRS-MZ proceeded with construction work. After removal of the deceased already interred there and subsequent shipment to Naples of those destined for repatriation and above-ground storage in nearby mausoleums for those destined for overseas burial, grading of the land began early in July and was finished during August at a cost of approximately \$67,000.⁶⁷

Constructed to accommodate approximately 11,000 remains, the permanent cemetery at Nettuno comprised 100 acres of almost level terrain, surrounded by vineyards, olive groves, and prosperous farms. The very excellence of the land for agricultural purposes had no doubt caused the Italian Government to procrastinate before granting permission for its occupancy. A small, spring-fed stream flowed through the cemetery, providing a continuous source of water. Geographically, it lay one mile northeast of Anzio and very near the small, sea coast town of Nettuno. This area, by virtue of its easy accessibility (40 miles from Rome), temperate climate, and fine, sandy beaches, was ideally suited to meet the needs of visitors on pilgrimage to the permanent cemetery.⁶⁸ By early autumn of 1948, Nettuno was ready for its first permanent interment. It took place on 10 September with appropriate religious services conducted by the three major faiths. When this burial ground passed to the jurisdiction of the ABMC on 15 December 1949, interments totalled 7,858.⁶⁹

After approval of the burial layout and grading plan of the cemetery near Florence, the American Ambassador in Rome on 12 February 1948 received a request to start proceedings with the Italian Government for perpetual rights to Site E. The owner's objection to expropriation of his property delayed a decree for its occupancy until 18 October 1948. Grading activity finally began in February 1949 and ended in March. In contrast to Nettuno, no existing cemetery had to be disinterred.

Covering 60 acres of gently rolling terrain, the cemetery was expected to accommodate a maximum of 8,000 remains. Set against

⁶⁷ Hist, AGRS-MZ, 1 Oct 47-30 Jun 50, p. 13.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

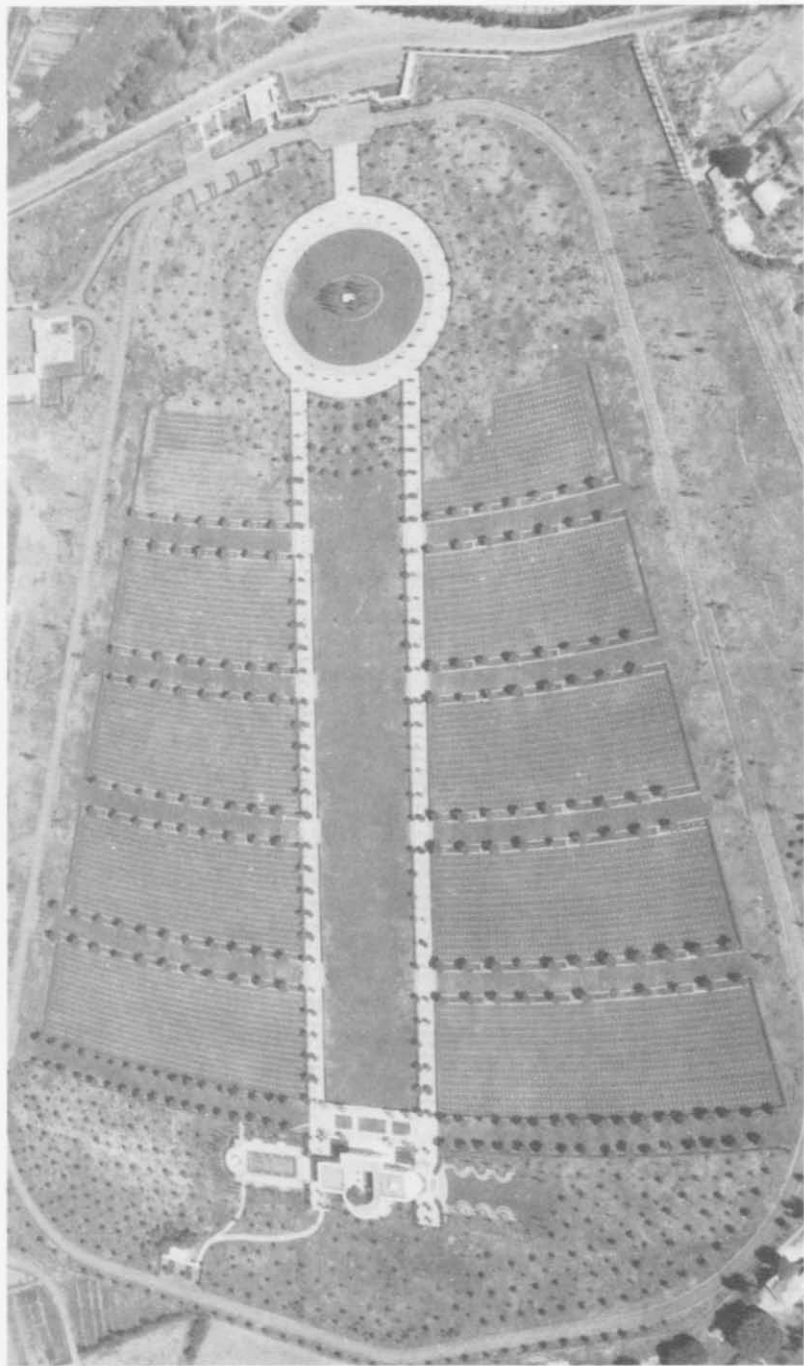


FIGURE 38. Aerial view of Sicily-Rome American Military Cemetery, north of Nettuno, Italy, and 37 miles south of Rome.

picturesque, terraced hills beside the River Greve and overlooking a pleasant landscape, which included towering cypresses, gnarled olive trees, and a historic villa, this burial ground presented a scene of tranquil beauty. Its close proximity to Florence, always a favorite spot for tourists, added to its suitability as a place where next of kin might visit the graves of their loved ones.⁷⁰ After a solemn dedication ceremony held on 9 April, the first final interment occurred on 21 April 1949 and by the time the ABMC assumed control on 15 December 1949, 4,353 deceased were buried here.

Upon recommendation of the ABMC and with the approval of Memorial Division, OQMG, the Nettuno Cemetery was officially named the "Sicily-Rome American Cemetery" after the military operations in which those who rested there had participated and the other permanent site became known as the "Florence American Cemetery" after its location. The latest available figures on the number of interments in each cemetery show 7,862 burials at Nettuno and 4,403 interments at Florence.⁷¹

Repatriation Operations in MZ

Plans for disinterment of Mediterranean cemeteries preparatory to repatriation activities began in the early months of 1946 or at about the same time officials in the Theater and at the OQMG began consideration of permanent overseas cemeteries in that area. Some of these early plans were materially altered before actual implementation. For example, OQMG officials originally expected to use not less than four ports in the Zone for the shipment of deceased from cemeteries to the United States. The ports were Palermo, Naples, Leghorn, and Bari.⁷² The concentration of all remains from Sicily to the Italian mainland, described heretofore, eliminated Palermo from consideration as a repatriation port and the transfer of deceased from Belgrade Cemetery was a factor in the abandonment of plans for use of Bari. The other reason for elimination of Bari was the decision of Theater Headquarters that remains from Bari could be moved more expeditiously by rail to Naples. The concentration of all Mediterranean war dead on the Italian mainland finally resulted in the eventual use of only two repatriation ports—Naples, which handled all homeward-bound remains from the southern portion of Italy, and Leghorn, which bore a like responsibility for repatriation shipments from northern Italy.

Early postwar plans indicated that the Field Operating Section

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

⁷¹ Interv, Col Mitchell, ABMC, 16 Nov 55.

⁷² Ltr, ASF, OQMG to CG, MTO, 7 Feb 46, sub: Repatriation Organization and Operations, 293, Med Zone, Alex RC.

(FOS) would serve as the basic operating unit for repatriation activities, with estimates that 5 of them might be required, each composed of approximately 5 officers and a total of some 40 American civilians and local Italian laborers. Each FOS would work at one of the following points: Sicily, Paestum, Nettuno, Mirandola, and the Balkans.⁷³ As matters developed, these plans were only partially carried out.

After a period of several months, during which other phases of the overall return mission demanded primary attention of graves registration officials, Theater Headquarters suggested a procedure for disinterment of Mediterranean cemeteries preparatory to homeward shipment of deceased, commencing in northern Italy and moving progressively southward. According to this scheme, repatriation operations would begin on 1 July 1947, at Leghorn, and continue through October 1947.⁷⁴ The port of Naples would not even be manned until the latter part of October, when the Leghorn personnel would be transferred there.

Theater Headquarters offered several justifications for this proposal. First, only one port would be used at a time, thus saving considerable personnel. Secondly, organic transportation would be concentrated at one point, thereby facilitating control, maintenance and flow of remains and supplies. Thirdly, weather in the mountainous areas of northern Italy precluded winter operations there. In the next place, the bulk of supplies and transportation facilities were then concentrated in northern Italy. Lastly, a geological survey of water tables indicated that the exhumation of northern cemeteries would be most difficult and impractical during the winter and spring months.⁷⁵

Nevertheless, the north-to-south movement of cemeterial evacuation did not materialize. Because of increasing political unrest in northern Italy, GRS officials deemed it unwise to undertake repatriation operations at Leghorn during the summer of 1947. The Zone Headquarters had not realized the seriousness of the situation during the closing weeks of 1946 when the operations were first planned. Consequently, AGRS Headquarters decided to evacuate the military cemeteries in the Naples area at the beginning of the repatriation project with all activities then moving northward and ending with the disinterment of Mirandola Cemetery.⁷⁶

⁷³ Ltr, Theater GRO, MTO to ASF, OQMG, 15 Mar 46; sub: Repatriation Organization and Operations, 293, Med Zone, Alex RC.

⁷⁴ Ltr, Hq AGRS-MTZ to OQMG, 13 Dec 46, 293, Med Zone, Alex RC.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Ltr, Hq AGRS-MTZ, 8 Jan 47, sub: Operational Plan for Repatriation of Deceased of World War II, 293, Med Zone, Alex RC.

Later, planning for final disinterments in Italy took firmer shape. Officials expected that seven FOS units would be needed, beginning in February 1948 at Nettuno Cemetery, followed by exhumations in the cemeteries at Bari, Marzanello Nuovo, Carano, R. Fratelle, Avellino, Paestum, and Naples. In July 1948, when operations in northern Italy were scheduled to begin, the number of FOS units would be reduced to five. Exhumations in the north would commence at Mirandola, and proceed to Pietramala, Castelfiorentino, Vada, Follonica, and Tarquinia, ending sometime in December 1948.

Disinterment plans originally called for graveside casketing of all remains, necessitating special equipment in each cemetery for handling the caskets as well as additional cemeterial land for storage space. This proposed procedure was changed when Col. W. W. Watson, CO, AGRS-MZ, decided to establish and organize central casketing points at Naples and Leghorn, corresponding to the two repatriation ports. Exhumed remains were to be moved to these points, where better working conditions might bring better results and thereby terminate activities in a shorter period of time.⁷⁷

During January 1948, Colonel Watson received word from Memorial Division, OQMG, that the Zone would be expected to ship 3,750 remains to the United States before 30 June 1948, as its share in meeting the world-wide goal of 50,000 remains repatriated by that date. To assure accomplishment of this purpose, Memorial Division suggested that the Zone take three steps: first, all possible priority must be given to processing and casketing remains destined for repatriation; second, shipments of casketed remains to port must be as frequent and large as practicable in order to have a substantial number available for loading upon arrival of the repatriation ship; and third, Nettuno exhumations should begin somewhat sooner than anticipated in order to meet the minimum quota of 3,750.⁷⁸ Although urging that every effort be put forth to meet this goal, Memorial Division cautioned the Zone against any "lowering of the prescribed high standards of preparation and processing of remains."

Final disinterment of some 22,000 American dead in the Zone for return to the United States began on 24 March 1948 at Nettuno, the largest Mediterranean cemetery. All exhumed remains from burial grounds south of Rome moved to the Central Casketing Point at Naples, located at the edge of the Capodichino Airport. After undergoing mortuary procedures as outlined in TM 10-281, they

⁷⁷ Hist, AGRS-MZ, 1 Oct 47-30 Jun 50, p. 3.

⁷⁸ Ltr, Col E. Busch, Mem Div to CO, AGRS-MZ, 23 Jan 48, sub: Target for Return of Remains through 30 Jun 1948, 293, Med Zone, Alex RC.

were held in above-ground storage, always totally covered by canvas. At the Leghorn Casketing Point, an open lot was used for above-ground storage. Casket cases were covered and stored on pallets or high dunnage, but the area became quite muddy during rainy weather.⁷⁹

In the storage area, casketed remains were subdivided into three sections. One of these contained those destined for return to the United States and was subdivided by Distribution Center. The second included those scheduled for permanent overseas burial; in general, remains casketed at Naples were designated for permanent burial at Nettuno after its completion as an overseas burial ground, while those casketed at Leghorn were destined for interment at Florence. The third section was reserved for those remains which were in an unresolved status.⁸⁰ By 1 June 1948, only about three weeks before the first repatriation ship arrived at Naples, the Central Casketing Point there had prepared approximately 9,000 remains from the temporary military cemeteries of southern Italy. These remains now awaited shipment to their native soil, permanent burial in Italy, or further instructions from the next of kin.⁸¹ During this month, which also saw the first repatriation shipment from the Zone, an additional 3,468 deceased were received by the Central Casketing Point at Naples, including 2,241 from Marzanello and 1,222 from Paestum, bringing the total received since the beginning of operations to over 13,000 remains.⁸²

On 24 June 1948, when the first group of deceased departed for their homeland, a formal ceremony was held at Naples in observance of this solemn occasion. For 24 hours before the services, three casketed remains, representing the Army Ground Forces, Navy, and Air Force, lay in state in the monument erected by Italy to war dead, high on Posillipo Hill, overlooking Naples Bay. An honor guard, composed of a U. S. Marine Corps Detachment and units of the Italian Army, Navy, and Air Force, kept constant vigil over the deceased. On the morning of 24 June, the three caskets were borne to Plebiscite Square where they were placed on a catafalque in front of Naples City Hall. The American Ambassador and high Italian Government officials participated in the memorial services, together with clerical leaders of the three major faiths. Components of the U. S. Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps rendered military homage during the ceremony and escorted the procession to the pier.

⁷⁹ (1) Hist, AGRS-MZ, 1 Oct 47-30 Jun 50, p. 11. (2) Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-MZ, 31 Mar 48.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

⁸¹ Ltr, AGRS-MZ, to Exec Spcy, NFDA, 1 Jun 48, 293, Med Zone, Alex RC.

⁸² Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-MZ, 30 Jun 48, p. 5.

As each of the three flag-draped caskets was placed aboard the USAT *Carroll Victory*, a separate volley was fired. Every vessel in Naples Harbor flew its ensign at half-mast and when the repatriation ship pulled away from the pier to start its long homeward journey with its cargo of 4,841 remains, the U. S. Cruiser *Juneau*, lying in the outer harbor, fired a twenty-one gun farewell salute.⁸³

After this initial shipment, disinterments continued in southern cemeteries of Italy and remains flowed into the Naples Casketing Point, until 20 August, when casketing activities ended, with the exception of special CIP cases. Nearly 22,000 deceased were casketed at Naples during the entire period of the operation.

In July, meanwhile, at the Leghorn Casketing Point, preparations for operations had reached their final stages. Disinterments at Mirandola began on 26 July 1948 and casketing at Leghorn on 2 August. At the end of August, some 3,158 remains from northern cemeteries had been placed in caskets with nearly 8,000 more yet to be exhumed.⁸⁴ By 26 October, when the USAT *Lawrence Victory* departed with the first shipment of remains from cemeteries in northern Italy, over 11,000 deceased had been casketed. The initial shipment from Leghorn included 3,759 fallen Americans, in addition to 3,378 the *Lawrence Victory* had taken aboard at Naples several days previously, bringing its total cargo of war dead to 7,137.⁸⁵ In this group were 87 deceased destined for final interment in other countries by way of the United States.

The next repatriation shipment from Leghorn occurred several months later, on 20 January 1949. The USAT *Corporal Eric Gibson*, already carrying 1,850 remains from Naples, representing the final outgoing shipment from that port, departed with an additional 2,131 dead from the Leghorn Casketing Point. Two later groups of deceased left from Leghorn in May and in October 1949, thus terminating major repatriation activities in the Mediterranean Zone. The latest available figure of total remains returned to the United States from the Mediterranean Zone (including those from Africa and the Middle East) was 26,056.⁸⁶

After the last repatriation ship had departed, Detachment No. 3, Naples, which had cared for remains in southern cemeteries of Italy and been responsible for operation of the Central Casketing Point there, was inactivated. All unresolved identification cases henceforth went to Detachment No. 2 at Leghorn.⁸⁷ This Detachment

⁸³ Hist, AGRS-MZ, 1 Oct 47-30 Jun 50, p. 12.

⁸⁴ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-MZ, 31 Aug 48, p. 4.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 31 Oct 48, pp. 3-4.

⁸⁶ Statistical Review of Permanent Disposition of WW II Dead, 31 Dec 51, p. 11.

⁸⁷ Hist, AGRS-MZ, 1 Oct 47-30 Jun 50, p. 6.

was also inactivated on 15 December 1949, following disposal of all property and the transfer of the CIL unresolved remains to the permanent military cemetery at Florence.⁸⁸ On 1 February 1950, Residual Detachment, 9107th TSU-QMG, AGRS-MZ, was activated. It consisted of 5 officers, 1 enlisted man, 3 Department of Army civilians, and 14 local inhabitants. Since all other graves registration responsibilities in the Zone were now ended, this Detachment concerned itself with search and recovery activities for remains reported found through individuals or government agencies as directed by TQMG, and with processing, casketing, and shipment of remains recovered through such efforts. After 5 months, the Residual Detachment, too, was inactivated, effective 1 July 1950 and its responsibilities transferred to the Commanding General, U. S. Army, Europe. This action terminated all significant graves registration operations in the Mediterranean Zone.

Conclusion

In summarizing the accomplishments of the American Graves Registration Service in the Mediterranean Area, its primary purposes must be borne in mind so that a definite conclusion may be reached as to how well its mission was carried out. The major responsibilities of the Commanding Officer, AGRS-MZ, included the establishment, improvement, maintenance, administration, and operation of all World War II Military Cemeteries, the recovery and identification of deceased, the return of the dead to their homeland or permanent overseas burial.⁸⁹

Most evidence points to a high standard of maintenance in the 14 cemeteries of Italy, particularly during the period of Colonel Watson's able leadership. Grass, trees, and shrubbery were carefully cultivated, grave markers received frequent painting, and buildings and grounds were kept immaculately clean. After the close of hostilities, search and recovery teams made over 3,000 recoveries, including those in the Africa-Middle East Zone. Although at the end of July 1950, the final report on search activities showed that approximately 3,120 remains were still unlocated and considered unrecoverable, the overall achievement compares quite favorably with the record made elsewhere. The total figure of over 41,000 recovered deceased attests to the high degree of success attained in this phase of the repatriation mission.⁹⁰ Accomplishments in the identification of unknowns in the Zone may be found in the following chapter, relat-

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 22.

⁸⁹ Hist, AGRS-MZ, 1 Apr 46-1 Oct 47, p. 2.

⁹⁰ Statistical Review of Permanent Disposition of WW II Dead, p. 10.

ing to world-wide identification operations. After considerable delay, return of the dead to the homeland from the two Italian ports proceeded quite smoothly. Final selection of the two permanent overseas cemeterial sites also was retarded by indecision and lack of co-ordination between Theater Headquarters and the Memorial Division, OQMG.

On the whole, then, accomplishments in the Mediterranean Zone measured up to those elsewhere in other Zones, with the proportion of recoveries somewhat higher than the world-wide average. But disinterment operations preparatory to shipment of remains to Central Casketing Points may have been undertaken too hastily. This conclusion stems from the fact that a high percentage of remains received at the Central Casketing Points lacked major skeletal portions. The embalmers at the Points insisted that this situation might have been avoided through more meticulous search of each individual grave during final disinterment operations.⁹¹ Despite these flaws, the final dispositions of over 40,000 deceased constituted a major achievement in the world-wide AGRS program.

⁹¹ Ltr, AGRS-MZ, to Mr. Howard C. Raether, NFDA Exec Secy, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1 Jun 48, 293, Med Zone, Alex RC.

CHAPTER XIX

WORLD-WIDE IDENTIFICATION OPERATIONS

Final disposition of the war dead in accordance with wishes of the next of kin incurred the obligation of reducing the number of unknown dead to the lowest possible minimum. The capital importance of this obligation was recognized at the outbreak of hostilities by adding to the Memorial Division, as then organized, an Overseas Branch which assumed the responsibility of maintaining a central office of burial records. An Identification Section was subsequently organized within the Branch to process all burial reports of unknown dead and conduct such investigations as might be suggested by fingerprints, tooth charts and personal effects. In commenting on the inadequate staff assigned to these two units, Col. R. P. Harbold, Chief of the Memorial Division, warned in a memorandum of 30 March 1944 for The Quartermaster General that "this work unless actively pursued at this time, will pile up and become an almost insurmountable task upon the cessation of hostilities."

Failure on the part of higher authority to heed Colonel Harbold's warning produced the very situation foreseen in March 1944. But widespread interest in problems relating to final disposition of the war dead afforded officers of the Memorial Division a hearing that had been denied during the war years. Identification of the unknown dead became a matter of paramount importance in the various planning programs developed by the Division between the Armistice of Reims and the issuance on 29 December 1945 of War Department GO No. 125, authorizing the establishment of AGRS area and separate zone commands. Notably, The Quartermaster General directed that a maximum effort should be made in the overseas theaters to establish identification of all deceased presently buried as unknowns and that burial reports should receive careful review to determine if any additional facts might help establish or confirm identities.¹

Search and recovery of isolated remains added new complications to the identification problem. Procedures employed in these operations during November-December 1945 in Germany and elsewhere

¹ Ltr, Col C. J. Blake, Mem Div, OQMG, to Brig Gen H. R. McKenzie, Hq USAFMIDPAC, 13 Dec 45, 293, Pacific, Alex RC.

during the early months of 1946 have been described in Chapter VI. Briefly, the techniques applied at graveside and collecting points were, in the main, a carryover of standard identification practices developed during the war years. Field experience, however, disclosed serious disadvantages of this system. In the first place, members of the disinterring team stood idle while the leader prosecuted studious investigation to establish a positive identification. Again, the so-called identification analysts and their assistants were, generally speaking, deficient in the knowledge of anatomy requisite to their work. Finally, there was a serious shortage of mortuary kits.

These deficiencies suggested the advisability of evacuating remains to a central identification point. Properly equipped and staffed, such a center would offer in contrast to the primitive methods employed in graveside identification the following advantages: (1) Physical anthropologists could greatly assist many investigations through the determination of approximate age, height, race, and sex by bone measurement; (2) Professional morticians could be available to supervise proper treatment and casketing of remains; (3) Difficulties in tooth charting could be handled by dental technicians; (4) Elaborate laboratory equipment (fluoroscope and X-ray machines) would be in the hands of skilled operators.

Central Identification Point

Upon recommendations proceeding from correspondence between Headquarters, AGRC-EA, and the Memorial Division, The Quartermaster General in May 1946 invited Dr. Harry L. Shapiro, Chairman and Curator of Physical Anthropology at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, to visit the European Theater for the purpose of recommending procedures and anatomical techniques in the identification of unknown servicemen. Dr. Shapiro arrived in France on 23 June 1946 and spent three weeks in the field, visiting AGRC units and observing their methods.² After reviewing every detail of graves registration activities in the three field commands, Dr. Shapiro proposed the establishment of a centrally located laboratory where identification processes would be accomplished with the aid of highly developed scientific apparatus. Graveside identification should be limited, Dr. Shapiro believed, to the resolution, if possible, of nationality. Upon such determination, the remains of American deceased, together with all identifying media found in or near the place of burial, should be sent through a collecting point to the central laboratory.³

² Narrative History, CIP, p. 3.

³ Rpt, Shapiro to CO, Mem Div, OQMG, 6 Aug 46, 293, WW II Identification, Alex RC.

Dr. Shapiro suggested that personnel requirements for the proposed Central Identification Laboratory should embrace several categories of workers, the numbers in each category depending upon the workloads and the pressure of time. He indicated a need for the following scientific personnel, leaving to the experience of military officials the determination of the number of processors:⁴

(a) A director, preferably a physical anthropologist, with broad background and high scientific attainment, familiar with various techniques that might aid in problems of identification, particularly in the study of skeletal remains, who could direct and organize the work assigned to him.

(b) An assistant, also a physical anthropologist, to aid in expediting detailed laboratory procedures.

(c) A general technician, familiar with laboratory techniques and capable of determining blood types from bony remains (the latter process was so recent a development that any possible candidate would require special instruction before assuming his duties).

(d) A second general technician, to assist in the aforementioned duties and to handle fingerprints and other such requirements.

(e) A police detection expert, familiar with special devices developed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and metropolitan police agencies.

(f) A group of enlisted men to serve as clerks and assistants, the number to be determined by the volume of work.

(g) High-grade processors working in close collaboration with and under the director of the technical staff.

In addition to these personnel recommendations, Dr. Shapiro offered rather detailed suggestions about existing identification procedures. In addition to his firm belief that graveside processing should be eliminated as wasteful of time and manpower and as conducive to the destruction and loss of evidence, Dr. Shapiro thought that the work in a Central Identification Laboratory might well prove less disagreeable than graveside processing. He favored experimentation with other procedures which might ameliorate a task that at best strained men's sensibilities. He proposed that tooth charts, as a highly significant item in identification procedures, be made only once in each case and only by well-trained and reliable persons. Dr. Shapiro listed several other advantages which he believed would accrue from the establishment of a Central Identification Point, including an easier and more uniform flow of supplies, processing at a faster and more even pace, the establishment of greater uniformity and higher standards, and better co-operation between those per-

⁴ *Ibid.*, Memo on Personnel for Laboratory.

forming routine processing functions and those engaged in technical and scientific aspects of identification. Realizing the necessity for accessibility of a remains until a given case was closed, Dr. Shapiro advocated above-ground storage near the laboratory. Finally, he suggested that every effort be exerted to determine blood type, since recent techniques had rendered such information available through study of osseous or bony remains. He believed that the blood type would prove a valuable clue in identifying unknowns, and in cases where identification tags were suspect, it could be a means of verification. In Dr. Shapiro's opinion, any available X-ray records could also offer a very important criterion for identification. He strongly urged all scientific personnel to work as a united team, bending their diverse efforts to the solution of each case.⁵

In accordance with Dr. Shapiro's recommendations and findings, AGRC Headquarters established the Central Identification Point (CIP) at Strasbourg, France, under General Order 46, dated 18 July 1946, effective 1 August 1946. All recovered isolated remains, both known and unknown, would henceforth be sent to the Central Identification Point for complete examination. At the same time, the practice of processing remains at graveside, unit, group, field command or cemetery processing points, was permanently discontinued.⁶

The new establishment did not actually commence operations until 7 August 1946, under Col. Willard N. Wallace, who had been serving as Commanding Officer of the Sixth Sector, AGRC, at Etampes, France.⁷ At its inception, the CIP was operated by the 349th QM Battalion. In addition to the Commanding Officer, the new organization consisted of 3 officers and 24 enlisted men.⁸ Within a very short time, several units or sections were created to carry out the manifold activities of the CIP, including a morgue unit, where processing operations took place, and Chemical and Photographic Laboratories.

Among the most important functions of the Central Identification Point were: the thorough processing of all remains recovered by search teams, and the recording of all information gathered; preparation of remains for reburial in a temporary United States Military Cemetery; the reprocessing of unknowns currently buried in temporary United States Military Cemeteries and of special cases as directed, and the conduct of research in the field of identification processing

⁵ *Ibid.*, see fn. 3.

⁶ Ltr, Hq AGRC, European Theater to Commands Concerned, 1 Aug 46, sub: Centralization of Processing and Identification, 293, Europe, Alex RC.

⁷ Narrative History, CIP, pp. 3-4.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

for the purpose of developing new and better techniques and improving those currently employed.⁹

Among the outstanding civilian contributors to early identification efforts in Europe was John Aievoli, Detective, New York Police Department, who served in this Theater until mid-October 1946. Detective Aievoli aided greatly in the establishment of identification techniques and procedures which were followed quite closely in later operations. Officials in Memorial Division, OQMG, considered his efforts among the most helpful of any individual in the entire European GRS organization.¹⁰

After establishment of the CIP at Strasbourg, disinterring teams, following search teams of the First Field Command and each of the Zones, exhumed and prepared recovered remains for evacuation to the Identification Point. The deceased were sent to the CIP by air, rail, and motor vehicle. The type of transportation depended mainly upon the location of the disinterring team. All shipments were manifested on a Way Bill to insure an accurate accounting for every body. At the time of evacuation, the Field Unit prepared and forwarded with the shipment of every remains, a case history which the workers at the CIP completed and sent to AGRC Headquarters. Upon arrival of a remains at the CIP, the Receiving Officer and the appropriate Liaison Officer checked it and the case history to insure that the shipment was complete in every detail. After opening the box and spraying the body with a disinfectant, they placed the deceased in storage to await processing by the Morgue (or Mortuary) unit.

Processing a typical remains for identification normally involved certain steps. In the first place, CIP workers carried the box containing the deceased into the processing laboratory, where technicians checked the evacuation number and emergency medical tag with the case papers. Next, they carefully removed the remains to a processing table, which was covered with a clean mattress. A team, usually consisting of four men (a table supervisor and three assistants, including a recorder), closely examined the body for clues. These analysts were required to possess a thorough knowledge of anatomy, have the ability to reconstruct the skeleton and name the bones of the body, recognize gross abnormalities and surgical or accidental scars, make an accurate tooth chart, and take finger prints.¹¹

⁹ Memo, Hq AGRC, European Theater, 30 Nov 46, sub: Operation of the Central Identification Point, 293, GRS-Europe, Alex RC.

¹⁰ Ltr, Horkan to Arthur J. Wallender, Commissioner, N. Y. C. Police Dept, 26 May 48, File 201—Aievoli, John J.

¹¹ See fn. 9, above.

The team removed all clothing and equipment from the remains, listed and measured each piece of clothing for size and recorded the color, design, and fabric. They looked carefully for laundry marks, manufacturer's marks, sizes, and lot numbers. They then washed all clothing in order to discover any other evidence, cut away any faded markings, and sent them to the Chemical Laboratory for special treatment. This careful study of clothing and equipment often aided in the determination of nationality, branch of service, and other valuable clues which led to positive identification.

After removing the clothing and laving the body with a gentle spray of water to remove all dirt and foreign articles, the processors searched the remains, especially the chest cavities and abdomen. They then turned the body over and thoroughly scrutinized the back for identifying media, such as tags buried or embedded in the flesh of the posterior part of the shoulder girdle. Following this examination, they arranged the remains and prepared the anatomical chart, on which they blacked out all missing parts of the body and recorded the missing bones. They then estimated height by use of the Rollet Tables, which were used to determine height by measurement of the long bones of the body, and whenever practical, checked by actual overall measurement of the skeleton. If a skull was present, the team members measured it in order to determine the head size, and based on other anatomical features, an attempt was made to determine the race and age of the individual.¹²

The next step involved the preparation by a specialist of a tooth chart. After completion, the table supervisor and a dental consultant carefully examined the chart to assure accuracy. The processing team wrapped the body in a clean mattress cover, placed it on a litter and carried it to the fluoroscope room for examination. This step proved to be an important part of identification processing since, on several occasions, identification tags, bracelets, and other metallic objects were discovered which might otherwise never have been found. The separate fluoroscopic examination of clothing sometimes also bore fruitful results. ✱The body was then returned to the processing room, wrapped securely in a clean sheet and blanket and placed carefully in a casket with the head resting upon the pillow. When the processors found two identification tags, which should have been worn around the neck, they fastened one tag to the blanket near the head of the remains and tacked the other one to the head of the casket in the upper right-hand corner. When they located only one tag, the laboratory workers pinned it to the blanket and an embossed strip was cut and placed on the head of

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

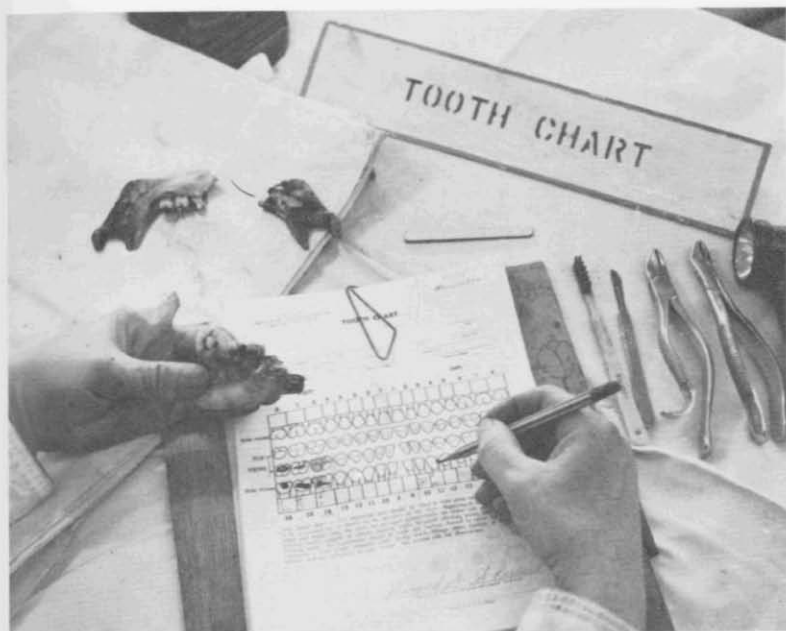


FIGURE 39. *Tooth charts proved to be an important factor in identification of remains.*

the casket. In unknown cases, the technicians cut an embossed strip for each casket, giving the unknown "X" number assigned the remains. The final step consisted of moving the casket containing the deceased to the shipping room where it was draped with an American flag while awaiting removal to a permanent military cemetery for reburial or return to the United States.

The thoroughness of identification procedures was clearly illustrated on 8 October 1946 (two months after the CIP at Strasbourg commenced operations), when 40 bodies, disinterred from St. Avold Cemetery, arrived at the CIP Mortuary for processing. Although each remains, after receiving at least one previous examination by a field team had been buried as an unknown, the processors at the Laboratory located dog tags buried in 5 remains and conclusive identification marks, such as bracelets, among 3 others, resulting in the successful identification of 8 of the 40 originally listed as unknowns. In addition, the CIP technicians discovered substantial clues as to the possible identity of 20 others.¹³

Mass burials involved those cases wherein more than one body

¹³ Narrative History, CIP, Mortuary Section, p. 9.



FIGURE 40. *X-ray technician uses fluoroscope to detect any foreign matter which might be lodged in remains, CIP, Strasbourg, France.*

was buried in a single grave. Such burials received the same identification processing as an individual case. In addition, highly trained technicians made a complete anthropological study in order to segregate remains in whole or in part so that each deceased might be processed as an individual. This procedure often required as many as ten tables with a like number of trained technicians, who examined and classified each bone and piece of equipment and clothing. In addition to making tooth charts, they attempted to reconstruct shattered jaws.¹⁴

During the first few weeks of the CIP's existence, the Morgue Unit necessarily assumed the responsibility of scrutinizing every clue removed from remains in lieu of systematic chemical research which was then non-existent. As has been indicated, pieces of clothing which bore evidence of laundry marks or serial numbers were carefully washed in the hope of revealing a number or clue obliterated

¹⁴ Memo, Hq AGRC, European Theater, 30 Nov 46, p. 5, sub: Operation of the CIP, ETA, 293, GRS-Europe, Alex RC.

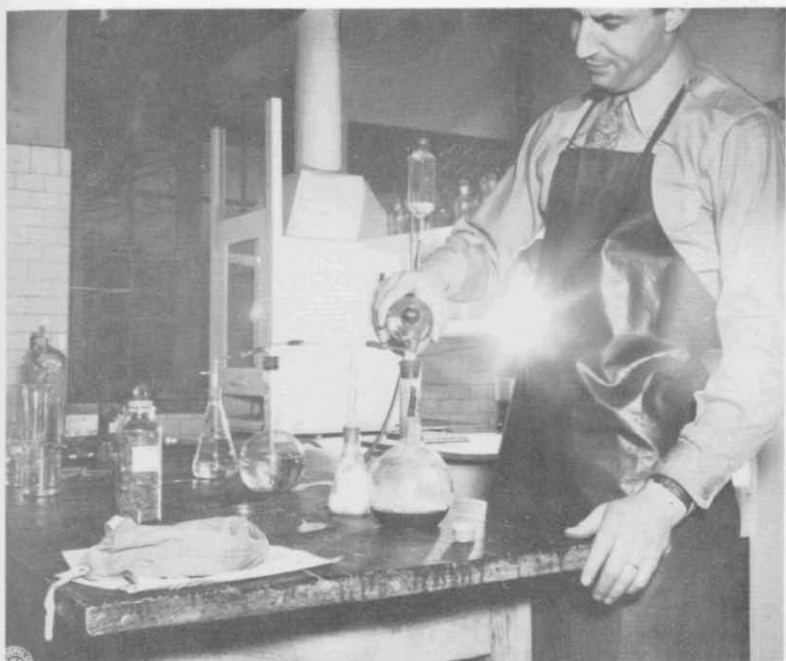


FIGURE 41. *Laboratory technician prepares a solution of ammonium sulfide for use in restoration of faded writing.*

by oil, dirt, blood, or age. Microscopic initials and names on rings and pieces of jewelry that had become rusted, twisted, or otherwise marred, were often illegible. Fragments of letters on which the ink had faded offered important clues, but the still limited facilities of the Morgue prevented full utilization of such opportunities for identification.¹⁵ Consequently, a Chemical Laboratory was established at the caserne (barrack) and the first chemical processing took place there on 27 September 1946.

Normally, the Chemical Laboratory served in the role of "troubleshooter" for the Morgue. After a remains had been completely processed at the Morgue, all material recovered during this procedure was sent to the Chemical Laboratory for further scrutiny. A trained chemist examined every item in an attempt to uncover any hidden clue which might aid in positive identification. Some of the special items processed by the Chemical Laboratory included hair, letters, cards, memo books, jewelry, and blood stains and clots.¹⁶

¹⁵ Narrative History, CIP, Chemical Laboratory Section, p. 1.

¹⁶ (1) *Ibid.*, p. 7. (2) See fn. 14, above.



FIGURE 42. *A chemist, with aid of microscope, examines a small piece of clothing in search for identification clues.*

Another function performed by the Chemical Laboratory included consultation and comparison of information with other Government agencies. For example, a War Crimes Investigator disinterred three American soldiers from the St. Avoild Cemetery and requested the Central Identification Point to process the remains. The specific point checked involved the determination, if possible, of whether or not morphine was present in the bodies of these soldiers, since it was suspected that a Nazi doctor had administered this drug. The CIP, through its Chemical Laboratory, could make such decisions and perform other toxicological examinations as requested. The Chemical Laboratory could also take prints of mummified decomposed fingers through a special process of injecting glycerine or liquid paraffin into the subcutaneous tissue, cleaning the epidermis with alcohol or gasoline, then drying the epidermis with heat to the proper degree so that it could be inked and printed.¹⁷

The Photographic Laboratory constituted another important segment of the CIP. This unit photographed any clues which might

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

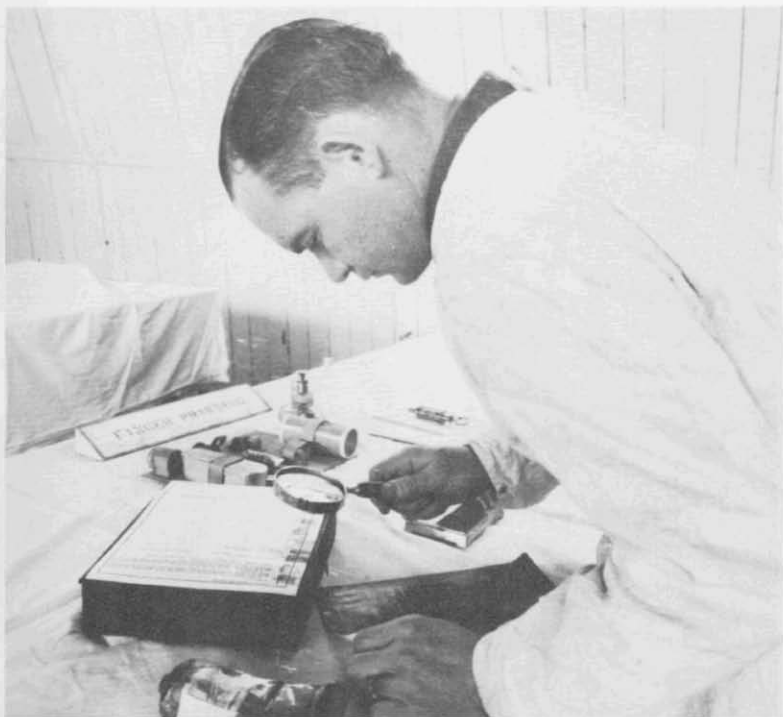


FIGURE 43. *Fingerprinting for positive identification, Chemical Laboratory, Strasbourg, France.*

lead to positive identification of the deceased, including rings, lockets, bracelets, pens, pencils, dentures, watches, fingerprints, personal photos, laundry and clothing marks, personal or official letters, business cards, drivers' licenses, club membership cards, and union cards. In addition to normal photography, this Laboratory used an infrared lamp to photograph faded writing and laundry marks. Use of the lamp made it possible to defer the use of chemicals since the latter often destroyed evidence unless quickly photographed. The Laboratory also used an ultra-violet ray lamp to decipher writing made illegible by charring, deterioration, and dirt.

Personal effects received at the CIP were given close attention at all times. They were carefully collected, inventoried and placed in a special bag. Upon completion of processing in both the chemical and the photographic laboratories, they were delivered to the Personal Effects Officer for final disposition. Two courses were available in disposition of these items. In cases involving remains which had been positively identified by the CIP, the effects were forwarded

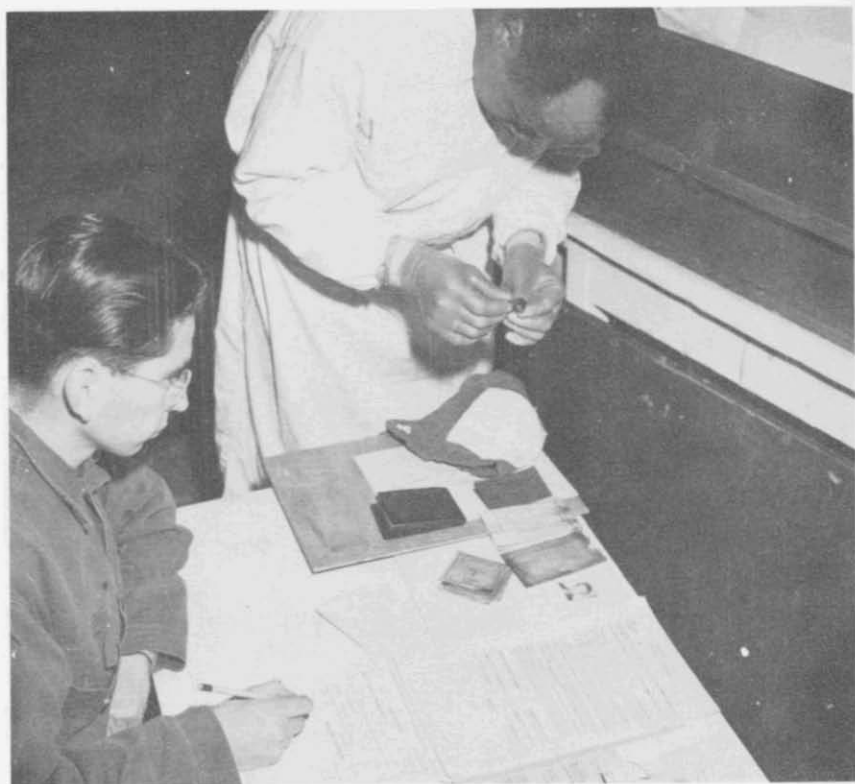


FIGURE 44. *Personal effects are examined by a table supervisor at Central Identification Point, Strasbourg, France.*

to the nearest QM Depot, which, in turn, sent them to the Effects Bureau, Kansas City, Missouri. In case of unknowns and "believed to be identified" the effects were stored temporarily at the CIP. When Hq, AGRC-EA, considered a case closed and had forwarded all papers pertaining to it to Washington, the CIP sent effects to Kansas City, as in cases of positively identified remains. The only exception to these procedures involved the handling of monies, which were promptly converted at the nearest Finance Office in order to safeguard the interests of the next of kin.¹⁸

The Central Identification Point continued to carry out its functions at Strasbourg, France, until late in the spring of 1947, when, in order to reduce cost of operation, its various sections were moved to new sites. The Chemical Laboratory, Photographic Laboratory, Effects Branch, Record Section, Supply Section, and Administrative Section moved to the AGRC Fontainebleau Depot, where more

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

adequate facilities existed. The Morgue Section was transferred to recently constructed buildings at Neuville-en-Condroz Cemetery, and to Margraten, where a sub-CIP was established. Officials estimated that these changes would result in a total operational savings of approximately \$50,000 annually.¹⁹

Boards of Review

Before narrating the activities of various CIP sections subsequent to the changes of locale, it is necessary to digress briefly in order to consider one of the most important units which dealt with identification matters—the Board of Review. Established in the spring of 1947, by authority of an AGO letter to all overseas area commanders,²⁰ these Boards were composed of not less than three commissioned officers, appointed by the chief of each AGRS Area and Independent Zone Command for the purpose (1) of reviewing and acting upon all cases pertaining to the identity of unknown remains referred to a board and (2) of reviewing and determining in all cases, from evidence presented, the non-recoverability of remains.²¹

The letter which directed the establishment of these boards specified that the following means of identification would be considered conclusive unless in conflict with other evidence submitted:

(1) An identification tag found around the neck of the deceased. In the case of an isolated interment, a tag found elsewhere, as in pockets or in the clothes, would also be considered positive proof of identity.

(2) A pay book of an enlisted man or pay card of an officer would be accepted as conclusive identity only when found in the clothing of the deceased.

(3) An emergency medical tag would be considered conclusive when signed by medical personnel.

(4) An identification bracelet when found worn on the wrist.

(5) An official theater identification card, when found on the person of the deceased.

(6) When any group of bodies was found with or in a tank, aircraft, or vehicle, the names of the crew or passenger list could usually be ascertained. In such cases, if all remains but one were identified, the identity of the unknown could be established by the simple process of elimination.

¹⁹ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRC-Europe, 4 May 47, p. 4.

²⁰ Ltr, WD, AGO to Commander in Chief, FEC, European Command, CG, AGFPAC, et al., 9 Apr 47, sub: Establishment of Boards of Review for Identification of Unknown Dead Overseas; KCRC-AGRS-IBT, 293.9, Bodies, Corpses, etc.

²¹ *Ibid.*

(7) A signed statement from an individual who knew the deceased and positively identified the remains. Such a statement must include characteristic features and such factors as missing digits, bruises, scars, tattoos, and birthmarks.

It should be noted that many of these means of positive identification very closely corresponded to those clues used by the early postwar disinterring teams. In addition, the Boards of Review considered as positive evidence any two or more of the following clues unless contradictory evidence existed:

(1) Identification tags, when found elsewhere than on the person of the deceased, but in the immediate vicinity.

(2) Motor vehicle operating permit, government or civilian.

(3) Personal papers, including Social Security card, marriage certificate, wills, letters addressed to the decedent, money orders, unofficial identification cards and similar papers.

(4) Engraved jewelry.

(5) Clothing marks containing the first letter of the last name and the last four digits of the decedent's serial number.

(6) Favorable comparison of tooth charts obtained from the remains and the last known tooth chart of the deceased.²²

The findings of Boards of Review in all cases were forwarded to the Memorial Division, OQMG, for administrative approval.

General Identification Operations, European Theater

Intensive identification training of officers and War Department civilians took place following the transfer of CIP units to Fontainebleau and Neuville-en-Condroz. On 21 July, the first CIP Repatriation School opened at Fontainebleau with an enrollment of 25 officers and 47 War Department civilians. Upon completion of the 2-week course, this group was assigned to the First Zone. The second school began during August with 11 officers, 14 enlisted men, and 50 War Department civilians enrolled. When the course ended, these officers and men proceeded to the Second Zone before undertaking their assignments. The third and last Repatriation School began on 6 October 1947 and ended 12 days later. Eleven officers, 39 War Department civilians, and 14 enlisted men completed the course. Of this group, 2 officers and 14 enlisted men were sent to the Third Zone and assigned to 2 Field Operating Sections there. One of these Sections was subsequently transferred to

²² *Ibid*

the Second Zone and the other one went directly to Lisnabreeny Cemetery, in northern Ireland, to begin exhumations.²³

During the last half of 1947, meanwhile, the CIP achieved notable results in actual operations. The unit at Neuville-en-Condroz, which received the personnel moved from the sub-CIP at Margraten after its closeout in the summer of 1947, handled all remains received from isolated locations and reprocessed unknowns then interred in cemeteries throughout Belgium and Holland. Also attached to the CIP were two Mobile Identification Teams with headquarters at St. Avold and Hamm Cemeteries, whose members reprocessed unknown dead in established French cemeteries. From 1 July to 30 November 1947, nearly 1,600 remains were received from isolated locations in Europe. As a result of CIP processing, approximately 348 remains were identified, 206 were "believed to be identified," 943 possessed clues, and 103 had no clues.²⁴

In accordance with Troop Movement and Assignment Order No. 31, dated 21 November 1947, the CIP closed out as a major subordinate command of AGRS-EA on 30 November, and became the Central Identification Section, Hq, First Zone. This organization was composed of an Administrative and Records Unit, located in the cantonment area; the Chemical and Photographic Laboratories, located in the First Zone Communications Switchboard Building; and the Morgue Unit, which operated in Neuville-en-Condroz Cemetery. During this period, Mobile Identification Team No. 1 functioned in the Second Zone area at St. James Cemetery and Team No. 2 in the Third Zone area at St. Avold Cemetery.²⁵

Operational elements of the Central Identification Section moved to Liège early in December while the Administration and Records Unit remained at Fontainebleau until 10 December, when all records were moved to Neuville-en-Condroz Cemetery. This change in area location of the Central Identification Section created the problem of hiring a new office force, since all personnel in Fontainebleau were French employees and could not be taken into Belgium. Despite the inevitable distractions stemming from this move, the Morgue Unit and Mobile Teams processed an estimated 450 cases during the last quarter of 1947.²⁶

Early in 1948, considerable discussion arose over the possibility of bodily harm to technicians who operated fluoroscopes in identification processing. Recommendations of the Command Surgeon

²³ Rpt of Opns, Hq AGRS-EA, Vol. I, Narrative, 1 Jul-30 Sep 47, pp. 112-13; 1 Oct-31 Dec 47, pp. 131-33.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 1 Oct-31 Dec 47, p. 118.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 119-20.

resulted in the temporary suspension of fluoroscopic operations at the Neuville Identification Point, pending careful inspection by a qualified EUCOM technician. Since zone commanders agreed that the fluoroscope saved time in locating identity tags and other objects which might not otherwise be found, steps were taken promptly to protect technicians in order that such operations might be resumed without undue hindrance to the identification program. Consequently, after the Command Surgeon had declared that the fluoroscope room and equipment were properly protected, the Commanding General, AGRC-EA, ordered operations to be resumed.²⁷

During the spring of 1948, the Records and Administrative Section moved from its former location in the cantonment area at Liège to Neuville Cemetery, thereby further consolidating overall identification operations. The Identification Point at Neuville meanwhile received some 486 remains from isolated locations during the April-June quarter and processed 306 of this group.

Later in the summer, a two-man Mobile Identification Team proceeded from Neuville to Cambridge Cemetery, England, to reprocess cases assigned to the Identification Point. Meanwhile, a new morgue was constructed for identification purposes at Neuville Cemetery. Despite definite evidence that the workload of the Identification Point would not be greatly reduced before the end of 1948, officials decided to retain only one technician each for the Chemical and Photographic Laboratories.²⁸

Operational emphasis upon the processing of unknowns for identification progressively increased during the closing months of 1948. A Mobile Identification Team was organized in the autumn to handle all remaining cases in France, except at St. Avold, and in Luxembourg. At this time, technicians at Neuville exerted considerable effort to resolve all cases involving discrepancy in identity uncovered during processing operations there. Of approximately 500 such discrepancy cases discovered at Neuville, about 100 had been cleared by the end of the year.²⁹

Other figures revealed that 1948 had been a year of notable activity and accomplishment in identification operations. A total of 1,494 of the unknowns buried in temporary cemeteries or recovered from isolated graves during the year were identified as a result of careful correlation of detailed evidence gathered by expert field investigators and records sections and thru the use of modern scientific

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1 Jan-31 Mar 48, p. 7; 1 Apr-30 Jun 48, p. 162.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1 Jul-30 Sep 48, pp. 171-72.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1 Oct-31 Dec 48, pp. 119, 172.

methods by the CIP at Neuville Cemetery. This achievement, in addition to 7,541 unknowns identified previous to 1948, brought the total of former unknowns successfully identified to 9,005, leaving a percentage of only 4.65 still unidentified.³⁰

Realizing that the search and recovery phase of operations was coming to a close and hoping to utilize the knowledge of experienced personnel in such work, the First Field Command set up a special section at Headquarters to review case papers of all unknowns recovered in the Command's search area and to seek out clues which might lead to their identification. The project, undertaken at the end of 1948, continued in full swing for several months. The results of this operation demonstrated the wisdom of the move, since 1,689 unknown cases were successfully resolved by the end of the first quarter of 1949, including all cases of unknowns in the following U. S. Military Cemeteries:³¹ St. James, Villeneuve, St. Corneille, Gorrion, Le Chene Guerin, Marigny, St. Laurent, St. Andre, La Cambe, Ste. Mere Eglise 1, Ste. Mere Eglise 2, and Blosville. Total resolution of such cases meant that a given remains was definitely identified, that it was not identifiable, or that it should be eliminated as representing other than American deceased personnel.

In March 1949, graves registration officials established a schedule for completion of all resolutions of unidentified deceased still resting in the following European cemeteries: Hamm by 15 June 1949; St. Avold and Margraten, by 15 July 1949; and Neuville by 15 August 1949.³² The Chief, Registration Division, AGRC-EA, felt confident that these deadlines could be met. In addition, the OQMG noted that fulfillment of such plans required that the majority of these cases be forwarded to the Memorial Division for completion of processing before 15 August 1949.

Although the rate of identification cases successfully resolved increased during the April-June quarter of 1949, with some 1,991 cases completed, it became apparent that the target date of 15 August 1949 for termination of all identification processing could not be met. Many of the remaining cases required additional information from the OQMG before further action could be taken by AGRC-EA. Then, too, as the program continued, cases became increasingly difficult of solution, usually requiring the services of an anthropologist at a time when only one such technician was available in the entire Command. Consequently, the acquisition of addi-

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 1 Jan-31 Mar 49, pp. 117-18.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 82.

tional anthropologists, especially from the adjoining Mediterranean Zone, received top priority.³³

Another very persistent problem which hampered identification of officers was the shortage of thoroughly trained and efficient dental technicians. Of approximately 25 men trained in tooth charting, only 10 became proficient in this operation. As a result, graves registration officials urged Headquarters, AGRC-EA, to employ only the best-qualified personnel.

Despite difficulties in completing unsolved cases, other phases of identification work in general progressed satisfactorily. Both the Chemical and Photographic Laboratories carried out their duties smoothly and efficiently. Records were forwarded to Hq, AGRC-EA, upon termination of any given case, and personal effects moved promptly to the AGRC St. Germain Depot, Personal Effects Branch. But the lack of a fluoroscopic unit, which had been out of order for several months, constituted a major handicap since it increased notably the time consumed in processing activities.³⁴

Despite all efforts, nearly 1,500 cases of unresolved unknowns still were on hand at the end of August 1949, necessitating further extensions of the deadline for terminating the activity to 15 January 1950 and later to 28 February. Even the latter date proved premature, since 899 unresolved cases remained at the close of March. Although this number seemed formidable, it was actually small when compared with the more than 4,000 cases which had faced identification workers a year earlier.³⁵

During the last two weeks of May 1950, the CIL Morgue and the Storage Section moved from Neuville-en-Condroz Cemetery to the Lido area at Jupille, Belgium, on the outskirts of Liège. The Casketing Point had operated at that location for over a year. All graves registration units were now in close contact in the Lido area, thus facilitating the physical handling of remains and the processing of available military records.

During the summer of 1950, Dr. Alexander Tardy, who had served in the former AGRS-MZ command, joined the identification technicians. With his assistance, processors during the ensuing year reduced the number of unresolved cases to 595 by July 1951.³⁶ Of this number, 503 required later action by the OQMG.

With the scheduled return of the Lido area to the Belgian Gov-

³³ Hist File, Hq AGRC-EA, Ch. III, Plans, Operations and Training, pp. 6, 38-39, Departmental Records Branch, AGO, Alex RC.

³⁴ AGRS Critique of Activities, Hq AGRC-EA, Ch. III, Operations, pp. 140-41.

³⁵ Hist Rpt, 7887 GR Detachment, 1 Apr 50-31 Dec 51, p. 25.

³⁶ (1) *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27. (2) Dr. Tardy left Europe in March 1951 for duty with the AGRS in Japan which was handling casualties of the Korean conflict.

ernment, the CIL Morgue Unit, Casketing Point, and Storage Section moved during July to the Bressoux area of Liège. By October 1951, one officer and four Department of the Army civilians arrived in Liège to help resolve the diminishing number of cases still on hand. Owing to their assistance, only 161 unresolved cases remained by 15 December 1951, and disposition instructions on many of these cases were being sent by the OQMG. Because of the lessened workload, only one embalmer and one identification technician were now needed.

It is interesting to note that of over 148,000 remains recovered in the European Theater, only slightly more than 1,700 or just over 1 percent were unidentified at the termination of the AGRS program at the end of 1951. These figures testify to the fine work accomplished in Europe by identification technicians in this vital phase of GRS operations.³⁷

Identification Operations in Other Theaters

Pacific Area

The identification phase of the repatriation program in the Pacific Zone (AGRS-PAZ) was handled by three organizational groups—the Central Identification Laboratory, where the remains received anthropological examination; the Identification Branch of the Repatriation Records Division, where pertinent information from the Laboratory, the Search and Recovery Branch, and the OQMG was assembled and compared; and the Board of Review, which considered and evaluated this information before determining whether or not identification could be established in any given case.³⁸

The Central Identification Laboratory (CIL) in the Pacific Zone came into existence during the spring of 1947. When the Chief of the Laboratory was appointed on 6 May 1947, no adequate facilities existed with which to carry on identification operations. Chiefs of the CIL and the Identification Branch, both of whom had been trained at the CIP in Europe, drew up plans for operations, which were somewhat modified in the interest of economy. The later enlargement of the CIL, however, actually exceeded the original suggestions.

At the beginning of its operations, the CIL sorely lacked qualified personnel. Technicians and helpers arrived one or two at a

³⁷ (1) *Ibid.*, p. 29. (2) Statistical Review of Permanent Disposition of WW II Dead, p. 10. (3) World War II Statistics, World War II Cemeteries, Burial Rpts, 26 Apr 54, Mem Div, Registration Br.

³⁸ (1) Hist, AGRS-PAZ, II, p. 214. (2) *Ibid.*, App. C, Incl. 18.

time for a period of over a year. The laboratory supervisor, Mr. Gravenor, a veteran of over a year's experience with AGRS in Europe, and the anthropologist, Dr. Mildred Trotter of Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, arrived in Honolulu in September 1947. They set up a training course to teach physical anthropology as it pertained to the reconstruction and evaluation of human remains. After reporting, each new laboratory employee received this course as well as a demonstration of skeletal reconstruction.³⁹

The procedure at the CIL consisted of an orderly examination of all remains from a particular cemetery, closely paralleling the methods and operations followed at the original CIP in Strasbourg, France. No records or files were available to the technicians at the Identification Laboratory because the local command held that they should rely completely upon their own research efforts. Graves registration officials at PAZ Headquarters contended that this system would inspire confidence in the accuracy of the identification data furnished to next of kin.⁴⁰

The CIL later received warm praise from Col. L. R. Talbot, Memorial Division, OQMG, who spent some time in Hawaii during the summer of 1948 and observed AGRS operations there. He stated that "Dr. Mildred Trotter and the other personnel there are doing an excellent job."⁴¹

The general procedure at the Identification Branch consisted of the acquisition, examination, comparison, and evaluation of all available information from the CIL, the Search and Recovery Branch, and the Memorial Division, OQMG. At the beginning of its activities, the Branch was very small, but later it became one of the largest in Zone Headquarters. At its peak, it had a strength of 4 officers and 5 civilians. The Branch Chief, Capt. Clarence B. Watts, had received training at the CIP in Europe. The Branch handled all paper work on unknowns and on major discrepancy cases.⁴²

The Board of Review, AGRS-PAZ, at first consisted of five officers. The members of this Board changed frequently and the positions rotated among the entire officer personnel of the AGRS Headquarters. In order to formulate a Board decision, at least three officers had to agree on a given case. Later in the program,

³⁹ *Ibid.*, II, p. 215.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 216-17.

⁴¹ (1) Ltr, Talbot to Col N. E. Waldron, QM, USARPAC, 10 Dec 48. (2) Dr. Trotter later made a detailed analytical study of 500 identified deceased for the purpose of determining height from bone structures. Her study provided an improvement over the Rollet Table and its results were eventually embodied in the "Trotter Table."

⁴² Hist, AGRS-PAZ, II, p. 216.

in order to hasten the completion of identification activities in the Zone, two officers were assigned to the Board on full-time duty to act in an administrative capacity.

During 1948, considerable difference of opinion arose between Hq, AGRS-PAZ, and Memorial Division, OQMG, over certain Board of Review functions. AGRS-PAZ officials believed that only those agencies having custody of remains should be charged with Board responsibilities. They justified their stand on the ground that duplication of action, waste of time and effort, and confusion, would thus be avoided.⁴³ Memorial Division, OQMG, failed to concur in this opinion. Instead, it issued new instructions which constituted a major change in procedure but which was also designed to avoid duplication of effort. These instructions provided that all CIL findings for processed remains formerly interred or stored in the China and India-Burma Zones "should be transmitted without Board action to the AGRS command presently having jurisdiction over the areas previously occupied by the China and India-Burma AGRS Commands."⁴⁴ The parent Zone could then correlate any CIL findings with "any and all surface investigation and search and recovery records at hand." Board of Review action might then be initiated in the Zone having current jurisdiction—in this case, the PHILCOM Zone.

Officers at AGRS-PAZ Headquarters objected strenuously to these prescribed changes in identification procedures. They pointed out that such a plan would require weeks of work at Pacific Zone Headquarters to prepare copies of their records in order to enable the PHILCOM Zone to effect identification of remains. Then, too, since the remains from the former China and India-Burma Zones and over 90 percent of the records pertaining to them were in Hawaii, the task of reviewing cases should, in the opinion of the Board, remain in its hands, rather than at PHILCOM Headquarters, thousands of miles distant. Both Eighth Army and PHILCOM Zone officials agreed with this point of view and urged the OQMG to reconsider its action.⁴⁵ As matters finally developed, the OQMG agreed to continue the procedure already in effect, with a few minor adjustments.⁴⁶

All decisions of the Board of Review were, until very late in the repatriation program, subject to the concurrence of Memorial Di-

⁴³ Ltr, Hq AGRS-PAZ to TQMG, 7 Jun 48, sub: Identification of Unknowns; KCRC-AGRS-Pacific, 293.

⁴⁴ 1st Ind to Basic Ltr of 7 Jun 48, D/A, OQMG to CO, AGRS-PAZ, 14 Sep 48; KCRC-AGRS-Pacific, 293.

⁴⁵ Rad, CG, USARPAC to TQMG, 22 Oct 48; KCRC-AGRS-Pacific, 293.

⁴⁶ Mem, Hq AGRS-PHILCOM Zone to CO, AGRS-PZ, 4 Nov 48, sub: Identification of India-Burma Unknown WW II Dead; KCRC-AGRS-PHILCOM, 293.

vision, OQMG, whose verdict was final. A later change in policy gave the Identification Branch the power to declare certain remains unidentifiable—a move which, if made earlier, might have accelerated the entire identification operation. Nevertheless, the Memorial Division often possessed important information, unavailable to overseas commands, which could establish identity—a most vital consideration, since this step constituted the primary objective of all identification efforts.⁴⁷

As already indicated, the three units of AGRS-PAZ which dealt mainly with problems of identity necessarily co-ordinated their activities quite closely. Consequently, considerable sentiment arose in favor of a closer geographical relationship to facilitate operations. As was true of certain other AGRS activities in the Zone, the sections were split between Fort Shafter, where the Identification Branch and the Board of Review were located, and the 20-mile distant site of the Identification Laboratory at Mausoleum 2, Schofield Barracks. Towards the end of the program, the desire for closer geographical relations was realized when the functions of the CIL and Identification Branch were combined and placed in Building 144 at Pearl Harbor.⁴⁸

A serious mishap, which vividly reflected the success of the training and experience gained by AGRS identification technicians in Hawaii, occurred in August 1948 when a B-29 crashed at Hickam Field, killing 16 of the 20 men aboard. Although such a case did not fall within the normal responsibilities of overseas identification operations, officers at Hq, AGRS-PAZ, received an urgent request from the Army current death mortuary at Fort Kamehameha to furnish personnel who could supervise attempts at identifying the badly burned and mangled victims. Consequently, several graves registration officials and enlisted men, from both the CIL and the Identification Branch, hurried to the mortuary and the scene of the crash. Working through the night, those at the mortuary searched for identification media, applying the same techniques and principles as those used daily at the Laboratory. They located identification tags on seven of the deceased, some embedded in the flesh. These individuals were considered to be positively identified. Those at the crash scene supervised the collection of personal effects from the still smoking, foam-covered wreckage.⁴⁹

In the morning, the remaining nine victims were moved to the Laboratory where working facilities were more suited to the immediate task. Unable to interview the four survivors because of their critical

⁴⁷ Hist, AGRS-PAZ, II, p. 223.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 223-24.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 220-21.

condition, graves registration personnel requested others from the plane's squadron to attempt identification by recognition. Four officers and 4 enlisted men volunteered to perform this service and identified 6 additional remains, leaving only 3 as yet unknown.

A radio request was sent subsequently to the squadron's home base at Spokane, Washington, for dental and physical descriptions of the victims. Technicians at the CIL meanwhile completed physical descriptions and dental charts of the deceased. Upon receipt of the needed information from Spokane, the last three were identified through comparison of dental and physical data, completing a difficult problem just 44 hours after the fatal accident.⁵⁰

The identification effort in AGRS-PAZ encountered problems not found in other zones. The geography of the Pacific, unfavorable climatic conditions, and the large number of plane crashes, ship wrecks, and isolated burials, all contributed to a somewhat higher percentage of unknowns and unrecoverables in this Zone. Nevertheless, efforts there compared quite well with those of other zones.

Far East Area

In the Far East Command, one of the earliest steps towards initiating identification operations along the lines followed at Strasbourg, France, was a letter of 7 February 1947 from the Chief, Memorial Division, OQMG, to the Commander in Chief, Far East, which urged that preliminary action be taken towards the establishment of a Central Identification Point at Manila and of a mobile unit for assignment to outlying cemeteries in accordance with their priority for exhumation operations.⁵¹ This letter also indicated that the AGRC-European Theater Area had already been asked to forward copies of standing operating procedures, technical reference data, and tables of personnel and equipment used at the CIP in Strasbourg. Furthermore, OQMG authorities had requested the Far East Command to send at least one officer and one embalmer to the European Theater to study its identification methods. OQMG also promised to furnish the Far East Command with a qualified anthropologist as soon as possible but suggested that an attempt be made to employ one locally.⁵²

In mid-April, Headquarters, PHILRYCOM Sector, Far East Zone, authorized the establishment of a central processing and

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 221-22.

⁵¹ Ltr, Horkan to CINCFE, 7 Feb 47, sub: Establishment of Central Identification Unit; KCRC-AGRC-FEC, 293.

⁵² *Ibid.*

identification laboratory and a mobile unit.⁵³ The main laboratory would henceforth be known as the Central Identification Point and would be located at Manila, P. I. All isolated deceased, both known and unknown, would thereafter be evacuated to the CIP or to "other identification points that may be designated from time to time by this headquarters for complete processing."⁵⁴ This directive also terminated immediately the practice of processing remains at graveside, unit, group, field command, or cemetery points.

On 5 May 1947, a communication from Hq, AGRS-PHILRYCOM, directed the establishment of one mobile processing unit in each Sector of the Far East Command. Ten days later, still another message outlined specific procedures to be followed. These procedures closely paralleled those used in Europe.⁵⁵

Based on the foregoing directives, a small identification unit, the nucleus of the Central Identification Point subsequently established at the AGRS Mausoleum in Manila, came into existence during July 1947 at Manila Cemetery No. 2. This unit processed special unknown cases from Manila No. 1 and Manila No. 2 cemeteries and trained technicians for a mobile team sent later to Yokohama, Japan.⁵⁶

The identification technicians worked closely with the Mausoleum and the Remains Depot, since bodies which could be positively identified were sent to the Remains Depot and held there pending repatriation, while those which could not be identified were stored above ground at the Mausoleum. Whenever the work load lightened, these remains were brought back to the Identification Point for further study.⁵⁷ After September 1947, the three graves registration units occupied adjacent hangers at Nichols Field. Step-by-step procedures were formalized in October.⁵⁸

At this time, Col. James A. Murphey expressed to Col. L. R. Talbot, Memorial Division, OQMG, his satisfaction over progress in identification activities in the Zone and emphasized that technicians would leave "not one stone unturned in efforts to eliminate any possibility that casualties reported unrecoverable in the Pacific are among unknowns."⁵⁹ He also stressed that each casualty report received careful study and that all available records of unknowns were closely compared with the information received

⁵³ Ltr, Hq PHILRYCOM, to CG, Ryukyus Command, *et al.*, 15 Apr 47, sub: Centralization of Processing and Identification; KCRC-AGRS-PHILRYCOM, 293.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Hist, AGRS-PATA, Feb 46 to Oct 47, Incls. 24, 25.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Incl. 15, sub: Tab K.

⁵⁸ Hist, AGRS-FEZ, 1 Oct 47-31 Mar 48, Pt. I, pp. 53-55.

⁵⁹ Ltr, Murphey to Talbot, 16 Oct 47, 319.1, Far East, Alex RC.

on that particular case. The unknowns which could not positively be eliminated were rechecked before the complete case was forwarded to the Zone Board of Review for action.⁶⁰

Of a total of 6,327 remains which had been received thru 31 March 1948 by the Mausoleum, the Remains Depot, and CIP, the latter unit had handled some 5,576 remains. Of this number, 735 were already identified when they entered the Mausoleum. On 31 March 1948, 4,841 remains were still unknowns, although after processing, enough data had been found to list 161 of this group as cases in which identity was indicated but which required more information to make it positive, while some clues had been discovered in 707 of these cases. The CIP had made positive identification on 16 cases and had received final approval of these findings from both PHILRYCOM and OQMG Headquarters.⁶¹

During the period of generally increased AGRS activities in PHILRYCOM, which extended from 1 April to 30 September 1948, the Central Identification Point processed some 2,600 remains from the Cabanatuan POW Camp, including both known and unknown deceased. Identification Point technicians examined remains individually and attempted to segregate them by groups. They also worked on approximately 650 major discrepancy cases from different cemeteries, which included those of remains where extra teeth or perhaps an extra identification tag were discovered, causing reasonable doubt about the original identification.⁶²

By November 1948, Hq, PHILCOM reported to the Commander in Chief, Far East, that some 5,000 unknowns, including about 900 remains from Cabanatuan, still were on hand in that Zone, and estimated that perhaps half this group might eventually receive either group or individual identification. Since this task would require thorough and unhurried analytical study, PHILCOM officials doubted that it could be completed before the end of 1949.⁶³ On 1 March 1949, Far East Command Quartermaster A. D. Hopping observed that even the estimated closing date of 31 December 1949 for identification activities in the Far East was overly optimistic in view of the large number of unresolved cases still on hand and the rate of their disposal by Boards of Review.⁶⁴

Nine months later, on 1 December 1949, GHQ, Far East Com-

⁶⁰ (1) *Ibid.* (2) The Zone Board of Review, AGRS-FEZ, was established by Opnl Order No. 1, AGRS-FEZ, 9 May 47, cited in Hist, AGRS-PATA, Incl. 35.

⁶¹ Hist, AGRS-FEZ, 1 Oct 47-31 Mar 48, Pt. I, pp. 53-55.

⁶² Hist, AGRS-PZ, 1 Apr-30 Sep 48, p. 25.

⁶³ Ltr, Capt M. O. Billbe, Hq PHILCOM to GINCFE, 19 Nov 48, sub: AGRS Phase Out of Operations; KCRC-AGRS-PHILCOM, 293.9.

⁶⁴ Memo, GHQ, FEC to D/A, 1 Mar 49; KCRC-AGRC-FEC, 293.

mand, reported that an inventory of unknown remains in the AGRS Mausoleum, Manila, showed a total of 3,568 in that category. The records indicated that 250 remains had been identified, 371 processed as unidentifiable, and 1,122 recommended for identification. AGRS Headquarters at Manila stated that "the newly established total of unresolved unknowns indicates that certificates of unidentifiability on all cases cannot be completed earlier than 1 March 1950. A more realistic estimate of this completion date will be supplied by 1 January 1950."⁶⁵

As matters finally developed, identification activities continued well into 1950. The Identification Section completed a substantial number of cases and submitted its findings to the Board of Review for action.⁶⁶ By October 1950, however, the waning of identification activities in PHILCOM was reflected in a smaller number of cases submitted to the Board of Review.

In the JAP-KOR Sector of the Far East Zone, identification operations involved intricate problems. Successful identification of airmen proved exceedingly difficult since they were generally buried in mass graves and were often badly mangled because of the terrific impact of the plane as it struck the ground.⁶⁷ Bombs and gasoline tanks usually exploded after the crash, making a blazing inferno of the fallen plane and rendering identification still harder. Often Japanese civilians could not approach the site for several days and when they could, the stench of decomposing flesh caused them to inter the bodies as soon as possible. Usually they removed identifying media and simply buried bones, flesh, and ashes in a common grave.

During the initial search just after the surrender of Japan, recovery teams attempted graveside identification based upon such evidence as laundry marks, equipment, and personal effects found near the remains. Since airmen, like members of other armed services, often borrowed or exchanged articles of equipment and apparel, this evidence hardly sufficed as positive identification.⁶⁸ Upon later receipt of additional information, AGRS officers discovered that many of the early postwar identifications were erroneous.⁶⁹

In April 1948, three months after the departure from Yokohama of the special Manila Mobile Identification team which had processed over 1,100 remains while in Japan, a Central Identification Labo-

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 1 Dec 49; KCRC-AGRC-FEC, 293.

⁶⁶ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-PHILCOM Zone, 26 May 50, pp. 6-7.

⁶⁷ Hist, AGRS-JAP-KOR, 1945-48, p. 69.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

ratory for AGRS-JAP-KOR was established at the Yokohama Cemetery. The Laboratory lacked some items of identification equipment but its technicians used chemicals advantageously in processing laundry marks and personal effects. The CIL had no photographic facilities but received excellent co-operation from Signal Corps photographers. The SCAP Legal Section also aided on several occasions. In atrocity cases, material evidence was found in Japanese-made rope imbedded in the neck or shoulders of remains, calcification of fractured bones, or evidence of skull injuries.⁷⁰

In the MARBO Sector of the Far East Zone, the Central Identification and Processing Laboratories were located on Saipan, but they remained incomplete until November 1947, only a few months before the first repatriation shipment from MARBO. Lack of a fluoroscopic technician proved to be no handicap since climatic conditions in MARBO produced skeletal remains in most cases.⁷¹ After the Processing Center was opened, training of technicians continued, although for a short period before the sailing of the USAT *Walter W. Schwenk* with the initial homeward shipment from MARBO, the CIP was closed as all attention was directed to final processing and casketing operations. Following the departure of the *Schwenk*, the CIP resumed its normal functions and continued them without special incident until the task was completed.

Africa-Middle East Zone

Before the establishment of the American Graves Registration Service, Africa-Middle East Zone (AGRS-AMEZ) on 1 June 1946, the Commanding General, Africa-Middle East Theater (AMET) received a long letter from Col. M. H. Zwicker, Memorial Division, OQMG, which outlined repatriation problems and plans.⁷² In addition to urging close attention to standard identification procedures, Colonel Zwicker urged GRS workers to sift the soil thoroughly around and below the deceased in an effort to locate identification tags and personal effects.⁷³

The unavailability of trained personnel stymied quite completely any significant progress in the identification of unknowns until some time after establishment of AGRS-AMEZ. Late in the summer of 1946, officials of the newly created AMEZ requested the OQMG to provide two mobile identification teams which would accomplish graveside identity. Shortly thereafter, an officer at AMEZ Head-

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁷¹ Hist, AGRS-MARBO Zone, Mar 48-Feb 49, I, p. 69.

⁷² Ltr, Zwicker to CG, AMET, 7 Feb 46, sub: Repatriation Organization and Operations, AMET File, Mem Div, OQMG.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

quarters, Capt. G. W. Rogers, sent his comments to the OQMG regarding certain portions of the Shapiro Report of 6 August 1946. He observed that, in general, AMEZ officers agreed with the identification techniques recommended in the report with two exceptions. The first involved the concentration of unknowns at a central point. Captain Rogers believed that this procedure would necessitate the changing of all plot maps and administrative records, besides causing "irregular, unsightly gaps in established cemeteries."⁷⁴ Secondly, he maintained that the proposed preparation of check sheets for identified remains would not be feasible since personal effects, when found on a body, were usually listed on the Burial Report.

In November 1946, General Horkan and Colonel Talbot visited the Zone. As a result, the earlier request of AMEZ officials for two mobile identification teams was reduced to one, which would consist of a director, an assistant director, and two technical assistants.⁷⁵ At that time, an officer and a War Department civilian were in Europe, studying identification operations which might serve as a basis for establishing methods and procedures in AMEZ. Although no technical equipment was then available in the Zone, officials planned to requisition such supplies from the European Theater through the OQMG.

The general situation at this time regarding identification operations in the Zone is shown in the following statistical table:⁷⁶

TABLE 23—*Identification Operations in Africa-Middle East Zone*

Section	Cemetery	Total Burials	Ident.	Unknowns
Morocco	Casablanca	530	472	58
	Fedala	85	79	6
	Port Lyautey	110	109	1
Algeria	Oran	1,100	1,065	35
	El-Alia (Algiers)	427	400	27
	Constantine	392	382	10
	Souk Ahras	172	172	0
	Tebessa	389	376	13
Tunisia	Gafsa	819	744	75
	Beja	485	459	26
	Mateur	790	726	64
	Tunis	472	409	63
	Hadjeb-el-Aioun	280	276	4
	Ksar-Mezouar	100	100	0

⁷⁴ Memo, Capt G. W. Rogers to TQMG, 27 Sep 46, 1st Ind to Shapiro Rpt, 293, Alex RC.

⁷⁵ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-AMEZ, 30 Nov 46, p. 2

⁷⁶ Chart, 21 Nov 46, 333.1, AGRS-AMEZ, Alex RC.

TABLE 23—*Identification Operations in Africa-Middle East Zone*—Continued

Section	Cemetery	Total Burials	Ident.	Unknowns
Egypt	Heliopolis	385	356	29
Liberia	Harbel	74	74	0
French W. Afr.	Dakar	61	61	0
Nigeria	Lagos	133	89	44
Iran	Teheran	248	248	0
Totals		7,052	6,597	455

By December 1946, graves registration officers in Zone Headquarters had made definite plans to evacuate all unknowns by air transport to the Central Identification Point at Strasbourg, France, for processing and subsequent return to the American Military Cemetery El-Alia for reburial. They offered several reasons for this unique proposal—first, the difficulty of procuring suitable facilities within the Zone; secondly, the high cost of establishing a zonal Central Identification Laboratory for less than 500 recovered unknowns; thirdly, the evacuation of unknowns to Strasbourg would eliminate the need for extensive training of additional personnel in processing techniques.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, Captain Rogers had returned from a personal inspection of CIP at Strasbourg, convinced that processing AMEZ unknowns could be accomplished there with much greater accuracy, speed, and economy. He mentioned other advantages, particularly the existence of chemical and photographic facilities.⁷⁸ He strongly criticized graveside processing by mobile units and observed that it had been discontinued in Europe because of its poor results.

Unfortunately for AMEZ officials, their well-laid plans for removing unknowns to Strasbourg were disapproved by General Horkan, who ordered AGRS-AMEZ to establish a mobile identification point. AGRS officials then made arrangements with local authorities for the establishment of mobile identification points at the United States Military Cemeteries at El-Alia, Oran, and Tunis. All unknowns in the entire Zone, with the exception of those at Oran and Tunis, would be moved to El-Alia by aircraft, since the vast distances involved demanded this method of transportation.⁷⁹ AMEZ officials estimated that the movement of unknowns could not be completed before July 1947 unless more than one C-47 aircraft was available. They expected, though, that a second C-47

⁷⁷ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-AMEZ, 31 Dec 46.

⁷⁸ Rpt, Rogers, Hq AGRS-AMEZ to CO, AGRS-AMEZ, 19 Dec 46, sub: Rpt of Inspection, CIP, Strasbourg and Carentan, France, 293, AGRS-AMEZ, Alex RC.

⁷⁹ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-AMEZ, 31 Jan 47, p. 1.

might be obtained in February 1947, thus enabling them to finish their mission during April 1947—an accomplishment which would avoid the overlapping of identification processing operations and initial repatriation activities.

On 22 January 1947, AMEZ Headquarters received notice by cable from Memorial Division, OQMG, which authorized the establishment of a semi-mobile identification unit, consisting of a laboratory officer, 3 supervisor embalmers, 8 assistant embalmers, 2 tooth chart specialists, 3 special technicians (X-ray, Laboratory, and Photographic), and 3 clerks. Consequently, on 12 February 1947, such a unit, headed by Lt. Alexander Capasso and two French anthropologists, Dr. Paul Witas and his assistant, Dr. D. C. Saffores, began work at the Mobile Identification Point at Oran Cemetery. They exhumed the 35 unknowns there and carefully processed them for identification, but little success rewarded their efforts. Remains were in a very dry condition and offered few clues. The technicians obtained tooth charts for 18 deceased, but the others had no skulls. They carefully sifted the dirt surrounding the remains, but discovered little to aid in identification.

The team then moved on early in March to El-Alia, where they processed some 159 unknowns, which had reached El-Alia by both aircraft and vehicle from U. S. Military Cemeteries in West Africa, Morocco, and Algeria. In several cases, identity tags were located and other good clues were obtained, but officials expected that the percentage of successful identifications would be very small, since most remains had decomposed to dry bones, leaving no clues of flesh or skin. Many possessed no jaws nor skulls.⁸⁰

During March, graves registration officials located suitable building facilities for a Mobile Identification Point at Tunis, where all unknowns from the six military cemeteries in Tunisia would be processed and reburied at the U. S. Military Cemetery. Meanwhile, after completion of its task in El-Alia, the identification team transferred its activities and equipment to Tunis, early in April. It fluoroscoped, examined, and measured some 230 deceased and made tooth charts whenever possible.⁸¹ In six cases, identity tags were located in remains, resulting in a tentative classification of "Believed to Be." Successful identifications were few in number, however, because of the same factors which hampered the identification team at Oran and El-Alia. By the close of May 1947, AMEZ Headquarters reported that the "processing of all unknown remains in this zone for identification by Mobile Identification

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 31 Mar 47, pp. 1-2.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 30 Apr 47, p. 1.

Points has been completed."⁸² A total of 17 former unknown dead had been identified.

When the Zone was deactivated at the close of April 1948 and its residual duties transferred to the Mediterranean Zone (AGRS-MZ), a total of 457 unidentified remains had been located within its borders. Of this number, 144 were considered totally unidentifiable. However, since some 6,624 deceased were successfully identified of a total of approximately 7,100 Americans resting in AMEZ cemeteries, it may be concluded that this Zone had a reasonably high percentage of identified dead.⁸³

The Mediterranean Zone

In the months following the establishment on 1 April 1946 of American Graves Registration Service in the Mediterranean Theater as a separate major command, AGRS-MTZ, the War Department considered proposals by Col. George A. King, CO, AGRS-MTZ, for the creation of a mobile anthropological laboratory. The Theater Surgeon, however, questioned the practical application of such a move, pointing out that "it is not clear how bone examination, either chemical or morphological, determines skin texture and leads to identification except in individual cases with known defects or markings Unless differentiation can be made between the remains of various nationals and the remains of United States nationals selected and further differentiation made to name individuals, the proposed organization would not appear to have a practical value."⁸⁴ Because the Theater Surgeon's opinion was based more upon scientific findings than that of any other official in Hq, AGRS-MTZ, Colonel King agreed to delay any decision on establishment of an anthropological laboratory for at least two months, during which AGRS-MTZ would secure all possible data from AGRC-ETA on their views concerning the value of anthropological identification procedures.⁸⁵

Although the Mediterranean Zone was fortunate in having several officers, enlisted men, and indigenous civilians who later developed into skilled identification technicians, some difficulty was experienced in securing qualified anthropologists. Nevertheless,

⁸² *Ibid.*, 31 May 47, p. 1.

⁸³ (1) *Ibid.*, 30 Apr 48. (2) The latest available figures showed only 234 recovered unknowns in the Zone—Taken from WW II Statistics, WW II Cemeteries, Burial Records, 26 Apr 54, Mem Div, Registration Br.

⁸⁴ Ltr, Hq MTO to CO, AGRS-MTZ, 9 Sep 46, sub: Identification of World War II Deceased, 293, AGRS-MTZ, Alex RC.

⁸⁵ 1st Ind to Ltr cited in fn. 84, above, 17 Sep 46, Hq AGRS-MTZ to CG, MTOUSA.

each of the later established Central Identification Points (CIP) in the Zone was able to obtain one fully qualified anthropologist, who was usually assisted by several medical and GRS technicians. In any event, the suggested anthropological laboratory never materialized.⁸⁶

Perhaps the most outstanding anthropologists who served in the Mediterranean Zone were Dr. Alfredo Sacchetti and Dr. Alexander Tardy. Dr. Sacchetti questioned the value of the Rollet Table for height estimation even though officials in Memorial Division, OQMG, authorized its use and felt that Dr. Sacchetti placed too much emphasis upon bone measurements as a means of identification. They believed that the tooth chart provided the prime factor in identification.⁸⁷

During November 1946, General Horkan and Colonel Talbot made an inspection tour of the Zone and recommended the establishment of Central Identification Points.⁸⁸ By early 1947, plans were well advanced for the activation of a permanent Central Identification Point at the U. S. Military Cemetery, Nettuno, Italy, patterned after the original CIP at Strasbourg. At this time, over 33,000 recovered American dead lay in U. S. military cemeteries within the Zone. Of this number, some 1,438 still were unidentified.⁸⁹

The Central Identification Point was activated at Nettuno on 15 February 1947. Three sections were provided for—the one at Nettuno, composed of 2 officers, 4 War Department civilians, and 23 Italian civilians, and two Field Sections, northern and southern. The southern section was located in Sicily and the northern one at the U. S. Military Cemetery in Mirandola.⁹⁰ By the end of May 1947, the Nettuno Section had completed work on 185 cases and the southern section had finished 227 cases, including remains from Sicily and from the U. S. Military Cemetery at Bari, Italy. The northern section did not begin operations at Mirandola Cemetery until 27 May.⁹¹

During July and August, the southern section, then consisting of nine individuals, processed unidentified remains at the U. S. Military Cemetery, Naples. Since the cemetery lay close to Sector

⁸⁶ Hist, AGRS-MZ, 1 Oct 47-30 Jun 50, pp. 9-10.

⁸⁷ Ltr, Col Whitfield W. Watson, Hq AGRS-MZ, to Col L. R. Talbot, Chief, Opns Br, Mem Div, OQMG, 18 Nov 48.

⁸⁸ Ltr, OQMG to CG, MTO, 17 Jan 47, sub: Central Identification Points, 293, GRS-MZ, Alex RC.

⁸⁹ Rpts, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-MTZ, 31 Jan 47, p. 6; 28 Feb 47, p. 1.

⁹⁰ (1) *Ibid.*, 31 Mar 47; 30 Apr 47. (2) Hist, AGRS-Mediterranean Zone, 1 Apr 46-1 Oct 47, Incl 4.

⁹¹ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-MTZ, 31 May 47, p. 10.

Headquarters, the identification unit worked from there, travelling back and forth each day. By 20 August, after completing work on 139 cases,⁹² the section turned to the processing of unidentified deceased in the U. S. Military Cemeteries at Marzanello, Carano, and R. Fratelle. Field Headquarters were established at Marzanello. The task was finished by 13 September 1947, with 65 cases processed.⁹³

The Nettuno Section, CIP, comprising a total of 11 enlisted men and civilians, also spent an active summer, completing on 5 August 1947 identification work on all unknowns then interred in the Nettuno Cemetery. This unit also processed remains recovered from the Island of Malta. On 8 August, members of the CIP unit disinterred and processed 16 unknowns at the U. S. Military Cemetery, Tarquinia, Italy, and then reinterred them in that burial ground. In mid-August, a small section of the Nettuno Identification Team departed for the American Cemetery at Castelfiorentino, Italy, and began the disinterment of some 184 unknowns there.⁹⁴

The CIP, Northern Section, possessing a strength of about 15 individuals, including 4 enlisted men and 11 civilians, finished the processing of 25 unknowns in the Pietramala Cemetery during July 1947. By the end of that month, the unit had terminated operations on some 150 remains from cemeteries lying within its area of responsibility.⁹⁵ During the late summer and early autumn, it completed its work in Mirandola Cemetery and began similar activity at Castelfiorentino, where the Nettuno unit had earlier disinterred unknown dead. Processing operations there closed at the end of September. The cemeteries at Vada and Follonica were scheduled for identification activities during the autumn months.⁹⁶

Thus, with a busy and fruitful summer just ended, the three CIP sections were strategically located throughout Italy. The Nettuno Section still processed remains from U. S. Military Cemeteries throughout central Italy. The southern and northern sections continued to operate as field mobile sections, moving about from one cemetery to another within their assigned areas.

By the close of October, the three units (Nettuno, Mirandola, and Paestum, where the Southern CIP Hq was then located), had processed a total of 1,525 cases. Pertinent data had been forwarded to Theater Headquarters in Rome where the Investigation and Research Branch attempted to correlate the information thus

⁹² Hist, AGRS-MZ, 1 Apr 46-1 Oct 47, p. 142.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁹⁴ Rpt, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-MZ, 31 Aug 47, pp. 8-9.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 31 Jul 47, pp. 9-10.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 31 Aug 47; 30 Sep 47; 31 Oct 47.

furnished with available cases of unknowns. Each case was presented to the Board of Review for its recommendations and then sent to the OQMG for final review and decision.⁹⁷

Early in 1948, a roving CIP Mobile Unit of 1 officer, 4 enlisted men, and 1 native civilian anthropologist visited all American military cemeteries in the Zone, except Mirandola and Pietramala. This team checked the work performed by the three CIP units. During January 1948, it processed remains in Nettuno, Follonica, and Castelfiorentino cemeteries. In February, the group moved to southern Italy and worked in Naples, Paestum, and Bari cemeteries.⁹⁸ During this same period, the three established CIP units continued to operate in their assigned areas. When exhumation of the various cemeteries began, preparatory to repatriation operations, the CIP units completed their task in a burial ground before it was vacated.

Prior to final disinterments, which started during March 1948, a procedure was instituted in three cemeteries—Nettuno, Naples, and Mirandola—which included the checking of all remains for verification of identity, the notation of any discrepancies, and re-burying at a shallow level. This program proved advantageous when full-scale repatriation activities began, saving much time and labor for exhumation teams as well as for the Central Identification Points.⁹⁹

Identification activities waned in the Zone after the beginning of cemeterial exhumations and the consequent shift of operational emphasis to the preparation of remains for homeward shipments or permanent overseas burial. By that time, nearly all doubtful identification cases had been resolved. Whenever an identity was questioned, however, a careful recheck ensued. When the last residual Detachment (the 9107th TSU-QMC, AGRS-MZ) was inactivated at the end of June 1950, AGRS reports indicated that identification technicians and workers in the Zone had performed in a remarkably thorough and praiseworthy manner, since more than 33,000 recovered dead had been identified while only 747 remained unidentified.¹⁰⁰

Publicity Concerning Identification Operations

As the time approached for the return of deceased from overseas war theaters, AGRS officials recognized that there was a rising tide

⁹⁷ Hist, AGRS-MZ, 1 Apr-1 Oct 47, p. 39.

⁹⁸ Rpts, GR & Repat Opns, AGRS-MZ, Jan 1948; Feb 48.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ The latest available figures, issued in April 1954, showed a total of 696 unknown recovered deceased in the Mediterranean Zone—Taken from WW II Statistics, WW II Cemeteries, Burial Records, Mem Div, Registration Br, OQMG.

of publicity in the American press concerning the accuracy of identification operations. These officials realized the importance of informing the public of the careful and exhaustive measures taken overseas to establish identity of unknowns. One such officer, Lt. Col. Edward Comm, felt that reticence concerning the fine accomplishments of identification technicians would mean a failure to give the public "that feeling of certainty about our identification processes that is so essential to the success of the whole program."¹⁰¹

Lt. Colonel Comm also believed that identification stories should come from the field rather than from Washington. If these stories originated in overseas areas, either in special articles by feature writers or in on-the-spot reports, the record of accomplishment would carry more weight with the general public.

A vivid illustration of such an identification story was provided by the release of the case of Unknown X-43, which showed clearly the lengths to which AGRS workers would go to establish the identity of a single unknown serviceman.

The individual known as "X-43" died on 2 August 1944 in Normandy, and was buried in Marigny, France, in Plot A, Row 7, Grave 128. The clues were very limited, although the interment report bore a notation that the body arrived at the cemetery with the following tag attached: "KIA, 8-2, A. Co., 18th Inf., Driver, Herman Rosen."¹⁰²

The first task involved the location of the driver, Herman Rosen. After receiving his address from The Adjutant General's Office, interested AGRS officials sent a letter to Mr. Rosen, explaining that the remains of X-43 had been found with a tag on them indicating that Rosen had driven the deceased to the collecting point. Mr. Rosen's reply did not shed much light on the matter, but did mention the name of a Lt. Kaspar from the 1st Battalion Headquarters Company, who had accompanied him on the day in question, 2 August 1944. After AGRS investigators obtained Lt. Kaspar's address from The Adjutant General's Office, they dispatched a letter to him, asking for any pertinent information.

Kaspar's reply proved to be important, since it informed the investigators that he and Rosen had encountered a jeep from the 90th Division on a reconnaissance mission. Both vehicles were shelled by the enemy. Kaspar stated that two of the three men in the reconnaissance jeep survived the shelling. Since these circumstances

¹⁰¹ Ltr, Lt Col Edward D. Comm to Brig Gen Howard Peckham, Hq AGRS, APO 58, New York, 22 Sep 47, 293, Alex RC.

¹⁰² "The Case of Unknown X-43, Incl. to Memo, W. M. Hines, Chief, Office of Tech Inf, OQMG to CO's, Schenectady, Philadelphia, Columbus, *et al.*, 28 Mar 47, p. 2, 293, Alex RC.

strongly indicated that the unknown deceased belonged to the 90th Division, AGRS officials again wrote to The Adjutant General's Office, asking for a list of all casualties which occurred in Normandy on 2 August 1944 among members of the 90th Infantry Division. This information was provided and served as a check for the eventual findings.¹⁰³

Still another letter was dispatched to Mr. Rosen to determine if he knew any of the men who rode in the reconnaissance jeep. Through Mr. Rosen's answer, AGRS investigators learned that his father had received a ring from somebody who believed that it belonged to Mr. Rosen. Actually, the ring did not belong to him, and might have been worn by the unknown. The ring provided the first really tangible clue to the identity of X-43. Yet another inquiry was sent to Mr. Rosen, asking him from whom his father had received the ring. The reply indicated that it had come from the Army Effects Bureau, Kansas City, Missouri. In turn, Rosen sent the ring to the AGRS investigators, who forwarded it to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, with a request for an examination of this important clue. The FBI reported that an examination revealed it to be a class or school ring, with these markings on the outside: "SVHS, Spring Valley, 1944, D. T." The FBI believed that the object was a Spring Valley High School ring for the class of 1944 and was made for someone, possibly a woman, having the initials "D. T." A quick check of an atlas indicated that towns named "Spring Valley" were located in the following states: Arkansas, California, Illinois, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin.

The FBI also revealed that the inside of the ring bore a marking "Jostenick," which probably referred to the manufacturer's name or trademark. A search of the *Jeweler's Guide* listed a Josten Manufacturing Company, located at Owatonna, Minnesota, who made school and college rings. AGRS investigators then wrote to the Josten Manufacturing Company, giving them all available information about the ring. The firm then supplied the important fact that the initials "D. T." referred to a Dorothy Thomas and that more information might be obtained from Mr. J. Shirley, the principal of Spring Valley, Wisconsin, High School.

After writing a letter of inquiry to Mr. Shirley, AGRS officials received from him the answer which finally brought the vital information they sought. He revealed that Dorothy Thomas had given her class ring to a Don Peters, a soldier whose Army Post Office number was 90. It was then ascertained from this number that

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

Peters had been in Normandy with his unit. Mr. Shirley stated further that Peters had been killed on 2 August 1944 and that his home was in Spring Valley, Wisconsin.¹⁰⁴

After receiving a report of Don Peters' death from The Adjutant General, Memorial Division, OQMG, had enough facts to complete the case for presentation to a Board of Review. A case history was written which mentioned all of the clues which established the identity of X-43 as Don Peters. After approval by the Board of Review, the case went to the Chief of Memorial Division, OQMG, who again carefully reviewed the facts before signing his approval. Finally, AGRS officials informed the mother of Don Peters of the burial place of her son. Another "unknown" soldier had been identified by much patient and painstaking work.

This case was an outstanding one, often cited as illustrative of the thoroughgoing efforts made to establish the identity of unknowns, but it was by no means unique. There were literally scores of cases involving almost equal difficulties. One such case involved the ultimate combining of two partial remains buried as unknowns with resultant successful identification as one individual.

This case involved 1st Lt. Walter B. Bidlack, O-1112021, who according to Army records, was killed on 6 June 1944, in the D-Day operations on the Normandy beaches. At the time of the landing and for some days afterwards, the confusion on the beaches delayed the removal and burial of the dead. No record indicated that Lieutenant Bidlack was ever buried under his name. However, one remains, listed as "X-112," interred in St. Laurent Cemetery, consisted of a left foot only, bearing the marking on the legging, "Lt. Bidlack, S-2021C or S-3021C." This clue provided the only identification discovered by investigators on 16 July 1944. With this evidence, efforts followed to locate the remainder of the body. After much research, identification analysts concluded that another unknown, X-158, might be the remains for which they had been searching.¹⁰⁵

The official burial report indicated that "X-158" had died on or near the Normandy beach on 6 June 1944, and was buried on 8 June in a temporary cemetery nearby. The body was moved on 12 July 1944 and reburied in St. Laurent Cemetery, as Frank Nawakas on the basis of an Army Pay Book found on the remains. Later information revealed that Nawakas was still alive and had been discharged from the Army after V-E day. Under scientific examina-

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Ltr, Maj James C. McFarland, Mem Div, OQMG to Verne C. Bidlack, 6 Oct 47, 293, BIDLACK, WALTER B, O-1112021, Alex RC.

tion 3 July 1947, the remains of "X-158" were found to lack a left foot, but the right shoe contained the remnant of a heavy grey non-regulation sock. The service shoe was size 11½-B. These two articles, upon close comparison, were found to be identical to the sock and left shoe of "X-112." The hair found on "X-158" was light brown, matching that of Lt. Bidlack. Since the deceased was a member of the 112th Engineer Combat Battalion, 1st Infantry Division, the engineer insignia attached to the shirt collar provided an important clue. The estimated height of "X-158" compared favorably with the known height of Lt. Bidlack. A dental chart, submitted for X-158, was incomplete in many respects, causing investigators to contact the next of kin, and request a civilian dental record. Upon receipt of the needed data, identification analysts showed a good comparison in the dental charts of X-158 and Bidlack. As a result of this combined evidence, GRS officials felt confident that the remains represented by X-112 and X-158, actually were those of Lt. Bidlack. Consequently, Unknown "X-112" was consolidated with the remains of "X-158" in the latter's grave at St. Laurent Cemetery.¹⁰⁶

The parents of Lt. Bidlack, after consulting with their civilian dentist, accepted the findings of GRS officials that both X-112 and X-158 were actually the remains of their son. They did raise the question of how the pay book of Frank Nawakas became associated with X-158. In reply, Memorial Division frankly admitted that this matter had never been satisfactorily explained, but that the pay book was not present when the remains of X-158 were re-examined on 3 July 1947. Direct questioning of Mr. Nawakas simply brought out the fact that the original pay book was still in his (Nawakas) possession.

After considerable thought, the parents of Lt. Bidlack decided to allow him to remain overseas for permanent burial. On 1 March 1949, Quartermaster General Larkin informed Mr. Verne Bidlack, father of the deceased, that his son rested in Plot I, Row 20, Grave 3, in the permanent American Military Cemetery, St. Laurent, France, thereby closing successfully another interesting but complex identification problem.

By publicizing such accomplishments, GRS officials aided greatly in establishing public confidence in this all-important phase of graves registration.

¹⁰⁶ (1) *Ibid.* (2) Ltr, Hq AGRC-EA to TQMG, 21 Aug 47, 293, Alex RC.

Conclusion

When the Return of the Dead Program officially ended on 31 December 1951, world-wide statistics showed a total of 280,994 recovered dead. Of this number, 270,983 remains had been identified, leaving 10,011 still unindentified.¹⁰⁷ In other words, only slightly more than 3½ percent of the total recovered dead remained unidentified. In view of the many difficulties which faced identification technicians, this small figure reflects much credit on those workers and upon the professional anthropologists, such as Dr. Shapiro, Dr. Trotter, Dr. Sacchetti, Dr. Tardy, and Dr. Witas, among others, who spent so much time and tedious effort in exhausting all possible means of identification. These anthropologists aided particularly in dealing with such problems as determination of age, height, race, and abnormalities in individual cases. They also performed important service in the segregation of mixed skeletal remains, making possible identifications which otherwise would have been impossible.¹⁰⁸ All in all, perhaps in no other major phase of GRS activities were efforts more successful than in the technically difficult identification operations.

¹⁰⁷ (1) Statistical Review of Permanent Disposition of WW II Dead, 31 Dec 51, p. 24.

(2) The latest figures available, issued in April 1954, showed a total of 281,769 recovered dead, of which only 8,744 were not identified.

¹⁰⁸ Interv, Carl Allbee, Registration Br, Mem Div, 5 Dec 55.

CHAPTER XX

DISTRIBUTION CENTER OPERATIONS

Introduction

The 15 distribution centers which were established after the close of hostilities bore responsibility for the receipt and safekeeping of World War II dead after they arrived from United States ports and for their delivery to the final destination designated by next of kin. The distribution center actually served as the last administrative echelon of the repatriation program and its officers and men had more direct contact with the families of the deceased than any other American Graves Registration Service organization. Since the guiding principle of the entire program demanded the utmost consideration for next of kin, the distribution center had a much greater responsibility in this regard than any other AGRS agency. Because bereaved families often dealt personally with the distribution center, their opinion of the return program might well be determined by the manner in which the center carried out its functions.¹ Much of the prodigious effort expended in preceding phases of the gigantic project—concentration of cemeteries, identification, search and recovery, and homeward shipment of deceased—could easily be nullified if the centers failed to fulfill their important duties in this final phase of repatriation. The successful achievement of the mission of the distribution centers constituted, then, a vital operation in the program.

Shortly after the end of hostilities, the Office of The Quartermaster General and the Office of the Chief of Transportation considered two plans for the dispersal of World War II deceased after their arrival in the United States. These plans—The Army Distribution Point Plan and Distribution by Commercial Means—were thoroughly discussed by representatives of both agencies early in 1946.²

The plans for distribution by the Army provided for 15 distribution centers strategically situated at established Quartermaster or Army Service Forces depots or at ports of embarkation. In tentatively selecting the sites of these centers, Army officers considered

¹ QMC 16-1, AGRS, Dist Centers, Adm & Opns, Sep 47, p. 3.

² Ltr, ASF, OQMG to Chief, Transportation Corps, 8 Feb 46, 293, Alex RC.

not only the military facilities afforded by the various installations but also their accessibility to a large population and to railroads and highways. The points picked were:³

1. New York Port of Embarkation
2. Schenectady ASF Depot
3. New Cumberland ASF Depot
4. Charlotte QM Depot
5. Atlanta ASF Depot
6. Memphis ASF Depot
7. Columbus ASF Depot
8. Chicago QM Depot
9. Kansas City QM Depot
10. Fort Worth QM Depot
11. San Antonio ASF Depot
12. Utah ASF Depot, Ogden
13. San Francisco Port of Embarkation
14. Auburn ASF Depot, Wash.
15. Mira Loma Depot, Calif.

The establishment of distribution points would permit remains to be loaded at overseas ports according to their ultimate destination and enable the American ports—New York and San Francisco—to make all necessary arrangements for rail shipment and for the escorts who would accompany the deceased to the next of kin. It was planned to facilitate these arrangements by having overseas ports forward via airmail to the OQMG and receiving American ports the lists of deceased broken down according to distribution points and stowage plans. In the United States, remains would be shipped from the ports to the distribution centers in carload or trainload lots, and each center would be provided with personnel lists covering shipments en route to it. These lists would be valuable in planning schedules, selecting escorts, and arranging for delivery of the deceased to their legal next of kin.⁴

The trainload lots, according to the Army Distribution Point Plan (which later was largely adopted), were to consist of some 12 to 15 mortuary cars, each containing from 50 to 66 remains. In some cases, particularly at smaller distribution centers, one or two such mortuary cars would be attached to passenger trains. Each car would contain steel racks with a locking device to hold the shipping cases in place. The shipping cases were to be stacked on both sides of the car on racks, and in the center aisle one row of cases would also be protected by locking devices to prevent sliding.⁵

³ Ltr, ASF, OQMG, to Chief, Engineers, 16 Apr 46, 293, Alex RC.

⁴ See fn. 2, above.

⁵ Interv, Carl Allbee, Mem Div, OQMG, 6 Sep 55.

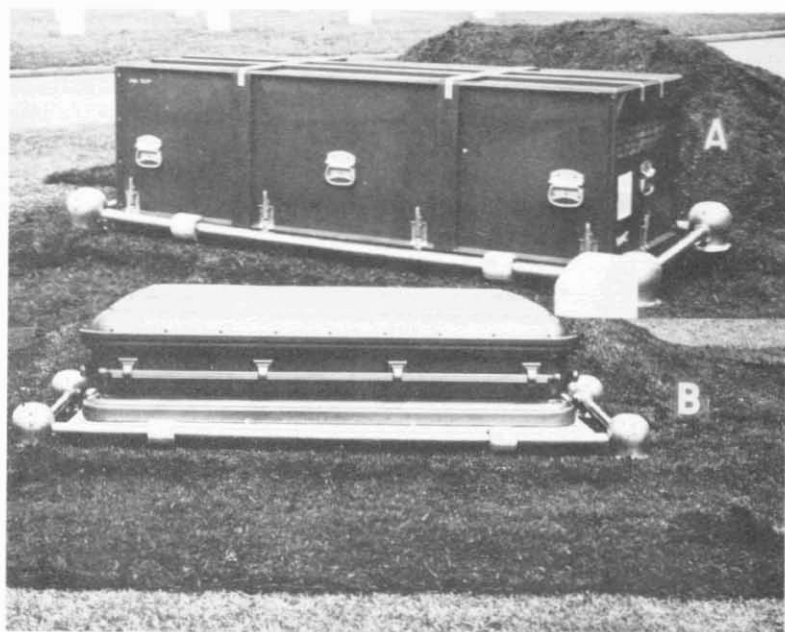


FIGURE 45. (a) Shipping case in which World War II dead were returned; (b) Type of casket used for permanent burial of war dead.

The plan for distribution by commercial means assigned a leading role to the railway carriers and made no provision for distribution centers. The port would divide incoming shipments into carloads for transportation to large population centers where the carriers would break down the carloads into individual shipments to next of kin. Railroad employees, rather than military personnel, were to unload the cars and accomplish any necessary transfer to other trains or carriers. The port would arrange for military escorts who were to accompany the remains from the population centers to the next of kin.⁶

Both the OQMG and the Transportation Corps definitely preferred the Army Distribution Point Plan. Several factors influenced their choice. In the first place, should a case containing remains be damaged en route to a distribution point, arrangements for repairs could be made immediately on arrival at the point. In the next place, when members of the family wished to accompany the remains from the Army Distribution Point to the burial place, the appropriate officer could take precautions to turn over the deceased

⁶ See fn. 2, above.

to the proper person. On the other hand, if the next of kin could not accept the remains on their arrival, they would be held at the center until final delivery became feasible. Another advantage of the Army plan stemmed from the fact that, when it was known that remains going to the same general destination were arriving soon, the distribution center could hold all remains and consolidate them into a carload movement. Both Quartermaster and Transportation officers regarded the unloading of mortuary trains by railroad employees as an unsatisfactory procedure, particularly if a carload of remains arrived at a railroad station. It would then be necessary to unload the caskets on the station platform and hold them there until they could be put on connecting trains or transferred to some other station in the same city. This procedure might cause much confusion in congested terminals and OQMG and Transportation Corps officials alike foresaw difficulty in obtaining escorts who would be available at the railroad terminals at the exact time needed to accompany the dead.⁷

During the summer of 1946, the tentative selection of the 15 centers had become quite firm, with only one major change from the earlier plans—the replacement of the New Cumberland ASF Depot by the Philadelphia Quartermaster Depot. The two accompanying maps show clearly the territory served by each center. A center's distribution area was seldom the same for remains from San Francisco as it was for those from New York. For deceased arriving from New York, as an example, the distribution area of the Schenectady Depot included Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York, except its southeastern tip; for those arriving from San Francisco, the depot served a larger area, which included all New England and New York.

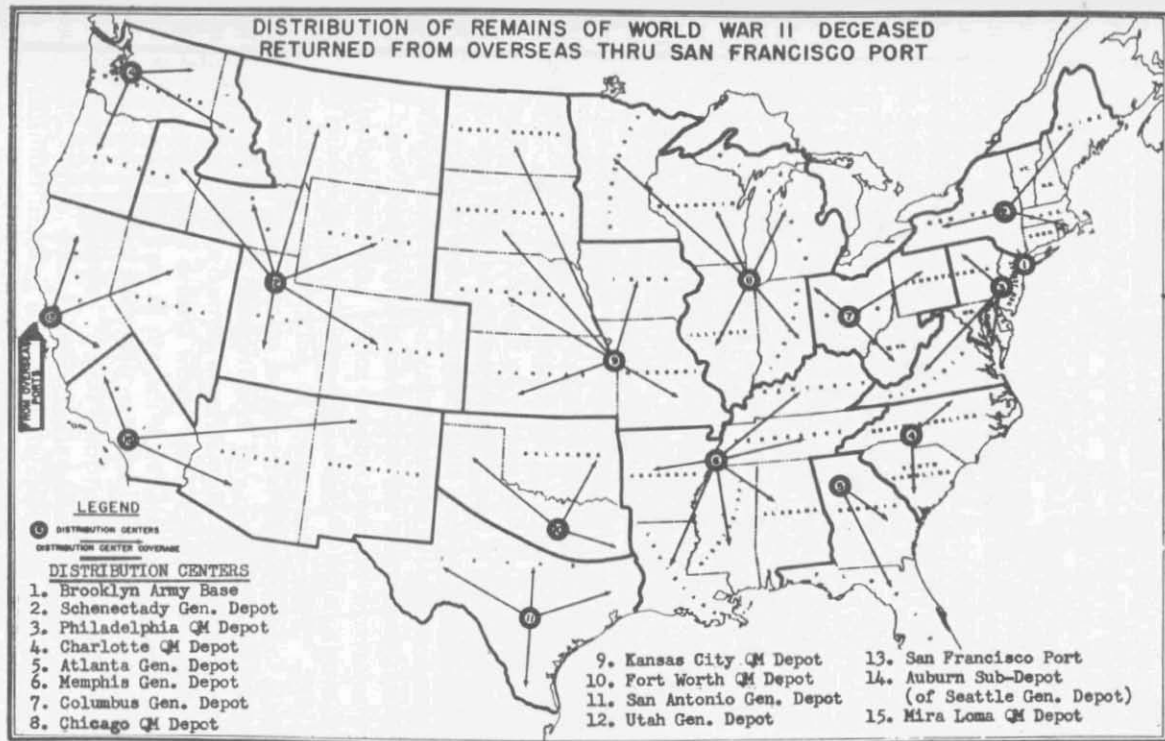
In August 1946, The Quartermaster General informed the commanding officers of all depots at which distribution centers would operate that they were to establish AGRS Distribution Divisions to operate the centers.⁸ In Quartermaster Depots, the Commanding Officers would have responsibility for the operation of the centers and the Director of Supply would assume staff supervision over the AGRS Distribution Division. In General Depots, the Quartermaster Supply Officer would exercise staff supervision over the Division and assume responsibility for its efficient operation.⁹

Plans for distribution center operations had advanced still further

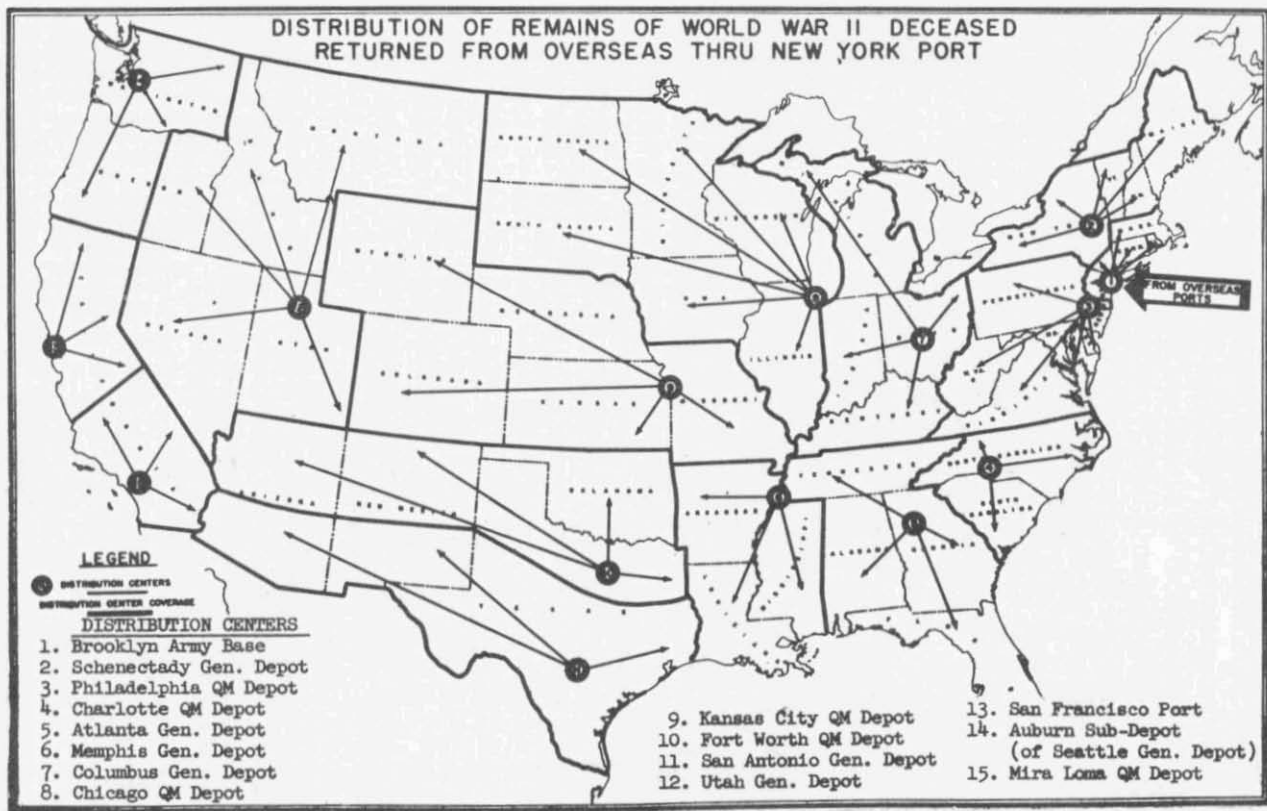
⁷ *Ibid.*, 1st Ind, OCT to OQMG, 25 Feb 46.

⁸ Ltr, Maj Gen T. B. Larkin, TQMG to CG, Philadelphia QM Depot, *et al.*, 21 Aug 46, sub: Depot Mission Incident to Program for Return of World War II Deceased, 293, Alex RC.

⁹ *Ibid.*



MAP 3.



MAP 4.

by early autumn of 1946. Arrangements had been made with the Transportation Corps for use of some 113 specially equipped hospital cars in which remains would be forwarded to final destinations in flag-draped caskets and accompanied by a military escort selected from among members of the same military service to which the deceased had belonged. Plans were also well developed for dealings with next of kin. Upon arrival of a body in the United States, the next of kin would be informed by a telegram prior to any news release in order to allow sufficient time for completion of funeral arrangements. When the casket actually departed from the distribution center under care of an escort, a second telegram would be dispatched, advising the family of the means by which the deceased was being transported and the exact time of its expected arrival.

An important problem involved the conversion of space for distribution center activities in the various depots. This problem necessitated consultation with the Office of the Chief of Engineers, which was charged with all building and alteration projects. The OQMG informed the Chief of Engineers that the warehouses selected for the new activities must be remodeled and maintained in a manner befitting the memory of the deceased. The conversion of space for this purpose would require painting, repair of floors and partitions, and alterations in the heating, plumbing, and lighting systems. In addition, plans called for rooms similar to those of funeral parlors for the benefit of visitors.¹⁰

In October 1946, the Office of the Chief of Engineers advised OQMG that as a result of difficulties it encountered in obtaining certain critical materials, the completion of all planned construction and conversion activities at the various centers might consume from six to nine months. Since the first remains were expected to reach the centers by mid-August 1947, OQMG officials set a 1 June 1947 deadline for termination of construction work. This plan would allow over two months for necessary inspection of all distribution centers and the completion of any required corrections. It was estimated that the cost of conversion of warehouse space at both ports and at the other centers would reach \$344,931.83. This figure did not include the cost of providing suitable quarters for escorts. Nor did it include the \$160,000 estimated to be the cost of the so-called "mortuary layouts," which comprised a reception room for next of kin, nurses' office, administrative office, rest rooms, and two to six "slumber rooms" and were intended to provide suitable facilities for receiving families of the deceased.

¹⁰ Ltr, ASF, OQMG to Chief, Engineers, 16 Apr 46, sub: Conversion of Space for AGRS Distribution Point Operations, 293, Alex RC.

Modifications of Initial Planning

The foregoing plans underwent several modifications as the time approached for actual arrival of remains at the two ports of embarkation. The policy of economy then in effect in the War Department was the chief cause for these modifications. The most striking change provided for the elimination of "mortuary layouts."¹¹ This alteration occurred late in 1946 in the belief that the "layouts" were not essential to a dignified and reverent execution of the repatriation program and were in a sense a duplication of accommodations available to families through local morticians when burial took place in private cemeteries and through the Government when remains were interred in national cemeteries. Despite the change, centers were still expected to provide a reception room for relatives visiting the installation. Besides saving money, cancellation of plans for "mortuary layouts" made additional storage space available in the depots and obliged depot commanders to revise their floor plans for the centers.

By April 1947, when Memorial Division, OQMG, was receiving the revised plans, it had become apparent that required construction work had been reduced far below previous estimates. While original plans had called for alterations to be made under the supervision of the Chief of Engineers, subsequent modifications had reduced the task of conversion to a comparatively minor operation, which could be carried out by each installation through its own Post Engineer, either by contract or by using local personnel.¹² The Office of Chief of Engineers informally approved this procedure and allotted required funds directly to the depots. It believed that Post Engineers, by the utmost utilization of local resources, were in a strategic position to accomplish the construction work in the shortest time with a maximum of economy.

Memorial Division officials, now basing their planning on the arrival of the first remains at distribution centers in October rather than in August 1947, as had originally been expected, strove for the termination of construction and conversion activity by 1 September 1947.¹³

¹¹ (1) Ltr, Col Ira K. Evans, OQMG to Chief, Engineers, 5 Dec 46, sub: Elimination of Mortuary Layout at Distribution Centers, 293, Alex RC. (2) Ltr, OQMG to CO, Mira Loma QM Depot, 12 Dec 46, sub: Operation of Distribution Center—Return of WW II Dead Program, 293, Alex RC.

¹² Ltr, Col C. R. Hutchins, Mem Div, OQMG to Chief, Engineers, 24 Apr 47, sub: Conversion of Space for AGRS Distribution Center Operations, 400.242, Alex RC.

¹³ Ltr, Col C. R. Hutchins, Mem Div, OQMG to CO, Mira Loma QM Depot, 22 May 47, sub: Conversion of Space for AGRS Distribution Center Operations, 293, Alex RC.

Modifications of original plans also applied to organizational matters. It will be recalled that in August 1946, the OQMG delegated responsibility for the operation of each AGRS distribution center to the Depot Commander and granted authority for the placement of the AGRS Distribution Division for staff supervision under the Director of Supply in Quartermaster depots and under the Quartermaster Supply Officer in general depots. But in view of the emphasis the War Department placed upon the mission of the distribution centers, OQMG decided that the AGRS Distribution Division should operate directly under the supervision of the Depot Commander as an administrative division in both Quartermaster and general depots.¹⁴ Instructions effecting this reorganization were contained in a letter from OQMG, dated 12 December 1946, to all depot commanders concerned and by late January 1947, this change had gone into effect.

Distribution Center Procedures

As the time for arrival of the first remains drew near during the summer of 1947, the Memorial Division, OQMG, cautioned Depot Commanders against the dissemination of information which might create erroneous impressions in the minds of next of kin. In cases involving specific inquiries, commanders were particularly instructed not to give premature or unsubstantiated information.¹⁵

Most Depot Commanders, however, realized the importance of obtaining wide press and radio publicity. Officials of Distribution Center 14 at Auburn General Depot, Auburn, Wash., were particularly concerned with this problem and late in 1946, conferred with representatives of newspapers in their area. The newspapermen were eager to publish press releases but suggested that the Chief of the Center and his Information Specialist visit the daily and weekly publications and explain the aims of the final phase of the repatriation program.¹⁶ Beginning early in December 1946 and continuing until the autumn of the following year, AGRD officials therefore made personal calls on city editors of daily and weekly newspapers in nearly all of the largest towns and cities of Oregon and Wash-

¹⁴ Memo, TQMG for Chief of Transportation, 23 Jan 47, sub: Organization, AGRS Distribution Division—New York and San Francisco Ports of Embarkation, 293, Alex RC.

¹⁵ Ltr, Col E. Busch, Mem Div, OQMG to Mira Loma QM Depot, *et al.*, 12 Jun 47, 293, Alex RC.

¹⁶ Hist, AGRD, DC No. 14, Auburn Gen Depot, Auburn, Wash, Nov 46–Nov 47, pp. 1–2.

ington.¹⁷ During the subsequent months, AGRD releases were printed in most newspapers of the Auburn area.

The Auburn Distribution Center, like the other centers, kept in touch with radio stations throughout its area, furnishing them with all pertinent data. Centers also generally maintained frequent contact with the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Catholic War Veterans, Jewish War Veterans, Military Order of the Purple Heart, the Gold Star Mothers, American Veterans of World War II, and other veterans' and patriotic organizations.¹⁸

Col. George H. Bare, Chief of the AGR Division at the New York Port of Embarkation, raised a problem of procedure in cases in which families of the deceased questioned the identity of the remains delivered to them. While he thought that there would be very few who would challenge the identity of remains, he believed it the duty of all distribution centers to satisfy this group if possible.¹⁹ He accordingly instructed each escort how to proceed if the question of identity arose. The escort would take two steps: first, notify the next of kin that they had the right to contact the Memorial Division, OQMG, requesting proof of the identity of the remains; and, second, immediately report the incident to the Commanding Officer of the Distribution Center so that he could notify the Memorial Division.

Colonel Bare, realizing that this problem would not be peculiar to the NYPE, suggested that OQMG prepare a statement to all centers, outlining the procedures for establishing the identity of remains and pointing out that an identification laboratory had been set up in each operational zone, where experts in anthropology, chemical analysis, and other sciences made certain that all identities were positive and final. He further proposed that each distribution center be authorized to reproduce this statement and give copies to escorts. When any next of kin questioned the accuracy of an identification, the escort would produce the statement.²⁰ Should the next of kin still be unconvinced, Colonel Bare suggested that the escort take the two steps outlined above. The recommendation for a standard statement was not adopted, for OQMG policy required that all questions of identity be handled by Memorial Division, which alone had all identification information.²¹

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-21.

¹⁹ Ltr, Col G. H. Bare, Chief, AGRD, NYPE to OQMG, 15 Aug 47, sub: Identification of Remains, 293, New York, Alex RC.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Interv, Carl Allbee, Mem Div, Registration Br, 9 Aug 55.

Actual Operations

Arrival of Remains at Two Ports

The actual implementation of plans for final disposition of remains would begin with the initial arrival of deceased at San Francisco and New York. The first World War II dead to reach American shores were to arrive at San Francisco on the *Honda Knot*. In anticipation of this event, an AGRS Conference was held at the San Francisco Port of Embarkation from 30 June through 2 July 1947 to make detailed plans for the large shipments that would soon be arriving. Both Brig. Gen. George A. Horkan and Col. Ira K. Evans from OQMG attended this meeting. On the basis of plans formulated at this time, the San Francisco Distribution Center rehearsed its part in the reception of the first remains. The Center, established within the San Francisco Port of Embarkation, conducted its activities in a building just across the street from the receiving pier and adjacent to spur tracks of the Army Base rail system.

The rehearsals at San Francisco consisted of two phases—port and distribution center operations. At the port, they included: (a) unloading from ship; (b) checking ashore; (c) inspection at pier; (d) movement to, and loading on, trailer or railroad car, depending on whether remains were consigned to the San Francisco or some other center. At the Center, these operations consisted of: (a) unloading from trailers; (b) inspection; (c) storage; (d) movement to shipping area; (e) loading on service car for final delivery.²² These procedures were followed almost without change in the actual handling of remains from the *Honda Knot* and all subsequent shipments from the Pacific.

The arrival of the *Honda Knot*, with 3,027 deceased, marked the culmination of preparations which had been underway for several months both at the Port and at the Distribution Center. The event assumed civic and even national importance since it signaled the first repatriation of those who had fallen in World War II. On the day of arrival, 10 October, a simple but impressively dignified ceremony took place in Marina Park at San Francisco. On the next day, an equally fitting ceremony was held at the San Francisco Civic Center.²³

If remains arriving at San Francisco on the *Honda Knot* and later mortuary vessels were consigned to the San Francisco Distribution Center, they were moved directly on trailers to the Center's mortuary area. Deceased consigned to other distribution points

²² Hist, San Francisco Port and Distribution Center, Agenda.

²³ Travel Rpt, Edward Steere, 4-17 Oct 47.



FIGURE 46. *Two by two, the flag-draped caskets are lowered to sets of rollers as debarkation of "HONDA KNOT" proceeds at Oakland Army Base, California.*

were transported on trailers to mortuary cars on sidings immediately beyond the pier. In the 11 major shipments of Pacific dead, it was possible to load mortuary cars directly from the ship, with three exceptions. Lack of such cars forced the storage for one month of bodies unloaded late in June 1948 from the USAT "*Sgt Morris Crane*." The deceased from USAT *Albert M. Boe* and the USAT *Cardinal O'Connell* passed through a special inspection point before proceeding to the cars. This process caused little delay, for the inspection required only a few minutes for each shipping case containing remains.²⁴

At the New York Port of Embarkation, the first practice operation embracing the entire Port and Distribution Center activity took place on 1 May 1947. It covered all procedures from the arrival of the remains to departure by hearse. On 2 May, an official rehearsal, repeating the operations practiced on the preceding day, was held for visiting officers from OQMG and the Office of Chief of Transportation. The experience obtained from these preparatory

²⁴ Hist, San Francisco Port and Distribution Center, Pt. III, Opns, pp. 1-2.



FIGURE 47. *War dead from Pacific areas, destined for inland points, are moved to rail siding before placement in mortuary cars.*

activities formed the basis for the establishment of the Standing Operating Procedure for both the Port and Distribution Center.²⁵

Preparations and planning for the expected arrival of the first group of deceased from Europe continued through the summer of 1947. At the invitation of the Commanding General, NYPE, all distribution center commanders attended an AGRS conference, held at the Brooklyn Army Base, 14–16 July 1947, to discuss the repatriation program in further detail. Sixty officers attended the meeting, which featured technical matters relating to the program, followed by a rehearsal of port operations.²⁶

By early autumn of 1947, the Commanding General, NYPE, anticipating the arrival of the USAT *Joseph V. Connolly* with the first group of war dead from Europe, invited representatives of press, radio, and newsreels to witness a simulated debarking operation on 29 September. This exercise, attended by some 35 reporters representing the 3 national news syndicates, leading New York newspapers, broadcasting networks, newsreels, and television evoked a generally favorable reaction in the accounts which appeared the following day in these publicity media.

The USAT *Joseph V. Connolly* arrived at the New York Port of

²⁵ Hist, AGRS, Distribution Center No. 1, Vol I, 28 Feb 47–29 Feb 48, p. 4.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.



FIGURE 48. Platform of white-painted pallet boards with roller arrangement is used for loading dead into mortuary cars at San Francisco prior to rail movement inland.

Embarkation on 26 October 1947. In accordance with the arrangements made by the Mayor of New York City and the Commanding General, First Army, the vessel docked in Manhattan, where the remains of a Congressional Medal of Honor winner were removed, put on a caisson and conducted to the Mall in Central Park. There followed a solemn and rather elaborate ceremony, with speeches by several Federal and State officials. Later, the ship proceeded to the Brooklyn Army Base, where another public service took place on 27 October at the upper level of Pier 3. Following this ceremony, 1,293 of the more than 6,000 remains that had arrived on the *Connolly* were consigned to the Distribution Center at the NYPE.²⁷

An interesting comparison may be drawn between the activities attending the arrival of the first repatriation ships at San Francisco and New York. According to one observer, who was present at both ports, the program at New York lacked the ceremonial aspect

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.



FIGURE 49. *Memorial Services held at Central Park, New York, 26 October 1947, honoring first American dead returned from Europe.*

which marked the proceeding at San Francisco. He pointed out, however, certain inherent factors which handicapped the program in New York and which did not apply at San Francisco.²⁸ In the first place, the NYPE handled about twice as many remains as the SFPE, forcing a rapidity of action the SFPE was not obliged to attain. Secondly, the movement of the deceased from shipside at New York proceeded by ramp to the upper levels of a warehouse, causing far more noise than the ground-level movement at the SFPE. In the third place, on their return, empty trailer trains, with as many as 20 trucks, roared over the block pavement of the ramp like a Manhattan elevated train. Lastly, the SFPE enjoyed a natural advantage in having more area for dispersal of operations, while the

²⁸ Travel Rpt, Edward Steere, 23 Oct-2 Nov 47.



FIGURE 50. *Pallbearers of various services carry casket of Congressional Medal of Honor Man during ceremony, Central Park, New York.*

much more compact physical layout at the NYPE made congestion and even confusion inevitable at times.²⁹

The civic ceremonies at Central Park, New York, also left something to be desired. Municipal authorities planned the affair with full consciousness that the Nation would be their audience. Yet it seemed that an important part of the audience—the next of kin—were somewhat overlooked. The long parade through the streets of Manhattan created the tension that usually goes with the elaborate reception New York likes to give national heroes. This atmosphere seemed contrary to the subdued spirit in which the American Graves Registration Service attempted to conduct the whole repatriation project. The ceremony itself was somewhat spoiled by long speeches. On the other hand, the services on Pier 3 were marked by dignity, reverence, and simplicity. Those held at Marina Park and in the Civic Center, San Francisco, also possessed a simple, solemn dignity.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

Procedures Followed at NYPE

In receiving the *Connolly* and other mortuary transports, the NYPE adhered to carefully planned procedures. Before the deceased were removed from the hold of a vessel, they were checked carefully against the shipping list. Then they were unloaded with special slings, two caskets at a time, and placed manually on a wheeled conveyor for acceptance by the Port Transportation Division.³⁰ During these operations, personnel of the Water Division, NYPE, policed the pier and ships in order to maintain cleanliness and order. An inspection team, composed of members of the Port Surgeon and Medical Supply Division, and the Port Transportation Division, inspected each shipping case for leakage, odors, and damage. Cases damaged so badly as to prevent shipment by rail were routed to the Port Transportation Division Shipping Case Replacement Shop.

After remains had been unloaded, checked, and inspected, each interested Distribution Center and Headquarters, AGRS, OQMG, Washington, D. C., received notice by telegram concerning the number of remains and any variances from the passenger list. Each shipping case required a Health Permit Marker, certifying that all customs, municipal clearance, and NYPE interstate and intrastate transit requirements concerning the preparation, inspection, and transportation of remains had been met, before it could be taken by the Port Transportation Division from the upper level, Pier 3, for movement to its ultimate destination. Deceased consigned to the local distribution center were held there temporarily pending delivery to next of kin. As at San Francisco, remains destined for other distribution centers moved directly from pier to mortuary cars.³¹ In general, the time of final delivery to next of kin depended mainly upon the ability of the railroads to move trainloads of deceased. The wishes of the families of the fallen servicemen also influenced decisions concerning immediate or delayed shipments. In a few cases, relatives requested delays in shipping home their loved ones, but the vast majority of families desired the earliest possible delivery.³²

Problems of Releasing Information to Press and NOK

Proper and accurate notification of arrival of remains to the press and more especially to relatives, proved, as was expected, one of

³⁰ Hist, AGRS, DC No. 1, Vol. I, 28 Feb 47-29 Feb 48, App. A, SOP No. 380, 6 Oct 47, p. 6.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-9.

³² Interv, OQMG Historian with Carl Allbee, Mem Div, Registration Br, OQMG, 6 Sep 55.

the most delicate problems of the whole repatriation project. The approved procedure consisted of an initial telegraphic notification to relatives before any news release. The telegram explained that "it is not possible at this time to give you a definite delivery date; however, three days prior to shipment from this depot your funeral director will be notified by telegram of rail routing and scheduled time remains will arrive at railroad station. He will be requested to pass this information to you so that you may make funeral arrangements. Remains will be accompanied by a military escort."³³ This message also requested relatives to verify the point to which they wished the remains sent. Just before the escort departed from the Center with the deceased, a second telegram, giving the actual time, place, and means of arrival, was dispatched.³⁴

In addition to the initial telegram to relatives, information concerning arrivals of deceased became available through press releases, thereby affording local patriotic and veterans' groups sufficient time to offer their services to the family and to arrange for such burial honors at the funeral service as furnishing buglers and firing squads.

One weakness which developed in regard to release of information to families of the deceased was the excessive time which sometimes elapsed between receipt of the advance telegram and the actual time of arrival of the remains. This delay usually caused repeated fruitless calls and visits by relatives with accompanying irritations and impatience. Families usually could not understand the necessary time lapse between the telegram and final delivery despite elaborate explanations by AGRS officials, who pointed out that in some instances several thousand remains arrived on a single ship and that the unloading and distribution of such large numbers of caskets rendered delays inevitable.³⁵

Another annoying matter stemmed from the practice followed by certain veterans' organizations of securing from Western Union employees advance copies of telegrams to be sent to the deceased's family and of acting as self-appointed committees for the delivery of these messages. Some organizations, apparently, even obtained complete shipping lists from newspaper employees or from other sources possessing press releases. The Missouri Department, Veterans of Foreign Wars, brought this situation pointedly to the attention of the Commanding General, Fifth Army, in Chicago, who, in

³³ Ltr, Kenneth C. Royall, Sec Army to Howard H. Hubbard, Clinton, N. C., 24 Nov 47, sub: Notification of Next of Kin, 293, Alex RC.

³⁴ Ltr, W. M. Hines, Chief, Office of Technical Information, to Lt Col Malcolm W. Courser, Information Officer, Hq 1st Army, 30 Dec 47, 293, Alex RC.

³⁵ (1) Critique of AGRS Activities, Ft. Worth DC, Summary of Disadvantages, 293 Ft. Worth. (2) Interv, Carl Allbee, Mem Div, Registration Br, 6 Sep 55.

turn, informed The Quartermaster General that, though the Fifth Army and the distribution centers serving it had scrupulously avoided any advance notice of the arrival of remains, strong evidence existed that certain veterans' organizations possessed complete shipping lists and planned to release the information they contained to relatives. With the full concurrence of the Commanding Officer at the Chicago Distribution Center, he urged the adoption of stern measures to prevent the leakage of such information.³⁶ At the same time, the Chief, American Graves Registration Division, Auburn General Depot, believing that the release of lists of deceased to the press, and thence to veterans' organizations, had caused confusion and uneasiness among relatives, recommended the termination of such press releases.³⁷

Quartermaster General Larkin, in replying to this suggestion, reminded the writer that policy pertaining to the release of information had received thoughtful consideration from the Army Public Information Division before a decision was reached to make names available to the press. Pointing out that such releases were not classified, he emphasized the Army's desire to maintain friendly relations with all informational media and opposed any action that might antagonize the press, which had rendered great assistance to the repatriation program, especially in its early stages when the Army sought its co-operation.³⁸ The Army Public Information Division fully concurred in General Larkin's attitude. It believed that, despite a few unfortunate errors, the return of World War II deceased was a matter of great civic interest in virtually every community and therefore merited adequate publicity. The problem never was solved in a completely satisfactory manner.

On several occasions, carefully planned procedures in dealing with next of kin did not work out particularly well. Several errors occurred, which placed the Army in the acutely embarrassing position of trying to explain to emotionally upset relatives why their loved one was not aboard ship after they had been advised that he was being returned. Finally, as a result of these unfortunate incidents, the Chief, Management Office, Memorial Division, suggested certain changes to eliminate such errors. He proposed that all remains be carefully checked against lists of deceased as they were unloaded at port *before* sending the first advance telegram to next of kin and before releasing the lists to the press. He suggested that the

³⁶ Ltr, CG, Hq Fifth Army, Chicago, to TQMG, 27 Oct 47, 293, Alex RC.

³⁷ Ltr, Lt Col Vernon L. Lewis, Chief, AGRD, Auburn Gen Depot to TQMG, 23 Oct 47, 293, Alex RC.

³⁸ 1st Ind to Basic Ltr, 31 Oct 47, TQMG to CO, Auburn Gen Depot, 293, Alex RC.

emphasis should be shifted from extensive publicity to extreme accuracy.³⁹ Memorial Division officially approved the suggested change and thereafter the number of embarrassing incidents dropped sharply.

Use of Military Escorts

One of the unique features of distribution center operations was the use of uniformed escorts of the same branch of service and in the same or higher grade as the deceased. The escorts accompanied each remains from the distribution point to the final destination. This practice involved direct and personal contact with grieving relatives and required carefully selected young men, endowed with proper tact, courtesy, and sympathy. The duties and functions of military escorts were drawn up in detail before the first deceased reached American ports. Standing Operating Procedure No. 30, NYPE, included instructions for escorts which closely resembled those issued at other distribution centers. Each escort would receive all necessary verbal instructions, be briefed by the Chief, AGRD, or his representative, on the importance of their mission, and be required to witness the motion picture "*Your Proudest Duty*" before leaving on a mission. Upon arrival at their destination, escorts were expected to help and comfort the bereaved in every possible manner, including attendance at the funeral if this was requested. In each case, the escort was directed to remove the American flag from the casket and present it to the next of kin. Upon completion of each mission, he would return immediately to the distribution center and report any unusual occurrences to the proper officials.⁴⁰

At the Kansas City Distribution Center, a typical inland point, definite procedures for escorts developed. The Escort Briefing Officer reviewed each escort envelope to insure that all data pertinent to the case had been included and that all necessary actions had been taken. When the escort reported for duty, about 2½ hours before train departure, the Briefing Officer personally examined him to insure neatness and cleanliness and to make certain that he had sufficient funds to complete his mission. The Officer instructed the escort on the use of each document in the envelope and informed him of any peculiarities of that particular case. Following this examination, the escort proceeded to the Operations Branch for acceptance of the remains.⁴¹ After checking his papers and making

³⁹ Memo, Chief, Mgt Office for Asst Chief, Mem Div, OQMG, 18 Feb 48, 293, Alex RC.

⁴⁰ Hist, AGRS DC No. 1, NYPE, SOP 380, Sec. II, pp. 7-8.

⁴¹ Hist, AGRS-DC No. 9, Kansas City QM Depot, Ch. II.

certain that he was receiving the proper remains, the escort supervised the removal of the casket to the Army hearse, which transported the remains to trainside.

In many cases, the escort represented the only personal contact made with relatives. For this reason, he often was "leaned upon" by bereaved families, funeral directors, veterans' groups, and others. To some families, he almost became another "son." Some officials had feared that relatives might resent the escorts by comparing these healthy young men with their loved ones, whose remains lay in a casket, but no such experience was reported to the Kansas City Distribution Center.

T/Sgt Walter W. McFarland, a native of Topeka, Kansas, personified the fine-appearing, well-mannered escort. He took part in an episode which resulted in The Quartermaster General's lifting a ban which had forbidden escorts from accepting gifts from grateful members of the family. Following services at Pawhuska, Okla., the Indian mother of the deceased offered the escort a horse. When he politely declined, she then insisted that he accept an Indian blanket, explaining that she wished to "honor one who had so greatly honored her son." The escort was about to refuse again, when the funeral director called him aside and informed him that the mother would be deeply hurt if he refused the gift. The escort thereupon accepted the blanket, the first in a collection of such gifts that escorts brought back from Indian families.⁴²

In general, escorts performed their duties satisfactorily. Colonel Bare, NYPE, reported the receipt of more than 500 letters from relatives, morticians, mayors, governors, and veterans' groups expressing appreciation of the manner in which the escorts carried out their delicate mission. He stated that "in spite of their bereavement and the emotional stress caused by reburial of their loved ones, many fathers, mothers, widows, and others are writing to tell us that escorts are proving to be a source of comfort and help to them."⁴³ Colonel Bare declared that such unsolicited letters were being received at all distribution centers.

Typical of these letters was one from the father of a Navy chief machinist's mate, who stated that: "The Government couldn't have selected a better man, a perfect gentleman in every respect, so considerate of the family and so helpful in every way, relieving us of many of the details. The escort's very presence made us a lot braver and our burden a lot lighter." Another letter, from the family of a

⁴² *Ibid.*, Ch. III, pp. 63-65.

⁴³ Ltr, Hq NYPE to PID, AGRS, 30 Dec 47, sub: Escorts for Returning World War II Dead, 293.1 New York, Alex RC.

deceased private, praised the arrangements for delivery of the body of their son in these words: "The soldier who escorted the remains of our son showed most remarkable politeness and courtesy and true soldierly manners. In our sorrow he was understanding and sympathetic and alleviated the burden of these days. The Distribution Center may be proud to have such tactful soldiers for such tact-demanding duties. The escort's presence and conduct honored our departed son."⁴⁴

Many letters commented favorably on the type of casket, shipping case, and hearse. The NYPE, eager to maintain the best possible public relations, gave any escort who had received five letters of commendation, a special letter of commendation from General Plank, Commanding General, NYPE. Colonel Bare believed that these letters were fine morale builders and encouraged the escorts to perform in an outstanding manner.⁴⁵ He also presented special awards, such as ribbons and medals, to superior escorts.

Though some complaints regarding the performance of escorts inevitably arose, these cases comprised a tiny minority. On the whole, the escort phase of the repatriation program constituted one of its finest and most gratifying features.

Weaknesses and Suggestions for Improvements in DC Operations

In addition to previously discussed difficulties emanating from premature and unauthorized release of information to relatives about the arrival of their loved ones, other shortcomings cropped up in the course of distribution center activities. One operational weakness arose from rigid regulations which failed to allow any latitude in the routing of remains to their final destination. Although these rules gave the Transportation Corps a firm guide to follow, they often obstructed the smooth execution of AGRS missions. Colonel Bare, NYPE, suggested that the Commanding Officer of each distribution center should possess some latitude in changing rulings specified by the Transportation Corps. As an obvious example, he pointed out the case of a deceased serviceman who was originally scheduled for burial in the Woodlawn National Cemetery at Elmira, New York.⁴⁶ The next of kin changed their minds and requested interment at a point nearer the NYPE. Shipment to such a point would have cost the Government less money than routing the remains to Elmira through Distribution Center No. 2 at Schenectady. The OQMG

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Ltr, Col G. H. Bare, Chief, AGRD, NYPE to Gen Kester L. Hastings, Chief, Mem Div, OQMG, 13 Dec 48, 293 New York, Alex RC.

⁴⁶ Ltr, Col G. H. Bare to OQMG, 24 May 48, sub: Delivery of WW II Remains to Inland Town, 293 New York, Alex RC.

nevertheless decided to send the remains to that Distribution Center on the next mortuary train, three weeks later. Had existing policy permitted, the Commanding Officer at NYPE could have re-routed the shipment, saved the Government money, sent the remains to next of kin at the time and place designated by them, and thus avoided a three-week delay. As matters developed, the family expressed much dissatisfaction with the arrangements and became very critical of the service rendered.⁴⁷

In replying to Colonel Bare's letter, Colonel Busch, Memorial Division, OQMG, recognized the vexation caused by relatives changing their minds as to final destination for burial after remains had been sent to a distribution center. But he reminded Colonel Bare that any deviation from the fixed policy could easily provoke the charge of unequal treatment of next of kin. Although Memorial Division was then working on a clarification of policy in this matter which would give distribution centers slightly more latitude in routing remains, the existing system continued in all cases.⁴⁸

At the Auburn General Depot, unsatisfactory housing facilities for escorts presented a problem. No standard barracks, mess halls, or recreation rooms were available. Living quarters consisted of two paper-covered buildings used as Bachelor Officers' Quarters, which were inadequate to accommodate all expected escorts. Housing and restaurants in the town of Auburn were likewise below the average. Because of these deficiencies, recommendations for improving accommodations were sent to TQMG.⁴⁹ It was suggested that officer and enlisted Army escorts be housed at Fort Lewis; Navy and Marine Corps escorts at the U. S. Naval Station, Pier 91, Seattle; and AAF escorts at McChord Field. Colonel Strickland, Commanding Officer at McChord Field, not only approved the recommendations but volunteered to accommodate the escorts of all other components—Army, Navy, and Marine.⁵⁰ OQMG officials promptly approved Colonel Strickland's proposal, and the Seattle General Depot thereupon made the necessary arrangements with McChord Field.

Shortcomings of a different nature presented a challenge to the Chief, AGRD, Columbus Distribution Center. In one instance, an escort reported that baggagemen at both Detroit and Cleveland handled caskets disrespectfully and failed to move the remains "feet

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Ltr, Col E. Busch, Mem Div, OQMG to Col G. H. Bare, NYPE, 8 Jun 48, 293 New York, Alex RC.

⁴⁹ Ltr, Col E. Busch, Mem Div, OQMG to TQMG, 15 Jan 47, sub: Military, Navy, Marine Escorts of AGRS at Auburn, Washington, 293.1 Seattle, Alex RC.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

first" in accordance with accepted practice. Other escorts reported that baggagemen often handled shipping cases and flag with soiled gloves.⁵¹ A more serious error occurred when the passenger agent in an Ohio community informed a mother that her late son would arrive there on 22 October 1947. The family became much upset because the Army had not notified them. The statement of the passenger agent was erroneous; the remains were not to leave the Distribution Center until a week later. Consequently, Lt. Col. Albert Barden, Chief, AGRD, Columbus DC, strongly urged that railroad employees should not give information to next of kin, since this function was strictly a distribution center responsibility.⁵²

At the Fort Worth Distribution Center, complaint arose from failure of the Center to receive operating supplies before the actual start of activities, forcing AGRD employees to substitute or improvise many items for the first shipments from the Center. A critique, drawn up at the Center, suggested that a more comprehensive study of the supply situation might have avoided this problem. It maintained that much trouble also might have been avoided if more intensive "follow-ups" had been made in effecting shipment of needed items to Fort Worth. Slowness in the location of relatives constituted another weakness, which might have been eliminated had the Center received the names and addresses of relatives from the decedent's 293 file. Still another problem at Fort Worth stemmed from errors in coding the race of the deceased. The critique pointed out that such embarrassing mistakes could have been averted if the race had been written in full instead of in numerical code.⁵³

In the New York area, the Pallbearers' Union claimed the right to handle all remains. Colonel Bare, in calling General Horkan's attention to this claim, pointed out a specific instance in which a Marine honor guard appeared in full dress uniform, prepared to carry the remains to the cemetery, when members of the union intervened, causing a distressing and embarrassing disturbance. Fortunately, the Marine escort, displaying good judgment, permitted the union to go ahead rather than create a disgraceful scene before the parents and friends of the deceased. Colonel Bare suggested that some newspaper publicity might arouse enough unfavorable public opinion to stop such practices.⁵⁴ Apparently, Colonel Bare was

⁵¹ Memo, Lt Col Albert Barden, Chief, AGRD, Columbus DC for Transp Officer, 22 Oct 47, 293.1 Columbus, Alex RC.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Critique of AGRS Activities, Ft. Worth DC, Summary of Disadvantages, 293 Ft. Worth, Alex RC.

⁵⁴ Ltr, Col G. H. Bare, Chief, AGRS, NYPE to Maj Gen George A. Horkan, Chief, Mem Div, OQMG, 27 Apr 48, 293.1 New York, Alex RC.

justified, for the publication in a local newspaper of the foregoing incident caused considerable public indignation.

At the San Francisco Distribution Center, difficulty arose over the scheduling and delivery of remains shipments. Memorial Division, OQMG, set a date for the completion of delivery for each shipment, usually three to six weeks after its arrival at a distribution center. Under this system, deliveries to a community were made simultaneously on several shipments, regardless of the time of arrival.⁵⁵ This practice caused some families to await remains that had arrived six or more weeks earlier while other families in the same community, whose deceased had arrived much later, received the remains at the same time. Realizing that the number of deceased on hand was increasing along with the possibility of more serious complaints over delay, the San Francisco Center proposed to the OQMG that remains be handled on a first in, first out basis and that one shipment be completed before beginning work on another.⁵⁶ OQMG replied on 7 July 1948 that deviation from the established system would "result, in many instances, in storing complete shipments for periods of from 30 to 45 days." It further contended that simultaneous delivery of remains from various shipments would bring better final results. It did, however, authorize deliveries in the manner deemed best by the San Francisco Distribution Center so long as the processing of remains went ahead at a uniform rate. Following this exchange of ideas, delivery schedules at San Francisco were revised and increased. The remains on hand reached a peak of 996 late in September 1948 but by November, this number had been reduced to only 215.⁵⁷

In the distribution area of the Utah Distribution Center, the great distances—occasionally 100 or more miles—between railheads and final destinations, posed a peculiarly difficult problem.⁵⁸ In the case of two Uinta Mountain communities, 100 miles away from the nearest railroad, remains had to be moved over fairly good mountain highways and over poor secondary roads, which became impassable in winter. After one delivery by Government hearse, the railhead was changed to Ogden and funeral directors from the two towns took charge of remains at the Center for a flat fee.⁵⁹

A related problem concerned the scarcity of funeral directors in the sparsely inhabited area served by the Utah Distribution Center.

⁵⁵ Hist. San Francisco Port and DC, Pt. III, p. 4.

⁵⁶ Ltr, Lt Col Frank Cumiskey, Hq SPFE to TQMG, 3 Jun 48, sub: Phasing of Delivery of Remains of WW II Dead to NOK, 293 San Francisco, Alex RC.

⁵⁷ Hist, San Francisco Port and DC, Pt. III, p. 5.

⁵⁸ Hist, AGRD, DC No. 12, Vol. II, Bk. 1, p. 5.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

In some cases, relatives of the deceased were forced to appoint a funeral director who lived at a distance of 50 to 100 miles.⁶⁰ The funeral director, always chosen by the next of kin, normally met the train carrying the deceased and provided a hearse for burials in private cemeteries. When interments occurred in national cemeteries, Government hearses usually carried the remains from the train to a church or a funeral establishment or from the train directly to the cemetery.⁶¹ When funeral directors lived at great distances from next of kin, as in the Utah Distribution Center area, the question inevitably arose as to whether the family of the deceased or the Government must pay the funeral director's travel expenses. On 30 June 1948, Memorial Division, OQMG, determined that the Government would not be responsible for these expenses but simply would provide transportation to the common carrier terminal address of the consignee. No authority existed for providing further transportation at Government expense. OQMG believed that the unavailability of funeral directors at the point of final delivery did not warrant the provision of Government transportation to any greater extent than in localities where funeral directors were immediately available.

As operations proceeded in the Utah Distribution Center area, officials discovered that in many instances the prescribed railheads were not satisfactory. Several stations lacked even baggage agents and facilities for unloading the deceased. In some cases, trains on branch lines, which were indicated for use in transportation forms, carried no baggage car. In other instances, trains operated without passenger accommodations, forcing escorts to ride in cabooses.⁶²

Special Cases and Events

Among the welter of thousands of incidents which arose at the 15 distribution points in carrying out their delicate and complex mission, certain outstanding cases deserve special attention.

The Borgstrom Case

One of the most celebrated and moving operations in the repatriation program involved the return of the four Borgstrom brothers of Tremonton, Utah, to their native soil. The plans for the silent reunion of these four servicemen, who, within a period of six months in 1944, had lost their lives at scattered points throughout the world, attracted nation-wide attention. The first of the four sons of Mr.

⁶⁰ Ltr, Maj Steven F. Capasso, Chief, AGRD, Utah General Distribution Depot, 24 Jun 48, sub: Policy, 293 Utah, Alex RC.

⁶¹ Interv, Carl Allbee, Mem Div, Registration Br, 6 Sep 55.

⁶² Hist, AGRD, DC No. 12, Vol. II, Bk. 1, p. 7.

and Mrs. Albert Borgstrom to give his life in World War II was Clyde Borgstrom, Pfc. U. S. Marine Corps, who died in the Solomon Islands on 17 March 1944. On 22 June 1944, Elmer LeRoy Borgstrom, Pfc. 91st Infantry Division, was killed in Italy. The third brother to perish in World War II, Rolon D. Borgstrom, died on 8 August 1944 in a bombing mission over Germany. The final tragic blow to strike one American family came with the death of Rulon, twin of Rolon, who succumbed to wounds in France on 25 August 1944.⁶³ Shortly after word was received of the fourth death, the last surviving son of military age was released from the Marine Corps to prevent further tragedy to a family which had already borne far more than its share of grief.

Elaborate plans were made for a two-day tribute to the four brothers and their family. The reason for the two-day rites, according to Col. Leonard R. Crews, who commanded the Sixth Army Escort Detachment, was that "This is the only four Gold Star family on record in World War II. Only the five Sullivan brothers, who were in the Navy and were serving on the same ship when it was sunk, constituted a greater loss to any family. The Borgstrom boys were in separate branches of the service and in separate theaters of action, making it important that we give them all possible honor."⁶⁴

The two-day event began on 25 June 1948 with the arrival from the Utah Distribution Center of the caskets bearing the four brothers at the Shaw and Rogers Funeral Home in Tremonton, Utah. During the afternoon, the bodies "lay in state." Sentries stood at each casket, representing each of the services—Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force. One sentry kept vigil throughout the night.

On the morning of 26 June, solemn memorial services took place in the Mormon church at Garland, Utah. Speaking on this occasion were Gen. Mark W. Clark, Commanding General, Sixth Army, Gov. Herbert B. Maw of Utah, Pres. George Albert Smith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and Clarence E. Smith, principal of the high school attended by the Borgstrom boys. Other high-ranking officers of the four services and dignitaries of the State of Utah attended the event as well as thousands of private citizens. The parents of the deceased brothers received posthumous decorations from the three generals and the admiral present at the rites, including three bronze stars, an air medal, and a good conduct medal.⁶⁵ Each surviving member of the family, including, besides the parents, two sons and two daughters, received a personal soldier

⁶³ *Deseret News* (Salt Lake City), June 23, 1948, Hist, AGRD, DC No. 12, Vol. II, Bk. 2.

⁶⁴ *Ogden Standard-Examiner*, June 25, 1948, Hist, AGRD, DC No. 12, Vol. II, Bk. 2.

⁶⁵ Hist, AGRD, DC No. 12, Vol. II, Bk. 2, pp. 1-2.



FIGURE 51. *Borgstrom brothers are borne to final resting place, Tremonton, Utah.*



FIGURE 52. *Final salute for the four Borgstrom brothers, Tremonton, Utah.*

escort throughout the ceremony. At the request of General Clark, Maj. Steven F. Capasso, Chief, AGRD, Distribution Center No. 12, escorted Mrs. Borgstrom.

Following the morning service at the church, the Sixth Army Escort Detachment furnished luncheon for more than 700 persons at the Garland National Armory. A private dining room was provided for the Borgstrom family and distinguished guests. Following the luncheon, the funeral cortege formed and moved slowly southward to the cemetery. Traffic was diverted all along the route to give the right of way to the long, solemn procession. When the band finally passed through the cemetery gate, the hundreds of onlookers watched in respectful silence. As the procession approached the canopied graveside, tears could be seen in the eyes of men and women alike. Behind the band came the four dark olive drab hearses, each bearing the flag-draped casket of one of the brothers. After each hearse were Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps pallbearers, side by side with members of veterans' organizations acting as honorary pallbearers. The rites at the graveside were brief but impressive. After the caskets had been lowered to their final resting place, the military band marched silently through the cemetery gate. The family and high officials began to leave the

rostrum. For the Borgstroms and all of Bear River Valley, a tragic occasion had ended.⁶⁶

The Wright Case

The worst war calamity to befall one family in a 14-State area of the Middle West involved the deaths of the three sons of Henry A. Wright, a widower who lived on a farm north of Hurley, Mo., about 200 miles south of Kansas City. The brothers were: Sgt. Frank H. Wright, Army Ground Forces, killed on Christmas Day, 1944, in the Battle of the Bulge; Pvt. Harold B. Wright, Army Ground Forces, who was wounded and captured on 1 February 1945 and died on 3 February in a German prison camp; Pvt. Elton E. Wright, Army Ground Forces, killed in Germany on 25 April 1945. The bodies of the three were forwarded simultaneously by railroad from the Kansas City Distribution Center to Springfield, Mo., on 3 November 1948. There the funeral director, representing the Wright family, met the train and took charge of transporting the deceased and their escorts to Hurley, Mo. The caskets were then taken to the farm home where the brothers had been born and reared. The father, a stooped, gray-haired man, requested that the caskets be carried into the bedroom in which all the boys had been born. All day long on Thursday, 4 November 1948, and during the morning of the following day, friends and neighbors called upon the father and laid floral offerings of roses, carnations, and chrysanthemums on the floor in front of the caskets.⁶⁷ Besides his neighbors, Mr. Wright had with him his two surviving sons and three daughters with their families.

On the afternoon of 5 November, services were held in a packed high school auditorium. Loudspeakers carried the music and spoken words to the overflow throng outside. Among the officers who attended the services were Col. Michael Quinn, Commanding Officer, Kansas City Distribution Center; Brig. Gen. John A. Harris, Commanding General, Missouri National Guard; and Col. R. F. Arnold, Commanding Officer, Ft. Leonard Wood, Mo.⁶⁸ The three flag-draped caskets, each accompanied by an escort, were placed on the stage of the school auditorium.

After the services in tribute to the sacrifices made by the brothers were over, the funeral procession left the school building and moved to the Hilltop Cemetery, about six miles southwest of Hurley, where interment services took place in a biting wind against a gray, over-

⁶⁶ *Deseret News*, June 27, 1948, Hist, AGRD, DC No. 12, Vol. II, Bk. 2.

⁶⁷ *Kansas City Times*, Kansas City, Mo., November 6, 1948.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

cast sky. At the close of the ceremony, the flags were removed from the caskets and the escorts stepped forward to present them. Two went to the father and one to the widow of Pvt. Elton E. Wright. The Nation and the community of Hurley had done all that could be done.⁶⁹

The Collier Case

In the investigation and completion, where possible, of "unresolved cases"—cases in which it had been impossible to locate the next of kin or in which the next of kin had failed to indicate their wishes as to the place of final burial—a distribution center usually acted either under the direction of the OQMG or at the request of relatives or their representatives. Sometimes, such cases could be settled in a telephone conversation, but others required considerable, and occasionally, difficult travel. When the next of kin lived in a remote rural section, personal meetings involved journeys which sternly challenged the physical endurance and the pioneering inclinations of the AGRD investigator.⁷⁰

Such an instance took place in the case of Pvt. Ernest E. Collier. Since his widow had remarried, the Memorial Division instructed the Kansas City Distribution Center to see personally the father, Jesse L. Collier, in order to have him complete the disposition form. Inquiry revealed that Mr. Collier received his mail through the Post Office at Timber, Mo., located in a wooded section deep in the Ozark mountains. The AGRD investigator, upon reaching this locality, found that the town of Timber consisted of a combination Post Office and filling station and numbered as its population the family operating the establishment. The postmaster informed the investigator that Mr. Collier lived "somewhere over the mountains about eight miles or so" and that his mail was left for him in a box on a roadway about four miles from his home.⁷¹

Pointing out what he described as a roadway leading into the mountains, the postmaster started the investigator on his way, but told him that the road would end "about four miles down in Henry Baker's farmyard." The postmaster added that he did not know how the investigator would reach the Collier place after he arrived at the farmyard. After traveling for an hour or more on a road which proved that an Army car is at least equal to a mountain goat, the investigator reached Mr. Baker's farmyard and was looking back at the long hills and wondering how he would ever get out of that locality with his Army vehicle when Mr. Baker appeared.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Hist, AGRS, DC No. 9, Kansas City QM Depot, pp. 70-71.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

After ascertaining the investigator's mission, the farmer pointed over the wooded hills in the direction of Mr. Collier's place. He informed the investigator that the distance was about four miles and that he could not reach the place by car. Mr. Baker suggested that the weary traveler could wait until Mr. Collier came to the mail box (which he did about once a week) or he could walk or ride a mare.⁷²

The farmer finally invited his visitor to hop on the mare behind him. Setting down the investigator on the far side of the first of three creeks to be forded, Mr. Baker pointed to one of several openings in the woods on a distant hillside, and warned against taking a wrong trail which would result in 3 or 4 miles of unnecessary walking.

Standing on the sandy bottom land watching the mare and its rider recede in the distance, the investigator wondered if he would ever get Form 345 to its proper destination, or, once there, if he would be able to return to civilization with it. His doubts were increased as he twice removed his shoes, stockings, and trousers to wade the two remaining fast-running streams. His worries further increased when, despite the farmer's warning, he took the wrong trail and traversed several extra miles and mountains before finally locating a small house at the distant end of what seemed to be a deserted farm.⁷³

The tired and footsore investigator sat for an hour or more on the porch step and intermittently called for Mr. Collier. As he was putting the uncompleted Form 345 back in his pocket and preparing for the dreaded return trip, a man and a woman, who proved to be Mr. and Mrs. Collier, appeared rather suddenly. The investigator explained his mission at once to the couple, who invited him into the house. As Mr. Collier signed the form, the investigator realized that the services of a notary were needed. After weighing the facts in his mind, the investigator decided not to mention a notary to Mr. Collier since the nearest one resided some 30 miles away in Salem, Mo., with several creeks and mountain ranges intervening. He took the shortest course by signing the notarized section of the form merely as a witness to Mr. Collier's decision and signature.

On the return trip, the investigator succeeded in taking the right trail back to the Baker farm, where he was reassured that the journey back to Timber could be made, no matter how steep and winding the road might seem. Thanks to the good condition of the

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

Army car, the investigator finally reached Timber and later proceeded along more modern highways to Kansas City with the completed Form 345, bringing to a close an unusually difficult task.⁷⁴

Memorial Service, Soldiers' Field, Chicago; Other Special Events

Perhaps the largest single event during the entire repatriation program, so far as numbers are concerned, occurred at Soldiers' Field, Chicago, on the night of 19 October 1947. Sponsored by a large local newspaper, this fitting memorial service was attended by an estimated 80,000 persons and began the program of returning the dead of World War II in the Chicago area. Practically every veterans' organization, and nearly every fraternal, patriotic, and religious group in the vicinity sent representatives. Also in attendance were the Governor of Illinois, the Mayor of Chicago, and high ranking Army and Navy officers stationed in the area served by the Chicago Distribution Center.⁷⁵ The ceremony itself proved to be a beautiful and impressive one. Caskets of ten Chicago war dead were placed before the stands of Soldiers' Field while the huge crowd rose, lighted candles in hand, in silent tribute. From all walks of life, men and women of all creeds and nationalities joined in the moving rites. Chicago newspapers claimed that more veterans' posts were represented by their colors during the service than at any memorial rites ever held in the United States.⁷⁶

Special ceremonies and tributes to the returning dead took place in other parts of the country as the first groups of remains reached their home communities. In the area served by the Schenectady General Distribution Depot, several cities held solemn processions in observance of the occasion. In Springfield, Mass., the entire city halted normal activities on 1 November 1947 while thousands watched flag-draped caskets move slowly down the main thoroughfare. Impressive outdoor rites took place on Armistice Day, 1947, in Albany, N. Y., to honor its sons who had given their lives in the war. In Kansas City, more than 2,500 persons attended special services on 19 October 1947 at the Liberty Memorial, commemorating the deceased of the eight States served by the Kansas City Distribution Center. Grimly reminding the crowd of the war's toll in lives were eight flag-draped caskets, each containing the body of a serviceman. The pedestals on which the caskets rested bore the name of the State and the branch of service of the deceased. Beside each casket stood a fully uniformed member of the serviceman's branch of the armed forces. Military, civic, and religious leaders

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

⁷⁵ Hist, AGRS, DC No. 8, Chicago QM Depot, p. 17.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, Incls 60, 61, *Chicago Herald-American*, October 20, 1947.

attended the ceremony as well as representatives of veterans' and patriotic organizations.⁷⁷

Deactivation of Distribution Centers

As the peak of incoming shipments passed at both the New York and San Francisco Ports of Embarkation, distribution centers were gradually deactivated. Two western centers—Mira Loma and Auburn—closed down their activities for reasons of economy on 31 March 1948. Their responsibilities were added to those of the San Francisco Center.⁷⁸ On 15 January 1949, a number of distribution points terminated operations, including Schenectady, Philadelphia, Charlotte, Memphis, Kansas City, and the Utah Depot. The burden of the surviving centers was thus increased. On 15 May, three more distribution points—Atlanta, Columbus, and San Antonio—closed down, leaving only the centers at the two ports and the inland installation at Chicago.

After the closing of the Chicago Distribution Center in September, only the centers at the two ports remained to handle the constantly diminishing influx of deceased from the European and Pacific theaters. The table below illustrates the accomplishments of all 15 centers and shows the number of remains handled at the centers as well as the total number received at each of the two ports.⁷⁹

The completion of the work of the distribution centers throughout the country also terminated, for all practical purposes, the last major phase of the vast and complex repatriation program. At the beginning of this chapter, the importance of distribution center operations was emphasized since the personal contact with next of kin was necessarily more direct than in any other stage of the entire project. The centers, despite some weaknesses and errors, performed in general most creditably. The scores of appreciative letters from grateful relatives and friends of the deceased are evidence of this fact.

The reception and distribution of over 170,000 American de-

⁷⁷ *Kansas City Times*, October 20, 1947.

⁷⁸ Hist, San Francisco Port and DC, Pt. I.

⁷⁹ Taken from Distribution Center Histories, available in Historical Branch, Admin. Div., OQMG; figures given are as of 31 Dec 51, the closeout date of the last two distribution centers; the 756 remains subtracted from the gross total of remains received at the two ports represent those reshipped to foreign countries or American possessions at request of NOK; the remaining discrepancy of 12 remains between the total processed and the net total received at the two ports probably is the result of clerical inaccuracy; the total of 57,705 remains received at San Francisco included slightly over 3,000 deceased from the Alaskan and Caribbean Zones; the total port figures were taken from Memorial Division Monthly Report, 31 Dec. 51.

TABLE 24—*Statistical Summary of Distribution Center Accomplishments*

Distribution Center	Activated	Inactivated	Remains processed	Received at port (NYPE & SFPE)
New York POE.....	28 Feb 47	31 Dec 51	40,070	113,834
Schenectady.....	25 Sep 46	15 Jan 49	5,087	
Philadelphia.....	21 Aug 46	15 Jan 49	12,306	
Charlotte.....	21 Aug 46	15 Jan 49	5,161	
Atlanta.....	1 Oct 46	15 May 49	11,528	
Memphis.....	1 Oct 46	15 Jan 49	5,782	
Columbus.....	21 Aug 46	15 May 49	21,817	
Chicago.....	26 Nov 46	15 Sep 49	30,378	
Kansas City.....	21 Aug 46	15 Jan 49	9,392	
Fort Worth.....	25 Jul 46	1 Apr 49	11,291	
San Antonio.....	21 Aug 46	15 May 49	654	
Utah ASF Depot.....	21 Aug 46	15 Jan 49	2,484	
San Francisco POE.....	21 Aug 46	31 Dec 51	14,234	57,705
Auburn (Wash).....	15 Nov 46	31 Mar 48	234	
Mira Loma.....	Jun 46	31 Mar 48	353	
Total processed.....			170,771	
Gross total.....				171,539
Less.....				756
Net total.....				170,783

ceased to national or private cemeteries in nearly every community in the country represented an enormous undertaking, demanding care, tact, and skill. Perhaps the performance of the escorts stands out as the most notable accomplishment of the whole task. These carefully chosen young men faced a trying assignment in meeting and consoling grieving families whose members were at first total strangers but who often became grateful friends. The entire repatriation program, from search and recovery and concentration of scattered dead to final burial in overseas or homeland cemeteries, stands out as a unique example of America's respect and appreciation for those who died to preserve the free way of life.

CHAPTER XXI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The unprecedented program for the care and disposition of recovered World War II deceased, which officially ended on 31 December 1951, had involved the utilization of thousands of military and civilian personnel over a span of six years and cost the United States Government millions of dollars. Because these individuals entered and departed from graves registration service at various times throughout the program, it is impossible to state the exact number engaged over the entire period of the program. The figures shown below represent personnel strength at a given time and place and serve as an indication of the numbers actually involved both in the overseas commands and in the Zone of Interior. The following table shows the number of persons, both military and civilian, who served in the Return Program in the United States, both in the Office of The Quartermaster General and at the various distribution centers throughout the country:¹

TABLE 25—*Total Personnel Employed in AGRS Program*

Period	Office of Quartermaster General			Distribution Centers		
	Total	Military	Civilian	Total	Military	Civilian
1946:						
December.....	655	61	594	39	13	26
1947:						
June.....	743	72	671	123	25	98
December.....	918	66	852	2,149	60	2,089
1948:						
June.....	927	63	864	1,790	382	1,408
December.....	877	51	826	1,510	395	1,115
1949:						
June.....	837	40	797	588	68	520
December.....	645	31	614	168	41	127
1950:						
June.....	517	25	492	79	11	68
December.....	460	22	438	60	7	53
1951:						
June.....	214	18	196	90	7	83

¹ Statistical Review of Permanent Disposition of World War II Dead, p. 7.

Two significant conclusions readily emerge from this statistical table. In the first place, civilian personnel everywhere far exceeded military personnel in numbers. Secondly, the peak strength was reached during the latter part of 1947 and the first half of 1948. This period, of course, embraced the climax of the actual return of dead from all war theaters to the United States, when the flow of incoming mortuary ships was heaviest, at both the New York and San Francisco Ports of Embarkation.

Figures on overseas personnel strength in all war theaters tell much the same story. During the latter part of 1947 and in early 1948, the greatest numbers, both military and civilian, were engaged in some phase of the program. Totals for all overseas areas and zones show a strength of 12,371 at the end of 1947, followed during the first half of 1948 by a rise to the all-time high of 13,311 in June. Again, the civilians outnumbered the military by a considerable margin, although not so markedly as in the Zone of Interior.²

No such vast program as the care and disposition of some 280,000 recovered remains scattered throughout every war theater in the world could be accomplished without enormous expenditures. Funds to carry out the Return Program were provided under a civil functions appropriation entitled "Cemeterial Expenses, Department of the Army, No Year." The "No Year" nature of the appropriation made it possible for funds unobligated at the end of a fiscal year to be available for use in succeeding fiscal years.³

The first appropriation made \$92,500,000 available, beginning 1 July 1946. Additional appropriations in the next two fiscal years brought the total amount to \$190,869,000. As time went on, however, OQMG officials realized that all this sum would not be required, and they made a reduction for Fiscal Year 1952 that left a total of \$163,869,000 appropriated for the program.⁴ As of 30 June 1951, the obligations amounted to \$157,986,086.23, leaving almost \$6,000,000 still available for obligation. Based upon the 279,867 remains for which final disposition had been accomplished at this time, the average cost for each remains had been \$564.50.⁵

In addition to the foregoing statistical review, the Return Program merits a critical analysis of achievements, problems, and failures and careful consideration of the many suggestions and recommendations offered during and after the program for improving the

² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

concentrating remains into permanent cemeteries or at ports for eventual return to the homeland. This situation, too, reflected a lack of foresight among responsible overseas military officials. Some of the most neglected temporary cemeteries were found in the Africa-Middle East region and in certain portions of the Pacific and Far East areas. In this connection, the final selection of permanent overseas cemeteries was considerably retarded in these areas and in the Mediterranean and European Theaters by inadequacy of co-ordination and slowness of decision on the part of both theater and Memorial Division officials. One of the most significant conclusions regarding cemeterial matters which emerged from postwar GRS problems and activities was that future permanent cemeteries should be established on land *other* than that used for temporary sites. The prevailing policy of constructing permanent sites on land which had been used for temporary cemeteries had caused many difficulties in matters relating to engineering, topography, and storage of remains.

As for the actual return of the dead and the myriad of accompanying operations, one of the major conclusions was that plans for this complex operation should begin much further in advance than had actually been the case, particularly as regards the requisitioning and stockpiling of necessary supplies. This recommendation applied to all postwar graves registration areas and zones but was most applicable to the Pacific and Far East.

In the Zone of Interior, the most important problems involved the conversion of sufficient space for distribution center activities, direct contacts with next of kin, ceremonies at the two ports when mortuary ships returned bearing war dead, the training and activities of the special escorts who accompanied each deceased to the place of burial designated by his next of kin, and the premature and unauthorized release of information about the arrival of remains from overseas.

Certain difficulties were inevitable or at least beyond the control of graves registration planners and officials. These concerned, among other things, frustrating delays encountered by search and recovery teams, which, in turn, were sometimes caused by political obstacles such as those placed in their path by Soviet and satellite officials in eastern Europe or by the unstable situation in the Dutch East Indies and other Far Eastern regions, or by natural handicaps, such as rugged terrain, extreme heat or cold, and by the inaccessibility of areas where American servicemen had been lost. In parts of the Pacific, the Far East, and the Africa-Middle East region, search and recovery teams and those moving remains to centralized cemeteries endured acute physical discomfort and sometimes faced

serious dangers, as narrated in those chapters devoted to these activities.

Several notable accomplishments resulted from the Return Program which deserve further mention. The establishment and operation of the Central Identification Point in Europe, replacing graveside processing and identification, provided one of the highlights of the entire operation. In this connection, the successful identification of all but approximately 3 percent of recovered dead constituted a great overall achievement. The establishment of the Processing Center in the Pacific Zone, where remains were prepared for casketing and then usually placed in caskets for storage, represented another important accomplishment.

In consequence of the countless experiences, difficulties, failures, and accomplishments resulting from the care and return of World War II dead, a few basic suggestions have emerged upon which nearly all GRS officers agree. In the first place, there should be not only a policy of careful advance planning for all phases of graves registration operations before the outbreak of hostilities but also a continuing basic organization around which such a program could be initiated quickly. Secondly, upon the termination of any future war, the graves registration mission should embrace the following specific activities:⁸ (1) the location, recovery, identification, and concentration of American deceased in temporary military cemeteries; (2) the later disinterment and processing of such remains for the purpose of casketing, storing, and reinterring designated remains in permanent overseas cemeteries and of returning the others to the United States in compliance with the desires of the next of kin, and (3) the development of permanent American military cemeteries by obtaining the necessary land from the host nation, grading the site, interring the deceased, and preparing the cemetery for transfer to the American Battle Monuments Commission.

If these suggestions and activities should be carried out in any future hostilities, the American public has every right to expect that the lessons learned from mistakes and omissions of the past will result in a more efficient program for care and return of those who lose their lives in the cause of freedom.



⁸ AGRC Critique of Activities, Hq AGRC-EA, Ch. III, pp. 1-2.

APPENDIX

QMC HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS AND HISTORICAL WORKS IN PROGRESS

PUBLICATIONS

QMC Historical Studies, Nos. 1-21:

<i>Number</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Thomas M. Pitkin and Herbert R. Rifkind.	<i>Procurement Planning in the Quar- termaster Corps, 1920-40.</i>	1943
2	Harry B. Yoshpe . . .	<i>The Small Business Man and Quar- termaster Contracts, 1940-42.</i>	1943
3	Joseph J. Mathews . .	<i>The Development of the Quar- termaster Replacement Training Cen- ters.</i>	1943
4	Harold W. Thatcher .	<i>Planning for Industrial Mobiliza- tion, 1920-40.</i>	1943
5	Thomas M. Pitkin . .	<i>Quartermaster Equipment for Special Forces.</i>	1944
6	Harold W. Thatcher .	<i>The Development of Special Rations for the Army.</i>	1944
7	Elliott Cassidy	<i>The Development of Meat, Dairy, Poultry, and Fish Products for the Army.</i>	1944
8	Harry B. Yoshpe . . .	<i>Production Control in the Quar- termaster Corps, 1939-44.</i>	1944
9	Erna Risch	<i>Fuels for Global Conflict</i>	1945
10	Harold W. Thatcher .	<i>The Packaging and Packing of Sub- sistence for the Army.</i>	1945
11	Harry B. Yoshpe . . .	<i>Labor Problems in Quartermaster Procurement, 1939-44.</i>	1945
12	Erna Risch	<i>A Wardrobe for the Women of the Army.</i>	1945
13	Louis Filler	<i>Laundry and Related Activities of The Quartermaster General.</i>	1946
14	Donald F. Bradford .	<i>Methods of Forecasting War Re- quirements for Quartermaster Sup- plies.</i>	1946

<i>Number</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Date</i>
15	Rogers W. Young..	<i>Inspection of Military Training by The Quartermaster General.</i>	1946
16	Erna Risch and Thomas M. Pitkin.	<i>Clothing the Soldier of World War II</i>	1946
17	Harry B. Yoshpe and Marion U. Massen.	<i>Procurement Policies and Procedures in the Quartermaster Corps during World War II.</i>	1947
18	Alvin P. Stauffer...	<i>Quartermaster Depot Storage and Distribution Operations.</i>	1948
19	Erna Risch.....	<i>Demobilization Planning and Opera- tion in the Quartermaster Corps.</i>	1948
20	Herbert R. Rifkind.	<i>Fresh Foods for the Armed Forces: The Quartermaster Market Center System, 1941-48.</i>	1951
21	Edward Steere.....	<i>The Graves Registration Service in World War II.</i>	1951

QMC Historical Studies, Series II:

<i>Number</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	John V. Haggard...	<i>Manufacture of Clothing, 1945-53</i>	1956
2	William H. Peifer..	<i>Supply by Sky: The QM Airborne Development, 1950-53.</i>	1957
3	John V. Haggard...	<i>Central Procurement of Clothing and Textiles, 1946-53.</i>	1957
4	Edward Steere and Thayer M. Boardman.	<i>Final Disposition of World War II Dead, 1945-51</i>	1957

U.S. Army in World War II Series:

	<i>Author</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Date</i>
	Erna Risch.....	<i>Quartermaster Corps: Organization, Supply, and Services, Vol. I.</i>	1953
	Erna Risch and Chester L. Kieffer.	<i>Quartermaster Corps: Organization, Supply, and Services, Vol. II.</i>	1955
	Alvin P. Stauffer...	<i>Quartermaster Corps: Operations in the War Against Japan.</i>	1956

WORKS IN PROGRESS

QMC Historical Studies, Series II:

	<i>Author</i>	<i>Subject</i>
	John V. Haggard..	<i>Quartermaster Inspection, 1946-56.</i>
	Thomas A. Johnson.	<i>Quartermaster Training, 1946-53.</i>

<i>Author</i>	<i>Subject</i>
Franz A. Koehler . . .	<i>Development of Operational Rations, 1946-53.</i>
Franz A. Koehler . . .	<i>Perishable and Non-Perishable Subsistence Supply, 1946-53.</i>
Franz A. Koehler . . .	<i>Supply Unification for Subsistence, 1955-.</i>
Arthur G. Stewart . . .	<i>Quartermaster Supply and Services in Korea, 1950-53.</i>
Charles J. Smith . . .	<i>Quartermaster Research and Engineering, 1946-.</i>

Korean Conflict Series:

<i>Volume</i>	<i>Tentative Title</i>
I	<i>Postwar and Cold War, 1946-50.</i>
II	<i>The Korean Crisis, 1950-53.</i>
III	<i>The QM Corps on a World-Wide Basis, 1950-53.</i>

U. S. Army in World War II Series:

<i>Author</i>	<i>Title</i>
Charles F. Romanus	<i>Quartermaster Corps: Operations in the War Against Germany.</i>

General History Series:

<i>Author</i>	<i>Subject</i>
Erna Risch	<i>General History of the Quartermaster Corps, 1775-1939.</i>

