

# YANKEE TRICK FOOLS GERMANS ON WAR FRONT

WITH THE AMERICAN FORCES IN GERMANY, Oct. 1—(By the Associated Press)—Tricks of the game of war are coming to light from time to time as each side tells its story. One of the most successful of them was practiced by American forces in the Meuse-Argonne battle last fall when the last great allied offensive was at its height from Switzerland to the sea. An imaginary army conceived by a handful of American junior officers was "thrown into the field" overnight and for days five crack German divisions just east of Verdun in the Etain region were kept on their toes momentarily expecting an attack which never materialized.

At a dinner table in a Coblenz cafe, overlooking the Rhine, an American intelligence officer recently told the story of the creation of the "mythical army," as it was called. It appears that the Germans were expecting an attack in the Etain sector at any time, and the Americans knew it; but at that phase of the game the First United States army was devoting its energies to driving the enemy out of the Argonne forest and the hill country on either side. So the mythical army was created, in preference to a real division, requiring many men, to convince the German commander that it would not be wise to weaken the Etain front to the benefit of the Meuse-Argonne front, where a desperate battle was proceeding.

Five fresh divisions had been placed by the Germans on the Etain line. These constituted their last and finest reservoir of available divisions. The Americans realized that the minute the Germans decided that this was not a danger point, any or all of the five divisions could be withdrawn, replaced by exhausted and fragmentary divisions coming from battle fronts, and that the appearance of the fresh troops in line west of the Meuse would have a tremendous effect on the American offensive.

The "X army" was assigned to a front from Bezonaux to Fresnes. From the morning of October 22 until just previous to the armistice this army "functioned." Captain Charles H. Mats, of Hubbard Woods, Illinois, was commander-in-chief. Captain William H. Dearden, of Springfield, Mass., and Washington, D. C., was chief of staff. Lieutenant John H. Graham, of Lexington, Va., was chief of "troop movements"; Captain O. W. Neldert was in charge of —, or administration; and Lieutenant H. T. Griswold, of Oyd Lynne, Conn., was chief of artillery. The staff of the X army were all members of the intelligence section of the First army and of course, before the beginning of operations, had secured the consent of their chief, Colonel Willey Howell.

The wireless and the telephone were freely used to convince the Germans that the Americans were preparing for an attack in the Etain sector. To make sure that the Germans would be able to "break into" the code used, the Americans furnished them with a satisfactory key.

One wireless station of the X army was established in a clump of woods near Verdun and was christened "headquarters of the X army." This station functioned until the end of the game, all "orders" to the army going out from this place by wireless. Soon after the station began working the Germans located its whereabouts and frequently shelled the woods and vicinity, apparently in hopes of breaking up the radio of this latest annoyance.

The X army also had a portable radio station, which moved about and represented itself as a different station every day or two.

The sector in which the X army was at work was directly under command of the Thirty-third French corps, and the roving wireless station caused considerable excitement among the French soldiers as it sent messages to make the enemy believe that several fresh American divisions had moved into the area. The French, unaware of the plans of the X army staff, at times thought the Americans had lost all sense of reason and on several occasions so reported the wireless plants.

The first message from the X army headquarters was a general despatch to all wireless stations in the army area (none of which actually existed) in the new code, of course, directing that none of the stations answer or make any use of their sending instruments, for fear of the enemy locating them, but to

be on the alert at fixed hours to receive messages. The effect was to warn the Germans that a large number of wireless stations must have been set up and to advise them of the hours when the enemy intercepting stations should be on the alert for the American messages.

This was followed by a series of messages designed to indicate that the X army was preparing for a full fledged operation. In order to inform the enemy of the geographical limits of the sector of the X army many messages were directed to imaginary officers at existing towns on the Etain front.

Meanwhile the roving wireless station was working overtime day and night. It began sending out messages in the Fresnes sector and trying to give the impression that it was several stations at widely separated locations. One message in particular was peculiarly designed to add to the enemy's suspicion of the approaching trouble—an imperative demand for 200 copies more additional of the Confians sheet, "Plan Directeur map." This could only be interpreted by the Germans, the Americans agreed, as preparation for a coming drive on the Briey iron center.

In addition to the wireless the X army also had in operation, on the front between Bezonaux and Fresnes, a telephone squad—a careless squad which set up telephone stations here and there and sent messages and talked shop and gossiped at night about the arrival of some old friend from America with such and such an outfit.

The X army telephone squad took no chances that the Germans might not hear the conversations the Americans desired them to record. They deliberately grounded their wires, so the enemy could "listen in," and crawled out into No Man's Land in the darkness and hooked one of the American wires over onto a German barbed wire in front of an abandoned trench system. In the front line of modern warfare the telephone is a most dangerous instrument, for both sides devised apparatus which within certain limits can pick up conversations over enemy line with which it is not even connected. So the Americans felt certain that all their conversations were heard by the Germans.

Two days after the X army began functioning, the results began to be noticeable, the nervousness on the part of the Germans being exhibited in many ways, the enemy first sending over a large number of airplanes to make reconnaissances. The Germans also began a series of trench raids, to obtain prisoners for the purpose of identifying units of the forces opposite them. German prisoners captured by the French told of wild alarms in the night on the part of the German forces, hurried reinforcement of the

main line of resistance and various other movements which indicated that the enemy was exerting extreme watchfulness on account of the activity of the little army being operated by a handful of Americans.

When the armistice became effective, November 11, the little American mythical army still held its ground in the field near Verdun, and opposite five crack German divisions stood their guard, not even suspecting that they had been tricked by a handful of ingenious young Yankees who were delighted at the results obtained by their mischievous schemes, which had worked so successfully in deceiving the wise old man veterans of a five year war.

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