



edited by Mad Dog  
contains items from German language version

MS # B-591

Allendorf, 12 June 1947

DERMEN, Friedrich Wilhelm

Generalmajor

THE 159TH INFANTRY DIVISION

The 159 Inf DivContinuation of the work of 3 May 1947 (MS # B-530)

Notes: The following expositions can only offer a complete picture in connection with the previous notes and those submitted to the "Southern France" campaign chief. The latter comprise the development of the 159 Inf Div from its formation as Inf Ers Div 1059 to 15 Sep 1944. To be acquainted with this development seems important to me, because, from it result the standard of the division's fighting qualities and the extraordinary difficulties up to its change into an active division. I repeat that my notes are made from memory and that some points have been supplemented by questioning former subordinates.

Tactical commitment - further course

16 Sep 1944. Position in the wooded areas south-west and south of LURE in a general line VOUHENANS - VAL DE GOUHENANS - ATHESANS. The connection with the right adjacent unit, 199 Inf Div, was loose, there was no contact to the left.

The Div command post LYOFFANS, and corps command post IV LW field C, were shifted from LURE in a north-westerly direction. The enemy was feeling his way forward with only weak reconnaissance. Evidently, the American troops - 54 Div - were being relieved by the French - 1 French Armored Div and 2 Mar Rifle Div.

17 Sep 1944. Subordination to LXXXV A C. Corps command post ST. BELFORT, div com post EBOULET.

Withdrawal to the Sector RECOLOGNE - MAGNY d'ANIGON - CLAIREGOUTTE - FREDERICFONTAINE, without enemy interference.

Committed: Res Gren Regt 9 to the right - Regt Cross (labor Gren Regt 1210), left. Right adjacent unit 199 Inf Div. Left adjacent unit 189 Inf Div, slightly projecting with its north wing. The road LURE-RONCHAMP was effectively blocked. Continuous reconnaissance activity. Enemy pressure only started after 20 Sep, mainly from the south-west between MAGNY d'ANIGON and FREDERICFONTAINE, with objective RONCHAMP. The LURE-RONCHAMP road probably proved too big an obstacle on account of its strong tree obstacles and mines.

On 24 Sep MAGNY was lost after heavy fighting against enemy armored forces in a terrain not favorable to the defender. Lack of artillery and heavy weapons, as well as insufficient means of signal communication were again the main cause for the loss of the position. The committed battalion of Regt Cross, which had been extended to the south-west, was retransferred into the wooded area and inserted into the general position frame work of the division. The battalion had carried out its mission to screen the effective blocking of the road CLAIREGOUTTE-RONCHAMP which was in force. This forced the enemy to build emergency roads for tanks; further attacks were at first held.

On 27 Sep, KAPPELLENBERG was attacked from the north west. An observation post which was located on this mountain, was conquered in battle. The

importance of this 600 m high summit, which allowed a complete insight into the rear terrain, was never underrated. However, the reserves necessary for taking into account this matter, as the situation demanded it, were lacking. The division quite realized the fact that this height had to be recaptured. The attack began at dawn on 28 Sep, its execution being assigned to the 9 Res Gren Regt.

One 10.5 cm battery and three destroyer tanks only were available for support. The battery had no signal equipment, the regiment's two new heavy infantry guns (15 cm) had no firing cables. After regrouping, three weak companies were withdrawn from the regiment's defense front and assembled for attack hard south and south-east of the KAPPELLEBERG.. They attacked after brief sudden concentration fire.

After an initial gain of terrain, they were strongly covered by concentrated enemy artillery fire, (app 1 Bn,) when half way up the slope, and suffered considerable casualties. Small elements only, in the force of app. one platoon, succeeded in reaching the height of the observation post. On the whole, the attack had to be considered a failure. A repetition could not be contemplated for lack of reserves and the support of heavy weapons. The observation post therefore remained in the enemy's hands, who, with his artillery fire from there during the following weeks, rendered communication to the hinterland nearly impossible in daytime, and disturbed it considerably during the night.

End of Sep. Div Com post ST. CHAMPAGNEY - Corps com post ST. BELFORT. The enemy was diverging his pressure on RONCHAMP. Strong enemy reconnaissance

thrusts and penetration attempts were repelled. The 199 Inf Div was withdrawn. The reconnaissance Battl 1000 (mot) and one security Bn from BELFORT were brought up and subordinated to the 9 Res Gren Rgt, which meant an extension of the front to the north. The general division line now ran from app point 665 north of CHAMPAGNEY to the west, app 2 km south-west of point 658, then to the south including RONCHAMP-CLAIRE-GOUTTE-FREDERIC FONTAINE. The northern part of the position consisted of difficult tropical wooded terrain, in which the line of vision was almost obscured. The right adjacent unit was the IV Lw Field Corps and the left one the 189 Inf Div. (See sketch appendix 1).

Estimation of the situation. The quiet before the divisional sector, which lasted several days, could not deceive us from believing that the enemy intended to keep on concentrating his point of main effort on the winning of the CHAMPAGNEY valley, with BELFORT as objective, and that new systematical preparations for the continuation of his attack were in progress. Meanwhile, he transferred pressure on the southern positions of the right adjacent unit, mainly against TRESSE. Heavy fighting was in progress there, whilst comparative quiet reigned before the front of the left adjacent unit, excepting some reconnaissance advances. The danger was evident that the enemy, in case of further gains of terrain in the sector of the right adjacent unit and by reaching the road PLANCHER LES MINES - PLANCHER BAS in an advance to the south, might not only get into the rear of the 199 Inf Div, but also overcome the scarce forces immediately west of BELFORT. All was done to reinforce blocks, obstacles and mining.

Order of battle - Appendix 2

It represents the final formation of a gradual development and is, in proportion of strength, coded according to months.

Course,

On 2 Oct the enemy broke through the wooded area south of RONCHAMP. After heavy fighting he reached EBEULET, where his advance was repelled. However, his tanks succeeded in penetrating RONCHAMP from the west. By dusk he had fought his way through to the RONCHAMP-BELFORT road. The way to BELFORT was free, but the enemy did not exploit this chance.

During the night the Division - with remaining elements of the I/Res Gren Rgt 9 closed the gaps close to the eastern border of RONCHAMP. Simultaneously, an engineer corps was committed for intensive blocking of the road net around RONCHAMP and a 8.8 cm flak battery was brought forward more closely both sides of the RONCHAMP-CHAMPAGNEY road.

On 3 Sep, enemy reconnaissance thrusts were repelled. Meanwhile, the stubborn fighting in the sector of the right adjacent unit, in the course of which FRESSE was lost, continued. The loss of this locality endangered the right wing of the division. In adaptation to this situation, the division could no longer hold the switch position on the north wing of the division between point 565 and 658, nor the position remaining from point 658 to RONCHAMP. It was given up - without pressure from the enemy - on app. 5 Sep, and the general line was extended in a northwesterly direction. For this purpose, the Inf Rgt Gruppe ROLLIN of the IV Lw Field Corps, was placed under the division. The position now ran from point 701 south-west

of PLANCHER les MINES to the south, hard south-east of point 665, across the wooded terrain north and north-west of CHAMPAGNEY - east border of RONCHAMP - eastborder of EBOULET - point 471 to the gorge near point 500 - point of intersecrtion stream/road north of point 434. Committed from right to left were Inf Rgt Gruppe ROLLIN - 1209 Gren Rgt - 1210 Gren Rgt. Contact to the right, with the IV Lsk was only loose and with gaps. Contact to the left was with 189 Inf Div (Sketch Appendix 1). Towards the end of Sep the Div Com Post was at ERREVET. This position was improved in the course of the coming weeks under worst weather conditions and reinforced with barbed wire obstacles, tree blocks and mining. Its strength lay in the wooded terrain, mainly south of RONCHAMP, its weakness in the terrain round RONCHAMP. Enemy observation made any movement in daytime nearly impossible; besides, ground conditions were bad and hardly suitable for the building of shelters against artillery fire. Heavier casualties could only be avoided with the help of clever camouflage. In spite of these conditions, the attacks which occurred up to end October, were repelled both here and at the remaining parts of the division sector. From then on, battle activity lessened. About the end of October, the Inf Rgt Gruppe ROLLIN was withdrawn and again placed under the IV Lw Field Corps. At its place, the Inf Rgt Gruppe FRANKE was subordinated to the division and committed in the same sector.

Our own position.

The quiet time before the division front, which lasted several weeks, was only interrupted by artillery fire on the positions and harassing fire on



the rear terrain. For the sake of ammunition economy, our own artillery had to limit itself to battle against worth-while targets and detached surprise fire. The striking power of the division had suffered as a result of the uninterrupted commitment during many weeks and the sustained casualties. 20-25% was the average loss in infantry companies. Increasing reinforcement of blocking and of position constructions, offered a chance to send up to 4% of the front line infantry, in turns, to a rest center not far from the front. At the same time a division combat school was set up, the infantry training in the positions was increased, radio training was completed. Plans of fire were worked out, defense points of main effort created, reconnaissance troop movements were started. The supply of rations was regular, if troublesome on account of terrain difficulties. Supply of artillery ammunition was irregular and insufficient.

The Division's mission: To prevent break-through to the entire sector.

Evaluation: Conditionally suited to the repulse of stronger attacks. The equipment of the infantry was gradually completed. There was still a shortage of infantry guns. The situation was at its worst with the artillery regt. The number of batteries was too low, the headquarters battery was missing, there was a scarcity of radio instruments, which essentially influenced fire control and observed firing. The employment of the subordinate cannon battery of the 1314 Fest. Art. Abt. was only conditional in this terrain and broke down completely in the mountains. It overloaded the Art regt by taking up too many of its horse teams.

The engineer Bn and signal Bn could be valued more favourably regarding equipment and strength: the Pz Jaeger Bn had also improved in this respect. (See footnote to order of battle). The supply regiment was short of dependable and uniform motor vehicles. The tonnage space (30-40t) at disposal was firstly used for the supply of ammunition. The horse-drawn column disposed of good horse material and supplied valuable compensation in all kind of supply service.

On 14 Nov C H Staff LXXXV AC was withdrawn for other employment, and a new C H Staff, as LXIII AC, was assigned. The troops of the recent LXXXV AC were now under its command.

#### The engagement:

Mid-November a massed armored attack took place near DELLE and resulted in a break-through towards MUEHLHAUSEN. The consequences of this attack affected the 159 Inf Div both directly and indirectly. Directly, in so far as the 1210 Gren Rgt was pulled out of its position on 15 Nov and subordinated to the left (189) adjacent division. The regiment had its initial commitment on 16 or 17 Nov, in the area HERICOURT. The gap was closed by assigning wider sectors to 1209 Gren Rgt and Inf Rgt Gruppe FRANKE, but our own division front was considerably weakened. The division combat school and training corps were eliminated for the present, teachers and trainees were again assigned to their units, the rest centers too were cleared. Indirectly, the division was - just as much as its left adjacent unit - insofar affected by the tank break-through, that it was now threatened by outflanking. This is why covering positions - which had been

reconnoitered a few hours earlier - were occupied in two stages following at short intervals, and beginning in the night of the 18/19 November.

1 Covering position on 19 November: PLANCHER les MINES - PLANCHER-BAS-FRAHIER, 2 covering position on 20 November: GROMAGNY - EVETTE - west border BELFORT (canal). The disengagement took place without enemy pressure and was screened by close-in protection infantry and artillery harassing fire. All heavy weapons, equipment, ammunition and part of the materiel could be secured. The roads leading from RONCHAMP to the north-east and southeast were forcibly cut off by blocks. The supply regt was transferred to the district of DOLLEREN. The supply units quartered in BELFORT, with all their stocks, were assigned to it. App on 21 Nov a further withdrawal to the area around SULZ took place. Meanwhile, the Inf Rgt C V (later 1211 Gren Rgt) was brought up to the division. It came from military area V, had been constituted in a hurry, consisted of only 2 Bns, and had neither infantry guns nor tank defense weapons. Its fighting qualities were of low value, all the more so as they constituted themselves mainly of replacements. In spite of this, the regiment fought bravely in the following battles. On 19 Nov, it was inserted between the 1209 Gren Rgt and the Inf Rgt Gruppe FRANK, and was thus able to reinforce the left divisional wing. Div Com Post GROMAGNY, Com Post LXIII AC. . . .

21 Nov the enemy was trying to feel his way forward with strong reconnaissance and tanks in the direction of GROMAGNY - BELFORT. The bridges over the canal west of BELFORT were partly destroyed. The enemy attacked in the night to the 22 Nov, and on this same day. He

succeeded in penetrating on the boundary of the 159 and 189 Inf Div, supported by armored forces coming from a northerly direction. The garrison of le SALBERT could not get into action and was unable to prevent the penetration. Heavy fighting developed in BELFORT, and in this, elements of the 1209 Gren Rgt and the divisional Inf Rifle Co took a distinguished part. A few enemy tanks were put out of action. Headquarters I/1209 was encircled in the northern part of BELFORT (VALDOIO) and was relieved after a counter-attack. The commandant of BELFORT defended the citade. The battle for GROMAGNY was in progress and the attack on the eastern border was held. Any contact with the right adjacent unit was interrupted. These interruptions, which continued during the further battles, were a constant worry. (Sketch Appendix 1). There were no positions in depth behind the divisional sector, forces for that purpose were lacking. A system of positions round BELFORT was in construction. This town, as the core of the antiquated fortress system, lacked the operational value of a fortress as such, as well as that of a barrier fortification. It had neither artillery arms, nor was it equipped accordingly. The necessary reserves too, were missing. The permanent installations were mostly unsuited for a defense to the west. Our own defensive installations around BELFORT only consisted of emergency field positions which were only thinly occupied, partly chocked up with mud, and insofar altogether unfit for use.

22 Nov and 23 Nov Defense was retired in a general line ETUEFPOH-ELOIE - BELFORT east, the division com post was transferred to the south exit of ANJOUTEY. All enemy attacks in the wooded area and behind the

high water Zone, which were still being conducted with strong numerical and material superiority, were repelled in the course of the following days. The situation with the right adjacent unit had meanwhile become more critical, the broken-off contact had to be regained in any case, although this was a difficult undertaking in the steep terrain, frequently broken-up by gorges. This state of affairs led, on 24 Nov, to a change in the disposition of the positions and to a regroupement. The right wing of the division was extended to the north and north-west. The course of the general line now was as follows: hill 1138 west of SEWEN - height 1000 south of SEWEN - ETUIFFON - HAUT - BETHONVILLIERS. Committed were from right to left Inf Rgt C V - 1210 Gren Rgt, 1209 Gren Rgt. The connection to the right hand gaps. contact to the left was with 189 Inf Div. Div Com Post ROUGEMONT, Corps Com Post in the area of SENTHEIM. The 1210 Gren Rgt had returned from its commitment with the 189 Inf Div on 23 Nov. The Inf Rgt Gruppe FRANKE, which had been badly battered during the past battles, was pulled out and detached from the division (sketch appendix 1).

On 25 Nov the Infantry Rgt C V, hill 1138, was circuted. This situation, with the enemy in the rear, held the danger of a break-through in the direction of MAASMUNSTER. The regiment, by surmounting great terrain difficulties, succeeded in carrying out the division's order: to occupy a switch position north and south of SEWEN and to effectively block the road to the north-west. This resulted in the creation of three points of main effort in the divisional sector, in the north-east of hill 1138, in the centre of the district ETUEFFEN HAUT, in the south, north-east of BELPORT,

At none of these points was the enemy able to break through. The following battles, lasting many days, broke up into individual engagements. Our own weak troops could not possibly prevent the forming of gaps in this difficult mountain terrain, nor the frequent losing of contact, even inside of the corps. It was not difficult for a clever enemy to operate through these gaps and to appear in the rear of the defense in a surprise attack. This infiltration created new centers in the whole front which could only be cleared by uncovering other battle sectors in the divisional area. It was essential that tank advances could always again be held, and this chiefly on the major roads leading south-east and north-east. The tactic of the checkered laying of mines, combined with as deep as possible tree blockades, proved most effective. It was as much as possible used at road turnings or on steep roads, as far as the latter could not be interrupted by blasting.

On 28 Nov., the defense was retired to the THUR sector. Div Com post THANN, Corps Com post in the area HARTMANNWEILER, course of general line eastborder RIMBACH - wooded area north-west and east of OBERBURBACH - RAMMERSMATT. Right adjacent unit: 269 (?) Inf Div echeloned in the rear; no contact with it was possible. Contact to the left: 189 Inf Div (sketch appendix 1), the situation in the sector of the right adjacent unit resulted in the division's right wing being bent back as far as WILLESEN and in forming a strong switch position both sides of the road. The artillery organization in the district of STEINBACH ALT THANN - THANN took place in the rear of the division's left wing. Freedom of movement in the north-west was only

possible on the road running parallel to the front, but held the danger of being cut off. The area before the right wing was in the fire zone of our own artillery. On the late evening of 28 Nov, a strong enemy attack with tank support materialized west of RODEREN nr. THANN and the high terrain was temporarily lost. After a short preparation of concentrated fire, the position was retaken and held by the 1209 Gren Rgt, which was supported by the left adjacent unit, in a counterattack.

Up to mid Sep the division's permanent adversary was the American 45 Div, and from then on two French divisions - the 1 French armored Div and the 2 Mar Div. The latter two were committed in the battles of the THUR sector. Their attacks were scattered and without inner connection. A break-through succeeded at no point. A concentration of their forces and attack led across the plain and along the mainroads, would probably have been more successful. In a case like this one, cutting-off of part of 159 Division in the mountains, could have been expected. The defense point, formed by the division on the left wing, was reinforced by the closer bringing up of the 169 Inf Div.

This measure proved successful up to my relief from the command of the division on 1 Dec 1944.

I handed over the division, fully convinced that it would continue to prove its worth in the future. In the preceding stubborn wood and mountain battles, as well as in the most difficult situations at the gates of Burgundy, it had given proof of outstanding perseverance and power of resistance. It succeeded in preventing a break-through, and fought without relief against an enemy who was vastly superior at all

times and who disposed of fresh troops, predominantly motorized artillery, tanks, unlimited quantities of ammunition and excellent air reconnaissance. The 159 Inf Div fought bravely and honourably.

Signed: FRIEDR WILH DERHM

Gen Maj. d. Res.



MS # B-591

- 2 -

Annex 1

Commitment of the 159 Inf Div  
from end of Sep to end of Nov 1944

Map 1: 100,000 FRANCE - Sheet 154

WILLEREN

DOLLEREN

ROLLIN (later FRANKE)

end Sep  
end Oct

Rgt 1210 on 15 Nov

assigned to 189 I D

the other two regimental

sectors were enlarged

BELFORT

Annex 2

Order of battle  
of the 159 Inf Div  
about mid/end Nov 1944

159 Inf Div

Field police

Cartographic  
post

1 Rgt C V

(later Gren Rgt 1211)

PIONIER BTL 1059

of which one camp was detached

as corps engineer camp.

( in formation )

( in formation )

2 ( horse-drawn ) column.

Tactically subordinated unit

from Freeres Festungs - Arty Abt. 1314

3 platoons at 3 guns each (partly without. horses)

Footnote to order of battle

- a - up to end Sep 44 from former authorised war strength app
- b - up to end Oct 44 " " " " % reached
- c - up to end Nov 44 " " " " % reached

	Gren Regt 1209	Gren Regt 1210	Inf Regt CV (later Gren Regt 1211)
a -	60%	40%	-
b -	80%	60%	-
c -	90%	85%	65%

	P1 BTL 1099	Div Inf Rifle Co	TELDERS. BTL
a -	60%	-	-
b -	75%	65%	-
c -	85%	70%	35%

	Signal Bn 1099	Pz Jaeg Bn 1099
a -	50%	-
b -	70%	60%
c -	80%	75%

Arty Regt 1099 ( in formation )  
headquarters Btry ( in formation )

II Bn with 1 signal platoon

1 Bn with one signal platoon

a -	-	35%
b -	60%	60%
c -	90%	90%

Supply Regt 1059

a -	being activated
b -	50%
c -	85%

**END OF FILE**

ANLAGE 1)

EINSATZ DER 159. J.D.

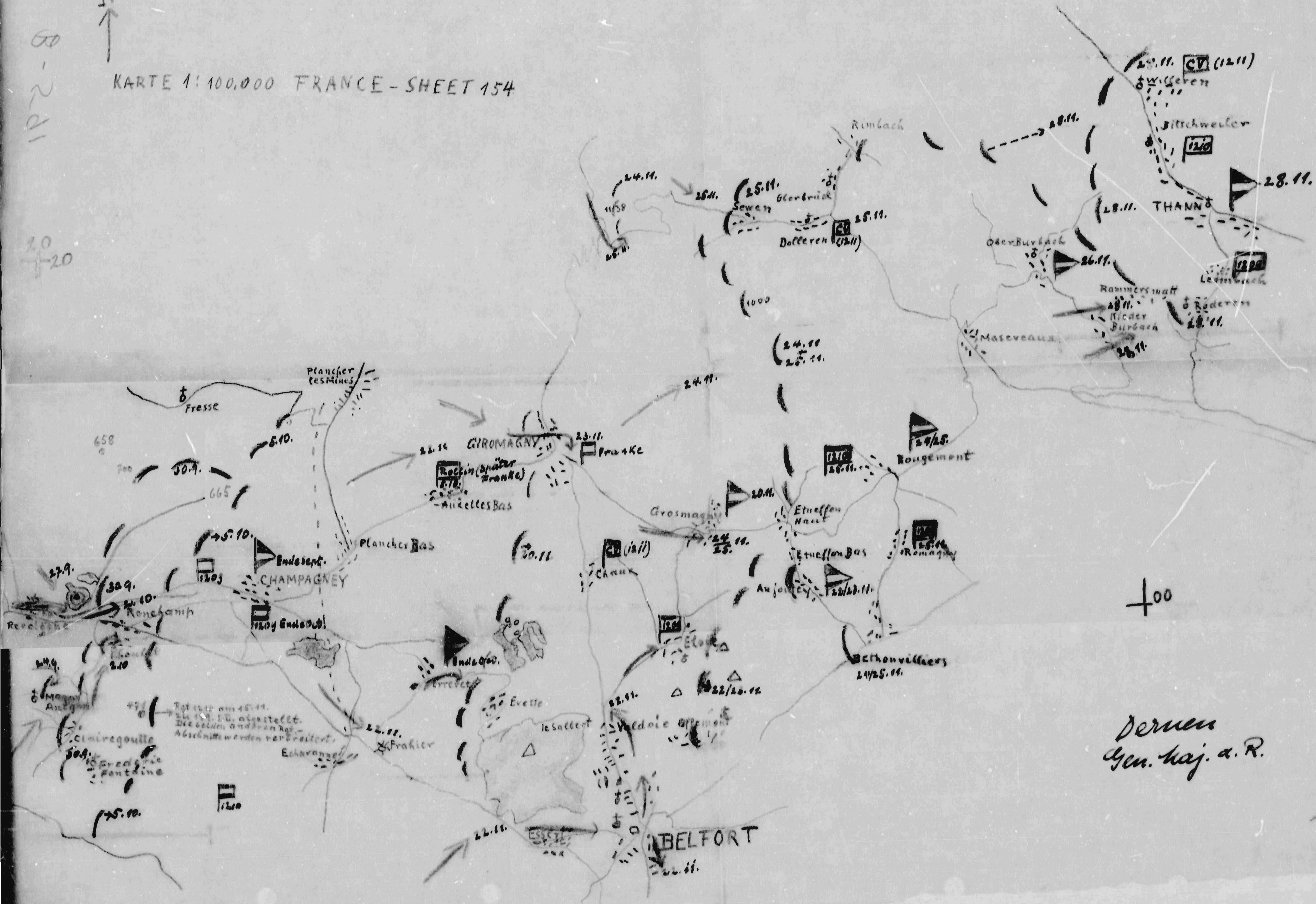
B-591

VON ENDE SEPT. 44. BIS ENDE NOV. 44.

KARTE 1:100,000 FRANCE - SHEET 154



Handwritten numbers and symbols on the left margin: '00', '20', '20', and a crosshair symbol.



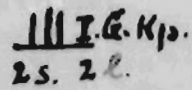
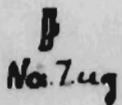
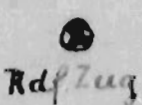
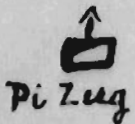
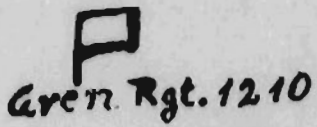
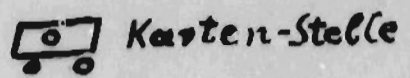
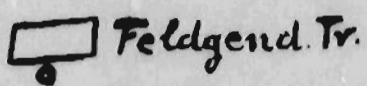
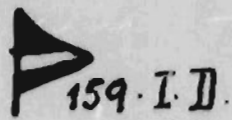
Handwritten number '100' with a crosshair symbol.

*Darmen  
Gen. haj. a. R.*

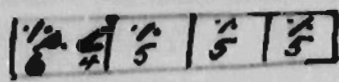
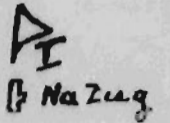
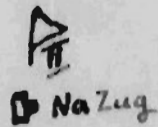
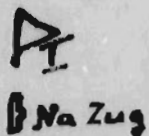
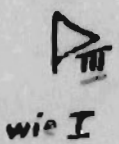
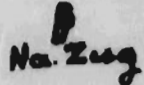
# Kriegsgliederung

der 159. I. D.

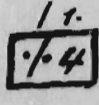
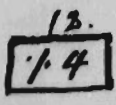
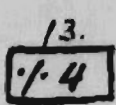
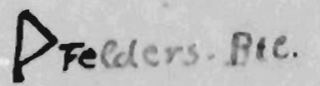
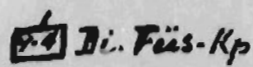
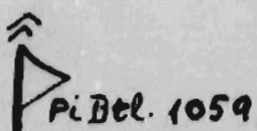
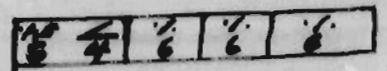
gegen Mitte/Ende November 1944



(wie 1209)



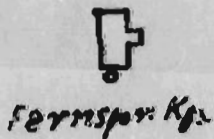
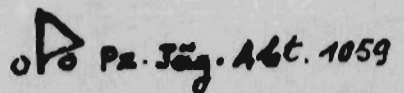
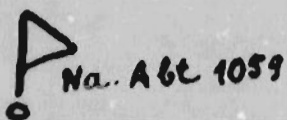
wie I



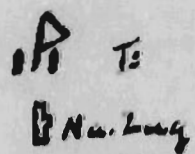
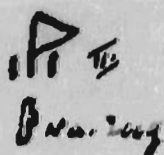
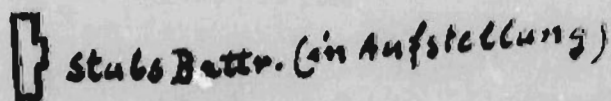
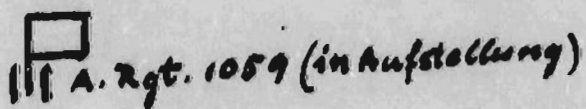
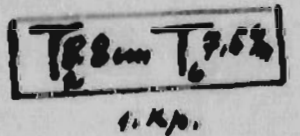
davon 1 Kp. als Korps Pi Kp. abKdt.

Di. Kampfschule

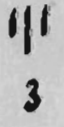
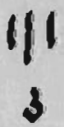
Ausb. Kp.



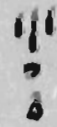
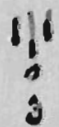
2. 4m  
10  
2. (Füs) Kp



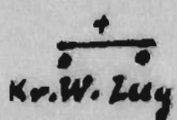
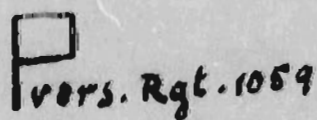
157m  
2 (G.F.H.16)



10.59m  
G.F.H.16



10,5 9m  
G.F.H.16



30 50  
2. (Ganz) Kol

10-40 6  
1. (Kw) Kol

