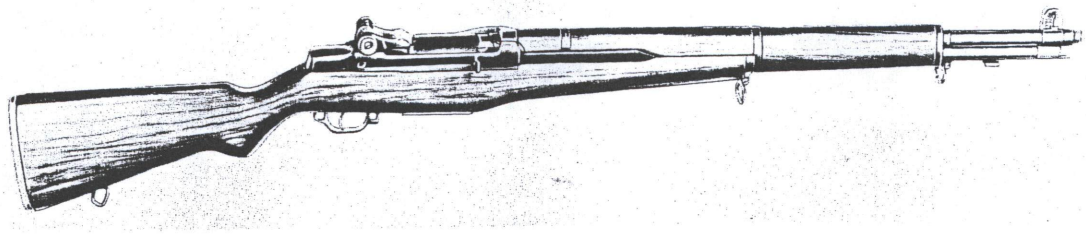
Supplemental Materials

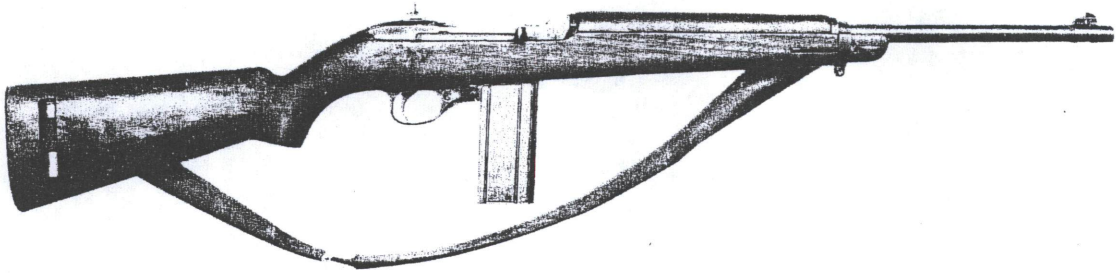
The following pages are supplemental materials that will help participants better understand certain aspects of the action on the Kall Trail and around Schmidt.

These include material on the light infantry weapons used, problems of battle fatigue (what we now call PTSD) and morale, and finally an article about Private Eddie Slovik of the 28th ID's 109th Infantry Regiment who was executed for desertion in January 1945.



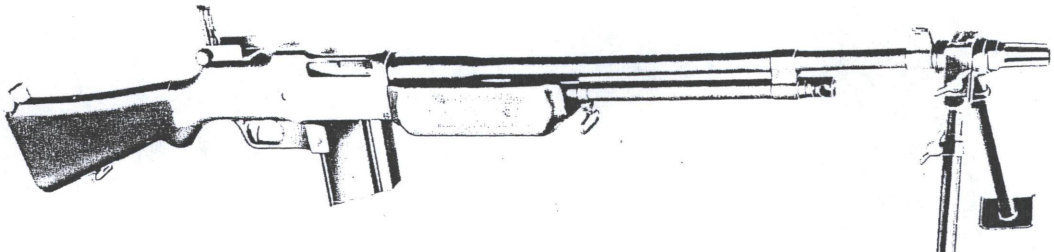
Caliber .30 M1 Rifle (Garand semiautomatic rifle).

Caliber .30 M1 Rifle
.30-06
Semi-Automatic
8 round staggered row
non-detachable magazine
requires special 8 round
clip
9.5 lb



U. S. Carbine, caliber .30, M1.

Carbine, caliber .30 M1
Semi-Automatic
15 or 30 round staggered
row, detachable magazine
5.5 lb

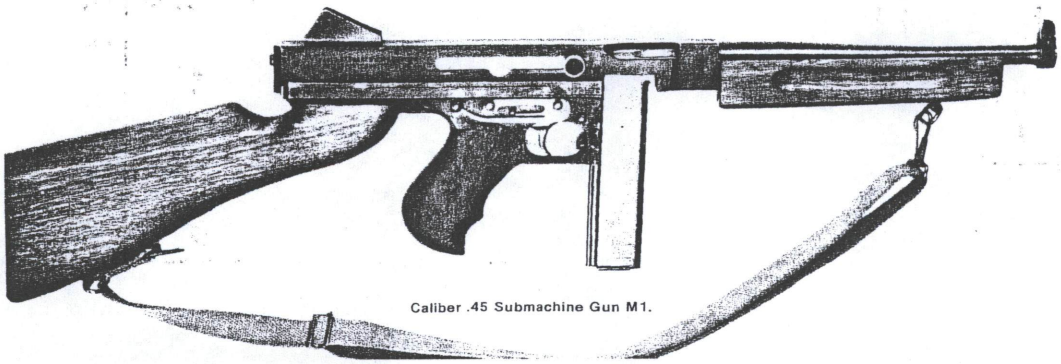


Caliber .30 Model 1918A2 Browning Automatic Rifle of late type. This specimen does not have carrying handle.

Caliber .30 Model 1918A2
Browning Automatic Rifle
30-06
Slow and Fast Fire
20 round staggered row,
detachable magazine
Slow Fire – 300-500 r.pm.
Fast Fire – 500-650 r.p.m.
19.4 lb

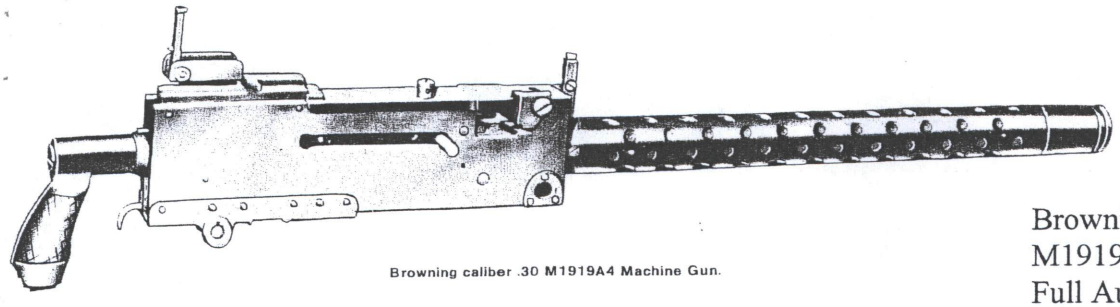
Caliber .45 M3 Submachine Gun
.45 APC
Automatic only
30 Round staggered row,
detachable magazine
350-450 r.p.m.
8.15 lb

Caliber .45 1911A1 Automatic Pistol
.45 APC
7 round in-line detachable
magazine
2.43 lb.



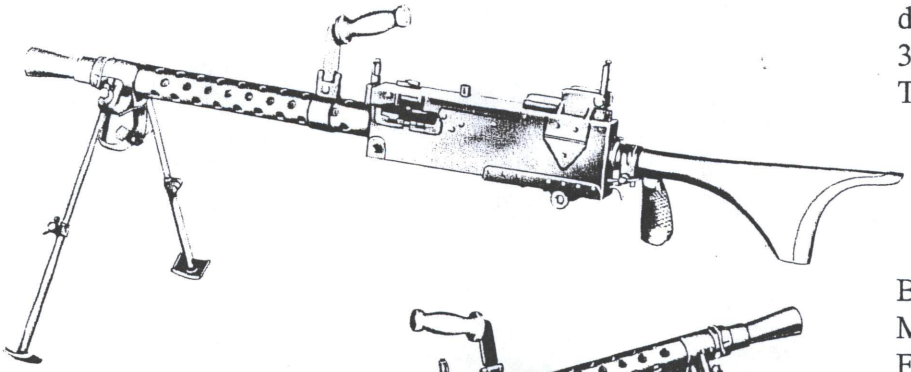
Caliber .45 Submachine Gun M1.

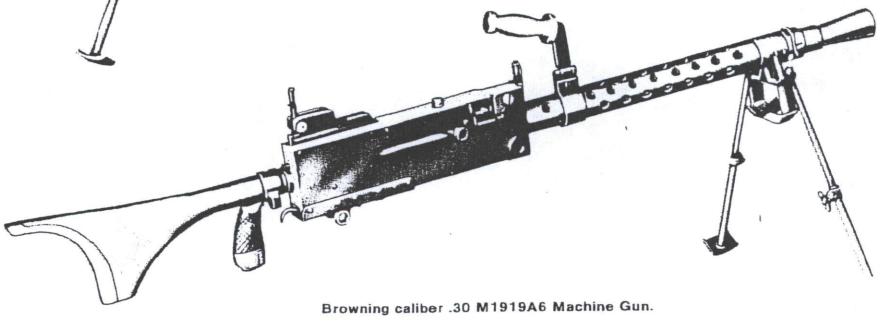
Caliber .45 Submachine Gun M1
.45 APC
Selective Fire-700 r.p.m.
20 or 30 round staggered row,
detachable magazine
10.45 lb



Browning caliber .30 M1919A4 Machine Gun.

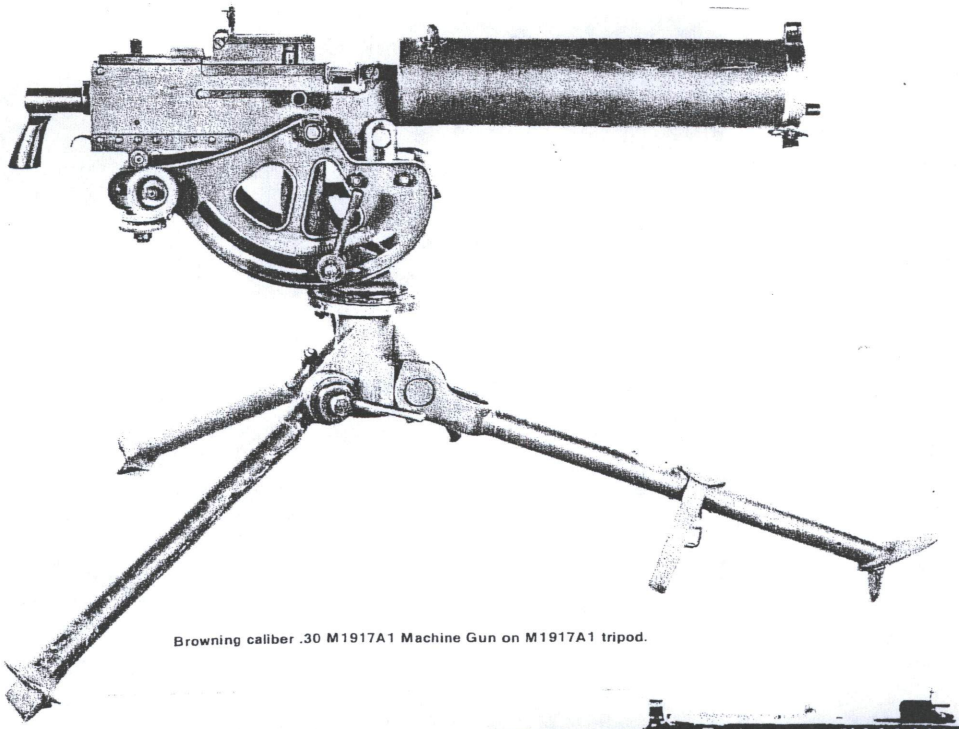
Browning Caliber .30
M1919A4 Machine Gun
Full Automatic Only-400-550 r.p.m.
250 Round Fabric Belt or
disintegrating links
31 lb
Tripod 14 lb (M2)





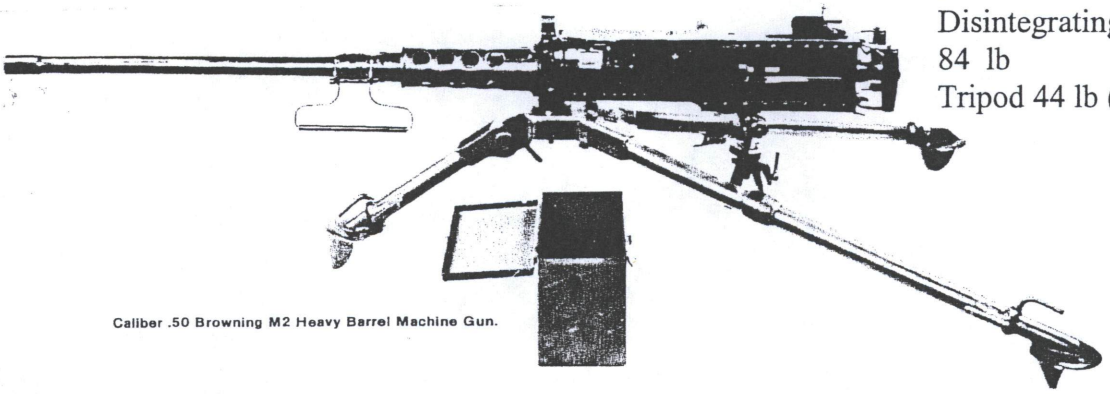
Browning caliber .30 M1919A6 Machine Gun.

Browning Caliber .30
M1919A6 Machine Gun
Full Automatic Only-400-500 r.p.m.
250 Round Fabric Belt or
disintegrating links
32.5 lb (with Bipod)
Tripod 14 lb (M2)



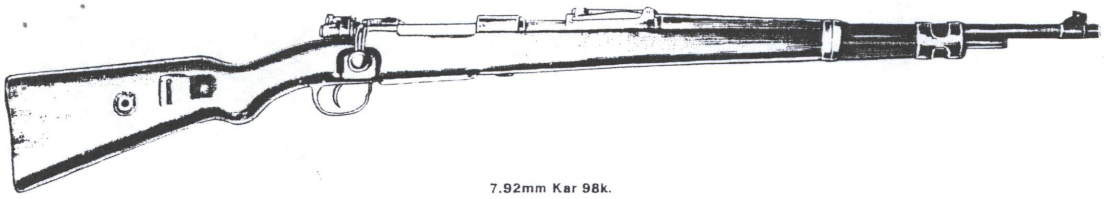
Browning caliber .30 M1917A1 Machine Gun on M1917A1 tripod.

Browning Caliber .30
M1917A1 Machine Gun
Full Automatic Only-450 - 650 r.p.m.
250 Round Fabric Belt or
disintegrating links
41 lb (with Water)
Tripod 53,15 lb)



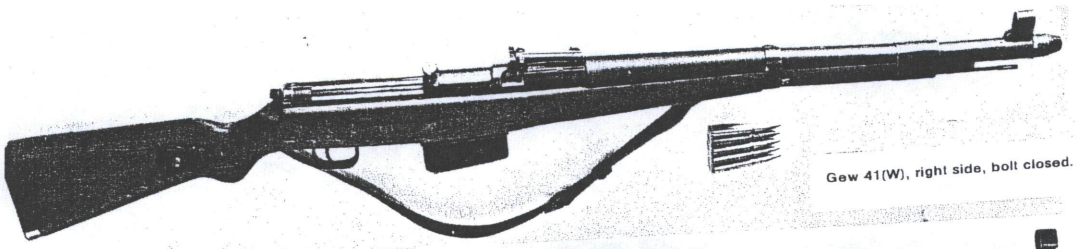
Caliber .50 Browning M2 Heavy Barrel Machine Gun.

Caliber .50 Browning
M2 Heavy Barrel Machine Gun
Full Automatic Only-450 - 550 r.p.m.
Disintegrating links
84 lb
Tripod 44 lb (M3)



7.92mm Kar 98k.

K98k
7.92 x 57 mm
5-round in-line fixed magazine
Bolt Action
8.3 lbs

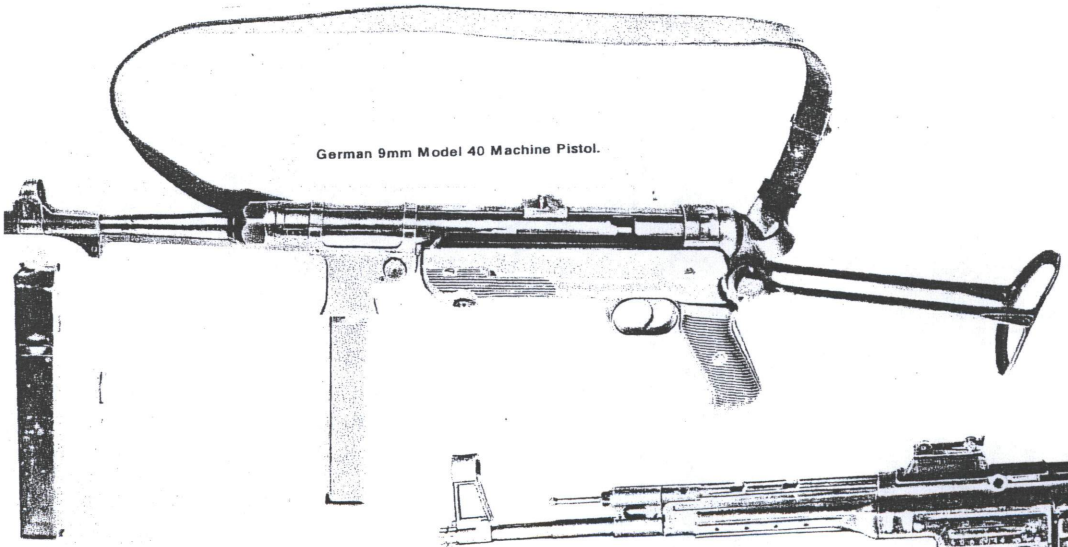


Gew 41(W), right side, bolt closed.

Gew 41 (W)
7.92 x 57 mm
Semi-automatic
10 Round staggered row
semi-fixed magazine
11.08 lb

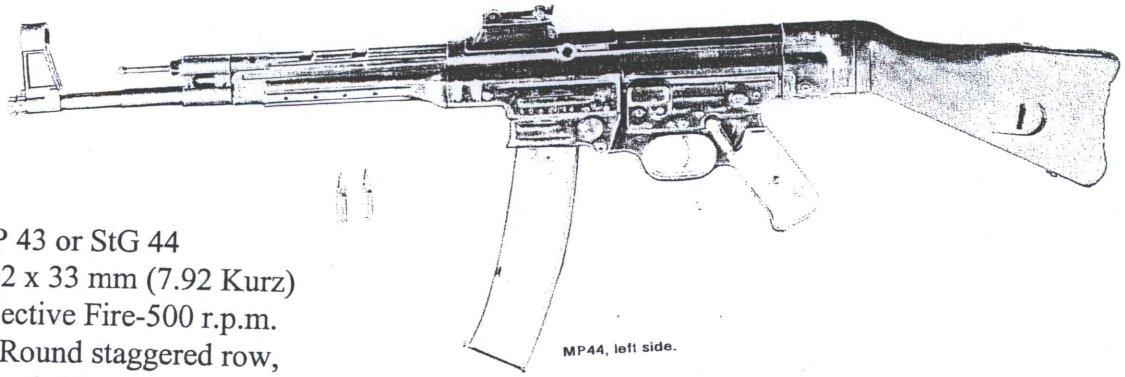
Gew 43 (above) and Kar 43 (below), both 7.92mm.

G (or) K 43
7.92 x 57 mm
10 Round staggered row
Detachable magazine
semi-automatic
9.5 lb
K 43 used as sniper weapon
Full Automatics versions also used



German 9mm Model 40 Machine Pistol.

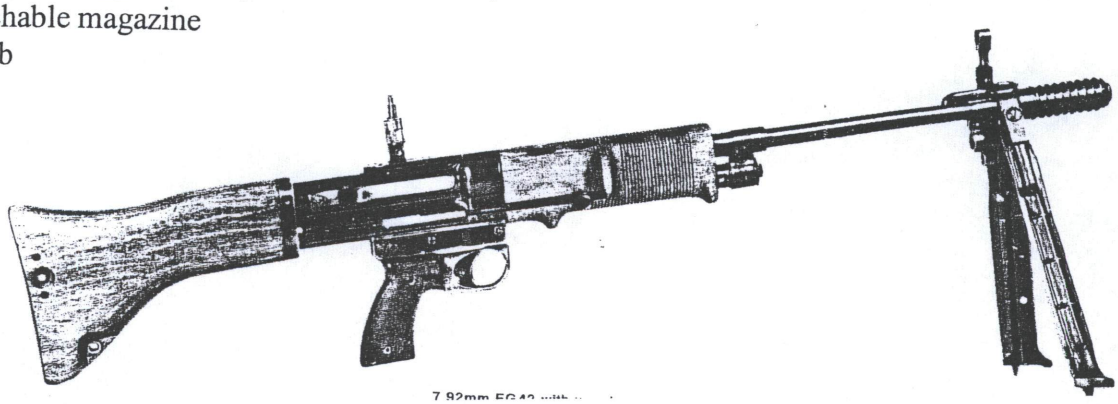
MP 40
9 mm Parabellum
Full Automatic-500 r.p.m.
30 Round staggered row,
detachable magazine
8.87 lb.



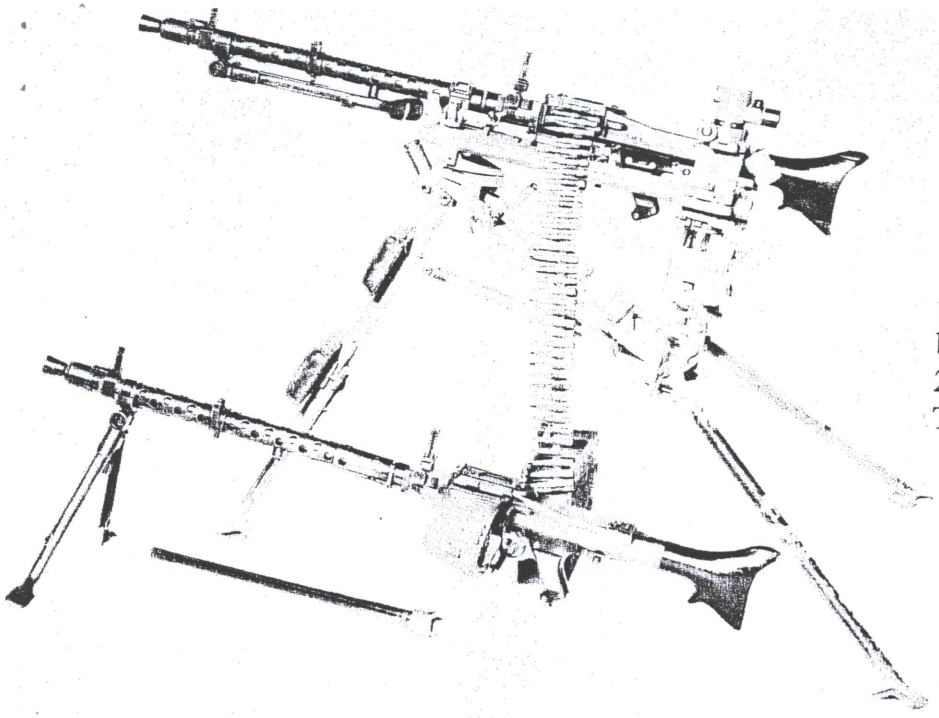
MP44, left side.

MP 43 or StG 44
7.92 x 33 mm (7.92 Kurz)
Selective Fire-500 r.p.m.
30 Round staggered row,
detachable magazine
11.5 lb

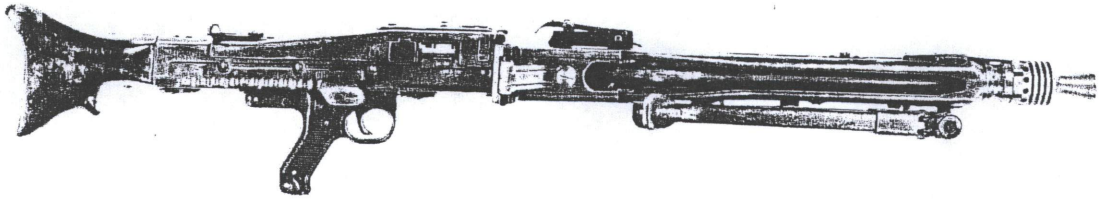
FG 42
7.92 x -800 r.p.m.
Selective Fire-750-800 r.p.m.
20 Round staggered row,
detachable magazine
9.93 lb
Note fired semi automatic with a Closed bolt
Full automatic with an open bolt



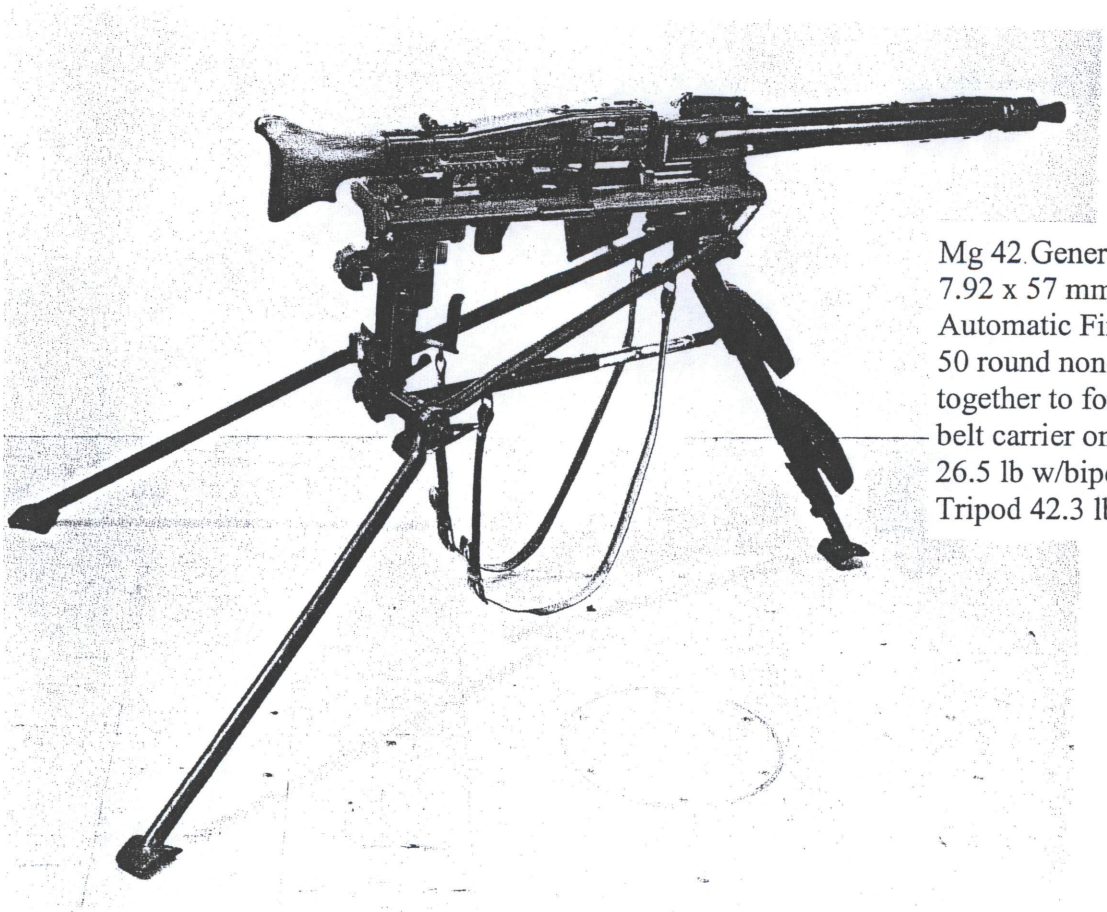
7.92mm FG42 with



MG 34 General Purpose Machine Gun
7.92 x 57 mm
Selective Fire – 800-900 r.p.m.
50 round non-disintegrating belt, linked together to form 250 belt or in a 50 round belt carrier on MG
26.5 lb w/bipod
Tripod 42.3 lb with scope

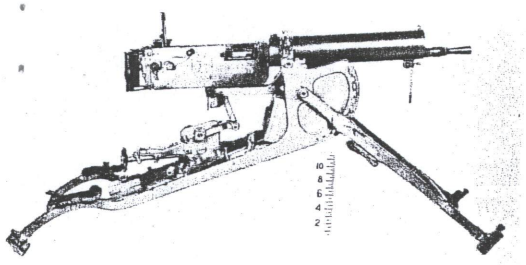


7.92mm MG42 Machine Gun.



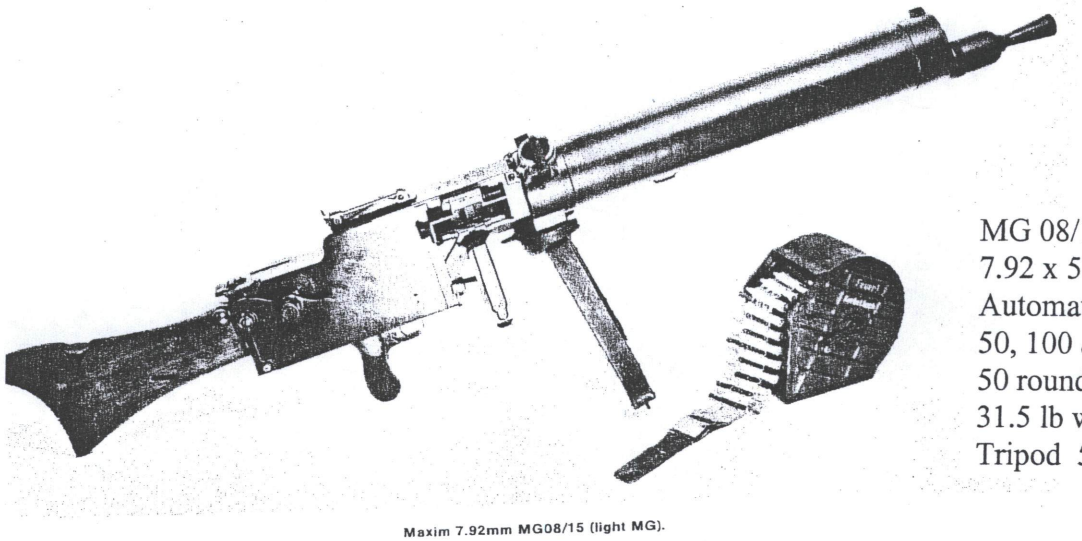
Mg 42 General Purpose Machine Gun
7.92 x 57 mm
Automatic Fire only – 1,100-1,200 r.p.m
50 round non-disintegrating belt, linked together to form 250 belt or in a 50 round belt carrier on MG
26.5 lb w/bipod
Tripod 42.3 lb with scope

MG42 on tripod.



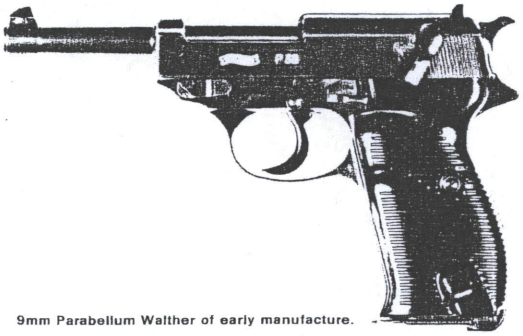
7.92mm MG08.

MG 08 Heavy Machine Gun
7.92 x 57 mm
Automatic Fire Only – 400-500 r.p.m
100 & 200 round fabric belt.
40.5 lb
Tripod 65.5



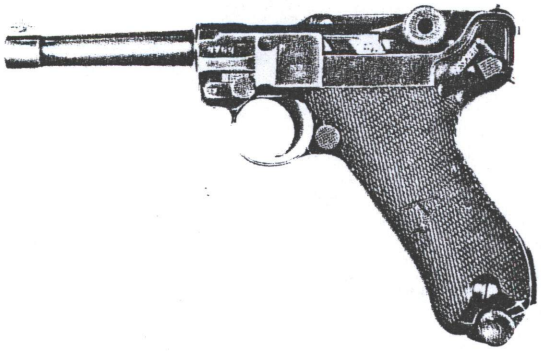
Maxim 7.92mm MG08/15 (light MG).

MG 08/15 Heavy Machine Gun
7.92 x 57 mm
Automatic Fire Only – 400-500 r.p.m
50, 100 & 200 round fabric belt,
50 round belt carrier carried on MG
31.5 lb w/Bipod
Tripod 51 lb.



9mm Parabellum Walther of early manufacture.

P 38
9 mm Parabellum
Semi Automatic
8 round inline detachable
magazine
2.1 lb



German 9mm Parabellum Model 08 Pistol (Luger P08).

P 08
9 mm Parabellum
Semi Automatic
8 round inline detachable
magazine
1.93 lb

Battle Fatigue/Combat Stress/Psychological Casualties in the Huertgen Forest

1. U.S. Forces committed: 120,000[1]

2. U.S. Casualties
   a. 24,000 Americans killed, missing, captured and wounded[1]
   b. Additional 9,000 succumbed to trench foot, respiratory diseases and combat fatigue[1]
   c. About 2,500 combat exhaustion casualties[2]
3. The Human Face of Battle Fatigue:
   a. The men were "physically exhausted to near the breaking point. They were tired and dirty.... Eyes were bloodshot, cheeks hollowed, and shoulders bent forward." [3]
   b. "Like some amorphous leech, the forest sucked at the lifeblood of a man's body and spirit."[2]
   c. " . . . toward the rear, eyes staring straight ahead, mind vacant, lips slightly drooling." [2]
4. Contributing factors to Battle Fatigue
   a. Sudden Exposure – Fear, shock, life, and death issues
   b. Cumulative exposure
   c. Physical stressors and stress symptoms
   d. Home front and pre-existing problems
5. Leader Actions
   a. "Soldiers in the 121st Infantry who suffered from combat exhaustion received coffee, a shot of whiskey, and some sleeping pills. They were allowed to rest a couple of days and then return to the line."[2]
   b. "These men have been fighting without rest or sleep for four days and last night were forced to lie unprotected from the weather in an open field. In some instances men were forced to discard their overcoats because they lacked the strength to wear them. . . . I firmly believe that every man up there should be evacuated through medical channels." [5]
   c. "Jerry turned all hell loose! Branded in my mind is position after position with men torn to shreds around busted up turkey canisters – as many as ten in one place."[4]

References

[1] http:/hurtgen1944.homestead.com

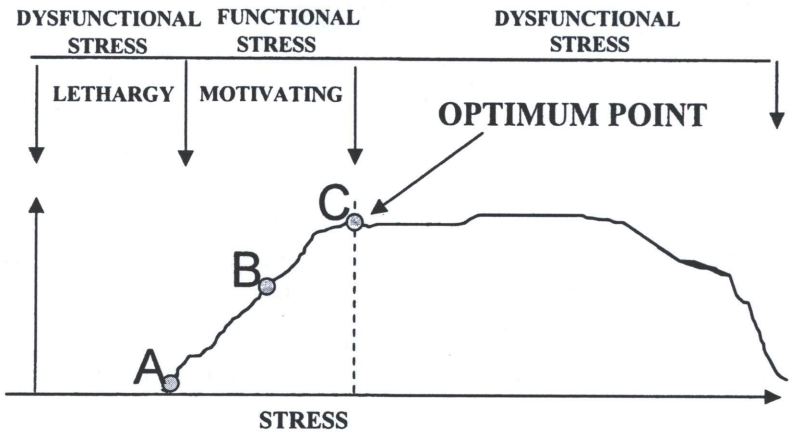
[2] Miller, Edward G. *"A Dark and Blody Ground: The Hürtgen Forest and the Roer River Dams 1944-1945"*. pg138&139

[3] Miller, pg18

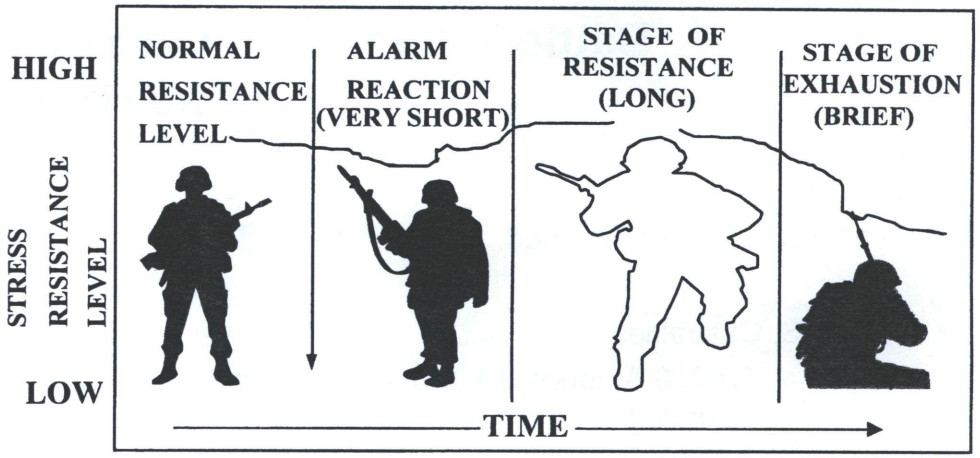
[4] American Heritage: Gavin, Gen. James M. *"Bloody Huertgen: The Battle that Should Have Never Been Fought"*. December 1979. Pages 32-44

[5] American History Illustrated: MacDonald, Charles B. *"Horror in the Hürtgen Forest"*. May 1972. Pages 12-22

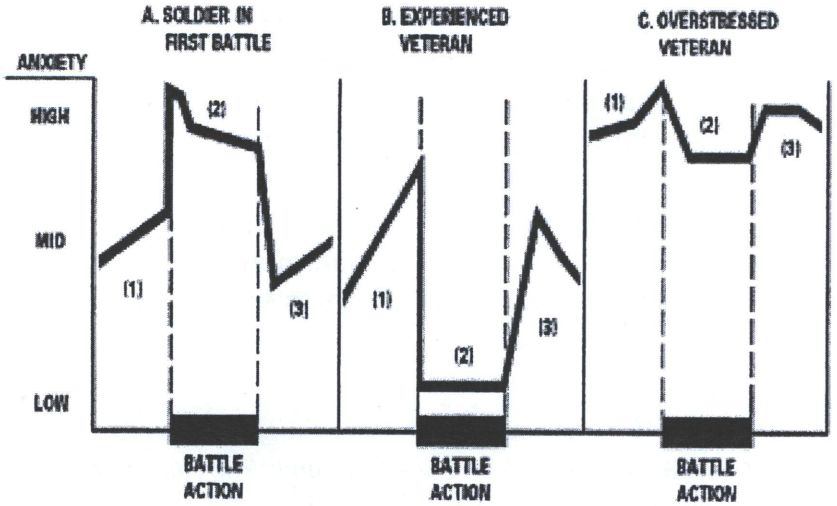
THE STRESS-PERFORMANCE RELATIONSHIP



STAGES OF STRESS ADAPTATION



Anxiety at different stages in combat tour.

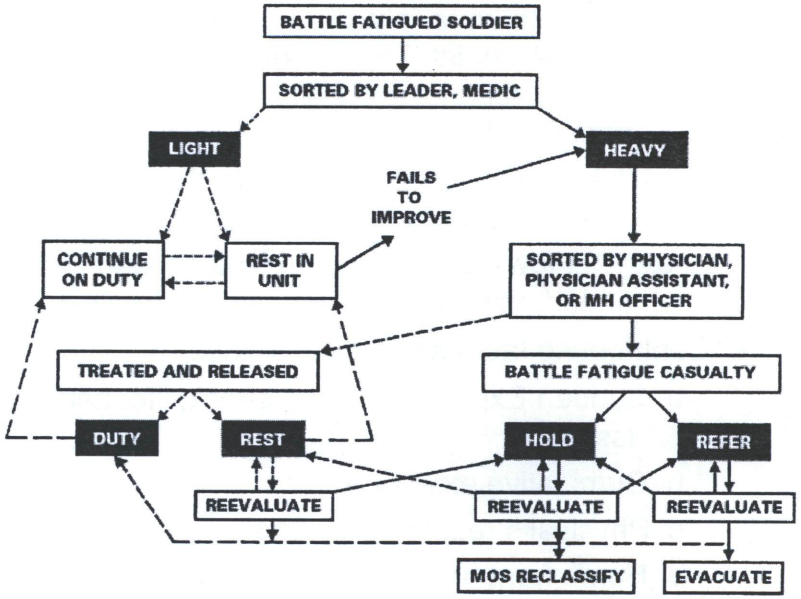


1. MID PREBATTLE ANXIETY:
WORRIED ABOUT UNKNOWN
2. HIGH FEAR IN BATTLE TROUBLE
DOING JOB. FEELS INCOMPETENT
3. RAPID RELIEF OVER SURVIVING.

1. MID / HIGH PREBATTLE ANXIETY:
KNOWS THE RISK.
2. LOW FEAR IN ACTION
CONCENTRATES ON JOB SKILLS
3. REBOUND ANXIETY
LOOKS BACK, SEES CLOSE CALLS.

1. HIGH PREBATTLE ANXIETY:
DREADS THE RISK
2. HIGH FEAR IN ACTION
UNABLE TO CONTROL STRESS
AWARENESS OF THE RISK
3. HIGH REBOUND:
PREOCCUPIED WITH CLOSE CALLS
AND GUILT THAT OTHERS WERE KILLED

Sorting choices and labels for battle fatigue cases.



4R's: 85% of soldiers improve within 3 days with Reassurance, Rest, Replenishment of physical needs, and activities which Restore confidence.

Eddie Slovik

Edward Donald "Eddie" Slovik (February 18, 1920 – January 31, 1945) was a United States Army soldier during World War II and the only American soldier to be court-martialled and executed for desertion since the American Civil War.[1][2]

Although over 21,000 American soldiers were given varying sentences for desertion during World War II, including 49 death sentences, Slovik's death sentence was the only one that was actually carried out.[1][3][4]

During World War II, 1.7 million courts-martial were held, representing one third of all criminal cases tried in the United States during the same period. Most of the cases were minor, as were the sentences.[2] Nevertheless, a clemency board, appointed by the Secretary of War in the summer of 1945, reviewed all general courts-martial where the accused was still in confinement.[2][5] That Board remitted or reduced the sentence in 85 percent of the 27,000 serious cases reviewed.[2] The death penalty was rarely imposed, and those cases typically were for rapes or murders. Slovik was the only soldier executed who had been convicted of a "purely military" offense.[2]

1 Early life and education

Slovik was born in Detroit, Michigan, to a Polish-American family, the son of Anna and Josef Slowikowski.[6][7] As a minor, he was arrested frequently. Slovik's first arrest was at 12 years old when he and some friends broke into a foundry to steal brass.[8] Between 1932 and 1937, he was caught for several incidents of petty theft, breaking and entering, and disturbing the peace. In October 1937, he was sent to prison but was paroled in September 1938. After stealing and crashing a car with two friends while drunk, he was sent back to prison in January 1939.

2 Career

In April 1942, Slovik was paroled once more, and he obtained a job at Montella Plumbing and Heating in Dearborn, Michigan. There he met the woman who would become his wife, Antoinette Wisniewski, while she was working as a bookkeeper for the owner, James Montella. They married on November 7, 1942 and lived with her parents. Slovik's criminal record made him classified as unfit for duty in the U.S. military (4-F), but, shortly after the couple's first wedding anniversary, Slovik was reclassified as fit for duty (1-A) and subsequently drafted by the Army.

Slovik arrived at Camp Wolters in Texas for basic military training on January 24, 1944. In August, he was dispatched to join the fighting in France. Arriving on August 20, he was one of 12 replacements assigned to Company G of the 109th Infantry Regiment, U.S. 28th Infantry Division.

2.1 Desertion

While en route to his assigned unit, Slovik and Private John Tankey, a friend he met during basic training, took cover during an artillery attack and became separated from their replacement detachment. This was the point at which Slovik later stated he found he "wasn't cut out for combat." The next morning, they found a Canadian military police unit and remained with them for the next six weeks. Tankey wrote to their regiment to explain their absence before he and Slovik reported to their unit for duty on October 7, 1944. The US Army's rapid advance through France had caused many replacement soldiers to have trouble finding their assigned units, and so no charges were filed against Slovik or Tankey.

The following day on October 8, Slovik informed his company commander, Captain Ralph Grotte, that he was "too scared" to serve in a front-line rifle company and asked to be reassigned to a rear area unit. He told Grotte that he would run away if he were assigned to a rifle unit, and asked his captain if that would constitute desertion. Grotte confirmed that it would. He refused Slovik's request for reassignment and sent him to a rifle platoon.[9]

The next day, October 9, Slovik deserted from his infantry unit. His friend, John Tankey, caught up with him and attempted to persuade him to stay, but Slovik's only comment was that his "mind was made up". Slovik walked several miles to the rear and approached an enlisted cook at a headquarters detachment, presenting him with a note which stated:

> I, Pvt. Eddie D. Slovik, 36896415, confess to the desertion of the United States Army. At the time of my desertion we were in Albuff [Elbeuf] in France. I came to Albuff as a replacement. They were shelling the town and we were told to dig in for the night. The

> following morning they were shelling us again. I was so scared, nerves and trembling, that at the time the other replacements moved out, I couldn't move. I stayed there in my fox hole till it was quiet and I was able to move. I then walked into town. Not seeing any of our troops, so I stayed over night at a French hospital. The next morning I turned myself over to the Canadian Provost Corp. After being with them six weeks I was turned over to American M.P. They turned me loose. I told my commanding officer my story. I said that if I had to go out there again I'd run away. He said there was nothing he could do for me so I ran away again AND I'LL RUN AWAY AGAIN IF I HAVE TO GO OUT THERE.
> — Signed Pvt. Eddie D. Slovik A.S.N. 36896415[4]

The cook summoned his company commander and an MP, who read the note and urged Slovik to destroy it before he was taken into custody, which Slovik refused. He was brought before Lieutenant Colonel Ross Henbest, who again offered him the opportunity to tear up the note, return to his unit, and face no further charges. After Slovik again refused, Henbest ordered Slovik to write another note on the back of the first one stating that he fully understood the legal consequences of deliberately incriminating himself with the note and that it would be used as evidence against him in a court martial.

Slovik was taken into custody and confined to the division stockade. The divisional judge advocate, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Sommer, offered Slovik a third and final opportunity to rejoin his unit in exchange for the charges against him being suspended. He also offered to transfer Slovik to a different infantry regiment where no one would know of his past and he could start with a "clean slate". Slovik, still convinced that he would face only jail time (which he had already experienced and considered far more tolerable than combat) declined these offers, saying, "I've made up my mind. I'll take my court martial."

2.2 Court martial

The 28th Division was scheduled to begin an attack in the Hurtgen Forest. The coming attack was common knowledge in the unit, and casualty rates were expected to be high, as the prolonged combat in the area had been unusually grueling. The Germans were determined to hold, and terrain and weather greatly reduced the usual American advantages in armor and air support. A small minority of soldiers (less than 0.5%) indicated they preferred to be imprisoned rather than remain in combat, and the rates of desertion and other crimes had begun to rise.

Slovik was charged with desertion to avoid hazardous duty and tried by court martial on 11 November 1944. Slovik had to be tried by a court martial composed of staff officers from other U.S. Army divisions, because all combat officers from the 28th Infantry Division were fighting on the front lines.[2] The prosecutor, Captain John Green, presented witnesses to whom Slovik had stated his intention to "run away". The defense counsel, Captain Edward Woods, announced that Slovik had elected not to testify. At the end of the day, the nine officers of the court found Slovik guilty and sentenced him to death. The sentence was reviewed and approved by the division commander, Major General Norman Cota. General Cota's stated attitude was "Given the situation as I knew it in November, 1944, I thought it was my duty to this country to approve that sentence. If I hadn't approved it--if I had let Slovik accomplish his purpose--I don't know how I could have gone up to the line and looked a good soldier in the face."[2]

On 9 December, Slovik wrote a letter to the Supreme Allied commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, pleading for clemency.[10] However, desertion had become a systemic problem in France, and the surprise German offensive through the Ardennes began on 16 December with severe U.S. casualties, pocketing several battalions and straining the morale of the infantry to the greatest extent yet seen during the war.

Eisenhower confirmed the execution order on 23 December, noting that it was necessary to discourage further desertions. The sentence came as a shock to Slovik, who had been expecting a dishonorable discharge and a prison term, the same punishment he had seen meted out to other deserters from the division while he was confined to the stockade. As he was an ex-con, a dishonorable discharge would have made little further impact on his civilian life as a common laborer, and military prison terms for discipline offenses were widely expected to be commuted once the war was over.

3 Execution

The execution by firing squad was carried out at 10:04 a.m. on 31 January 1945, near the village of Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines. The unrepentant Slovik said to the soldiers whose duty it was to prepare him for the firing squad before they led him to the place of execution, "They're not shooting me for deserting the United States Army, thousands of guys have done that. They just need to make an example out of somebody and I'm it because I'm an ex-con. I used to steal things when I was a kid, and that's what they are shooting me for. They're shooting me for the bread and chewing gum I stole when I was 12 years old."

Slovik, wearing a uniform stripped of all insignia with a GI blanket across his shoulders against the cold, was led into the courtyard of a house chosen for the execu-

tion because it had a high masonry wall. The commanders did not want the local French civilians to witness the proceedings. Soldiers stood him against a six inch by six inch post. The soldiers strapped him to the post using web belts. One went around and under his arms and hung on a spike on the back side of the post to prevent his body from slumping following the volley. The others went around his knees and ankles. Just before a soldier placed a black hood over his head, the attending chaplain, Father Carl Patrick Cummings, said to Slovik, "Eddie, when you get up there, say a little prayer for me." Slovik answered, "Okay, Father. I'll pray that you don't follow me too soon." Those were his last words.[11]

Twelve picked soldiers were detailed for the firing squad from the 109th Regiment. The weapons used were standard issue M1 rifles with just one bullet for each rifle. One rifle was loaded with a blank. On the command of "Fire", Slovik was hit by eleven bullets, at least four of them being fatal. The wounds ranged from high in the neck region out to the left shoulder, over the left chest, and under the heart. One bullet was in the left upper arm. An Army physician quickly determined Slovik had not been immediately killed. Just as the firing squad's rifles were being reloaded in preparation for another volley, but before the reloading of the rifles was complete, Private Slovik died. He was 24 years of age. The execution took 15 minutes.[12]

4 Burial

Slovik was buried in Plot E of Oise-Aisne American Cemetery and Memorial in Fère-en-Tardenois, alongside 95 American soldiers executed for rape and/or murder. Their grave markers are hidden from view by shrubbery and bear sequential numbers instead of names, making it impossible to identify them individually without knowing the key. Antoinette Slovik petitioned the Army for her husband's remains and his pension until her death in 1979. Slovik's case was taken up in 1981 by former Macomb County Commissioner Bernard V. Calka, a Polish-American World War II veteran, who continued to petition the Army to return Slovik's remains to the United States. In 1987 he persuaded President Ronald Reagan to order their return.[13] Calka raised $5,000 to pay for the exhumation of Slovik's remains from Row 3, Grave 65 of Plot E and their transfer to Detroit's Woodmere Cemetery, where Slovik was reburied next to his wife.[13]

Antoinette Slovik and others petitioned seven US presidents (Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Jimmy Carter) for a pardon, but none was granted.

5 Analysis

In militaries around the world, courts-martial have imposed death sentences for offenses such as cowardice, desertion, insubordination, and mutiny. In France during World War I from 1917 to 1918, the United States Army executed 35 of its own soldiers, but all were convicted of rape and/or unprovoked murder of civilians and not for military offenses.[14] During World War II in all theaters of the war, the United States military executed 102 of its own soldiers for rape and/or unprovoked murder of civilians, but only Slovik was executed for the military offense of desertion.[2][15]

Colonel Robert C. Bard of the judge advocate general's office noted that of the 2,864 army personnel tried for desertion for the period January 1942 through June 1948, 49 were convicted and sentenced to death, and 48 of those sentences were voided by higher authority. One of the members of the tribunal came to believe that Slovik's execution was an injustice in light of all the circumstances, and was an example of disparate treatment from a flawed process.[4]

6 In popular culture

In 1960, Frank Sinatra announced his plan to produce a movie titled *The Execution of Private Slovik*, to be written by blacklisted Hollywood 10 screenwriter Albert Maltz. This announcement provoked great outrage, and Sinatra was accused of being a Communist sympathizer. As Sinatra was campaigning for John F. Kennedy for President, the Kennedy camp became concerned, and ultimately persuaded Sinatra to cancel the project.[16]

However, Slovik's execution was the basis for a 1954 book by William Bradford Huie. In 1974, the book was adapted for a TV movie starring Martin Sheen and also called *The Execution of Private Slovik*. The military service record of Slovik, which is now a public archival record available from the Military Personnel Records Center, provides a detailed account of the actual execution of Slovik which took place in 1945 and it was upon this that most of the film was based. Some dramatic license occurs, including during the execution. There is no evidence, for example, that the priest attending Slovik's execution shouted "Give it another volley if you like it so much" after the doctor indicated Slovik was still alive.[17]

In addition, the 1963 war film *The Victors* includes a scene featuring the execution of a deserter clearly inspired by Slovik.

Kurt Vonnegut mentions Slovik's execution in his novel *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Vonnegut also wrote a companion libretto to Igor Stravinsky's *Histoire du soldat,* or *A Soldier's Tale,* which tells Slovik's story.

Slovik also appears in Nick Arvin's 2005 novel *Articles of*

War, in which the fictional protagonist, Private George (Heck) Tilson, is one of the members of Slovik's firing squad.

7 See also

- History of the Polish Americans in Metro Detroit
- Harold Pringle, the only Canadian executed for desertion and murder in World War II.

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- **Eddie Slovik** *Source:* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eddie_Slovik?oldid=741057586 *Contributors:* Brion VIBBER, Mav, Koyaanis Qatsi, Mark, Danny, Rmhermen, SimonP, Mrwojo, Infrogmation, GCarty, Conti, Mulad, WhisperToMe, Wik, Cleduc, Raul654, MK~enwiki, Phil Boswell, Donreed, Ektar, JackofOz, Fuelbottle, TOttenville8, Abigail-II, Everyking, JillandJack, Gadfium, Andycjp, Yossarian, Sam Hocevar, Lindberg G Williams Jr, Neutrality, Quota, Ukexpat, D6, Rich Farmbrough, Ffirehorse, LindsayH, Calair, Jpgordon, Whosyourjudas, Giraffedata, Polylerus, Hooperbloob, A2Kafir, Anthony Appleyard, Gerweck, LtNOWIS, Max rspct, Evil Monkey, Bnguyen, Woohookitty, MK2, Fingers-of-Pyrex, Oliphaunt, Tabletop, Kelisi, GregorB, ⍰⍰⍰⍰⍰⍰, Jack Cox, Cuchullain, Kbdank71, Ted Wilkes, Koavf, Vegaswikian, CAPS LOCK, Ground Zero, Beanbatch, Noclador, Bullzeye, Thomas E. Goodwin, G.G., PS2pcGAMER, Black Falcon, Nlu, Sam Sloan, Deville, Great Cthulhu, Some guy, SmackBot, Roger Davies, David Kernow, Mauls, Gilliam, Hmains, Sepa, Jmlk17, Swax, SnappingTurtle, Michael David, Esrever, Nishkid64, Nareek, John, Purplepumpkins, Ben Jos, Jaywubba1887, SirFozzie, DouglasCalvert, Clarityfiend, PaddyM, N0TABENE, Danras, Anthony22, Aherunar, AlbertSM, PurpleChez, Cydebot, Reywas92, Lugnuts, Nabokov, Kingstowngalway, Thijs!bot, Biruitorul, Catsmoke, Escarbot, Fcyoss, Clintheacock66, Zenitram82, ARTEST4ECHO, Ghmyrtle, Caracaskid, Magioladitis, Waacstats, Nopira, FlieGerFaUstMe262, STBot, CliffC, CommonsDelinker, J.delanoy, DrKay, AltiusBimm, FLJuJitsu, Troutsneeze, Hillock65, Aatomic1, HenryLarsen, Hugo999, UnicornTapestry, Indubitably, Umalee, ^demonBot2, Scarlet Spartan, Drutt, JonSenior, OberRanks, YonaBot, Baseball Bugs, Kumioko (renamed), Tom Reedy, Explicit, The Thing That Should Not Be, All Hallow's Wraith, DragonflyDC, Ktr101, NuclearWarfare, 7&6=thirteen, Tastesoon, Cold Phoenix, Berean Hunter, Bilsonius, Mdterp09, Subversive.sound, MystBot, Good Olfactory, Hueydoc, Addbot, M.nelson, Sambeck, Mdnavman, Lightbot, Zorrobot, Luckas-bot, Yobot, GrdnBug, AnomieBOT, Faethon Ghost, Aglomax, LilHelpa, GrouchoBot, Korea Beat, StealthCopyEditor, Cresix, Spinach Monster, Jnocook, FrescoBot, Paine Ellsworth, User F203, BenzolBot, MarB4, Gothica36, Ozonalayer, Apple4ever, Doppelback, Buddy23Lee, RjwilmsiBot, Mukogodo, SgtBigG, Bipedantics, Illegitimate Barrister, Wingman4l7, Demiurge1000, Lauburn, Ebehn, ClueBot NG, Nlttyndale, Runner4, Helpful Pixie Bot, Roberticus, Hypd09, Kalimanitu, BattyBot, Cyberbot II, Khazar2, Esszet, Mogism, VIAFbot, Vintovka Dragunova, Magnolia677, AddWittyNameHere, ZackGoodsonWikiAddict, Panzer VI-II, Zacdoggies, Poninjon, KasparBot, Some of everything, GreenC bot, Bender the Bot and Anonymous: 159

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Lieutenant Colonel Thomas E. Christianson, "The Destruction of the 28th Infantry Division in the Huertgen Forest, November 1944," in Roger J. Spiller, Combined Arms in Battle since 1939, Fort Leavenworth: C&GSC Press, 1992.

MORALE

The Greek mercenary Xenophon noted the importance of morale in deciding battle when he wrote in the fourth century B.C.: "Neither numbers nor strength bring victory in war; but whichever army goes into battle stronger in soul. Their enemies generally cannot withstand them." Likewise, Napoleon's maxim, "morale makes up three quarters of the game; the balance of manpower accounts only for the remaining quarter," remains an axiom in military leadership training. Perceptive commanders throughout history have recognized that high morale is a prerequisite to victory.

Conversely, low morale contributes to the failure of military operations. Soldiers suffering from low morale lack motivation, are more susceptible to fear and panic, and can become psychiatric casualties. When low morale is widespread and severe within a military organization, defeat is likely. This was the case of the 28th Infantry Division when it faced determined German resistance in the Huertgen Forest in November 1944.

Earlier in 1944, morale among American soldiers had been high as they pushed German defenders from the hedgerows of Normandy to the German border. Sweeping ever eastward, the GIs advanced with confidence, limited only by U.S. logistical efforts. Rumor had it that, with luck, the war would end before Christmas. Men of the 28th Infantry Division were veterans of this success and, in recognition of their courage and combat effectiveness, proudly wore the blazing red keystone that the Germans respectfully called the Bloody Bucket. On 11 September, 28th Division patrols crossed the Our River, and on the 13th, the remainder of the division marched into Germany, the first U.S. unit to enter the German heartland in force. Here, they honed their skills in destroying pillboxes and fortifications along Hitler's famed Westwall. On 1 October, in need of supply and reinforcements, they moved to the rear for rest and recovery. Many of the soldiers went to Paris on leave, while others remained behind to train replacements for the next breakthrough, which many thought would spell ultimate victory for the Allies.

On 26 October, the rested 28th Division moved forward and replaced the 9th Division in the Huertgen Forest. This dense area of firs and other evergreens has steep ridges with occasional open plateaus and farming hamlets that break up the vast tangle of thick green forest. Throughout this area, the German Todt organization had constructed a system of concrete pillboxes and log and earth bunkers. These positions, with interlocking fields of fire, were augmented with booby-trapped concertina wire and minefields designed to restrict all movement. The U.S. First Army commander, Lieutenant General Courtney H. Hodges, wanted to eliminate the Huertgen Forest as a threat before resuming a general offensive. Both he and the VII Corps commander, Major General J. Lawton ("Lightning Joe") Collins, were World War I veterans of the Meuse-Argonne campaign. They believed that the Huertgen Forest posed a threat as a concealed assembly and counter-attack position, just as the Argonne had in October 1918. If U.S. forces could break through the forest to the crossroads in the hamlet of Schmidt, however, they would then control the highest ridge and thus facilitate

the attack onto the Monschau plain, to the Ruhr, and beyond to the Rhine.

What appeared so simple, however, proved impossible for the soldiers of the 9th Infantry Division, who had been assigned the mission in late September. After a month of desperate fighting, they had gained only 3,000 yards and suffered 4,500 casualties. The Germans had fought with uncommon tenacity, and their morale rose as they frustrated the 9th Division's attacks. Wehrmacht soldiers were now on German soil, fighting for their homeland and families. Success reinforced the Germans' will to fight and hold. The frequently poor weather and the lush forest growth in the Huertgen also provided respite for the German defenders from the constant Allied air attacks that normally accompanied Allied ground action.

As the soldiers of the 28th prepared to relieve the 9th, they were encouraged by intelligence reports indicating a hard-pressed German defense. One report to the 109th Infantry suggested that "the West Wall was manned with battered remnants of German forces" and that "the Germeter-Huertgen area is thinly held and consists of a series of field fortifications rather than deliberate defenses." But all the favorable intelligence reports in the world could not blot out the haggard faces of 9th Division soldiers as the GIs from the 28th moved forward in relief. Morale of the men of the 28th plummeted from the moment they entered the tangled fir forest. The forest bore the scars of war: the record of the bitter contest waged by the 9th was all about in the form of abandoned helmets, gas masks, blood-soaked field jackets, and loose mines. Water-filled shell holes were everywhere. Even worse, the bodies of German and American soldiers, entangled in the sucking troughs of mud and unclaimed by graves registration units, punctuated this grotesque, gloomy landscape. The 28th's veterans knew that staff intelligence experts often under- estimated the enemy in order to justify a proposed course of action. Soldiers who had expected an easy victory were shocked by the hard reality that severe fighting lay ahead.

Weather also contributed to unit demoralization. Within days, hundreds of soldiers suffered from the damp cold that matched so well the dark, gloomy forest. In their water-filled foxholes and tents, hundreds developed respiratory diseases-from colds to walking pneumonia. Immersion foot (trench foot) cases swelled the sick call rolls. Moreover, the sick, shivering soldiers lacked adequate winter clothing. The division reported a shortage of 9,000 overshoes. (Ironically, the footwear arrived just as the 28th withdrew from the Huertgen fighting.) In this depressing atmosphere, soldiers prepared to attack what they now knew to be a resolute enemy. Weather forecasters offered little consolation. Along with the cold, damp weather, they promised occasional snow and freezing temperatures. The effect on morale was predictable.

While the soldiers in the 28th huddled in their foxholes battling the elements, plans for seizing Schmidt continued. Major General Leonard Gerow, the V Corps commander, whose penchant for micro-management was well known, specified the missions for each of the three regiments of Major General Norman D. Cota's 28th Division. The 109th Infantry would attack north toward the village of Huertgen and block any counterattack along the division's left flank (see map 19). (In October, German counterattacks along this axis had been successful against the 9th Division.) Gerow directed the 110th Infantry to strike south from Germeter through the forest and pillbox defense line to form a corridor in the woods near Simonskall. This corridor would provide a

more secure and trafficable main supply route into Schmidt. Only one regiment, the 112th, was to take Schmidt, the actual objective. The 112th would first assault Vossenack, then move down a dirt trail to the Kall River, cross it, proceed up the ridge to Kommerscheidt, and finally arrive at Schmidt. Gerow had told Cota that the main First Army drive would commence on 5 November. However, when the weather prompted cancellation of this main effort, Hodges, the First Army commander, saw no reason why the 28th Division should not attack as planned on 2 November. The perceived meddling by Gerow, and now the sure knowledge that no other attack would occur along the whole front, certainly affected Cota's morale and that of his staff. Confidence in the operation slipped.

Following an artillery barrage, soldiers of the 109th Infantry stumbled forward on the cold, misty morning of 2 November. Command and control in the dense forest became an immediate problem. To make matters worse, unit maps were inaccurate. Many infantrymen, unsure of their positions, ceased attacking and simply dug in. Portions of one battalion actually fought their way through to the objective overlooking Huertgen. But they had little time to savor their success, as repeated German counterattacks along their flanks hindered their efforts to consolidate gains. German patrols roamed freely in their rear, and continued enemy infiltration prompted the Americans to fall back to their original positions.

Another battalion moving across more open terrain struck an extensive minefield. Their attack ground to a quick halt as soldier after soldier exploded mines. German machine guns and mortars frustrated the engineers' efforts to clear the minefield. Meanwhile, medics watched helplessly as dead and wounded soldiers lay stranded on the cold, wet field. Many of the wounded would freeze to death before morning.

The dark forest, cold weather, rain, and constant sniping by an unseen enemy caused a massive sense of isolation in the soldiers. Many no longer knew what their mission was. Huddled in wet foxholes that offered no protection from the tree bursts of German artillery, the men of the 109th fought to survive. This pattern of battle for the 109th continued until 6 November, when members of the 4th Division's 12th Infantry relieved them. Repeated attacks and counterattacks, all at close quarters, exacted a U.S. casualty rate of more than 50 percent. Completely demoralized, the 109th moved back to its assembly area at Germeter through a driving rain that changed to sleet, then snow. The 109th's hopes for prolonged rest were shattered by new orders. The 109th was needed to assist its sister regiments, the 110th and 112th, both tottering perilously on the edge of total destruction.

Farther south, the 110th Infantry's initial attack against the pillbox defense belt near Raffelsbrand and its drive along the Kall River toward Simonskall stopped almost as soon as it started. German machine-gun fire from log bunkers and pillboxes, along with mines and booby-trapped concertina wire, combined to stop the 110th in its tracks. As with the 109th, units became disoriented. Communications in the dense forests and ridges was spotty at best. Soldiers, already weakened by the weather conditions, felt isolated and forgotten. Their sense of mission, other than to survive, evaporated. On 3 November, Cota ordered another assault by the 110th that proved even more costly. One company returned with less than forty-five soldiers, and in some battalions, all company-grade officers were killed or wounded. Cota, determined to succeed, ordered his division's reserve battalion to assist. Prompting Cota's decision was the supposed success of the 112th

Infantry, which had taken Schmidt on 3 November. (Cota would later regret his decision.)

On the morning of 2 November, Colonel Carl L. Peterson's 112th Infantry struck east of Germeter. Two battalions were quickly stalled in the woods under circumstances similar to those experienced by the 109th and 110th. The 2d Battalion of the 112th, however, proceeded on schedule and, with the assistance of some attached tanks, controlled the important village of Vossenack by midafternoon. Grateful troops dug in along the northeastern ridge just beyond the village. Peterson decided to withdraw from the woods and then attack the next day southeast from Vossenack down the Kall gorge.

Peterson's attack on 3 November brought almost incredible success. The soldiers passed through Kommerscheidt and controlled the division objective by nightfall. Unbelievably, German soldiers were captured drunk, playing cards, and eating. At least for a short time, the credence of G2 staffers who talked about weak German Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe remnants increased. The cold, weary U.S. troops dug in only superficially and threw some antitank mines out along the enemy's major axis of approach without camouflaging or burying them. They were too tired, and after all, they had accomplished their mission. Cota received congratulations from his superiors and, despite the tremendous casualties suffered by the 109th and 110th, said he felt like "a little Napoleon." Congratulations for Cota's victory, however, were premature. Coincidentally, at the time of the initial attack on 2 November, Field Marshal Walter Model and his major subordinate commanders were conducting a map exercise near Cologne. News of the U.S. attack brought quick action. Model ordered his generals at the map exercise to engage the Americans in a real operation. He issued orders for portions of the veteran 116th Panzer Division from Huertgen to attack the U.S. forces. When the German Seventh Army commander, General Erich Brandenberger, returned to his unit on 3 November, he learned of the U.S. capture of Schmidt. He decided to withdraw the tanks from Huertgen and reroute them to counterattack in the Schmidt-Kommerscheidt sector. Additionally, elements of the German 89th Division and the 1055th Regiment, scheduled to move out of the area, were told to remain and support the counterattack. Unknown to the unsuspecting Americans, major enemy forces were now poised and ready to attack.

Following a brief artillery barrage, the Germans launched a coordinated armor and infantry attack on the dazed U.S. 112th Infantry. The German tanks seemed impervious to bazooka fire and easily by-passed the shoddy minefield the U.S. troops had prepared the evening before. The Germans seemed to attack from all directions, and the confused GIs called for artillery and air support that always came too late or not at all. U.S. air support could not distinguish friend from foe and therefore was ineffective. The troops--cut off without communications and suffering mounting casualties--felt completely isolated. Rumors spread that orders to withdraw were imminent. Fear quickly led to panic. An infantryman in Kommerscheidt commented on the situation in Schmidt: "The next thing we knew, about four columns of ragged, scattered, disorganized infantrymen streamed back ... in low morale. We managed to stop some but most streamed back to the rear." One company fled southwest into the woods even deeper into enemy territory. Most were killed, wounded, or captured. Soldiers in Kommerscheidt made frantic attempts to stop the demoralized mob, and some 200 eventually joined the Kommerscheidt defense. Those who were not killed, wounded, or captured crossed the Kall River, not stopping until they reached Vossenack or Germeter.

Although Cota continued to order the 112th to retake Schmidt (including sending a task force to assist it), the 112th spent the next two days trying to hold Kommerscheidt. The American soldiers fought desperately, supported by a small force of tanks led by First Lieutenant Raymond E. Fleig. Casualties increased, and the weather got worse. Also, Cota had already committed his reserve to the 110th's sector of operations. Ammunition, food, and other provisions were in short supply. Furthermore, the only available main supply route, the Kall trail, was difficult to negotiate. Night after night, the Germans remined it. The trail was littered with broken-down tanks, jeeps, thrown treads, and other military equipment that never made it to Kommerscheidt where it was needed. Engineers sent to improve the trail suffered high casualties from tree-burst artillery and eventually acted more as a security force than an engineer unit. An aid station was set up along the trail where artillery bombardment and German patrols were frequent. Again, troops along the trail felt isolated, out of touch with their mission and chain of command. Foxholes provided no shelter from tree bursts, only a place for water to collect.

The soldiers of the 2d Battalion, 112th Infantry, on the Vossenack ridge were not immune to the looming catastrophe. Following their easy victory of 2 November, the Germans subjected them to three days of incessant artillery attack. Under direct German observation from the Brandenberg-Bergstein ridge, the troops suffered severe casualties. The Germans seemed intent on destroying the U.S. positions one by one. Their nerves shattered, U.S. soldiers cried that they could take it no longer. The battalion commander sat in the church at Vossenack crying pitifully, his adjutant forced to command.

Finally, on the morning of 6 November, the men panicked. The dawn was uncommonly peaceful, but then, as daylight increased, an artillery barrage thundered upon them. Small groups of men fled what they thought was a sure, meaningless death. Panic in the demoralized group was contagious. Abandoning their positions and equipment, others joined in the race to the rear, thinking that someone had ordered a retreat. Most fled all the way to Germeter. Those soldiers remaining finally formed a line at the Vossenack church. Subsequently, the Germans who occupied the former U.S. positions were driven out but only after a tough fight with an engineer task force Cota had formed that night to reestablish control of Vossenack.

Along with the precarious situation at Kommerscheidt and the wild rout of the men at Vossenack, the situation along the lifeline between U.S. forces, the Kall trail, also deteriorated. Early on the morning of 6 November, the Germans cut the trail and effectively isolated the bedraggled troops at Kommerscheidt. The Germans placed a guard at the U.S. aid station (which held U.S. medical supplies and needed food) and patrolled and remined the trail. Firefights, measured in feet, between American and German soldiers were common. Although a task force led by Lieutenant Colonel Richard W. Ripple of the 707th Tank Battalion managed to punch through to Kommerscheidt on 6 November, the Americans only controlled the trail for hours. Ripple's force was not strong enough to make a difference. Still intent on retaking Schmidt, Cota ordered his assistant division commander, Brigadier General George A. Davis, to lead another task force toward the village. He ordered the 109th Infantry, already battered at Huertgen, to secure the Kall trail. The 109th entered the dark forest only to get lost and end up miles away from the trail, to the rear of the 110th Infantry.

The pocket of encircled Americans at Kommerscheidt continued to withstand repeated artillery fire and infantry probes. They were short

of ammunition and food, and their foxholes were filled with water that froze each night. Completely demoralized, isolated, hungry, and wet, they finally broke before a combined armor and infantry assault on 7 November. Dazed men ran wildly to the rear, refusing to take orders. The Germans claimed 260 prisoners. Those weary American defenders who held on waited for inevitable death or capture.

Cota's relentless obsession with taking Schmidt persisted. Peterson, commander of the 112th Infantry, received a message (which Cota later denied sending) to report back to division headquarters. Accompanied by a two-man escort, he tried to circumvent German patrols to get there. Engineers later found him near the trail, wounded twice, his escort dead. When Peterson reported to headquarters, Cota accused him of deserting his men; then Cota fainted.

The Kall trail lost, Cota finally accepted this situation realistically. Perhaps Peterson's trip back to headquarters had not been in vain. On 8 November, the survivors at Kommerscheidt tried their best to organize a breakout. Their trip down the gorge, across the river, and to Vossenack or Germeter was a disaster. One company reported back to Germeter with only 81 men out of its original 193. Scattered groups were picked off or captured by the Germans. Fortunately, the Germans allowed the wounded and litter bearers to use the Kall trail. Cota's message "fight your way out" was late-too late for the men already poking through the forest trying to avoid the ever-present German patrols. For most of the 6,184 casualties (dead, wounded, or captured) of the 28th Division, the battle for Schmidt was over.

The 28th Infantry Division's experience in the Huertgen Forest was not unique. Five other divisions suffered a combined total of 23,000 casualties (killed, wounded, or missing) in the forest, with 8,000 battle exhaustion and disease cases added to that list. Major General James M. Gavin called the tragedy of the Huertgen Forest the "American Passchendaele"-a fitting epitaph for the 28th Division.

Certainly, one of the ingredients in the recipe for the 28th Division's disaster was low morale. The horrific weather conditions, fatigue, constant artillery bombardment, and the almost diabolical nature of the dark forest all contributed to the demoralization of the 28th's infantrymen. The isolation felt by the troops and junior leaders and their sure knowledge that their superiors were ignorant about the true battlefield conditions caused soldiers to experience low morale. Their isolation in the face of constant danger made them fearful and vulnerable to panic. Even battalion commanders became psychiatric casualties. Men believed rumors, gave up, or fled to the rear. Few, then, would disagree with Ardant du Picq's claim that, in the last analysis, success in battle is a matter of morale. The destruction of the 28th Infantry Division bears solemn testimony to du Picq's analysis.

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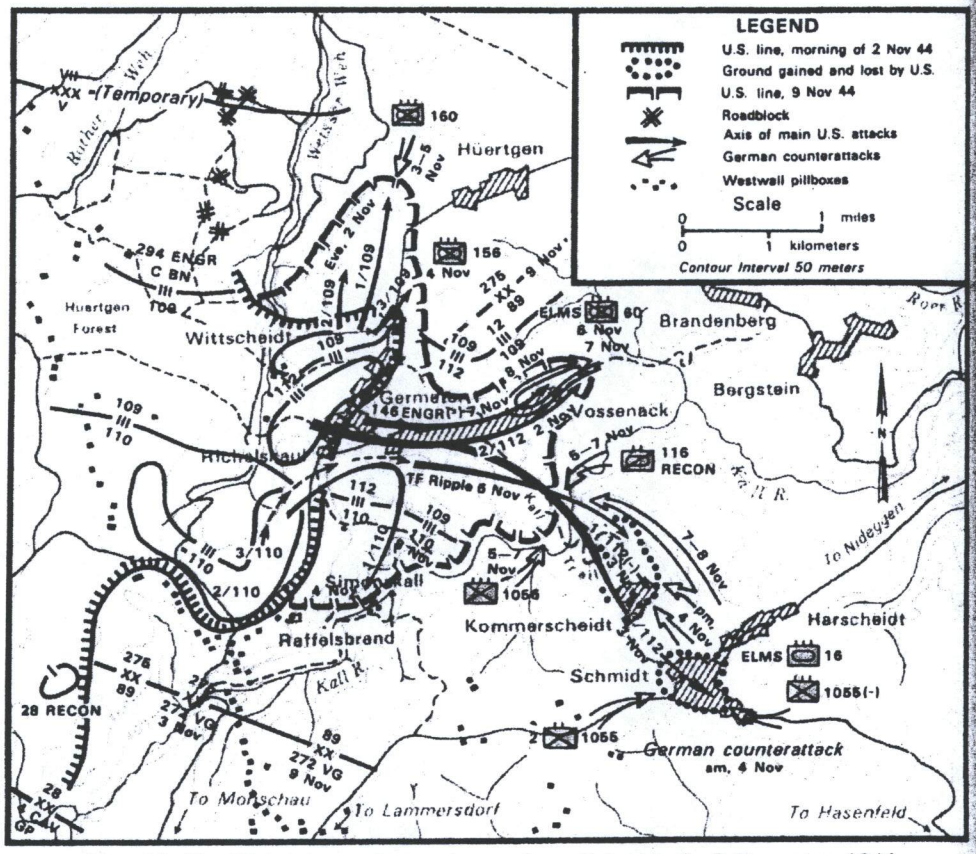

Map 19. The 28th Infantry Division's attack on Schmidt, 2—9 November 1944