

Origins of the Chemical Corps

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Every year members of the Chemical Corps celebrate the birthday of the Corps on 28 June. On that day of 1918, War Department General Orders 62 created the Chemical Warfare Service in the National Army and transferred to that service all facilities and functions related to toxic chemicals. MG William L. Sibert, an engineer officer who had built a large part of the Panama Canal and former commander of the First Division in France, took over as the first Chief of the Chemical Warfare Service.

This year—1993—is particularly important as it marks the Corps' 75th birthday, a milestone in the life of any organization that signifies the continuing importance of that institution. As we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Chemical Corps, let us not forget that all important events have antecedents. It is appropriate to take some time during this important celebration to contemplate the origins of our Chemical Corps. For that we must look to the bloody trench warfare in France and Belgium during World War I.

By the time the United States entered the war in April 1917, both sides had tried to break the stalemate of trench warfare through the use of poison gasses. Chlorine, phosgene,

and mustard had become established as effective killers. General John J. Pershing, Commander of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF), knew he would have to cope with these new killers. Less than a month after he arrived in France, his headquarters published General Orders 8, dated 5 July 1917, establishing the AEF General Headquarters. Within that headquarters General Orders 8 created the position of "Chief of the Gas Service."

The first organization in the Army dedicated to gas warfare was thus born. A little over a month later, LTC Amos A. Fries, an engineer officer like General Sibert, became the first Chief of the AEF Gas Service. He immediately set about organizing the Gas Service as the AEF agency responsible for offensive and defensive gas operations, all gas personnel in the AEF, gas warfare supplies, and gas warfare training. AEF General Orders 31, 3 September 1917, made all of this formal.

Also preceding establishment of the Chemical Warfare Service was the First Gas Regiment. This was the unit that would have the special and technical engineer troops who would be responsible for gas warfare in Europe. War Department General Or-

ders 108 constituted this unit as the 30th Engineer Regiment (Gas and Flame) on 15 August 1917. It was then organized at Camp American University in Washington, D.C., from 30 August to 28 November, with companies beginning deployment to Europe in December. On 13 July 1918, this unit was redesignated the 1st Gas Regiment. Several companies of the 1st Gas Regiment served with valor in Europe, after which the regiment was demobilized at Camp Kendrick, Lakehurst, New Jersey, on 28 February 1919.

Cognizant of the continued threat of chemical warfare, the War Department reconstituted the 1st Gas Regiment on 24 February 1920, and organized at Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland. The unit became the 1st Chemical Regiment on 5 February 1929. It remained the Army's principal chemical unit until it was inactivated on 15 April 1935, and finally disbanded on 12 March 1942.

Although the AEF Gas Service and the 1st Gas Regiment no longer exist, their legacy lives on in the Chemical Corps and chemical units in today's Army. The Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment of the 2d Chemical Battalion at Fort Hood proudly traces its lineage to the 1st

Gas Regiment. On 7 November 1951, the 1st Chemical Regiment was reconstituted in the Regular Army and consolidated with the 2d Mortar Battalion with the unit designation being the 2d Chemical Mortar Battalion. In addition, two modern chemical com-

panies trace their lineages to the 1st Gas Regiment. The 22d, with the 3d Armored Division at Frankfurt, Germany, until its inactivation in 1991, began its existence on 26 November 1917, as Company C of the 30th Engineers. The 91st, assigned to the

24th Infantry at Fort Stewart, Georgia, was first organized on 24 October 1918, as Company G of the 1st Gas Regiment (see *91st Chemical Company*, below).

91st Chemical Company Lineage

The 91st Chemical Company traces its lineage to the 1st Gas Regiment of World War I fame. It was organized in the National Army on 24 October 1918, at Camp Sherman, Ohio, as Company G, 1st Gas Regiment. As the war ended on 11 November, Company G did not see action in World War I. It was demobilized at Camp Sherman on 15 December 1918.

Company G was reconstituted in the Regular Army on 24 February 1920, and organized at Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland, as part of the 1st Gas Regiment. During the interwar years, Company G was reorganized twice. The first time was on 29 June 1927, when it became the 2d Chemical Company and was stationed at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. On 30 April 1931, it was again reorganized and redesignated Company A, 1st Separate Chemical Battalion, still stationed at Schofield Barracks.

With the advent of World War II, the unit was again reorganized and redesignated. This was on 12 March 1942, as the 91st Chemical Company. On 20 January 1944, the 91st was attached to the 7th division for action in the Pacific. This action led to credit for four campaigns—Central Pacific, Eastern Mandates, Leyte, and the Ryukyus. The campaign credit for Leyte was "with arrowhead" to recog-

nize the amphibious assault of the 91st during that campaign. The valor of the 91st in World War II resulted in three unit decorations. Two of these were Presidential Unit Citations. One was for the Army with the streamer embroidered "Leyte." The other was for the Navy with the streamer embroidered "Okinawa." The 91st also received the Philippine Presidential Unit Citation with the streamer embroidered "17 October 1944 to 4 July 1945."

During the last year of World War II, the 91st underwent another reorganization and redesignation. This was on 24 February when the unit became the 91st Chemical Mortar Company. After the war the unit returned to Hawaii where it was inactivated on 1 May 1947.

On 1 September 1981, the 91st was redesignated the 91st Chemical Company and activated at Fort Stewart, Georgia, for assignment with the 24th Infantry Division. When that division deployed to Southwest Asia in 1990 for *Operation Desert Shield*, the 91st also deployed. It served gallantly during the 1991 *Operation Desert Storm*, with its FOX vehicles providing critical NBC reconnaissance missions for the 24th. After *Desert Storm* the 91st returned with the 24th Infantry division to Fort Stewart.