

Headquarters 142nd Infantry, A.E.F.
January 23, 1919. A.P.O. No. 796.

CLASSIFICATION
CANCELLED
By authority of The Adjutant General
Halsbach Maj AGO
AGPA - 6 334 (27 Jun 45), 8 Jul 46

From : C. O. 142nd Infantry.
To : The Commanding General 36th Division (Attention Captain Spence)
Subject : Transmitting messages in Choctaw.

1. In compliance with Memorandum, Headquarters 36th Division, January 21, 1919, to C. O. 142nd Infantry, the following account is submitted :

In the first action of the 142nd Infantry at St Etienne, it was recognized that of all the various methods of liaison the telephone presented the greatest possibilities. The field of rocket signals is restricted to a small number of agreed signals. The runner system is slow and hazardous. T. P. S. is always an uncertain quantity. It may work beautifully and again, it may be entirely worthless. The available means, therefore, for the rapid and full transmission of information are the radio, buzzer, and telephone, and of these the telephone was by far the superior, - provided it could be used without let or hindrance, - provided straight to the point information could be given.

It was well understood however that the German was a past master in the art of "listening in". Moreover, from St Etienne to the Aisne we had traveled through a country netted with German wire and cables. We established P. C.'s in dugouts and houses, but recently occupied by him. There was every reason to believe every decipherable message or word going over our wires also went to the enemy. A rumor was out that our Division had given false co-ordinates of our supply dump, and that in thirty minutes the enemy shells were falling on the point. We felt sure the enemy knew too much. It was therefore necessary to code every message of importance and coding and Decoding took valuable time.

While comparatively inactive at Vaux-Champagne, it was remembered that the regiment possessed a company of Indians. They spoke twenty six different languages or dialects, only four or five of which were ever written. There was hardly one chance in a million that Fritz would be able to translate these dialects, and the plan to have these Indians transmit telephone messages was adopted. The regiment was fortunate in having two Indian officers who spoke several of the dialects. Indians from the Choctaw tribe were chosen and one placed in each P. C.

The first use of the Indians was made in ordering a delicate withdrawal of two companies of the 2nd. Bn. from Chuffilly to Chardeny on the night of October 26th. This movement was completed without mishap, although it left the Third Battalion, greatly depleted in previous fighting, without support. The Indians were used repeatedly on the 27th in preparation for the assault on Forest Farm. The enemy's complete surprise is evidence that he could not decipher the messages.

142nd Inf.
36th Div.
Indian Dialects
236-32.5