



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2440

April 5, 2020

*517th Parachute Infantry Regiment
460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion
596th Parachute Combat Engineer Company*

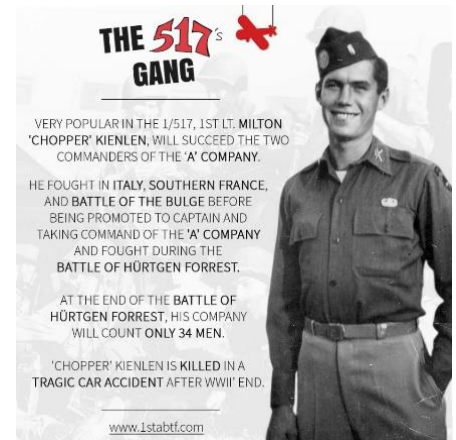
MailCall News

Hi Loïc,

I love these short 517th features that you're putting in Facebook. It's great to hear stories that I never heard, or I've forgotten, and the layout is great. It really makes you remember the people.

Is it ok for me to include one of these in each MailCall? I'll include a link to your site with it.

Bob Barrett



Feel free to share those stories ! History needs to be told !

Stay safe.

Your friend Loïc.

Great. See the **Tom Cross** story on the last page of this MailCall - BB

My dad, corporal **Mike Sura** wore only two of his many decorations. Even with three Purple Hearts, his Paratroop Silver wings and the Combat Infantry Badge were always near to his heart.

Dennis Sura son of H Company 517th trooper



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Dear Bob:

This Mail Call outs the quarantine into perspective—the recollections about the loss of comrades, especially the **Ray Helms** photo with X's on those killed in combat, and the reminder of how long Anne Frank hid in that little attic before she and her family were killed in the concentration camp. The Christmas story of going home with Ray captures the humanity and caring for each other in the 517th. Excellent. Thank you.

We pray you, your family and all of the 517 families are safe, healthy and creatively coping. Alan and I are well, using the time for a mini Lenten retreat plus working remotely, learning new tech skills (even conducted our reentry Court telephonically; so glad we did as the voices of the program participants reflected how grateful they were for the whole team's support. Our program participants are among the most vulnerable as they are now unemployed with no savings.

We pray for: healing for those with the virus, for protection of our health care workers, for eternal life for those who have died, for comfort for those mourning, support for those devastated economically and for the containment of the virus' spread. We will come out on the other side of this virus hopefully wiser, more caring and more together as a nation. God bless.

Pat Seitz

Nice analogy to our present situation



This picture from World War II, a soldier carrying a donkey. It is not that the soldier loves donkeys or has some sort of perversion. What's happening is that the field is mined and that if the donkey was free to wonder as it pleased, it would likely detonate a charge and kill everyone. The moral of the story is that during difficult times the first ones you have to keep under control are the jackasses who don't understand the danger and do as they please.



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Hello all, I have a question I'm hoping someone in the group will know the answer to. My dad, **Joseph Egelhof**, served in Company D, and later Hq Company at the Bulge. He wrote home to describe his decorations and his earned points. In that letter he mentioned that the King of Belgium had awarded his unit an award that entitled the unit's to wear something called a forrage. I am in the process of gathering his medals and ribbons to have mounted. In his collection there is also a red meritorious unit citation. He served in the 2nd Battalion as a BAR rifleman in Co. D and as a scout in the HQ company. Can anyone confirm or comment on these two awards or describe the forrage?

Respectively,

John Egelhof

What little I know about the French (or Belgium) Fourragère (a braided cord worn usually around the left shoulder, is from MailCall #2100:

"I lost a red cord or lanyard playing army in the woods about 1970. My Granddad, Raymond Doane, 596th 1st PLT, said he got it overseas. He told me the story but being only 8 at the time i have forgot it. I do remember Charlie Pugh sent him the info to get the French Fourragere in the mid 80's but i don't think he ever sent for one.

So i would like everyone's help with the story of the Belgian Fourragere and how he (596th) ended up with it. From what i have read you have to be mentioned Twice. I can only find one mention on the 517th website. I have his ribbon bar with what looks like the Belgian ribbon in the middle which i will forward. The only other thing i can think of is that when he got stuck in the 82nd, they gave it to him to wear in a parade or something to that effect. I finally got a DD214 and separation papers I'll email you a copy too. Bob thanks again for your work on the GREATEST WW2 WEBSITE EVER!

Take care
Johnny Privott

Steve Markle then answered:

I think I can help on this. "From what i have read you have to be mentioned twice. I can only find one mention on the 517th website."

The members of the 1st platoon of the 596 were honored twice by France:

French Croix De Guerre Avec Etoile De Vermeil
- French Decision #247 (15 Jul 1946) as part of the 596/517

French Croix De Guerre Avec Etoile D'Argent
- French Decision #246 (15 Jul 1946) for the 1st Platoon of the 596

Document attached. Also referenced here: <http://517prct.org/overview.htm>

-Steve-



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The modern fourragère of the French Army is awarded to all members of military units which have been awarded a [mention in despatches](#). It should not be confused with unit awards of particular decorations, where the medal itself is hung on the flag of the unit. For example, there are many units wearing the *fourragère* of the [médaille militaire](#), whereas only six units wore the medal on their flags. See also the article dealing with the [Croix de Guerre](#).



Fourragère aux couleurs de la Croix de Guerre des TOE

It was introduced during the [First World War](#), when the French Ministry of War first awarded the fourragère to units which had been recorded as distinguishing themselves more than once in the Orders of the Army. There were then six fourragères, depending on the numbers of Mentions in Dispatches awarded to the unit:

Unfortunately, I am still lost on who gets a Fourragère. How it is different than the Croix De Guerre mentions here?:

Unit Decorations

517 PRCT	French Croix de Guerre with Silver-Gilt Star streamer embroidered DRAGUIGNAN	French Decision No. 247
517 PRCT	Belgian Croix De Guerre	Belgian Decree No. 6185
1/517 PIR	Belgian Croix De Guerre	Belgian Decree No. 1329
2/517 PIR	Belgian Croix De Guerre	Belgian Decree No. 7253
1/517 PIR	Distinguished Unit Citation streamer embroidered SOYHOTTEN, BELGIUM	Executive Order No. 9396
460 PFAB	French Croix de Guerre with Silver-Gilt Star	French Decision No. 247
460 PFAB	Belgian Croix De Guerre	Belgian Decree No. 6185
596 PEC	French Croix de Guerre with Silver-Gilt Star	French Decision No. 247
1/596 PEC	French Croix de Guerre with Gold-Gilt Star	French Decision No. 246
596 PEC	Belgian Croix De Guerre	Belgian Decree No. 6185

These are from the overview page on the website, taken from some of **Clark Archer's** info, although I'm not sure from exactly which document.

The bottom line is that I am still not sure what the criteria for the fourragère. **Steve Markle** mentioned that "you have to be mentioned twice". But mentioned for what? A Croix de Guerre? A see a combination of those awarded to the 517, but also to individual Battalions, and separately to the 460th and 596th. Which combinations of these might qualify for the fourragère? Does anyone know?

Also, there are several pages at the end of the **Paratroopers Odyssey** book (Pages 245-248) which list a lot more details about the awards above plus a few more. These pages are not yet on the online copy on the website, but I will add them soon.



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Enjoyed once again the remarkable Mail Calls you so graciously send us. The most recent Mail Call No. 2439 was sort of close to home. **Gene Brissey** was my father's squad leader. My wife and I had the honor and good fortune of traveling to Europe with Gene and his wife on two occasions. Those trips were amazing, to say the least. We toured Southern France, Belgium and Bergstein, Germany.

Thought I would mention my father, **John H. Krumm**, is in that picture on page four. He is the fellow on the far right in the second row. In my conversations with Gene, he spoke highly of his good friend, **Ray Helms**. Gene was a very kind, humble man who reached out to people. I am so grateful that my wife and I were able to meet him and his wife and spend time with them on those trips and at a few 517th reunions. Thanks for all you do, Bob, on our behalf.

John Krumm



I have to throw in a picture of **Gene Brissey**. I met him at many of the reunions. He still fit into his dress uniform, and always had a big smile on his face. This photo of Gene and Edie is from the Oklahoma reunion in 2003. – Bob Barrett





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Hi Glenn. I did include a lot of stories about your dad [**Ray Helms**] in yesterday's [MailCall #2439](#). Link below. Also see the note from **Jean-Loup Gassend**.

While I have you, maybe you can answer the mystery. **Gene Brissey** said that he and your Dad got together in England, while they were in nearby hospital in 1945. But Ray was also in the June 1945 picture of E Company in France. Did he go to England, then back to France?

PS: I knew Gene from several reunions and when he sent me his bio. Great man.

Bob Barrett

Thanks for getting my dad's obituary in the Mail Call and thanks for pulling up the places he was mentioned in **Gene Brissey's** memoir.

To answer your question about how Gene and my dad ended up in hospitals in England at the same time, I don't know for certain at this time. I'm reviewing my dad's medical records that I obtained from the VA to see if I can piece together any information related to the times when he was away for medical treatment and where he received his treatment. From what I've seen so far it's going to be difficult to decipher the raw documents that they provided (mostly hand written, in no particular chronological order). I've come across bits and pieces that indicate his injury at La Roquette kept him in medical facilities from August 28, 1944 to mid-October 1944. It also indicates he had follow-up treatment for an abscess associated with that wound sometime during the second half of May 1945. I also found records related to treatment for frozen feet he experienced during a truck convoy in Belgium around December 28, 1944, and that he was evacuated to the UK for treatment. I haven't been able to determine how long he was in the UK for this treatment, but this may overlap the time when Gene was there. I also see records where my dad received follow up treatment for his feet during the first half of April, 1945, but I can't figure out where he was treated yet.

I'll let you know if I can get anything more specific from his records.

Thanks again for your hard work.

Glenn Helms

Hi Glenn,

I looked at our Morning Reports and found several entries for **Ray Helms**. Looks like he was wounded in Italy and France, and then on 24-Dec-44 was sent from Belgium to the hospital.

21-Jul-1944	Rome Italy	Duty to 33rd EVAC Hosp (LD) 19 July
28-Aug-1944	Roquette, France	fr duty to Abs sk LWA to trfd to Det of Pat 7 Army
16-Oct-1944	Luceram, France	Reasgd & jd fr Det of Pat 7th Army LWA
24-Dec-1944	Belgium	fr dy to NBC LD ab sk in hosp. Basic status changed fr asgd to atchd unasgd.
21-Mar-1945	Joigny, France	Fr AB Hosp DS LWA-BC to Dy. Basic status changed from Atchd Unasgd to Asgd



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Records may be missing, but he rejoined the unit on 21-Mar-1945, so that's how he got back with the unit for the Joigny photo in June. He must have been flown to England hospital, where he saw Gene, then back with the 517th in March.

Bob B.

PS: Interesting that **Ray Helms** is on all these morning reports, but he is not listed on the 1944 Christmas Roster. I was thinking that the booklet must have been produced in December 1944 in France before the Bulge broke out. But now I realize that it really does include dates of events, including a 25-December 1944 "Christmas in Hell" note. I don't know how HQ had the time or resources to produce a booklet around the fighting at Christmastime, but it must have already been in the works. So Ray Helms missed being included by 1 day.

I'm still reading old Mail Calls and saw something in the December 2, 2018 ([#2400](#)) issue that caught my attention. Chad Upton submitted some information about his grandfather, **Bluford Upton**, and indicated he was in H-Company. He included a photo with his grandfather circled.

His photo was actually cropped from the group photo of E-Company, not H-Company. I say that because my dad, **Ray Helms**, was in E-Company and I have his E-Company group photo from Toccoa. It is labeled "LT. E.F. BROOKS COMDG. CAMP TOCCOA – GA". For reference, a photo of 2nd Battalion officers posted on the 517th web site ("Officers of the 2nd Battalion at Camp Toccoa 1943", submitted by **Wayne Cross**) identifies **Ed Brooks** with E-Company. Also, the E-Company group photo posted on the 517th web site ("E Company at Toccoa – 1943", submitted by **Lee Lacey**) is just like the one I have. Two people are labeled on this photo: **Gene Brissey** and **C. B. Jones**. I know they were both definitely in E-Company with my dad. In Chad's cropped photo I believe my dad may be the third man from the right on the second row.

I'd like to know if anyone has a copy of the E-Company at Toccoa photo that includes the names of everyone in the photo.

Glenn Helms

Here is the photo of all the 2nd Battalion officers, including **Dick Seitz**, **Edgar Brooks**, **Tom Cross**, **John Lissner**, etc.



See full-size at:

http://517prct.org/photos/toccoa_1943_officers_2nd_btn/camp_toccoa_2nd_btn_officers_1943.htm



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Also, as I went through some other photos posted in the "Training and WWII Photos" section of the web site I found another instance where the E-Company group photo is incorrectly referred to as "H-Company ?" (see "H Company at Camp Toccoa GA, submitted by **Mike Wells**"). I've noticed that some of these Toccoa group photos include the company name, while others like E-Company just include the name of the commanding officer.

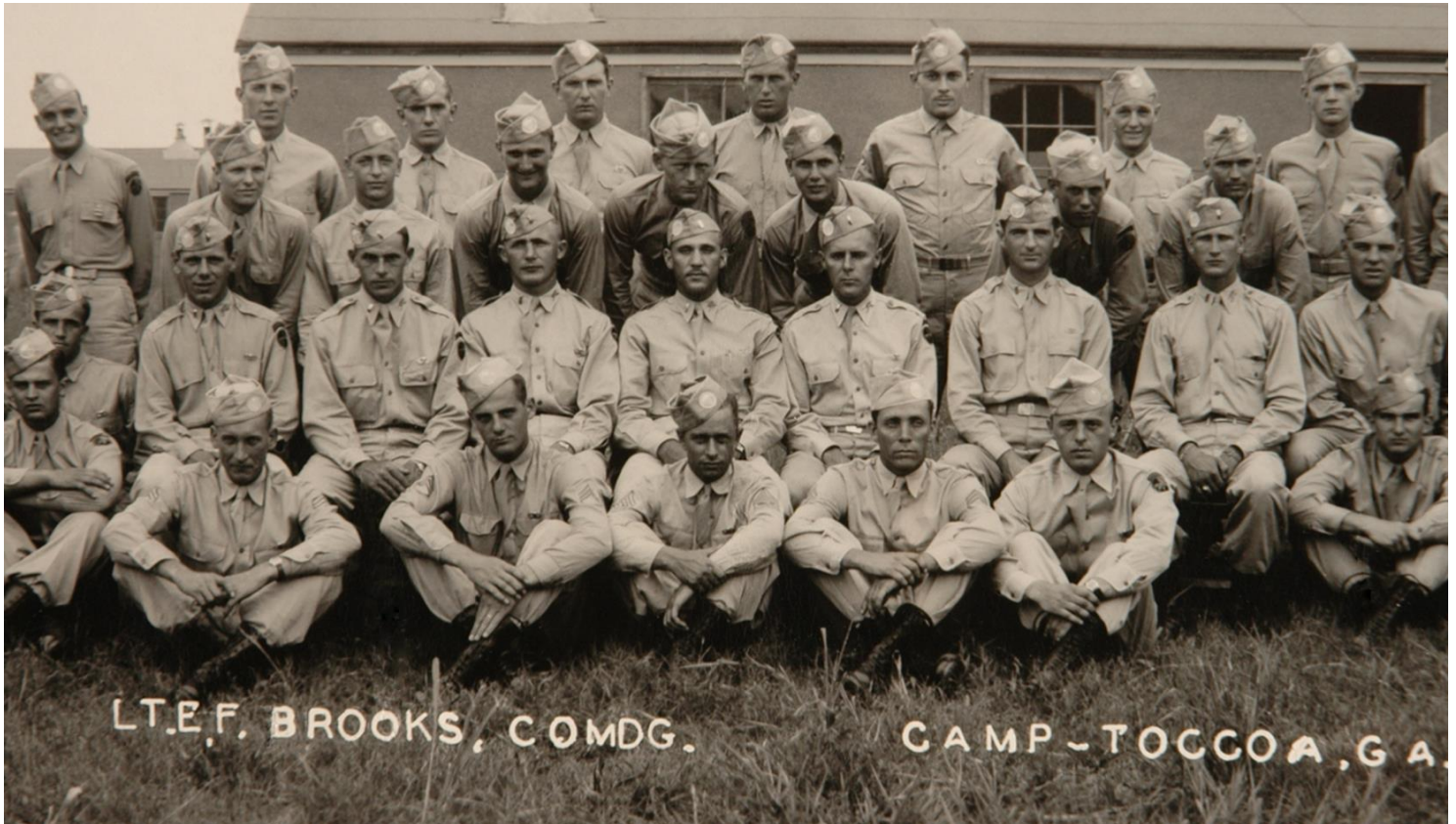
Thanks and stay healthy.

Glenn Helms



I am correcting the web site info now for this picture. **Mike Wells** had the original E Company photo restored. If anyone needs a super-detailed copy of it, click [here](#). His Dad, **Chester Wells** was initially with the Service Company, then reassigned to H Company in 3-Aug-1944.

Bob B.

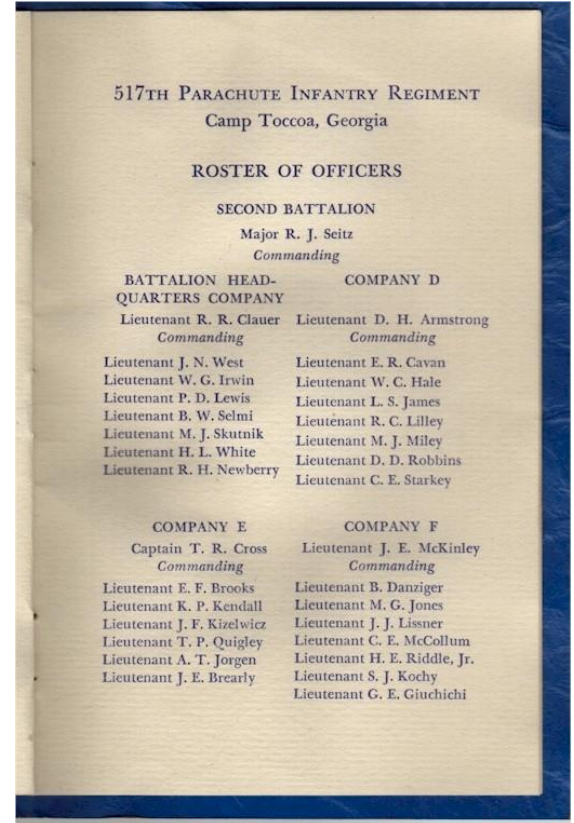




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Glenn,

Nice detective work. You are correct, the H Company Toccoa photo is exactly the same as the E Company photo. And I can confirm that it is E Company (sorry Mike Wells): From a "Prop Blast" booklet in June 12, 1943, I can verify that **Lt. Edgar F. Brooks** was indeed one of the senior officers of E Company. On this book **Tom Cross** was still the CO. Brooks took over E Company at some point in 1943 and was later transferred to Regimental Headquarters in July 1944.



Just to continue on about the Camp Toccoa photo, here is a note from **Darrell Egner** in 2007:



Note: Each company in the 517 had a picture like the one that you fixed up for Mail Call. Each picture was taken at the same place at Toccoa. I pulled up my company picture, Hq. 2nd Battalion and at first I thought it was the same picture you sent. What you thought was a statue is the smoke stack on a barracks building just behind the picture. It does not show on the picture you sent but if you can read the printing on the bottom of the original it will identify the company commander and probably the company name

As I remember all of these pictures were taken just before we left for Jump School. I am sure I was not happy getting dressed for a picture after living in shorts and shoes for 17 weeks. -- Darrell Egner

However, I think Darrell did answer wrong about the statue/smokestack. In a closeup of the statue, it sure looks like a statue to me. Or it could just be someone standing there. -- BB





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One more story about the group pictures. We have a lot, but not all of the Company photos, some at Toccoa, some at Mackall. There is one of I Company here:

http://517prct.org/photos/3rd_battalion_I_Co/i_co_mackall.htm



Look closely at the guys holding the flags on the far left and the far right:



Yes, that's the same guy. Apparently, in order to get everyone in the photo, these were done panorama style, where the camera shutter was left open as the photographer panned from left to right. Everyone was supposed to stand very still. Meanwhile, that guy with the flag started on the left, then as the camera moved, he ran around the back to the other side with the flag, and presto, there he is again, bookmarking both side of the photo!



Also there is the photo of all the 2nd Battalion officers, including **Dick Seitz, Edgar Brooks, Tom Cross, John Lissner**, etc. at:

http://517prct.org/photos/toccoa_1943_officers_2nd_btn/camp_toccoa_2nd_btn_officers_1943.htm



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Administrivia

If you miss any MailCalls, they are all available online at <http://www.517prct.org/mailcall/>

- At any time, if you want to be added or removed from the MailCall list, just let me know, or just click on the unsubscribe link on the email.
- Send any news, stories, or feedback to: MailCall@517prct.org
- If you send me email that you do not want included in MailCall, just label it as FYEO.
- I now understand how Ben could get confused about what he already posted and what he didn't. If I miss something, please just send it again.

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THE 517^s GANG

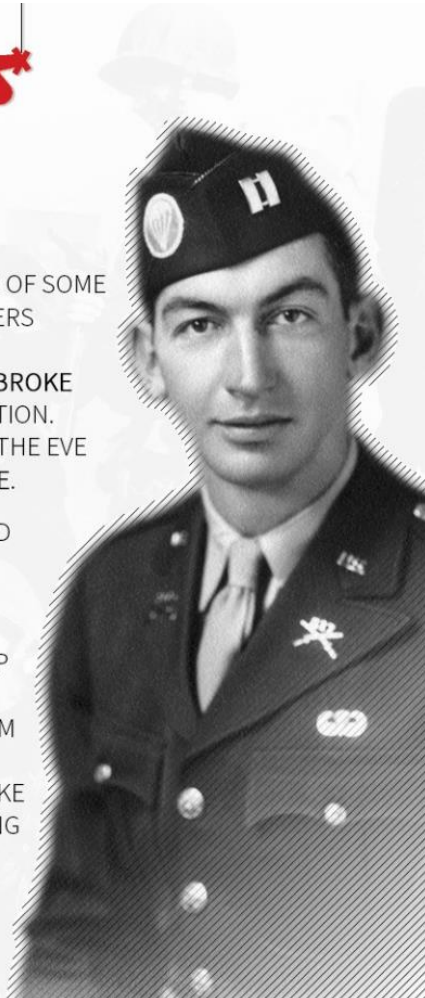
MAJ. THOMAS CROSS WAS THE LUCKIEST OFFICER OF SOME AND THE MOST UNLUCKIEST FOR THE OTHERS

DURING THE JUMP IN SOUTHERN FRANCE, HE BROKE HIS ANKLE AND WAS THEREFORE OUT OF ACTION. AFTER HIS RECOVERY, HE JOINED THE 517TH AT THE EVE OF THE ARDENNES COUNTER-OFFENSIVE.

ON JANUARY 2, 1945, WHEN HE HAD JUST JOINED THE 517TH, THOMAS CROSS BRIEFED THE MEMBERS OF A RECONNAISSANCE TEAM.

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE BRIEFING, HIS GROUP WAS POUNDED BY MORTAR SHELLS. THOMAS CROSS IS WOUNDED AGAIN. ALL THOSE WITH HIM WERE WOUNDED OR KILLED. DURING HIS EVACUATION, THE AMBULANCE HEADED BY MISTAKE STRAIGHT TO THE GERMAN LINES, BEFORE BEING CAUGHT BY AN MP IN A MOTORCYCLE !

www.1stabtf.com



The 517th's Gang is available at: <https://1stabtf.com/en/boutique/the-517ths-gang-us-eng-version/>