

8

**Attacks on American Troops in Postwar Germany
(including sabotage of U.S. installations and lines of communication)**

**Compiled by Perry Biddiscombe
The University of Victoria
September 2003**

The following list enumerates the number of assaults on American forces in postwar Germany from 9 May 1945 to 31 December 1948. A total of 380 incidents are listed, as a result of which 48 American soldiers were killed and 189 injured. The list does not include most beatings of individual soldiers, especially those that did not result in serious injury, nor does it include minor forms of sabotage, such as the cutting of field telephone wires or the infliction of damage upon Allied posters and proclamations. Hundreds of such incidents took place. The list does also not include the theft of weapons and explosives from U.S. facilities nor the discovery of German weapons caches. The geographic zone of coverage also includes western Austria, the Sudetenland and the South Tyrol, as well as certain sections of the British and Soviet occupation zones, parts of which were overrun initially by U.S. troops. In a re-configuration of occupation forces in the early summer of 1945, American troops withdrew from the British and Soviet Zones but also fanned out to occupy the southwest sector of Berlin and the Bremen enclave in northern Germany. Most U.S. forces were withdrawn from the Sudetenland and South Tyrol by the beginning of 1946. The list is compiled from the document collection on which my books Werwolf! and The Last Nazis are based, although my coverage of the period May-August 1945 is admittedly inadequate. All major events are probably included, but a systematic review of War Department casualty reports and unit war diaries would no doubt produce evidence of additional events, thus increasing the total sum of incidents, and it would probably also suggest an upward revision of the estimates of dead and injured soldiers produced by such attacks. A recent survey of records by the U.S. Army Center for Military History suggests that there were 39 American soldiers killed in the first several months of the occupation.¹

Germany was a dangerous environment not only because of hostile Germans and lawless eastern refugees (Displaced Persons, DP's), but also because of accidents. This was particularly the case during the early days of the occupation, when most troops were still carrying their arms and there was considerable shifting of U.S. units. The 101st Airborne Division alone reported seventy vehicle wrecks between 11 May and 2 June 1945, and in a six-week period in June and July 1945 two officers and 11 enlisted men were killed in this single division.² Obviously these types of incidents are not included in the following assessment.

Incident Date Place Remarks

9-31 May 1945

Fighting in the Salzburg area did not end until 11 May³ and there was a spate of sabotage in other areas, although it was not at the level that had been anticipated (or at the level that had been threatened by the defeated Germans). SHAEF's Joint Intelligence Committee reported in late May that "a considerable amount of minor sabotage such as wire cutting continues to be reported, but in general the attitude of the population remains passive."⁴ The Fifteenth Army reported that in the period 8 May to 8 June there were 11 attacks in the Rhineland

R-1
08-M-3096
07-M-0598 R1

during which U.S. troops were fired upon, plus three explosions, five instances of fuel pipeline sabotage and four cases in which road blocks were erected.⁵

1. A U.S. soldier is shot and killed by a German officer. ⁶	9 May 1945	Fügen (Austria)	Twenty German soldiers were shot in reprisal and a stiff curfew imposed on the Zillertal.
2. American soldiers fired upon by SS troops. ⁷ No reported casualties.	10 May 1945	Potshcen Pass (Austria)	-
3. One American soldier (T/Sgt. Steve Lambert) wounded by snipers. ⁸	10 May 1945	Klenovice (Czechoslovakia)	Return fire in the skirmish was considered the last official shot of World War Two in Europe.
4. Two American soldiers are "mysteriously killed" and the bodies left lying in a meadow. ⁹	11 May 1945	Schierke	"Prompt and effective reprisal measures" were taken against local German villagers.
5. A building selected as an American billet is blown up. ¹⁰ No reported casualties.	12 May 1945	Bressanone (South Tyrol)	--
6. A time bomb left by German troops in the cellar of an American billet wounds 22 American soldiers and burns down a battalion command post. ¹¹	c. mid-May 1945	Colle Isarco (South Tyrol)	--
7. One American soldier wounded by a mine (leg amputated). ¹²	c. mid-May 1945	Harz Mountains	-
8. A trio of Hitler Youth boys are captured while preparing an ambush. ¹³	c. mid-May 1945	Harz Mountains	-
9. An American soldier is shot and wounded (?) while picking wildflowers in	c. mid-May 1945	Harz Mountains	-

a field. ¹⁴			
10. American anti-aircraft artillery troops fired upon by snipers. ¹⁵ No reported casualties.	20 May 1945	Drachelsried	"Appropriate action" taken but snipers succeeded in fleeing.
11. Six U.S. officers fired upon. One man wounded. ¹⁶	20 May 1945	Konusin (Czechoslovakia)	--
12. A convoy of American trucks fired upon. ¹⁷ No casualties reported.	21 May 1945	Grafenau	Return fire kills one German guerrilla.
13. An American officer (Lt. James MacDermid) is attacked and badly injured by a German civilian armed with a hand axe. ¹⁸	21 May 1945	Harz Mountains	-
14. U.S. troops are fired upon. ¹⁹ No casualties reported.	c. 23 May 1945	?	The perpetrator was a 17 year old SS man who was subsequently sentenced to death by a U.S. Military Court.
15. U.S. troops skirmish with 21 SS soldiers. ²⁰ No casualties reported.	25 May 1945	Zfitiarn	One SS soldier was wounded before the remainder fled into the woods.
16. A U.S. ammunition train is blown up. ²¹ No casualties reported.	25 May 1945	Bamburg	The perpetrators were two boys, aged 10 and 14, both trained in sabotage.
17. Fire breaks out at a U.S. chemical warfare dump. Possible sabotage. ²² No casualties reported.	28 May 1945	Grafenwohr	Two German boys apprehended; 11 local civilians held for questioning.
18. A bridge is partially blown up. ²³ No casualties reported.	31 May 1945	Hekanagger	Perpetrators were three Hitler Youth boys, each 12 years old.

Total U.S. casualties: 3 dead; 27 injured.

June 1945

U.S. patrols in the Austrian Alps were still getting into occasional shoot-outs with Nazi desperadoes²⁴ and elsewhere SHAEF noted the first signs of German sullenness "as they begin to realise that the Allies are not going to extend t hearty welcome to them and that they are faced with hunger." A slight rise was reported in minor acts of sabotage, particularly wire cutting and the stretching of "decapitation wires." Bremen and Thuringia were reported as particularly troublesome areas.²⁵

1. A U.S. guard is attacked while checking civilians for identification. ²⁶ No injuries reported.	1 June 1945	Maxhutte	The perpetrator of the attack was an SS soldier. He was shot during the melee.
2. An American soldier is shot and killed (?) while walking in the street. ²⁷	c. early June 1945	Amberg	U.S. troops threw a cordon around the town and arrested "several suspicious persons."
3. Two explosions in a police headquarters kill five American soldiers (including a Marine intelligence officer, Capt. E.M. Krieger). Four additional American soldiers are injured. ²⁸	4 June 1945	Bremen	German casualties in the explosion amounted to 137 (39 killed, 5 missing, 93 injured). An official investigation blamed either a charge of high explosives or a gas leak as the cause of the blast.
4. A U.S. soldier is garrotted and killed and his body dumped in the Danube River. ²⁹	12 June 1945	Abbach	--
5. A shot is fired at a U.S. reconnaissance aircraft, leaving a hole in the fusilage. ³⁰ No casualties reported.	18 June 1945	Hurschau	--
6. A "decapitation wire" is strung across a road. ³¹ No U.S. casualties reported.	18 June 1945	road between Hollnich and Ebscheid	The mayor of a nearby community was injured when he hit the wire while riding on a motorcycle. A German arrested for cutting communication lines, Heinrich Hanraths, confessed to stringing the wire.
7. A "decapitation	18 June 1945	road between Neuhaus	A 13 year old boy,

wire" is strung across a road. ³² No casualties reported.		and Kersch	Albert Gottschalk, was arrested for stringing the wire.
8. A German anti-tank grenade explodes at an ammunition dump, killing five U.S. soldiers and wounding five others. An investigation for possible sabotage is launched; conclusions unknown. ³³	late June 1945	Pfeddersheim	--

Total U.S. casualties: 12 dead; 9 injured.

July 1945

The U.S. 3rd Army reported "organized groups of SS troops as still at large in the Bavarian mountains and receiving organized outside support in receiving supplies."³⁴ Similarly, USFET noted that "former SS members operating in small groups persist in their occasional harassing activities, but are far overshadowed by armed bands of displaced persons, whose looting and indiscriminate attacks constitute the greatest single source of disturbance among the civilian population." There was a rising number of "malicious attacks" in late June and early July, although such incidents declined in the middle part of the month. According to USFET, "incidents of sabotage, with few exceptions in the present popular form of wire cutting and minor demolitions, remain at a generally low level and are apparently the work of small groups of disgruntled amateurs."³⁵ In addition, "the mid-summer calm was... suddenly and violently disturbed" by a series of zone-wide raids (July 21/22) designed to find weapons and expose illegal activity.³⁶ Nonetheless, "a number of wire cutting incidents took place and there were several instances of decapitating wire stretched across roads."³⁷ By late July, the 3rd Army reported only five wire cuts, six attacks against American troops and several small sabotage incidents; XV Corps counted one wire cut and one decapitation device; and XX Corps picked up news of two wire cuts and one anti-American assault, observing that "there was a noticeable lack of the usual vexing incidents involving the security of personnel and material."³⁸ However, Munich was identified as a trouble spot and clandestine Nazi radio activity and leafleting suggested that in Bavaria "the belief that Hitler is not dead is being carefully and rather successfully fostered."³⁹

1. A "decapitation wire" is strung across a road. ⁴⁰ No casualties reported.	1 July 1945	Neuhaus	--
2. A train wreck kills one American soldier. ⁴¹	19 July 1945	Munich	German casualties amounted to 103 killed and 68 injured. A German railwayman was arrested on charges of criminal negligence.
3. A bridge is partially blown up. ⁴²	21 July 1945	Unken	SS troopers were thought to be skulking

