

MEDICAL ASPECTS OF HARSH ENVIRONMENTS

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Section II: Cold Environments

Section Editor:

ROBERT S. POZOS, PhD
Department of Biology
San Diego State University
San Diego, California



Olin Dows

Medics Moving In Near Bastogne

1945

The events depicted here are consistent with more than one scenario. The watercolor could show a medical unit retreating into the perimeter of the surrounded 101st Airborne Division at Bastogne, Belgium, during the German siege in the third week of December 1944. More likely, it shows a medical unit accompanying Patton's Third Army as it broke through the German ring on the day after Christmas 1944. The medical unit would have assisted with the treatment and evacuation of some 1,500 casualties who had been trapped at Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge. The official history of the Bastogne campaign contains the following passage, which nicely sums up some of the medical problems of warfare in cold weather:

The cold caused even slightly injured men to go into shock so that litter squads had to carry extra blankets, and aid stations had to administer larger than usual amounts of plasma.^{1(p397)}

Quotation: (1) Cosmas GA, Cowdrey AE. *Medical Service in the European Theater of Operations*. Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History; 1992: 397. Watercolor: Reproduced courtesy of Army Art Collection, US Army Center of Military History, Washington, DC.

