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ORDER OF THE 6th BAVARIAN DIVISION REGARDING MACHINE GUNS.

No. 35191.

6th BAVARIAN INFANTRY DIVISION.

MACHINE GUNS

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The Battle of the Somme has again shown the decisive value of machine guns in defence. If they can be kept in a serviceable condition until the enemy's infantry attacks and are then brought up into the firing position in time, every attack must fail. The greater the efforts the enemy makes in the future to destroy our trenches before his assault by an increased expenditure of ammunition, the greater the extent to which we must rely on the employment of machine guns for repulsing attacks. These should be brought into action unexpectedly and continue the fight when the greater part of the garrison of the front line trenches is out of action, and the enemy's barrage fire renders it difficult to bring up reinforcements. In view of the above, all improvements to existing works and all new construction must be carried out on the following principles:—

1. In regular trench systems, the accurate trace of which is known to the enemy by aeroplane photographs and which he is therefore able to destroy, as regards the greater part, at least, of the foremost trenches, the employment of machine guns is only permissible when they can be kept in a serviceable condition in deep dug-outs with several exits, and when it is possible to bring them into position *in time*, owing to the existence of strong obstacles which cannot be completely destroyed by bombardment, or to the possibility of close observation of the enemy's movements.

The 1st Trench and the ground between it and the 2nd Trench are, therefore, quite out of the question, for even if they contain excellent dug-outs there is no certainty that the enemy's assault can be seen in time. Machine guns should therefore be placed, as a rule, behind the 2nd or, better still, behind the 3rd Trench. The methodical fire by which the enemy seeks to destroy our trenches is considerably less effective here, and further, the obstacles erected in front of the 2nd and 3rd Trenches and round the machine gun emplacements themselves make it possible to see the enemy's assault in time. Commanding positions with a very wide field of fire, or positions which can at least flank the trench system should be selected. About half the machine guns should be allotted to such positions.

2. The remainder should be sited behind the trench system and on ground further in rear, in deep pits which are usually covered over and also on platforms concealed in trees, in such a manner that the enemy is caught in an unexpected cross-fire if he breaks through. The important point is that the machine guns should not, in any circumstances, be detected beforehand. They must not, therefore, be too close to trenches which can be photographed or to well-defined woods which the enemy will suspect in any case. The best sites are in the open, in or under clumps of trees and bushes, or in hedges. All the earth excavated must be removed or concealed under hedges, etc. A low network of trip-wires has proved to be the best form of obstacle. To each machine gun there should be allotted a certain number of infantrymen armed with hand grenades, who can also work the gun if necessary.

3. The construction of special machine gun emplacements is not advisable. If sited in the position itself, they are destroyed, and if further in rear they disclose their positions. The guns should either be fired from improvised mountings or from sandbags.

4. In cases where the ground which the enemy's attack has to cross is not covered by machine guns sited in retired positions, it is necessary to hold machine guns in readiness even in the 1st Trench, particularly by night or during misty weather, as a means of defence against surprise attacks made without artillery preparation, though these can only be of local and minor importance. The machine guns mentioned in para. 2 should be employed for this purpose. By day, however, or at the very latest as soon as intense artillery fire begins, they should be taken back to their proper positions.

5. Machine guns may always be sited in the front trench in thick woods or under other exceptional conditions. The decision in such cases will rest with me; suggestions should be submitted.

(Signed) v. HOEHN.