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EXTRACTS FROM THE EXPERIENCES OF THE SIXTH GERMAN ARMY IN THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE '08/'15 LIGHT MACHINE GUN.

Excellent results can be obtained with the '08/'15 light machine gun, when handled by men thoroughly familiar with this weapon and its use, and commanded by officers possessing a detailed knowledge of the conditions favourable for its employment in action.

Sufficient use has not yet been made of this weapon, for its issue was delayed, and the men have not yet received the indispensable technical instruction.

There is urgent need for '08/'15 light machine guns to be issued for instructional purposes to the infantry regiments of resting divisions. Furthermore, not only the No. 1, but also the two other gun numbers should carry rifles, so that, in the event of the machine gun being out of action, the fighting value of these three men is not entirely lost.

TACTICAL EMPLOYMENT.

In the trenches, the '08/'15 light machine gun should always be stationed close to the platoon commander, who will tell the gunners what position to take up. The battalion commander should maintain a reserve of '08/'15 light machine guns in view of counter-attacks.

The '08/'15 machine guns should be employed independently of the '08 machine guns of the machine gun companies, and should be sited accordingly.

They should be posted in the front line, either in shell holes or in one of a number of alternative positions reconnoitred in advance. They need to be distributed by platoons, but particular stress should be laid on flanking and cross fire. They should not fire over the heads of the infantry, and, consequently, they should only be posted between the first and second lines in very exceptional cases. Frequent changes of position should be made, in order to deceive the enemy as to their location and to shelter them as long as possible from artillery fire and from aeroplane observation.

Their mobility in a shell-hole area, the facility with which they can be hidden from aerial and ground observation and their general handiness can only thus be fully utilized. Sap-heads provide excellent cover for single guns against surprise bursts of fire.

Good results can also be obtained against fleeting targets (working parties at night, carriers, etc.), reconnoitring patrols and troops moving to the assault; short bursts of harassing fire have proved very effective.

When employing the '08/'15 light machine gun, it should, however, be borne in mind that its accuracy is strictly limited. It should never be entirely substituted for infantry, but, on the contrary, the latter must realize that the '08/'15 light machine gun is only a means whereby the infantry can increase their volume of fire. By reason of its mechanical defects, the '08/'15 light machine gun can never entirely take the place of the '08 machine gun.

For mobile defence, the '08/'15 light machine gun is indispensable. It is posted either in the foremost line, or in front of the latter in machine gun nests and in shell holes. In addition, owing to its rapid rate of fire, it affords the infantry in the front line a certain amount of moral support.

In the attack, when skilfully handled and judiciously posted, the '08/'15 light machine gun contributes a valuable increase to the volume of fire. It can advance with the first wave of the assault and engage portions of the enemy's trenches where our attack is held up. This demands initiative. Consequently, in action it should be close to the platoon commander, so that the latter can employ it at the right place at a moment's notice.

In raids, the '08/'15 light machine gun can be usefully employed to protect the flanks of the infantry attack and in support of the latter. It should not be taken prematurely up to a newly-won position, and then only when bombing has stopped. In the meantime, it should be kept in front of the enemy's trench, and the ground towards the enemy should be observed for remunerative targets. Once posted in the enemy's trench, its duty will be to protect the flanks and to repel counter-attacks. In the latter case, it is absolutely essential to protect the '08/'15 light machine gun by bombing parties. Provided the gunners are in training, the '08/'15 light machine gun can keep up with the infantry. There is no doubt whatever as to its being sufficiently light for this purpose. Complete with filled water jacket, belt drum and sling, it weighs 48½ lbs.

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The '08 machine gun, which weighs 55 lbs. complete with filled water jacket on an "assault" mounting, has been frequently employed in assaults.

The ammunition expenditure is not excessive when the '08/'15 light machine gun is judiciously employed, for 1,200—1,500 rounds should suffice. Fire should not be continuous, but should be concentrated on specially remunerative targets. The maximum expenditure reported is 5,000 rounds. The longest burst of fire amounted to 250 rounds.

Command, as regards both *tactical employment* and *ammunition supply*, should be exercised by the infantry company commander.

The regimental machine gun officer is only responsible for the upkeep of '08/'15 machine guns when they are not in action. For this reason, the ammunition supply of the '08/'15 light machine guns should be quite independent of that of the '08 machine guns. Moreover, the latter will usually be posted between the lines or behind the front line trench.

It should be a point of honour with all men from the infantry, detailed as ammunition carriers for '08/'15 light machine guns, to return all empty boxes and belts to the ammunition depot near battalion headquarters.

The men should be drilled so as to acquire this habit.

TRAINING.

The '08/'15 light machine gun can only be used to advantage by a trained machine gunner, who must be thoroughly versed in all the details of the mechanism and not baffled by stoppages.

Above all, machine gunners should be instructed to carry out the following duties:—

Setting up the gun quickly in a shell hole, without fouling the barrel.

Changing lock and barrel when sitting in a shell hole.

Loading under the most unfavourable conditions, and in cramped positions.

Crawling along, carrying the gun, and jumping from one shell hole to another, carrying the gun slung.

The machine gunner must be convinced that his weapon renders him in no wise less mobile than the infantry, and this conviction must be strengthened by constant drill and practice in jumping. Promptitude and initiative will be encouraged, as well as a certain tactical "sense" when faced with various situations. To achieve this, it is absolutely essential to carry out detailed manœuvres conjointly with the infantry.

Only under the above conditions full use be made of *this very excellent weapon*.

GENERAL STAFF (INTELLIGENCE),

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS.

16th September, 1917.