

894F.9  
[S.S. 459.]

Estado Maior do Exército

BIB.

(Translation of a German Document)

C.G.S. of the Field Army.  
No. 26655 op. Secret.

BIBLIOTECA DO EXERCITO	
(Antiga Biblioteca do E. M. E.)	
N.º 894	Custo
Aumentado em G.H.Q. 14-9-19	
Livro N.º	20/4/16.

## FLAMMENWERFER.

The attached extract from the report of the Commander of the Flammenwerfer Troops, regarding the experience gained in the recent fighting with this weapon, is forwarded for information.

(Signed) TAPPEN.

### Extract from a Report of the Commander of the 3rd and 4th Guard Pioneer Battalions regarding the recent fighting with Flammenwerfer.

Since the 21st February, 1916, Flammenwerfer have been employed on 51 occasions, on all of which except two they were employed in the attack.

Of these engagements 41 were successful, and enabled our troops to advance; ten were unsuccessful because the Flammenwerfer squads were shot down before they arrived within "spraying distance," or because the trenches, blockhouses, etc., which had been captured by means of the Flammenwerfer, had eventually to be abandoned.

## EXPERIENCES.

**A. General.**—The task of the Flammenwerfer during the attack consists in mastering isolated hostile defences which continue to resist and thus prevent our infantry from advancing, thereby rendering possible a further advance of our infantry. This task was fulfilled in the majority of cases during the recent fighting.

As a general rule, at least one Flammenwerfer squad should be allotted to each infantry company which is attacking: this squad should follow a short distance behind the leading skirmish line. The company commander will indicate to the commander of the Flammenwerfer squads the objective which is to be gained, but will, as far as possible, allow him a free hand in the execution of his task. A few bold infantrymen will be attached to a Flammenwerfer squad which comprises 2 light Flammenwerfer. The attachment of machine-guns is very advantageous if the Flammenwerfer squad and the machine-guns can work together before the attack. For this reason, single machine-guns are included in the organization of Flammenwerfer detachments.

**B. Actual Examples.**—Large Flammenwerfer can at times be brought up and employed with advantage. It was possible on several occasions, though with great difficulty, to bring them up into the most advanced lines and employ them there against the enemy's concrete blockhouses, etc. Three large Flammenwerfer were taken into Fort Douaumont and successfully employed.

The small Flammenwerfer have proved especially valuable in wood and village fighting, against the enemy's blockhouses and for the purpose of working along a trench in order to clear it. It was again found that a single jet directed through the loopholes of blockhouses drove out the gun teams of the machine-guns inside and generally compelled them to surrender.

The occupants of the blockhouse frequently closed the loopholes by means of their iron shutters when attacked by Flammenwerfer. The Flammenwerfer squad took advantage of the fact that the machine-gun were thereby put out of action, and rushed forward to the entrance to the blockhouse and directed a jet through the entrance.

Flammenwerfer were also successfully employed in village fighting. The enemy frequently remained in deep cellars or cave-like dug-outs, from which he could not be driven by rifle fire or hand grenades. A jet directed for a fairly long period through a loophole, or through the entrance, was quite sufficient to persuade the garrison to surrender. The flames also drove the enemy out of the upper stories of defended houses, the latter being frequently set on fire by the jets of flame.

The creeping forward of the Flammenwerfer squads, which was practised for several weeks with a view to employing this method in the advance on the Hauts de Meuse, proved most successful. It was successfully employed on more than 30 occasions. The men crawled forward silently and by circuitous routes towards the objective, making every use of shell holes and other available cover. Quite short rushes by individuals are also advantageous. When the village of Samogneux and the "Bauernschreck" Battery in the Haumont ravine were captured, the Flammenwerfer squads crept forward for more than 100 yards over country which was for the most part treeless.

In many cases, the squads which have crawled forward find themselves faced with 40 to 50 yards of entirely open ground before they can reach their objective. This difficulty was frequently surmounted by directing, for some time, a jet of flame between the squad and the objective; under cover of the smoke cloud produced, the squad was able to rush forward to within attacking distance of its objective.

The moral effect of the flames was very considerable. Many of the enemy surrendered before the flames reached them, and frequently even when a smoke cloud was produced at some little distance from them. During the fighting at Samogneux and Haumont, the Flammenwerfer squads ran short of fuzes and continued to operate their jets without setting fire to them. Even this induced the occupants of houses to surrender.

The Flammenwerfer Detachments (down to individual squads) must be placed under the orders of the Infantry Commander responsible for the tactical execution of the operation. This commander must allot the general objective of the Flammenwerfer Detachments, etc., and duly consider their proposals, but he must leave the technical and tactical execution of the task to the Flammenwerfer Commanders. In any case the Infantry Commander must ascertain the limits of this weapon for the close combat, both from a technical and a tactical point of view. It has happened, for instance, that an Infantry Commander has allotted to the Flammenwerfer the impossible task of directing a jet against the enemy's position from a distance of 220 yards.

COPIES ISSUED TO:—

Battalions,  
Companies,  
Machine-gun units.

(End of Translation.)

### Note by the General Staff, General Headquarters.

The method of meeting attacks by Flammenwerfer is to look out for, and shoot down the men of the Flammenwerfer detachment.

The method of advance recommended in the 6th paragraph of B should be noted, and rapid fire must at once be directed on any smoke cloud formed by Flammenwerfer jets, under