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Not to be Taken Into Front Line Trenches
Issued down to include Company Commanders

COMBAT INSTRUCTIONS

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General Headquarters
American Expeditionary Forces

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COMBAT INSTRUCTIONS

September 5, 1918.

1. The principles enunciated in Bulletin No. 30, May 23, 1918; Memorandum for Corps and Division Commanders, August 8, 1918, and Notes on Recent Operations, No. 1, August 7, 1918, are not yet receiving due application. Attack formations of platoons, companies, and battalions are everywhere too dense and follow too rigidly the illustrations contained in the Offensive Combat of Small Units. Waves are too close together; individuals therein have too little interval. Lines are frequently seen with the men almost elbow to elbow, and seldom with intervals greater than two or three paces. Columns, when used, are too long; in first line companies they should rarely have a greater depth than ten files. All formations are habitually lacking in elasticity; there is almost never any attempt to maneuver, that is, to throw supports and reserves to the flanks for envelopment. Scouts, if used, are frequently only a few yards in front of the leading waves, where the only purpose they can serve is to blanket or to receive the fire of the men behind them. Subordinate officers display little appreciation of the assumed situation and how best to meet its requirements. It is necessary, therefore, to repeat once more a few fundamental principles which must be impressed upon all concerned.

2. The essential difference between open and trench warfare, so far as effect upon formations is concerned, is characterized by the presence or absence of the rolling barrage ahead of the infantry. From a tactical point of view, the method of combat in trench warfare presents a marked contrast to that employed in open warfare, and the attempt by assaulting infantry to use trench warfare methods in an open warfare combat will be successful only at great cost. Trench warfare is marked by uniform formations, the regulation of space and time by higher command down to the smallest details, absence of scouts preceding the first wave, fixed distances and intervals between units and individuals, voluminous orders, careful rehearsal, little initiative upon the part of the individual soldier. Open warfare is marked by scouts who precede the first wave, irregularity of formations, comparatively little regulation of space and time by the higher command, the greatest possible use of the infantry's own fire power to enable it to get forward, variable distances and intervals between units and individuals, use of every form of cover and accident of the ground during the advance, brief orders, and the greatest possible use of individual initiative by all troops engaged in the action.

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3. The following principles deal chiefly with warfare in the open. In a trench-to-trench attack, where a moving barrage is to be followed closely, uniform formations are generally expedient until the enemy's first line trenches have been entered. Thereafter, the principles outlined below should be applied.

4. *Scouts.* When closely following a moving barrage, there is seldom room for scouts. When the barrage has been lost or does not exist, as is ordinarily the case in the open field, scouts should precede the first line companies. They should deploy at wide and irregular intervals, 10 to 50 paces, to present a poor target to hostile machine guns. They should take every possible advantage of the ground to obtain cover, provided their advance is not thereby unduly delayed. Exposed ground should be crossed at a run. Their distance in front of the main bodies of their platoons should follow no set rule, but should constantly vary with the ground and with the anticipated position of the enemy. One moment they may be 500 meters ahead of their platoons, a few minutes later they may be absorbed therein. Their purpose is to compel the enemy machine guns to open fire and so disclose their location or be run over by the scouts. When the hostile machine guns have been located, the scouts should at once open fire.

5. *Platoons.* Under cover of the fire of the scouts, enough men from the platoon behind work forward individually or in small groups to this thin and very irregular line of scouts in order to give it sufficient fire power to pin the machine gun crew to the ground. Or, if the scouts are in low ground, it will sometimes be advisable for the platoon to open fire over their heads from commanding ground behind. But the firing line, however formed, must remain a thin one, with no two men ever less than five meters apart, and in the usual case preferably at much greater interval. The first reinforcements for the scouts should contain one or more automatic rifle teams. At the same time, riflemen and bombers, and, if the ground favors it, automatics also, begin to work from the second wave around one or both flanks of the firing line to get at the flanks of the machine gun and thus close on its crew. All detachments or units attempting such an attack must take proper measures to secure their own flanks. If the hostile gun is shifted to meet the new attack, a whole or part of the firing line should take prompt advantage of that change in position or direction of fire to rush directly forward. As soon as the scouts have located the machine gun, the rifle grenadiers assist the advance of everyone by heavy fire from suitable positions behind the first line. The ability of the platoon leader is displayed by prompt reconnaissance of the ground, by a rapid estimate of what it offers toward facilitating the advance of his men, and by immediate decision upon a simple plan for

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the use of his combined weapons and of the ground to enable him to close with the enemy. His plan should habitually include pinning the enemy to the ground by frontal and flanking fire, under cover of which some portions of the platoon, usually those sent against the hostile flanks, can close by short rushes with the enemy. The training and discipline of the platoon are shown by the skill with which the men carry out the plan of the leader. A platoon should by itself be able to capture one, or even a pair, of hostile machine guns.

6. *Company.* The capture of a *nest* of machine guns will probably be beyond the capacity of a platoon, and will require the company to send its support platoons to the flanks to envelop or encircle.

7. *Machine Guns.* Every first line battalion should habitually be reinforced by a machine gun company, which reports to and is under the orders of the battalion commander. He should not in turn pass the company on by platoons to his rifle companies, but should command it as a fifth company. This does not mean that the company should be assembled at one place for massed fire. In fact, the contrary is usually advisable. The company should ordinarily work by platoons, one supporting each first line company, while one, if two rifle companies only are in first line, is charged with defense against hostile aircraft, with replacements for the first line platoons and with securing the flanks of the battalion. When initiating an attack, the machine gun platoons will at first usually follow in rear of the first line companies, provided the character of the terrain renders their early use probable. When such is not the case, they should follow in rear of the support companies. After the enemy has been located, the guns of each platoon habitually work in pairs, one pair remaining in position on commanding ground to cover the advance of the other pair to a suitable firing position in advance. All changes of position are, as a rule, made by bounds of half platoons. Except in the early stages of an attack, as noted above, a steady advance of machine guns will seldom be advisable. A platoon supporting the advance of an infantry company ordinarily fires from commanding positions over the heads of the troops. The company commander remains near the battalion commander. He takes full advantage of every opportunity to concentrate the fire of his platoons, usually without changing their position, on those hostile nests or strong points which are making most trouble. He shifts the fire of his platoon, whenever practicable, to give flanking instead of direct fire. He must take every opportunity to bring forward his gun and ammunition carts.

Platoons in support of first line companies should send agents, usually a non-commissioned officer and two privates, forward to the rifle companies. A rocket signal will, as a rule, most promptly secure fire from the supporting machine guns

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8. *One-Pounder Gun.* The one-pounder guns will usually be assigned to the first line battalions, and will be placed under the command of the infantry majors. When there is only one battalion in the first line, two guns should ordinarily be assigned to it. The remaining gun may be held under the order of the colonel between the leading and the second battalion to replace any gun lost in the first line and to secure the flanks. The one-pounder gun is intended for direct fire against machine guns, in which it is of the utmost possible value. In fact, the one-pounder is the most effective single weapon in the infantry regiment for use against machine guns. It is so effective that the hostile artillery will not permit its approach within short range unless its advance is so carefully screened that the enemy does not discover it until it opens fire. It should not be used against other targets than machine guns or tanks. These guns advance by bounds from one firing position to another along defiladed routes, which should be reconnoitered in advance.

9. *Light Mortars.* The light trench mortar should be assigned by pairs to first line battalions, and placed under the battalion commander. Its principal use is also against machine gun nests, where its fire is both physically and morally highly effective. Like the machine guns and the one-pounder, the advance of the mortar must be by bounds from one position to another from which it can support the first line companies. In open warfare its use is hampered by the difficulty of transporting by hand both the mortar and its bulky ammunition. Economy in the use of ammunition and careful organization of the system of supply will do much toward overcoming these difficulties. When the Brandt-Maurice shell can be obtained 75 per cent. of the ammunition should be of this type.

10. *Recapitulation.* To recapitulate, the German machine guns constitute the chief weapon to be combatted by our infantry. The platoon commander must oppose them by fire from his rifles, his automatics and his rifle grenades, and must close with their crews under cover of this fire and of ground beyond their flanks. The battalion commander, in addition to the weapons of the platoon, has his machine guns, one-pounder gun, light mortars and accompanying field piece. The battalion commander who makes the most intelligent use of the combined fire of these weapons and of the ground will lose the fewest men. The success of every unit from the platoon to the division must be exploited to the fullest extent. Where strong resistance is encountered, reinforcements must not be thrown in to make a frontal attack at this point, but must be pushed through gaps created by successful units, to attack these strong points in the flank or rear.

11. *Artillery.* The division artillery, for open warfare, is divided into two classes: (a) that retained by the division

commander under the command of the artillery brigade commander, and (b) that assigned to infantry units under the command of the infantry commanders.

The proportions to be assigned to these two classes depend on the following considerations:

The retention of a large proportion under the division commander permits rapid and powerful concentration on decisive points anywhere on the division front. But unless communications are perfect and information complete, it renders the close support of local actions difficult.

The assignment of artillery to infantry units binds such artillery closely to the infantry it is supporting, and gives the infantry commander a powerful combination of arms with which to handle local situations without loss of time. On the other hand, it tends to lessen the power of artillery concentration of the division as a whole, and may render the infantry unit clumsy and immobile. Moreover it demands a high degree of decision and initiative on the part of both the infantry and artillery commanders immediately involved.

In whatever manner the artillery is assigned, close and direct liaison between the artillery and the infantry which it is supporting must be maintained.

A suitable proportion of artillery for assignment under infantry commanders is, as a rule, one battalion of light artillery to each infantry brigade. With respect to its mission and employment, this artillery is divided into two classes: *infantry batteries* and *accompanying guns*. If a battalion is assigned to each infantry brigade, a suitable disposition will frequently be to use two batteries as infantry batteries, and to break up one battery for use as accompanying guns. Infantry batteries should be fought as batteries; accompanying guns always by piece; each under an officer when practicable.

12. *Infantry Batteries.* With two infantry batteries per infantry brigade, they may be either assigned one under each infantry regimental commander, or both held under the infantry brigade commander. The former disposition is ordinarily preferable when regiments are deployed abreast.

With both infantry batteries held under the infantry brigade commander, the artillery battalion commander commands these batteries, ordinarily remaining with the infantry brigade commander or in close communication with him. When the infantry batteries are assigned to infantry regiments, the artillery battalion commander supervises the employment of his batteries, as well as of the replacement of personnel, materiel, and ammunition.

The missions of infantry batteries include the attack of the stronger points of resistance, defense against local counterattacks, and firing on hostile reserves.

Fire is habitually by direct observation from near the battery positions on specific objectives. The range finder should be at hand and used when accurate map ranges are not available and for moving objectives. Free use must be made of scouts for securing information and for protection against surprise. Visual communications are important. Positions should be forward, well reconnoitered, but occupied with rapidity and boldness.

13. *Accompanying Guns.* These are assigned first line infantry battalions and placed under the command of the infantry majors. The proportion may be one or even two per battalion, depending on the front covered.

Accompanying guns attack hostile machine guns, tanks and strong points.

Fire is direct in the case of clearly visible or moving objectives; otherwise indirect with flash defilade and observation at the piece. The range should be from 500 to 1500 meters. Ranges are ordinarily estimated. A wide bracket of say 400 meters is quickly obtained and searched. Ineffective ranges are eliminated during fire for effect.

The pieces are ordinarily moved horsed, unlimbered under cover, and run forward by hand. Caissons are brought as near the pieces as conditions permit. Accompanying guns find their protection principally in the small target presented, in concealment by natural features, and in their mobility. Two or more caissons should be assigned for the ammunition supply of each piece.

Captains of batteries broken up for accompanying guns may devote their attention to superintending ammunition supply and replacement of materiel and personnel, or they may assign lieutenants to this duty and themselves command pieces.

Nearby infantry reserves should be called upon to assist in ammunition supply and in the movement of the piece when necessary.

A portion of the battery personnel for information and communication should be assigned to each piece. This personnel is pushed forward to secure information and locate objectives, to reconnoiter positions, and to secure liaison with the infantry commander and the ammunition supply.

14. The functions of infantry commanders having either infantry battery or accompanying guns under their command generally consists in the indication of missions and supplying information as to enemy and friendly dispositions. Technical details and methods should be left as far as possible to the artillery commander. However, in the absence of a specific mission, the artillery commander should, on his own initiative, use the means at his disposal to locate and attack suitable objectives.

In general, the artillery commander is responsible that the full power of his weapons is developed and aggressively used. The infantry commander must apply this power where it will best assist his infantry.

15. *Division Trench Mortars.* The 6″ Newton Trench Mortar, while developed primarily for position warfare, is capable of utilization in open warfare. Its motor transport enables it to follow the advance, and assures ammunition supply. If conditions render it necessary, a portion of the mortars may be left behind. This affords a reserve of personnel and transport for ammunition supply to hasten the occupation of a position and to replace casualties promptly.

16. The mission of the division trench mortar battery in open warfare is solely a close support of infantry in overcoming strong points which are holding up the advance. Except when the attack is at dawn of days succeeding the first day of the advance, the position warfare conception of elaborately prepared emplacements must be entirely abandoned. It requires too much time. For missions undertaken and executed by day, the rapid occupation of a position and opening of fire is *essential* to success.

17. When the nature of the action is such that the mission of the trench mortar battery can be anticipated, it should preferably be attached to the infantry regiment or brigade which it will be required to support. When its mission cannot be foreseen, it must be held subject to orders of the division or brigade in such a way that its prompt assignment to any mission arising during the action can be effected. Its assignment to the division infantry reserve is feasible when this will not result in its being held too far to the rear for prompt entry into action. Whatever be the tactical assignment of the battery, the battery commander must take all possible measures to push his unit forward in order to hasten its entry into action when called for.

18. Infantry commanders assigning a mission to the battery should state definitely the locality to be fired upon, and the positions of friendly troops. The selection of positions should be left within rather large limits to the battery commander. The time of attack should be arranged after consulting the battery commander as to the time necessary for the latter to go into battery.

19. Up to the time of the assignment of a mission, the battery commander remains with, or in close liaison with, the infantry commander to whom attached. When assigned a mission the battery commander hastens to join the infantry commander whose unit he is to support. After obtaining the necessary information as to the operation contemplated, he makes a rapid reconnaissance of position, and meets the battery on arrival in the vicinity or sends an agent to conduct it to the position. The position selected should be at as short a range as is possible, consistent with proper concealment and ammunition supply.

20. Visual concealment in position must be had, but protection must be limited ordinarily to that afforded by the natural features of the position selected. The construction of emplace-

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ments is carried only as far as is absolutely necessary to fire. Previously prepared sand bags are necessary. Protection for the cannoneers must not be allowed to delay the opening of fire. The deep defilade possible with this piece is ample protection against hostile fire under open warfare conditions. The moral and material effect of a rapid fire, promptly delivered, is great. But if the fire is delayed, the enemy is allowed to perfect his dispositions, all the while inflicting losses on our infantry.

21. When a mission has been accomplished, the materiel should be at once withdrawn and loaded on the transport for further advance.

* * * * *

22. Division commanders will secure full compliance with the principles herein enunciated.

23. Copies of all standing instructions upon tactical matters which have been, or may be, issued by division or higher headquarters will be forwarded through channels to General Headquarters.

PERSHING.

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