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BANGALORE TORPEDOES.

as used by 7th Field Company Australian Engineers.

DESCRIPTION: The accompanying sketch "A" shows in detail the BANGALORE Torpedo as used by the 7th Field Company, A.E. on the HINDENBURG Wire.

The pipe was well dried before filling with Ammonal and contained 30 lbs. of the explosive.

The method of ignition shewn proved very satisfactory. One spare length of fuze with dry primer, detonator and Nobel lighter was carried by one of the party. No "Duds" were experienced.

ORGANISATION ETC. Each torpedo party consisted of two sappers and one infantryman.

The infantrymen employed were attached to the Field Company for one day before the operation for practice purposes and were selected men who knew the line well.

Number one sapper or N.C.O. of each party was in charge and carried ignition apparatus with the spares.

The pipe is plugged with wood at both ends, the one at the rear being removed after placing pipe on wire and the wooden plug (shewn on sketch "A") containing dry primer with attached fuze is inserted.

No. 2 sapper carries front end of torpedo and No. 3 infantryman the rear end.

The torpedo was launched by the front end being raised by shoulder of No. 2 with No. 3 holding the rear end down at full length of right arm. The front end is then lifted over as far as possible before being placed on the wire. The pipe is then pushed across the wire. Then there should be at least 6 inches overlap of pipe at each end to make sure of a clean gap being cut right through the wire.

The placing of the torpedo on the top of the wire is found by actual experiments to be most satisfactory and more practical than in the centre or on the ground.

The noise made by the torpedo as it was being pushed across the wire was considerable, but could be obviated by taking out a light wooden trough to slide the pipe along. This could be carried by No. 1.

Experiments were made afterwards behind the line with a trough as shewn in sketch "B" and found quite satisfactory.

EFFECT. On average wire entanglements the gap cut was a minimum of 12 feet in width for a length equal to the length of pipe actually touching the wire, provided there was an overlap of 6 inches.

COVERING PARTIES ETC. The following extracts from 7th Australian Infantry Brigade Order No. 95, dated April 21st 1917, explain methods adopted:-

Sub.para. 3 - A warning signal - A succession of three red flares at ten seconds interval will be fired from a point about C.5.b.5.8. at 2-14 a.m. At 2-15 a.m. the signal for the exploding of the charges will be three red flares fired simultaneously from three VERY pistols from the same point.

In the event of fog or misty weather, charges will be exploded at 2-15 a.m. by time, and No. 1 of each party should therefore be provided with a luminous watch.

Sub.para. 4 - A covering party of two riflemen and two bombers under a selected N.C.O. or senior private will precede each party carrying mobile charges until the wire is reached, and the charges laid. As soon as the first signal is fired, the covering party and all except No. 1 of the carrying party will withdraw 100 yards into shell-holes. When the second signal is fired the No. 1 will light the fuze and withdraw to the covering party. The whole party will then return to our front line. One officer of the 25th battalion will be put in charge of the covering party, and will be responsible for seeing that the group leave the front line correctly, and will fire the necessary warning and firing signals from our front line.

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Sub. para. 5 - Covering parties will meet the parties of 7th Field Company, A.E. with mobile charges, at the crater NOREUIL at 10 p.m.

Sub. para. 6 - The man or N.C.O. in charge of the covering party will be responsible for guiding the mobile charge party from the rendezvous to our front line, and thence to the wire to be destroyed.

Sub. para. 7 - Covering parties will make a careful reconnaissance of their objective and the ground to be traversed, by daylight observation from our front line, during the 23rd instant.

Sub. para. 8 - Covering parties and mobile charge parties will leave our front line at 1 a.m.

Sub. para. 9 - ARTILLERY. The arrangements for the lifting of barrage made in my 203/2 of April 21st will be amended as follows:-

The barrage on the left sector will be lifted at 1-15 a.m. and not as stated, and will recommence at 2-25 a.m. on the enemy front trench, returning to the enemy wire at 2-34 a.m. The barrage will otherwise be normal unless an increased rate of fire is asked for to enable the parties to return.

Sub. para. 10 - All infantry and machine guns will be warned that the enterprise is taking place, and every precaution taken to prevent our parties being fired on, either during the operations or on their return.

Sub. para. 11 - O.C. 25th Battalion will detail 4 stretchers and complement of stretcher bearers to be in readiness in our front line to collect casualties should they occur.

Sub. para. 12 - All watches will be carefully synchronised with 2nd Aust. Division Signal time at 7 p.m. The officer in charge of the covering parties will get the time from the 7th A. I. Bde. Hd.Qrs at 9-45 p.m.

With reference to para. 4 of the order, it was considered that under the conditions existing that it was better to use only one rifleman and one bomber per party; this was adopted. On one occasion the charges (numbering 8) were placed only 40 yards apart and the nature of the country made it more suitable to take the parties out in file than in line. In this case the whole party was preceded by a covering party consisting of 1 Lewis gun with 6 riflemen carrying bombs, while the rear of the party was brought by a similar covering party. The leading covering party (when torpedo parties were placed) took up its position on right flank to protect that flank and the immediate rear. The rear covering party acted similarly on the left flank.

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War diary