

German Notes on Winter Use Of Infantry Weapons



The following notes, based on directions issued by the German High Command on the use of infantry weapons in winter, are reprinted from the *Intelligence Bulletin* with permission of the Army's Military Intelligence Division.

THE German Army is thoroughly aware that winter cold and snow necessitate special measures concerning the carrying, moving and bringing into position of infantry weapons and ammunition. In this connection German soldiers are reminded of certain fundamental points: that noises travel farther in cold, clear air; that when snow obscures terrain features, there are decidedly fewer landmarks; and that, in winter, distances are generally estimated too short in clear weather and too far in mist. The German High Command adds several other practical suggestions:

It will be especially necessary to practice target designation, distance estimation and ranging.

The rifleman and his weapons must be camouflaged thoroughly. White coats, white covers for headgear, and white overall trousers and jackets will be worn. When necessary, such outer clothing can easily be improvised out of white canvas. The simplest camouflage for weapons will be plain white cloth covers or coats of removable chalk; the former will have the added advantage of affording protection.

At low temperatures, the accompanying weapons of the infantry will fire somewhat short at first. After a few rounds, however, the range to the point of impact will be normal. Before a weapon is loaded, the loading movements should be practiced without ammunition. (In drilling with pistols, be sure to remove the magazine beforehand.)

Rifles. Rifles are carried on the back, or are hung from the neck and suspended in front. During long marches on skis, rifles are fastened on the side of the haversack.

When the German soldier goes into position, he takes special care not to allow his rifle barrel to become filled with snow. He does not take off the bolt protector and muzzle cap until shortly before he is to use the rifle. The various methods of going into position are practiced in drill.

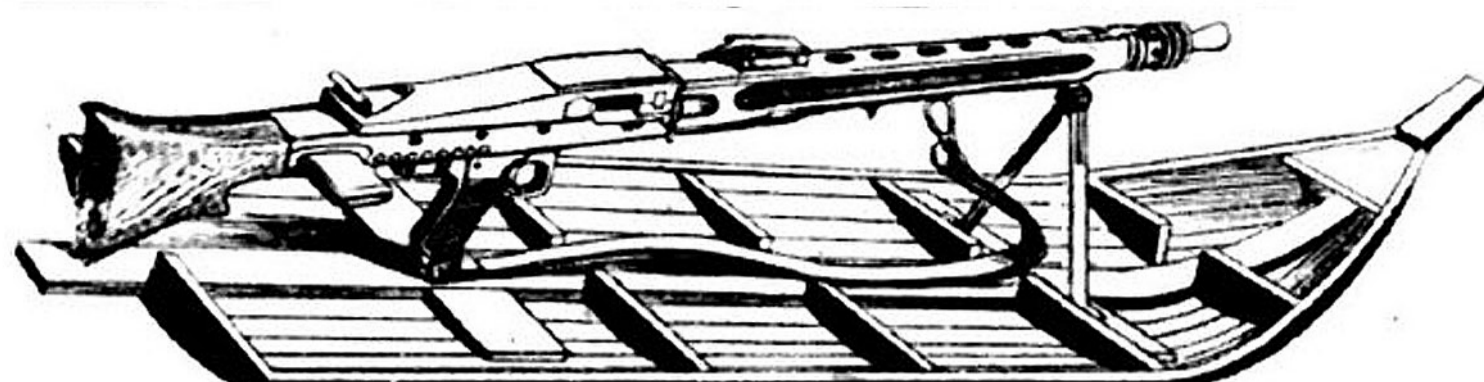
As far as possible, telescopic sights are not exposed too suddenly to extreme changes in temperature.

Automatic Pistol. The Germans keep the automatic pistol well wrapped and sling it around the neck or over the shoulder. Magazine pouches are closed very tightly.

Light Machine Gun. The light machine gun is slung on the back. In going into position, the Germans use brushwood or a "snow board" for a base. They take care not to disturb, by unnecessary trampling, the snow cover in front of positions. The purpose of this precaution is to avoid recognition by the opposing force.

The simplest kind of mat is taken along so that belts can be kept clear of snow.

The light machine gun is first shot until it is warm and then oiled.



Pulk used for transporting machine gun in snow.



"Snow board" used as light machine-gun base.

When fire is continued for any length of time, the snow in front of the muzzle turns black; therefore, before the snow becomes blackened, the Germans decide upon prospective changes of position.

If there is to be a considerable interval after the firing of the machine gun, the bolt is changed and the oil is removed from the sliding parts. (Only an extremely thin oil film is allowed to remain.) This precludes stoppages by the freezing of oil. The new bolt is given a very thin coat of oil before it is inserted.

Replacement ammunition, in pre-filled belts, is carried into action.

Heavy Machine Gun. The heavy machine gun is carried in the usual manner or is loaded on a small sleigh, skis or a *pulk*. A *pulk* is a type of sled used by the Lapps; its front half somewhat resembles that of a rowboat.

When the Germans take the heavy machine gun into position, they use some sort of snow board, the *pulk* or even a stretcher as a base. They take care not to disturb the snow in front of the position.

The Germans try not to expose the sights to temperatures of less than 6° F. During marches these sights are kept in their containers, and before they are used they are gradually warmed in sheltered places or on the human body. The sights are kept mounted on the machine-gun carriage only while the gun is in active use.

Mats are carried so that belts may be kept clear of snow.

For shooting in extreme cold, German range tables provide for the necessary sight adjustments. The heavy machine gun is first shot until it is warm and then is oiled. New positions are decided upon before the snow in front of the muzzle becomes blackened.

The Germans prevent soiling of the machine gun, which leads to stoppages, (a) by keeping the antidust cover closed as much as possible and (b) by not allowing the gun to remain loaded (with bolt backwards) for any length of time.

Speed is considered highly important in readying the gun for firing. While firing is in progress, the bolt remains uncocked in the forward position, the belt is inserted into the belt pawl, and the gunner, remaining in the firing position, withdraws the cocking slide only with a strong jerk and pushes it forward again.

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DECEMBER 31, 1943

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