

PART II. WAR.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PRINCIPLES OF EMPLOYMENT OF MOUNTED TROOPS GENERALLY WHICH CONCERN MOUNTED RIFLES.

120. *The sub-division of the mounted troops of an army.*

1. It is a general principle that when mounted troops are employed on duties which require that they should be able to manoeuvre freely, their operations shall not be hampered by responsibility for the protection of their own army. On the other hand, when mounted troops are employed in the service of protection, they are bound to the force they cover. A clear distinction must always be drawn between these two duties. One body of mounted troops cannot carry out both duties at the same time, for they are by nature conflicting, and it is not possible for the same commander to fix his attention at the same time upon manoeuvring so as to carry out an independent role, and upon subordinating his plans to the movements of another force.

2. For these reasons the mounted troops of an army are divided, according to the nature of their duties, into:

- i. Independent.
- ii. Protective.

In addition to these two main groups, a small force of mounted troops is allotted to each division for special duties.

3. The body of mounted troops acting independently is independent only in the sense that it is entrusted for the time being with some special mission, and is not charged with the direct protection of any slower moving body. It co-operates as much as any other formation in giving effect to the will of the commander-in-chief.

The mounted troops specially detailed for protective duties furnish the first line of protection only. Columns moving behind this first line must be covered in addition by advanced, rear and flank guards as may be required, and by outposts when halted.

Divisional mounted troops form a part of the divisional command and should not be removed there from even temporarily without special and urgent reason.

In deciding on the relative strengths of the forces to act independently and protectively, it must be borne in mind that if a force is to act independently on a mission of reconnaissance with success, it must usually operate in large numbers, as it must be prepared to meet the hostile cavalry; therefore the minimum force necessary should be kept for protective duties.

At any time circumstances may arise which make it necessary for the forces to be re-grouped, for the body which has been acting independently to assume a protective role, and vice versa, or for either body to reinforce the other. Even without orders from superior authority the respective commanders of the independent and protective forces should always seize any opportunities of co-operating that may offer, in furtherance of the commander-in-chief's plans, but with due regard to the special responsibilities allotted to each.

YEOMANRY AND MOUNTED RIFLE TRAINING - Part I & II - 1912(1915)

4. Mounted rifles may, under various circumstances, be required to form part of any of these groups of mounted troops. Normally the divisional mounted brigades to which protective duties are usually allotted, when they are acting in conjunction with a cavalry division, may be formed either wholly or partially of mounted rifles.

5. The role and duties of mounted troops when acting independently are described in "Cavalry Training." The principles governing the employment of mounted rifles in the other duties of mounted troops which have been indicated above are described in the following sections.

121. *The command and leading of mounted troops.*

1. In case of mounted troops the personality of the commander and a thorough understanding between him and his subordinates are of great importance. The rapidity of action, which is one of the chief characteristics of mounted troops, often allows only the shortest time for consideration. In many cases it will be impossible for the commander to gauge, with any degree of accuracy, the strength of his adversary from the preliminary resistance he encounters. Orders, therefore, often must be based on a general consideration of the circumstances, and will frequently no more than indicate what is required. If troops are to be able to act promptly and intelligently under such conditions thorough training combined with high executive talent in the leaders down to the most junior is essential.

2. Readiness to act at all times with rapidity and energy does not imply hurry or lack of method. A methodical system of command must be enforced and the necessary arrangements and order for an attack clearly and carefully issued whenever possible.

3. On the battlefield mounted troops must be able to recognise and seize the opportunities which are most favourable for their action. Officers must therefore understand the principles which govern the movements and action of the other arms in the field.

4. All leaders must realise that success depends on concentrated effort and that in a collision with the enemy the concentration of a force once scattered is most difficult to achieve. Detachments must be kept down to a minimum and it is the duty of the commander of any detachment, the moment his special mission has been accomplished, to move on his own initiative to rejoin the main body, subject to the general principle that, in reconnaissance, touch when once obtained, with forces of the enemy regarding, which information is required, must never be lost without orders from superior authority. (See F.S. Regs., Part I, Sec. 90, 6, and Sec. 137, 6 of this manual.)

122. *Economy of horseflesh in the field.*

1. All ranks should appreciate the value of the horse and the power that it confers on the arm. They must understand how to use the horse's qualities to the utmost when occasion requires, and how to spare it in every possible way at other times.

A sound system of conditioning horses in peace and of economising horseflesh in the field is one of the foundations of success. In normal circumstances demands

must not be made upon mounted troops which would only be justified in moments of crisis.

Opportunities to feed, water and rest must be given even during the progress of the battle if the situation will permit it, but in this case permission from higher authority should be obtained.

Except in warm dry climates commanders should endeavour to make use of billets to shelter their horses.

2. A wise economy with regard to the number of men used for protection, reconnaissance, and orderly duty is essential. A system of inter-communication towards the rear, calculated to economise horseflesh, is important in the case of mounted troops acting in advance of an army.

123. The protective role of mounted troops.

1. An army may be covered either by a general advanced guard or by a body of protective mounted troops operating in front of the tactical advanced guards of the various columns, or by both. The strength and composition of a general advanced guard will be determined by the commander-in-chief, according to the purpose for which it is required. It will usually be composed of all arms, and will include either the whole or a part of the mounted troops acting protectively. When no general advanced guard is formed the protective mounted troops will usually be under the direct orders of the commander of the force it covers.

2. The following duties may be allotted to the protective mounted troops:

i. To protect and screen the advance either as part of a general advanced guard or when acting by itself in front of the advanced guards of the various columns.

ii. To seize and hold positions in front of the infantry and deny their occupation to the enemy until the main body arrives.

iii. To protect and screen a flank march.

iv. To furnish information regarding tactical features resources, and roads of the country in advance of the main body.

3. As the duty of the protective mounted troops is to secure tactical liberty of action for the force it is covering, it must be sufficiently far ahead to give the latter time to deploy for battle and for the commander to form his plan of action.

Whilst the opposing armies are at a distance from one another the commander of a general advanced guard in disposing his force will usually employ his mounted troops for reconnaissance, and his infantry as supports; he must, however, always ensure intimate co-operation between all portions of his forces so as to utilise his whole available strength, when necessary.

Similarly, the protective mounted troops, when by themselves, should be so disposed as to make effective action in force possible, should circumstances require it; that is to say, a large portion should, as a rule, be kept as concentrated as the nature of its duties will admit, and patrols, suitably supported, be pushed along all the approaches by which hostile bodies might advance.

YEOMANRY AND MOUNTED RIFLE TRAINING - Part I & II - 1912(1915)

4. Instead of marching at a uniform rate and distance in front of the main army, it will usually be expedient for portions of the protective mounted troops to move rapidly forward to some natural feature, such as a ridge or river, along which it will establish posts of observation, the country in front and on the flanks being watched by patrols. The troops not sent forward to seize this line will continue to maintain a line of observation in rear until the new line of observation is taken up. They will then concentrate and move up to support the advanced troops, or pass through to form a more advanced line. By this method horses are spared unnecessary fatigue, and fewer squadrons are broken up than if the whole force extends and marches at a uniform pace in front of the column covered.

5. When the heads of the opposing armies are drawing near each other it becomes the duty of the mounted troops, assisted by the other arms, to clear up the tactical situation, by driving in the enemy's protective troops. This will involve offensive action and will be the work of all the mounted troops available.

124. *Divisional mounted troops.*

1. On the line of march the duties of the divisional mounted troops are: to assist the infantry in the immediate protection of the division by supplying mounted men for patrolling in connection with advanced guards, flank guards, rear guards, and outposts; to maintain connection with the protective mounted troops and neighbouring columns; to furnish escorts, orderlies, despatch riders, and to facilitate inter-communication generally.

2. Divisional mounted troops when employed with advanced, flank or rear guards will be of great assistance, their mobility enabling them to examine a wide extent of ground, thus saving the infantry much exhaustion and affording effective protection. When attached to infantry outposts they may be employed for reconnaissance or as protective patrols. When communication within the outposts cannot be maintained by signalling or the use of cyclists, the divisional cavalry will furnish sufficient mounted men with the supports and the reserves for the purpose.

3. When a division is in action, the duties of its divisional mounted troops are to watch and patrol the flanks and rear; to reconnoitre localities which may be held by the enemy; and to maintain communication with neighbouring forces.

4. In order to spare the horses of the divisional mounted troops, great economy must be exercised in the employment of mounted orderlies and despatch riders. Orderlies temporarily detached must be returned punctually to their units and on no account are they to be employed for duties other than those for which they were detailed.

125. *The co-operation of mounted troops with the other arms in battle.*

1. When the main body of infantry closes with the enemy, the mounted troops will be compelled to clear the front. The groups of mounted troops in the front line will then be replaced by infantry, each group rallying to its own main body, so as to be prepared for action when opportunity offers.

YEOMANRY AND MOUNTED RIFLE TRAINING - Part I & II - 1912(1915)

In these circumstances it is the duty of the commanders of mounted troops, after they are relieved, to withdraw their commands to concentration points without delay or confusion. To this end they should anticipate relief and make arrangements accordingly, e.g., men who can be spared from the firing line should be withdrawn to the supports, routes should be reconnoitred, subordinates warned to be ready to vacate their positions, &c.

It is also their duty to collect and pass on to the officers who relieve them as much information as they can concerning the local situation, what is known of the enemy's dispositions and of the ground in the vicinity. When possible this information should be conveyed by a personal interview.

2. The role of the mounted troops after being relieved by the infantry will depend on circumstances. They may be used to operate against the enemy's flanks and so incidentally protect the flanks of their own army; to reconnoitre; to assist in enveloping movements; to delay the approach of hostile columns; or to deceive the enemy as to the commander's plan of action. When not given a definite mission by the commander of the force they must be at hand when wanted, and available to act at the point which offers the best tactical chances and the prospect of decisive results.

Mounted troops must therefore keep in close touch with the other arms and take advantage of their progress, offering them such help as they can. Any success gained by the guns and infantry is thus extended far beyond the actual position captured, and the fruits of victory can be reaped.

Distant action by the mounted troops against the flank or rear of an enemy will often in wasting time and strength on petty combats with small protective detachments. All action must be directed to obtaining a favourable issue on the battlefield and any action which does not influence that issue is a waste of power.