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Directorate of History
National Defence Headquarters
Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0K2

July 1986

CANCELLED

REPORT NO. 141

HISTORICAL SECTION

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: DHD 3-3

by for DHist NDHQ

Date: NOV 26 1986

18 Jul 45

SITUATION OF THE CANADIAN MILITARY FORCES OVERSEAS.
Progress in Equipment (January - December 1944)

1. This report deals with the equipment problems of the Canadian Army Overseas during 1944. The last report dealing with this topic, No. 113, brought this subject to the end of 1943. The major development of the period dealt with in this report was the assault landing in Normandy on 6 Jun 44 and the campaign that followed. The assault required a considerable amount of special equipment such as amphibian vehicles and self-propelled guns for the formations taking part. The provision of these and the completion of the process of equipping the Canadian Army for battle was the principal concern in the first half of 1944.

2. As in previous reports only weapons and vehicles are considered. No attempt is made here to cover engineer or signal equipment. Digests of the state of equipment of the Canadian Army Overseas are attached as Appendices. These have been divided by theatres as each is, in effect, a separate picture.

3. Although a large part of the Canadian Army was in action in the second half of 1943 it was not possible to deal at length with their experiences in the last report. During 1944 the whole of the Canadian Army Overseas was engaged, and for the first time it has been possible to include references to the performance of the equipment in action. As many of the reports from the field have been circulated in "Canadian Operations in the Mediterranean Area, Extracts from War Diaries and Memoranda" (on C.M.H.Q. file 24/AAI/1) or in "Canadian Operations in North-West Europe, Extracts from War Diaries and Memoranda" (on C.M.H.Q. file 24/AEF/1), reference has been made to these two series whenever applicable. For the sake of convenience they have been cited as "Cdn Ops in Med Area", and "Cdn Ops in N.W.E." respectively.

SOME GENERAL TRENDS

4. The history of the process of equipping the Canadian Army Overseas was outlined at the beginning of Report No. 113. During the period covered by that report the emphasis was mainly on developing new types and improved patterns of equipment and much was in an experimental stage. But with the beginning of 1944 the necessity arose of stabilizing policy. It became a matter of deciding what types were to be used in operations, having regard to their suitability and the expected state of supply. An important factor in these decisions was British policy. In order to

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facilitate supply and maintenance it was desirable to maintain a general uniformity of equipment in each theatre of operations. This division of the Canadian forces between two theatres accentuated this factor.

5. The Canadian forces operating with the Allied Armies in Italy were supplied through British channels, though responsibility for the provision was naturally Canadian. On arrival in Italy 5 Cdn Arm'd Div took over the vehicles of 7 Brit Arm'd Div. These mostly needed replacement, and during the year the Canadian forces in Italy were completely re-equipped with Canadian vehicles. For an account of the process of equipping 1 Cdn Corps troops and 5 Cdn Arm'd Div see Historical file Italy 1944/1 Cdn Corps/R/P: The re-equipping of 1 Cdn Corps and 5 Cdn Arm'd Div in the Central Mediterranean Theatre, Oct 43-Feb 44, informal account by Colonel J.A.W. Bennett, D.D.O.S., 1 Cdn Corps. In some instances the equipment of the Canadians in Italy differed from that used in North-West Europe. This was due to the policy of the theatre, and this report has accordingly merely recorded the differences.

6. In the United Kingdom the first five months of 1944 were devoted largely to the process of completing the equipment of the Canadian Army for the invasion of Europe. There were two problems involved. Not only had the standard types to be determined and provided in sufficient quantity, but also a considerable amount of special equipment had to be issued to 3 Cdn Inf Div and 2 Cdn Arm'd Bde for the purposes of the assault landing. This special equipment was provided entirely through the British.

7. The fortunes of Canadian production during the year have an interest of their own. Apart from carriers few Canadian-made armoured vehicles were adopted for use by the Canadian Army, though some use was found for most of those already delivered. The majority of the "B" vehicles held by the Canadian forces continued to be Canadian-made. Canada also made useful contributions in weapons of the standard British pattern. The distinctive Canadian equipment in the 20-mm field was not required due mainly to decreased demands. Special mention might be made of the 25-pr self-propelled guns on the Ram chassis ("Sextons") which have been in demand.

8. In the last half of 1944 the two main problems were those of maintaining supplies of equipment in use and developing new weapons and vehicles that experience had shown to be desirable. General policy decided at C.M.H.Q. occasionally had to be modified by circumstances prevailing in the theatre. This applied to North-West Europe as well as Italy (Historical file AMF/2 Cdn Corps/R/P: Chief of Staff 2 Cdn Corps letter, 23 Sep 44). It is noteworthy that very little

of the equipment of the Canadian Army failed to be entirely satisfactory in action. The new developments were of new types rather than of replacements for existing equipment.

WEAPONS

9. Rifles. By the end of January 1944 the Canadian Army was completely equipped with the No. 4 Rifle (C.M.H.Q. file 1/Rifle/1: Minute by C.S.O.II, S.D.S, 31 Jan 44). This rifle continued in use and in good supply. The main source was Canadian production and in the second half of the year reinforcements from Canada began to arrive in the United Kingdom already equipped with rifles (ibid: Tel G.S. 444, DEFENSOR to CANMILITRY, 24 Jul 44; secret cipher Tel No. 92543, ALLOC 3119, War Office to MILSTAF Washington, 10 Nov 44). The main objection to the No. 4 Rifle was the aperture battle sight (Cdn ops in W.W.E., series 1, p. 12). In July this began to be replaced on all new rifles by the Mk 3 and 4 leaf backsights (C.M.H.Q. file 1/Rifle/1: Tel G.S.W. 588, DEFENSOR to CANMILITRY, 22 Jul 44). At the beginning of July the replacement of the aperture battle sight by the Mk 3 for Rifles No. 4 held by units was authorized. This modification was to be done on a G.S. priority (C.M.H.Q. file 24 Reports/1/3: Q(A.E.) Memorandum, 15 May 45).

10. As regards the Sniper's Rifle, No. 4 (T), the supply situation was not so satisfactory, but there was no marked deficiency on the existing scale of issue. In April units of the Canadian Army with the Allied Armies in Italy recommended an increase in the scale of issue for this weapon, but the supply situation prevented any immediate action being taken (C.M.H.Q. file 1/Rifle/1: S.D.S, C.M.H.Q. to War Office, 25 Apr 44; and reply, 11 May 44). In June a renewal of this request was turned down for the same reason (ibid: 12 Jun 44, and 16 Jun 44). This situation still prevailed in September, when requests for increases were being received from North-West Europe as well (ibid: War Office to Senior Officer C.M.H.Q., 22 Sep 44; Tel S.D.W. 2819, CANMILITRY to S.D. Main First Cdn Army, 31 Aug 44).

11. During the year the Rifle (Light) No. 5 was developed and production started in the United Kingdom. The first were available for issue by 1 Dec 44 (C.M.H.Q. file 1/Inf Eqpt/1/4: Agenda of Army (44) 104th Meeting held 1 Dec 44). These were intended for use in the Far East only. The production policy in force was that Canada would continue to produce the No. 4 only, whereas the United Kingdom would shift entirely to the new model. This caused some concern in Canada over prospects for post-war production (C.M.H.Q. file 1/Pers Weapons/1/2: D.G. of A., Cdn T.L.S. Staff Memorandum, 3 Nov 44).

12. Pistols. The principal types of revolver on issue in the Canadian Army were the Smith and Wesson .38-in and the pistol No. 2 .38-in. But they did not prove entirely satisfactory; officers usually preferred to carry a rifle or machine carbine (Cdn Ops in Med Area, series 19, p. 1; Cdn Ops in N.W.E., series 1, p. 12). In October it was decided "to replace with Pistols Automatic Browning 9-mm H.P. of Cdn manufacture all Pistols Revolver .380 calibre, and (also) Carbines Machine Sten at present issued to tk crews and sigs D.Rs. of Cdn units operating in N.W.E. Pistols Revolver .380 calibre will remain in use with units operating in the A.A.I." (C.M.H.Q. file 1/Pers Weapons/1/2: Equipment Policy Letter No. 123, 6 Oct 44). By the end of December First Cdn Army held about three-quarters of the Browning 9-mm, perhaps better described as self-loading, needed to cover the new establishment, and sufficient stocks had been shipped to complete the process of replacement (C.M.H.Q. file 13/Equip State/2/5: Equipment State, Cdn Units in First Cdn Army as at 31 Dec 44). 1 Cdn Para Bn, under British command, used the .45 Colt automatic. On 30 Nov 44 they held exactly enough of these to meet their establishment. They also were changing to the Browning 9-mm.

13. Machine Carbines. Two principal types of machine carbines were in use in the Canadian forces throughout the year. In the Allied Armies in Italy the Thompson machine carbine continued in use. Supplies, from British sources, were adequate to meet the requirements of the field units and to train and equip reinforcements in the United Kingdom proceeding to Italy (C.M.H.Q. file 13/Equip State/2/4: Equipment States, Cdn Forces in A.A.I.; C.M.H.Q. file 13/Equip State/1/7: Equipment States, C.M.H.Q. and C.R. Units). This weapon proved quite satisfactory in action (Cdn Ops in Med Area, series 9, p. 8; series 19, p. 1).

14. In North-West Europe the Sten Machine Carbine was the standard issue to the Canadian Army. Supplies were adequate, and in May an additional pool of 12 Stens over and above establishment was allowed to each infantry battalion for the use of platoon commanders as desired (C.M.H.Q. file 1/Sten MC/1: Equipment Policy Letter No. 120, 10 May 44).

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The following comparison of the two pistols is cited from the War Diary of Historical Officer, C.M.H.Q., Diary of visit to First Canadian Army, 19 Apr 45: "At Corps we picked up Major Wrinch and drove with him to 5 Cdn Armd Div across the high ground north of Arnhem, a sandy tract of pinewoods. En route we stopped to fire our pistols. I had carried a .38 at intervals since 1940 but had never fired it before. We found that of five .38 bullets striking a German metal ammunition box used as a target, two holed it and bounced off, the rest fell inside; but a bullet from Major Wrinch's 9-mm automatic pistol penetrated both sides of two such boxes placed beside each other. The difference in the performance of the two weapons is striking. The .38, however, appears to be quite accurate."

