

5th Div Staff  
27/2  
314.1

**SECRET.**

[S.S. 111a.]

NOT TO BE TAKEN INTO THE TRENCHES.

**LESSONS FROM THE GERMAN  
GAS ATTACK on 16/17 JUNE, 1916.**

1. The noticeable features of the attack were:—

- (i) Of a number of men who were gassed and were able to give an account of the circumstances, a large proportion of the cases could be traced to more or less preventable causes such as defective helmets, taking off the helmet too soon, entering dug-outs before they were clear of gas, removing helmet between the waves of gas, etc.

Others were caused by shell fire damaging the helmet or preventing the men putting it on. With the box respirator also, several of the latter cases occurred.

- (ii) A number of the casualties were cases of men who were only slightly, or not at all, affected at the time, but succumbed six to eight hours later.
- (iii) A number of this last type were officers and N.C.O.'s. who had, while in the gas, exerted themselves and shouted orders, also men who carried ammunition up or did other work during the prevalence of the gas.

2. It is desirable therefore, that instructions should be issued to ensure that in all places where the gas is thickly concentrated, there should be as little movement or talking as possible, and that rapid fire should not be opened unless an attack is actually delivered by the enemy. Such exertion causes a great acceleration of breathing and may, when the gas is very thick, result in a small quantity of it being drawn under the helmet and this may cause the cases which develop later. It has been found, in recent instances, that officers and N.C.O.'s have suffered disproportionately on this account.

3. For the same reason, ample supplies of ammunition and stores of all kind, including cleaning oil for rifles and machine guns should be kept in the front line, so as to avoid employing men in carrying them up while gas is prevalent.

4. In order to guard against the danger of a subsequent gas cloud, all ranks must be warned that after the gas is clear, the helmets should be carefully rolled up and worn inside the jacket in the "alert" position and a sharp look-out kept as long as the wind continues in a dangerous quarter. Similar precautions should be taken by men equipped with box respirators.

5. The provision of gas-proof blanket curtains to all dug-outs occupied as signal stations, command posts, dressing stations, etc., within the zone of cylinder or shell gas is a matter of importance, and should be carried out everywhere without delay. Similar protection to all dug-outs occupied by troops in the immediate support line and all trenches in rear of it should also be provided as soon as practicable.

358. Headquarters.  
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Lessons from the  
German gas attack  
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1916

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