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WRITING AN APPRECIATION OF A SITUATION.
SOME NOTES ON THE SUBJECT FOR OFFICERS OF THE ROYAL ARMY
MEDICAL CORPS.

[See *Training and Manœuvre Regulations, Section 25.*]

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SOME people when they are called upon to write an appreciation of a situation find themselves wondering how to begin. One is rather taken aback by the mouthful of words, "an appreciation of the situation"; there is a feeling that something quite out of the ordinary has been asked for. The making of an appreciation is, however, consciously or unconsciously, a matter of daily and hourly routine with every one of us.

The medical practitioner diagnosing a case and deciding on its treatment; the policeman directing the traffic at a cross-roads; the individual arranging his afternoon's golf is doing nothing more or less than making an appreciation of the situation, considering perhaps the various ways by which he can get to the links by car, by bicycle, on foot, or by train, the time at which he must start, and a number of minor details and eventually deciding on his plan. In some cases it is only a matter of a moment's thought, in others a full examination of many factors may be necessary.

The habit of making and writing appreciations is a valuable exercise for an officer; it teaches him to arrange his facts methodically and trains him to arrive rapidly at a logical and sound conclusion.

Briefly stated, the process of making an appreciation consists of the following stages:—

- (a) First decide on your object. Sometimes it is quite clear, in more complicated cases it must be deduced.
- (b) Next consider by what different ways you can attain your object, and the advantages of each.
- (c) Then consider the objections to these different ways. In a military appreciation this includes what the enemy may do to prevent you attaining your object.
- (d) You can now choose what you consider to be the best way of attaining your object.
- (e) Finally, decide how to carry out the chosen method; this constitutes your plan.

In the process of considering the various courses open to you and to your enemy, an examination will have to be made of all the factors bearing on the situation and deductions arrived at from this examination. A commander in the field has to consider the factors of time and space, relative strengths of opposing forces, topographical and climatic conditions, vulnerable points, supply, transport, communications and similar subjects. A director of medical services, in studying his particular problem, would also have to consider some of the same factors, but not all of them. A surgeon about to perform an operation would have quite a different set of factors to deal with. It is not the factors themselves that are of chief consequence, but the deductions we make from them that decide our choice of a course of action. In a written appreciation we should rigorously exclude anything that has not a definite bearing on the particular problem and is not essential to its solution. In a battle the problems of the commander of a field ambulance and of the A.D.M.S. of a division, though they have certain points in common are not the same. Certain factors will affect the appreciation that each would make; all the factors would not affect them both nor in the same degree. Each case must be treated on its merits.

The actual form which a written appreciation takes is of considerable importance. The object aimed at is that it should be perfectly clear, and the arguments should lead logically to the conclusion arrived at.

It is sometimes necessary to make detailed calculations regarding transport facilities, for example, or to describe climatic conditions at different times of year. It will generally add to the clearness of the appreciation if all such details are put in appendices and the broad deductions only are set out in the body of the paper.

As an illustration of the form which might be adopted, an appreciation is attached of a purely imaginary situation, which is supposed to have arisen as the result of a decision to despatch an expeditionary force to carry out a landing, in conjunction with the Navy and Air Force, in the

territory of "EREHWON," where operations will be conducted in co-operation with our ally X-land.

This example should not be used as a fixed form to be followed in every case; it would probably be quite unsuitable for, say, the appreciation that the A.D.M.S. of a division might make prior to some major tactical operation on land; it is given merely as an illustration of the application of the principles referred to above, to a particular type of operation. It is not claimed that the following appreciation gives a correct solution of the problems facing the Medical Service. It is merely illustrative of the form such an appreciation might take.

Some notes are added at the end explanatory of the proposals put forward.

SECRET.

Appreciation of the situation from the point of view of the Director of Medical Services arising out of the decision to dispatch an expeditionary force to EREHWON, to co-operate with X land.

LONDON,

April 1, 1929.

(1) *The object* of this appreciation is to assess the responsibilities of the Medical Service arising out of the conditions of the campaign and to determine the medical organization required to meet those responsibilities.

(2) *The Size of the Force.*—The force is to consist of two divisions, with a proportion of non-divisional and L. of C. troops, and a R.A.F. contingent, with an approximate total strength of 50,000, all ranks. Apart from battle casualties this presupposes a normal daily sick-rate of 150; in addition, the Royal Navy, operating in conjunction with the Army, may call upon the Army to provide for a daily sick-rate of 100.

(3) *The climatic conditions* and diseases arising therefrom which are liable to be encountered are summarized in Appendix I attached, from which it will be seen that no special scale of rations is required unless operations should be prolonged into the winter; that the normal scale of clothing is suitable with the addition of certain special items of which the scale of issue recommended is stated in the same appendix.

(4) *Geographical and Topographical Considerations.*—Apart from climatic conditions, the outstanding topographical considerations are the lack of road and railway facilities of the proposed theatre of war, and the very limited port facilities at the proposed point of landing. This calls for all motor ambulances being of the six-wheeled type, and for the provision from naval sources of suitable hospital small craft for the conveyance of sick and wounded to and from hospital ships and landing places; it is considered that ten such craft should be provided as tenders to each hospital ship; they will be of the utmost value for the evacuation of casualties in the early stages of the initial landing.

Another topographical condition of great importance is the question

of water supply in the area. Intelligence is lacking, but there is reason to suppose that water is available in ample quantity though its quality is open to very considerable doubt. From a medical point of view, if not from other aspects, this calls for the provision of water as an article of supply from approved sources, in the first instance, and very early arrangements for adequate water reconnaissance upon which medical officers should serve.

(5) *The General Organization of the Lines of Communication.*—The distance from the home base in the United Kingdom to the advanced naval and air base on WHATHO Island is nine days' steaming. From WHATHO Island to PORT WISHFUL, in the vicinity of which place the landing is to be effected, is approximately eighty miles. On WHATHO Island, in addition to R.N. and R.A.F. installations, there will be certain military base installations such as personnel camps, remount and veterinary establishments, etc., and a minimum of fighting troops, chiefly anti-air defence units.

On the mainland, in addition to the two divisions and certain non-divisional troops, there will be base installations containing all kind of maintenance stores. These latter installations, however, by special arrangement with our Allies, are to be kept to an absolute minimum consistent with tactical necessity and the security of maintenance. As much as possible of the limited space available in the vicinity of PORT WISHFUL is being reserved for the use of our Allies.

In consequence of the above the medical requirements of the troops on the mainland will be met by the normal medical units included in formations and by the necessary number of casualty clearing stations, while general hospitals are opened on WHATHO Island.

Sufficient and suitable hospital ships, having regard to navigational difficulties in the vicinity of WISHFUL, will be required :—

- (a) For evacuation from the mainland to the hospital centre on WHATHO Island ; and
- (b) For evacuation from WHATHO to the home base. For these purposes two large and two small hospital ships are considered necessary.

(6) *The General Nature of the Tactical Operations Contemplated.*¹—These include a short period of special training somewhere in the home area, an unopposed landing of certain units on WHATHO Island, an opposed landing in the vicinity of PORT WISHFUL and subsequent operations on the mainland to an approximate distance of some twenty miles from the point of landing. It is anticipated that the British force will be withdrawn before the winter sets in.

(7) *The Number and Nature of the Casualties Anticipated.*—In the

¹ This is of course not a part of the D.M.S.'s appreciation, but is taken from the General Staff appreciation. It is included to show that there are four distinct periods involved in the operations as a whole, for each of which medical arrangements have to be thought out and provided for.

event of the initial landing being opposed, this is the stage in the campaign when battle casualties are expected to be at their greatest. The General Staff estimates these casualties at fifteen per cent. of the troops actually engaged, say 1,500 on the day of the landing. There is, in addition, the probability that the enemy will use gas; the number of medical units included in the organization of the force must therefore admit of the segregation of gas casualties.

(8) *Plan.*—The medical arrangements to meet the four stages of the operations and to deal with the casualties anticipated will be planned on the following lines:—

- (a) All medical units will be disembarked in the home area prior to the sailing of the expedition from final rendezvous.
- (b) A C.C.S. will be landed immediately on WHATHO Island to provide for essential services pending the establishment of a hospital centre on the island.²
- (c) Arrangements for medical services at the initial landing will be made by the D.D.M.S. of the force with the units at his disposal.
- (d) Two, subsequently three, C.C.S.'s will be opened on the mainland in the vicinity of PORT WISHPUL as soon as tactical conditions admit, and one motor ambulance convoy (less one section on WHATHO) will be made available for the service of mainland formations.

(e) General hospitals will be established on WHATHO Island³

(9) In view of the above considerations the following medical units should be embarked with the force in addition to those normally included in formations; the units are shown under their proposed destinations: ⁴—

MAINLAND.	WHATHO ISLAND.
1 Field Ambulance, Non-divisional.	1 Section Motor Ambulance Convoy.
1 Motor Ambulance Convoy (less 1 Section).	1 Hygiene Section.
1 Advanced Depot of Medical Stores.	1 Mobile Laboratory.
3 C.C.S.'s (one temporarily on WHATHO Island).	1 Base Depot of Medical Stores.
	3 General Hospitals (1,200 beds).
	1 Convalescent Depot.

Two large and 2 small Hospital Ships based on WHATHO Island.

(10) In addition to the above, cleansing and disinfection units will be required both on the mainland and on WHATHO Island.

² This is not necessarily the best solution, but it is important to state definitely at this stage what arrangements are proposed for the immediate provision of hospital accommodation, in order that the branch of the staff concerned may make the best arrangements possible for embarking the medical units in a correct order of priority, and for their inclusion in the correct convoys in accordance with the destination and order of arrival of each.

³ The order adopted is in the same sequence as events will follow in practice.

⁴ The field ambulances and hygiene sections which are included in the normal organization of divisions are not mentioned; they would of course be embarked with the formation to which they belong.

APPENDIX I.

NOTES ON CLIMATIC CONDITIONS PROBABLY TO BE EXPERIENCED, AND ON SUITABLE CLOTHING AND RATIONS FOR THE TROOPS.

(1) The climatic conditions to be expected in EREHWON may be summarized as follow :—

April-May.

- (a) Weather conditions approximate those of NORTH SCOTLAND in same period but more humid, and dense fogs are an outstanding characteristic.
- (b) The clothing of our men is eminently suitable for this period, but extra socks, mufflers and warm gloves will be required. Fur or leather coats, ear caps and gauntlet gloves should, if possible, be provided for all vehicle drivers.

As the snow will be melting, gum boots or loose (German) boots will prove useful, particularly for personnel engaged on guards, picquets and other exposed duties at nights. Extra blankets will be required in bivouacs and billets, to be withdrawn as weather improves.

- (c) The authorized field ration is satisfactory and, if cocoa is added during this period, should prove very suitable.

June, July, August.

- (a) High temperature (75° to 90° F.) with marked humidity is common. There is little darkness at night, and owing to trying conditions of day-time, work is often largely conducted at night.

Heavy rains may be expected during August.

- (b) Our clothing is quite suitable, but cotton underclothing is essential, and cap screens (protection against sun) are desirable.
- (c) The authorized field ration is suitable.

September-October.

This period approximates to our winter season. September may remain mild, but October usually is severely cold.

See notes under April-May.

Mosquitoes and gnats abound at all seasons. Nets, curtains, etc., are practicable only under certain conditions, but repellent oils should be available for all troops—particularly for those on guard, picquet and outpost duties.

Should the occupation extend into the cold season, special clothing will be necessary, and the Shackleton food ration should be authorized.

(2) *Diseases which may Adversely Affect Man-Power.*

- (a) Our force should be 100 per cent inoculated against enteric fever.
- (b) Dysentery, epidemic diarrhoea, and even sporadic cholera may result from any deviation of Hygiene Orders, as the melting of the snow results in highly insanitary conditions and ready pollution of water.
- (c) Typhus and relapsing fevers will certainly occur if thorough body cleanliness and ample washing and disinfecting arrangements are not provided.
- (d) Malaria will probably not prove a serious danger, but heat stroke and sun exposure during the warm months must be guarded against.
- (e) Venereal disease is an outstanding danger, and definite and comprehensive action should be taken to obviate possibly very serious loss of man-power from this disease.

It is considered that:—

- (i) The climatic conditions, although very trying, should present no great obstacle to success;
- (ii) If practical measures are taken to guard against obvious sources of infection, disease should not prove a menace to the success of the Expedition.

(3) *Cleansing and Disinfestation.*

Cleansing and disinfestation units will be essential for duty with all troops, and should be included in the "Order of Battle."