REMOVAL OF CASUALTIES FROM ARMoured CARS

BY

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In most armoured cars there are three possible ways of getting out: up through the turret; out through the side escape hatch; and, in the case of the driver, up through the hatch directly above the driver's seat.

These three alternatives compare as follows:

THE TURRET

This is the usual way in and out for all members of the crew. The top is easily opened and, though the passage way is encroached upon by the breech of the 2-pdr. gun and other items of equipment, it is the roomiest way of the three. The main drawback in the case of the helpless man is the vertical lift from the floor to the top of the turret opening, a height of 4½ feet.

THE SIDE ESCAPE HATCH

This is on the level with the floor of the armoured car and at first sight would appear to be the most obvious way to remove a casualty. In action, however, the 2-pdr. bag and the Besa bag might be formidable obstructions, especially if they were half full of expended rounds. For complete access to the side hatch it is also necessary to traverse the turret slightly to one side. Apart from this preliminary clearing of the way, a wounded driver would have to be bent round sideways to a considerable degree to bring him through.

Under small-arms fire, however, this is the method of choice, as the rescuers are not exposed above silhouette of the vehicle.

THE DRIVER'S HATCH

This is a comparatively small aperture, 18 in. by 10 in.; and, whereas a driver of normal build can emerge through it fairly easily, the lifting of a helpless man can be extremely difficult. Apart from the smallness of the opening, it is very difficult to extract the man's legs from under the large steering wheel, which fits low on the thighs. As injury to the lower limbs is particularly frequent in drivers, an attempt to pull directly upwards might, in fact, cause further damage. The fit of the steering wheel is so tight against a larger man's thighs that it is common practice for the more hefty drivers to unscrew the steering wheel from the steering column, before getting in and out again. A small point is that the barrel of the 2-pdr. gun normally lies directly over the hatch, and the turret has to be traversed slightly to move it clear.

There is no doubt, therefore, that as far as the helpless driver is concerned, the first step should be to pull him back from his seat into the main compartment.
THE BARREL LIFT

This is a method of using a 12-ft. length of webbing for lifting a helpless man from the floor of the main compartment of the car up to a sitting position on the rim of the turret.

The 12-ft. webbing is made extemporaneously by joining two standard stretcher slings (threading the looped end of one through the buckle of the other).

It may also be made up from the standard webbing equipment by joining together four straps supporting and one webbing brace, the latter being in the middle as it is broad and more comfortable for the crutch. The principle is the same as that of the R.A.M.C. barrel bandage used for supporting fractured jaws.
One end of the length of webbing is threaded through the crutch, until the ends are equal when held up vertically above the man’s head. A simple knot (first half of reef) is tied and drawn down until it rests on top of the man’s head. The knot is now opened and eased down over his head and shoulders to a point just above the elbows on each side. The sling is now drawn tight, pinioning the arms to the side.

The injured man may now be raised easily and with good control by two men standing fore and aft on top of the turret.
The drill movements for the two rescuers are as follows:

Both climb up the outside of the armoured car to the turret opening.

No. 1 descends into the main compartment with one end of the webbing, the other end being retained by No. 2, who takes up a position on the forward part of the turret opening. No. 1 threads the webbing through the man's crutch and passes it up to No. 2, who, when the ends are equal in length, ties the knot and draws it down on the man's head. He retains a loose hold of the two ends while No. 1 opens the knot and cases it over the head and shoulders, and down to the correct position just above the elbows. He then tightens it, being careful to keep...
the straps up from the man’s crutch quite vertical so that they pass up the front
and back of the man’s body in the mid line. As soon as No. 1 indicates that the
sling is in position No. 2 pulls the ends up and holds them taut. No. 1 then climbs
out of the turret and takes up his lifting position on the afterpart of the opening,
facing No. 2. They then together raise the man with a steady pull, and bring him
into a sitting position between No. 1’s legs on the afterpart of the turret rim.
No. 2 steadies him in this position, while No. 1 jumps down on to one side of the
engine cover. He in turn supports the man while No. 2 jumps on to the other
side of the engine cover. Then, one on each side, they ease him backwards and
head first down on the engine cover. No. 2 now steadies him, while No. 1 jumps
to the ground, and removes him by a back lift, his legs being eased off by No. 2.

Actual Use

Several methods have been advocated and used in the past; notably, making
armoured car crews (especially drivers) wear their basic webbing equipment in
action; also the wearing of a special web harness with a parachute type of fitting
round the thighs and handle straps on the shoulders. But in the first instance the
buckles of the equipment and its tightness tend to interfere with quick and free
movement, and in the second the provision of a specially made harness may not be
administratively practical.

In this connection an interesting comment is made by officers who have
fought A.F.V.s. In their experience the instincts of self-preservation and com­
radeship are so strong that even badly wounded men manage somehow to get
themselves out when the occasion arises. It was rarely necessary to remove any
wounded man who had any chance of survival, and therefore the call for specially
made harness might seem hardly justifiable.

Advantages

Points in favour of the barrel lift may be summarized as follows:

The materials used may be improvised from standard equipment (stretcher
slings or individual webbing equipment, or even rope).

The sling when correctly applied is quite comfortable and relatively non­
traumatic for the casualty, as the strain is distributed over the body.

The sling will not slip and the body is automatically kept upright, making the
lifting a straightforward pull with both hands, no additional steadying being
required.

It can also be adapted for lifting up casualties by ropes from ravines, or for
raising up casualties into a hovering helicopter. All that is necessary is to join
the two loose ends above the man’s head by threading the one through the carrying
buckle. The resulting union will take a heavy strain.

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