

The Deadly Weapons of WW1

During World War 1 there were many weapons used while fighting in the war. Along side these weapons there were also ways a certain weapon was used. It was a matter of where the weapons location was, when to use a certain weapon, how to use it, the best way to use it, and so on. Weapons, such as toxic gas and artillery fire, were used a lot while fighting in this war.

Let's start off with toxic gas. In April 1915, during the Second Battle of Ypres chlorine gas was used by the Germans killing hundreds of French soldiers. British soldiers also used chlorine gas and later developments in the war resulted in the use of deadlier gases, such as phosgene and mustard gas, which blinded the people who came in contact to it. By 1917, the toxic gas was delivered through mortars and chemical shells, giving it better precision and killing about 1 million people on both sides. They used the gases at or just before dawn because with the cold air and absence of wind, it allowed the gas to stay closer to the ground for longer time, as said in "The Trenches: Symbols of the Stalemate."

Next we move to artillery. Most of the casualties in WW1 were caused by artillery shelling. It was used to "soften up" the enemy lines. Guns like the British Howitzer Mark 1, as mentioned in "A history of WW1 in 10 deadly weapons," could fire two rounds of 290lb shells a minute. In March 1918, the Germans used their long-range "Paris Gun" to shell the French capital. It had a 118-foot-long barrel that fired 25 miles up into the air hitting the capital about 74 miles away. Historian Spencer Tucker's thoughts on this were as follows, "Even after the appearance during World War I of machine guns, tanks and attack aircraft, artillery remained the major source of firepower on the battlefield... World War I is an example of a period in which firepower technology got far ahead of mobility technology, and the result was trench warfare."

Now we will talk about barbed wire. It was originally used in the American West to corral cattle, but then it became a deadly defensive weapon on the Western Front during the war. While trying to go through it, the soldiers would most likely get their equipment and clothing caught. As they tried to disentangle themselves, they'd be picked off by snipers in the trenches. The barbed wire would be deployed in double rows or in intricate traps and it was mostly coupled by the destructive power of the heavy machine gun.

Finishing off with machine guns. The machine gun was made by Hiram Maxim in 1884 but later improved at the time of the war. It was made easier to carry and was used to even deadlier effect across no man's land. The Machinengewehr 08, the German's machine gun, was derived from the Maxim gun and could fire 400 rounds per minute. The Vickers machine gun, the British's machine gun, could fire 450-500 bullets per minute. Writer Peter Squires had this to say about the machine gun, "Few technical developments had quite the impact of the machine gun on the Western Front during the First World War. The German army's Maxim guns effectively ended an entire, attrition-based, strategy of military campaigning, although it took the best part of the war for the allied generals to realize this."

In conclusion, all these weapons played an important role in WW1. Used effectively and strategically, they played a huge part in the war. The barbed wire and machine guns played parts in making sure no one got through no man's land. While the toxic gas and artillery made a way to draw out their enemy's. Without these weapons there would be no advances in weapon technology today and WW1 would last a life time.

<http://www.independent.ie/life/world-war-1/a-history-of-world-war-one-in-10-deadly-weapons-30249206.html>

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