

The mounted corps as a rule go into camp for six days in each year, and have very little other training.

Every opportunity should be taken to get the mounted corps to brigade together. They should be encouraged to hold their corps camps at the same time, and as many corps as possible at the same place. This has been arranged for as regards all the corps in the Wellington District this year, and I have put forward proposals for the corps in the South Island.

The men composing the mounted corps are mostly farmers and men working on farms and runs. It is only at certain seasons of the year, when shearing, ploughing, sowing, harvesting, &c., are not going on, that the men can be got together for parade. Owing to these circumstances, I have so far only seen one mounted corps, so cannot say anything definite as to the efficiency of this arm.

Of the thirteen corps of Naval Artillery, one is at the Thames, one is at Napier, one at Wanganui, one at the Bluff and Invercargill, and two in Westland District. At none of these places are there either mines or forts, and the corps cannot get instruction in artillery or submarine mining work. They have been warned that they will have to provide themselves with the new uniform and turn into rifle companies by the end of the year.

The Naval Corps at the centres are trained in artillery and submarine mining work, as far as possible in the places they would have to occupy in the time of war. They take much interest in their work, and are a smart body of men. The training in the forts is necessarily almost entirely confined to the fortnight annually during which they are in camp.

Of the nine Field Batteries, two have already been turned into Infantry corps. The Batteries at Napier and Invercargill should also be converted into Rifle Corps. The officer commanding the battery at Napier has informed me that this will be done as regards his battery at the end of the year. This will leave us with five field batteries: one at each centre, and one in the Nelson District.

Field-guns should play an important part in the defence scheme. They would be most useful against any cruisers which might be attempting an attack or a landing in boats—in fact, no serious defence could possibly be carried on unless assisted by mobile field-guns. I most strongly urge that four field batteries, complete with wagons, harness, and full equipment, be ordered at once from Home. They should be similar in every respect to the guns now being supplied to the Royal Artillery. One battery should be kept in each centre. I should very much prefer to see these batteries manned by permanent men and horses kept by the State. If this is found impossible on the score of expense, then the Volunteers who would have them in charge should be enlisted on special terms, and arrangements should be made for their turning out mounted of an afternoon at least twice a month for two hours' drill. The period of their annual camp should be extended to a fortnight.

On receipt of the four modern batteries, the Nordenfeldt guns and equipment at present in possession of the D Battery at Wellington may perhaps be handed over to the H Battery in the Nelson District. At any rate, they will come in useful as part of the movable armament of ports.

Under existing regulations the Field Batteries cannot earn their capitation unless they complete the same course of musketry as the Infantry corps. For this purpose a certain number of rifles were issued to each battery, and were in nobody's particular charge; consequently, the arms were not properly looked after, and many got damaged. The efficiency of Field Artillery does not depend on their knowledge how to shoot with a rifle: their duty is to their guns, and their guns only. The regulations on this head should be amended at once. The rifles are being withdrawn from the Field Batteries, and carbines issued, on the scale laid down for Field Batteries in the Imperial Service—twelve per battery. Each gunner should be put through a modified course of carbine practice, as laid down for the Artillery in the Imperial Service, and, if considered advisable, the Field Batteries might compete among themselves for prizes.

Carbines are being issued to the Permanent Force, and the Naval Artillery Volunteers should get them as soon as there are a sufficient number available. They have quite enough to do to learn their Artillery drill and fire-discipline without being called upon to carry out an elaborate course of musketry instruction. The amount of carbine practice they should be called upon to perform should be based upon that of the Royal Artillery Imperial Forces. For prizes they should compete amongst themselves.

The forty-six Infantry corps are scattered all over the colony. Only in very few stations are there more than two corps together. Some of the stations are very isolated and not easy of access, and the corps in such stations cannot get proper and systematic instruction; nor do they, except on the occasion of the Easter camps, ever get a chance of working with other corps in tactical combination. Such corps would not be fit to take the field on an emergency, and can only be looked upon as a reserve.

On mobilization all the country corps would be brought into each of the four centres, and it would happen that in each centre you would have a number of small corps with no cohesion, and no experience of working together, the result being confusion, and valuable time taken up in organization. In each of the four big districts I consider that you should have two battalions of eight companies each. Each battalion should have its own commanding officer and adjutant, the battalion being administered through the commanding officer. He should be responsible to the Officer Commanding the District for the efficiency of his battalion, and should visit the outlying companies as often as possible, whilst arrangements should be made for the companies to be brought together for battalion exercise periodically. This would cost the State but little, the railways being mostly State property, and the benefit to the efficiency of the Volunteer Force would be very great.

No new corps should be formed in isolated stations, nor in stations which are not closely connected by rail with those in which corps already exist.

Efforts should be made to strengthen the number of corps in each of the four centres, and in each district (except Nelson) I should like to see one battalion complete in the principal port, and