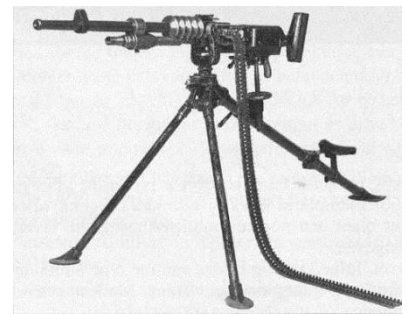


Machineguns



Modern machine-guns were developed in the second half of the 19th century. They equipped all armies in 1914 and appeared in ever greater numbers as the war progressed. The reason was simple – a heavy machine-gun fired 400-600 rounds a minute. Heavy machine-guns were mostly associated with defensive roles but were also used offensively. Gunners were trained to elevate their guns so that the bullets would fly over the heads of advancing infantry and then gravity would bring the rounds down on an enemy target.

Such bulky weapons were as difficult to manhandle as their name suggests. Most weighed between 80 and 90 pounds, excluding the large amount of ammunition needed to keep the weapon firing. The average machine-gun needed two or three men to fire it, but most guns were operated by teams of four. Soldiers often lugged heavy machine-guns around in battle but out of action they were broken down and transported by mules or placed on carts



The war also saw the development of an entirely new type of weapon, the light machine-gun. These guns weighed a lot less than its heavier counterpart and were also more practical on the battlefield. These guns were carried by a single soldier and were either belt or magazine fed. They were, however, susceptible to mechanical errors due to poor manufacturing standards.

The best light machine-gun was the Lewis gun. The Lewis was a design from the United States and became popular throughout all allied armies. Although it was quite heavy, it was both versatile and reliable; being fitted to aircraft, armored cars, and tanks.

