

Combined Arms Library Vol. 1

**J.B.A. Bailey**

# **Field Artillery and Firepower**



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## Foreword

Major Jonathan Bailey is a serving officer in the Royal Artillery who has researched and written this book in his spare time over the last few years. During this period he has served with the Commonwealth Monitoring Force in Rhodesia, with 5 Brigade in the Falklands, in Northern Ireland and, latterly, as a battery commander with the British Army of the Rhine. He has, therefore, a wide experience of conventional operations and has taken a deep professional interest in the history and current developments of his own Arm, the Royal Artillery.

In his introduction, the author states that “it is *hard* to find a book which presents the principles of field artillery tactics, how these have developed with experience against a background of changing strategy and technology, and what the future may hold as a consequence”. I have found it impossible!

There are books which cover some ground similar to Bailey’s, although the majority have historical slants. Chris Bellamy’s *Red God of War: Soviet Artillery and Rocket Forces* deals with territory similar to Bailey’s chapters on the Second World War and NATO. B.P.Hughes’s *Open Fire* considers how artillery was handled in battle in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries only. Shelford Bidwell’s *Gunners at War* is a tactical study of the Royal Artillery, mostly in the two World Wars, and covers similar ground to Bailey’s chapters on the development of fire support, as does Kenneth Brookes’s study *Battle Thunder*. Finally, Shelford Bidwell and Dominick Graham’s *Fire-Power* is an excellent historical/tactical treatise, but it uses an historical approach and does not trespass on Bailey’s territory. From this it follows that I agree with Jonathan Bailey when he states that he has identified a gap in the “literature concerned with field artillery”, and I commend him for identifying this and producing such a scholarly *magnum opus*.

Throughout his book the author traces the ebb and flow of the importance of artillery through the centuries. He rightly states that “at different periods of history artillery has been seen either as the decisive arm on the battlefield or, more often, as the arm which merely supports the front-line troops who will decide the outcome of the battle”. After reading his analysis, certain conclusions become evident. Artillery when used in penny packets fails. When used in concentrated fashion at the crucial point of a battle it produces shock action that can neutralise, paralyse and destroy the enemy and weaken his will to win. As Montgomery said, “the concentration of artillery and mortars is a battle-winning factor of the first importance”. Artillery produces the firepower of fire and manoeuvre at formation level; it allows one’s own side to close right up to the enemy or conversely prevents the enemy from closing up to you. The more you have, the greater the chance of success. Artillery can be used to gain tactical surprise, or as an aid to deception. It is inherently flexible and can be used in all weathers, day and night. In time of war, a commander always demands more artillery than he is allocated and, sadly, in times of peace the value of artillery and the lessons learned through history are nearly always forgotten.

One of the most interesting parts of the book is the author’s glimpse into the future and his emphasis on the deep battle. Not every reader will agree with his contentions that “the significance of the deep battle will soon be comparable with that of the close battle of forty or seventy years ago; and artillery will be judged in future primarily by its performance in this engagement, not in close support”. I think Bailey is right to highlight the increasing importance of the deep battle, now that sophisticated target acquisition devices are entering service combined with missile systems which can destroy armour. It is clear that if indirect fire, including air-delivered munitions, can prevent an enemy re-inforcing his troops in contact, then friendly forces engaged in the contact battle have a much greater

chance of achieving success. That said, an army will always need to hold or seize ground, and to that end the requirement still exists for properly balanced all arms battle groups with access to substantial artillery support. The difficulty facing all Western armies is the need to balance the resources required to fund weapon systems for both the contact and the deep battles. It is certain that money will not be available for everything and, in terms of the future of artillery, Bailey has come down firmly on the side of the deep battle. He may well be right, even though some Gunners from the past may either disagree or have reservations.

I hope his book will be enjoyed by a wide field of readers encompassing professional soldiers, academics and civilians alike. I would venture to suggest that Bailey has done for Artillery what Richard Simpkin did for Armour in his excellent book *Tank Warfare*. I can give no higher praise or greater commendation.

J.H. Learmont CBE  
Major General  
Commandant, Staff College  
Camberley

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J. B. A. Bailey

## Table of Contents

### Part One: Operational Concepts

Chapter 1	Introduction	3
	Purpose of book	
	Organization of material	
	Historical perspective	
Chapter 2	Equipment and Munitions	9
	Guns and rockets	
	Calibre	
	Mobility of towed and self-propelled guns	
	Target acquisition	
	Munitions	
Chapter 3	The Nature of Firepower	15
	Firepower and mobility	
	Generating firepower	
	Effects of firepower	
Chapter 4	The Battlefield	19
	The close and deep battles	
	Theatres of operation	

### Part Two: Ancillary Services

Chapter 5	Command, control & communications (C3)	23
Chapter 6	Artillery Logistics	25
Chapter 7	Artillery Training	37

### Part Three: Specialized Missions

Chapter 8	Direct fire	45
Chapter 9	Counter battery (CB) fire	51
Chapter 10	Suppression of enemy air defence (SEAD)	65
Chapter 11	Operations in special environments	71
	A. Fighting in built-up areas (FIBUA)	
	B. Airborne operations	
	C. Amphibious operations	
	D. Operations at night	
	E. Operations in cold climates	
	F. Jungle operations	
	G. Mountain operations	
	H. Desert operations	
Chapter 12	Survivability	93

### Part Four: The Development of Fire Support

Chapter 13	Before 1914	115
Chapter 14	The First World War 1914-18	127
Chapter 15	1918-1939	153

Chapter 16	The Second World War 1939-1945	167
	A. The Western front	
	B. The Eastern front	
	C. The Far East	
	D. Conclusions	
Chapter 17	Limited war and counter-insurgency since 1945	235
Chapter 18	NATO and the Warsaw Pact	267
	A. The Soviet bloc 1945-1962	
	B. The West 1945-1965	
	C. The Warsaw Pact 1962-1982	
	D. NATO 1965-1982	
	E. The Warsaw Pact 1982-1990	
	F. NATO 1982-1990	
	G. The Warsaw Pact 1990 and beyond	
	H. NATO 1990 and beyond	
Chapter 19	Summary and conclusion	333
Appendix A	Selective historical comparison of artillery concentrations and ammunition expenditure	337
Appendix B	List of abbreviations	342
Appendix C	Glossary	344
References		349
Index		373

## List of Figures

1. The defeat of German artillery at Ypres, July 1917	57
2. Warsaw Pact air defence cover in the forward area, 1984	66
3. Number of artillery pieces per 1,000 infantrymen in 1914 and 1918	127
4a. The straight barrage, 1915	133
4b. The piled-up barrage, 1916	133
4c. The creeping barrage, 1917	134
5a. The crooked barrage, 1939-40 (the echelon method)	170
5b. The crooked barrage, 1939-40 (the wheel method)	170
6. German tank and anti-tank tactics in Libya, 1941-42	174
7. Causes of casualties to British tanks in the Second World War	196
8. Comparison of German and Soviet gun production, 1942-44	217
9. The role of fire support in the destruction of North Vietnamese assaults on Khe San Base, 1968	244
10. Increasing dispersion on the battlefield	269
11. Comparison of weight of fire between a Soviet Army of five divisions and 1st British Corps in the late 1970s	284
12. Comparison of rates of advance	315
13. Approximate number of artillery barrels per 1,000 men in 1986	318

## About the Series

The **Combined Arms Library** series presents detailed and scholarly studies of the tactical principles of the Arms which comprise the modern combined arms force, and how they have developed under the pressures of combat experience, differences of strategy and new technology. These tactical realities in turn affect the character of conventional ground operations, the options available to their commanders and the assumptions, particularly in respect of sustainability, made by strategic planners. Fully indexed and with extensive footnotes and bibliographies, volumes in the series clarify issues and trends at tactical, operational and strategic levels. They will be of value to military professionals, to academic students and researchers in military and strategic studies, and to a wide range of civilian readers interested in the military balance in the world's actual and potential areas of conflict.

## About the Book

**Field Artillery and Firepower** explores the tactical missions which field artillery has been, or may be, tasked to accomplish, and how those missions have served or failed to serve operational needs. In particular, it provides a basis for addressing two key questions of doctrine – correctly judging the importance of firepower relative to that of mobility, and deciding how far it is appropriate to regard the artillery as a supporting Arm, and how far as an offensive Arm in its own right.

## CONTENTS

**Part I: Operational Concepts** discusses key concepts concerning field artillery technology, the nature of firepower and its combat effects, and the close and deep battles.

**Part II: Ancillary Services** covers important topics in C3, logistics and training, which are sometimes overlooked in peacetime.

**Part III: Specialized Missions** reviews the tactical principles of missions beyond the general role of indirect fire support.

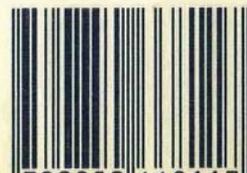
**Part IV: The Development of Fire Support** constitutes the core of the book, tracing the evolution of field artillery tactics from the early nineteenth century to today, and assessing the impact of modern reconnaissance and target acquisition technology on artillery's ability to fight the deep battle.

**Glossary. List of Abbreviations. Bibliography. Index.**

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