Rouvroy’s view on the use of Horse Artillery in 1802
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The original article was signed von R which was a pseudonym of 2nd Lieutenant Friedrich Gustav von Rouvroy [Stephen Summerfield (August 2010) “Rouvroy family of Saxon Artillery Officers,” Smoothbore Ordnance Journal, 1(07)]

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It is a fact that, when a new type of unit is raised, or when a new weapon is used, its use is fixed according to its characteristics. To ascertain that its use will be as effective as possible and partially to prevent misuse.

Much has been written about the horse artillery up to this date [1798], still the most important question has not been answered yet, although everything depends on it: What is the real purpose of it? This is the one and only reason that, because of the many different views, the horse artillery in every army where it was introduced, has found an inexpedient use.

When looking at the characteristics of horse artillery in order to define its proper use one thing is perfectly clear; the ease with which it is able to cover a certain distance compared with other artillery, and as such to occupy any given position quickly, being able to leave such a position quickly again, and to deploy in another position. As a result of this, the horse artillery can be used in the following ways:

**Reserve Artillery**

Very effective as reserve-artillery. If, for example during a battle, because of bad deployment or by enemy fire, a gap appears in a wing or in the centre of the line, and the enemy threatens this part of the line with cavalry or infantry, or maybe already has broken into that part of the line. In this situation, (part of) the horse artillery, according to the circumstances, with its characteristic speed, can close the gap itself, or deploy at a favourable position near the threatened spot, to drive of the enemy with all power. For this purpose a part, or all the horse artillery would have to be positioned in the vicinity of the commander in chief or the general in command of the artillery at the beginning of the battle.

In the same way the horse artillery would be used by the commanding general: to be able to reinforce every part of his line or position with guns at the utmost speed, as soon as it will become clear that the enemy would have a numerical advantage on that part, especially if this numerical superiority could have bad results.

The horse artillery is very advantageous when pursuing the enemy, because it can leave one position, and deploy in another one very quick. At the same time, the enemy is suffering from its fire, pursued by the horse artillery the whole time, and prevented from occupying new positions.

During retreats the horse artillery can give the same profit: Because of its characteristic speed and manoeuvrability it is able to cover the army by continuous fire from one position after another, and still following the own troops without being cut off.
High Speed Movement
During all manoeuvres by units, executed at high speed and in full view of the enemy, which have to be supported by artillery, the presence of horse artillery is indispensable. No artillery is able to perform this task the way horse artillery can. For example when part of the army is outstripping the enemy, the horse artillery is able to relieve the task of the outstripping units enormously, by firing at the enemy from one position after another, and finally to enfilade and fire in the back of the outstripped enemy line. On the other hand, the horse artillery is able to prevent enemy troops from outstripping the own lines, by deploying quickly, and firing in the flank of the attacking forces.

If the enemy line is defeated on one of his wings or in the centre, the horse artillery is more efficient in supporting the troops that have to exploit the gains; because of its speed, it is able to complete victory moving from one position after another.

Occupy Ground
Using the horse artillery, the commander in chief is able to occupy speedily any unoccupied favourable position in front of or to the side of his own lines. He is even able to occupy such a position before the enemy can, by sending in several cavalry squadrons, as many as the situation makes necessary, supported by horse artillery. Together, the cavalry and horse artillery should be able to maintain such a position, until they can be reinforced by infantry.

During reconnaissances in force, the presence of horse artillery to protect a sudden retreat is indispensable: normal field artillery would only be a hindrance during the reconnaissance.

During ‘invasions’ of cavalry, often executed in distant parts of the terrain and which have to be fulfilled with the utmost skills, the horse artillery is the most effective, in fact the only support. It is able to replace every kind of infantry, without sharing their slow movement rate.

During surprise attacks, which most of the time are executed on a grand scale and for which speed is a condition for victory, horse artillery is very useful to support infantry as well as cavalry. In case of failure, its speed is a big advantage in covering the retreat of the defeated troops, as well as to save themselves.

Support Light Infantry
In support of light infantry, the horse artillery can mean a big advantage. As again, most operations are based on speed, only to be executed by the horse artillery. No other artillery is able to execute such operations, and their speed is advantageous during the retreat, when they can support the retreating troops at the utmost.
CONCLUSION
From the above, it must be clear to everyone how useful horse artillery is. When on a certain day, the commander in chief has already committed all other troops, the horse artillery should be his last reserve. With its aid, he is able to put the crown on his victory, or to limit the results of defeat. With horse artillery alone, he is able to undo the results of mistakes caused by the terrain, by the forces at his disposal, by his subordinate commanders, or by his own doing. But the horse artillery has to be treated as such! Giving it a stationary position in the line, and treating it like all other artillery, means that its advantages are nullified, as well as depriving yourself from a very useful aid. Yes, even from an economical viewpoint, this would be wrong, because costs to maintain horse artillery is much higher then normal artillery, and used in the same way its effect would not be better. Even a bigger mistake is its misuse as regimental guns attached to the cavalry, to add them always to the cavalry, and to reinforce these with the horse artillery.

During an attack by the cavalry on enemy cavalry the presence of the horse artillery will hamper the speedy and flexible movement of the cavalry, which is of the utmost importance during such combats. Although the horse artillery is much more quicker then normal artillery, it still is much hampered by its vehicles, and obstacles caused by the terrain which can be difficult to pass, so that a solitary horseman from cavalry that has been beaten always will outrun it. If it’s the attacking cavalry, or the defending cavalry that is defeated, in both cases the horse artillery will not be able to keep up, and is therefore lost.

Signed von R.
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