

No 2600 Waf 25th Oct 1881

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Govt. of (1881) Madras
MILITARY.

To
THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT,
&c., &c., &c.

Dated February, 15th.

Issued

Recd.

17th Feb 1881
Recd.

G.O., 15th February 1881, No. 917.

FEBRUARY.
Nos. 284-287.

Recording correspondence on the subject of
employing dynamite as part of the future equip-
ment of Sapper and Miner Companies and
Engineer Field and Siege Parks.

Encl. in Receipt Regr

With order
H. M. P. D.

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

MILITARY DEPARTMENT.

15th February 1881, No. 947.

Equipment—Native Army.

Read the following papers :—

No. 284. *Proceedings of Government, Public Works Department, dated 23rd August 1880, No. 1986-W.*

No. 6624.

Referred to His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, for favor of remark with advertence to para. 2 of the Order of Government.

(By Order.)

OOTACAMUND,
19th October 1880.

(Signed) J. MICHAEL, Colonel,
Secretary to Government.

No. 285. *From Brigadier-General GODFREY CLERK, Officiating Adjutant-General, to Colonel E. L. HANKIN, Acting Secretary to Government, Military Department; dated Fort St. George, 8th February 1881, No. 84.*

Procs. of Govt., Public Works Department,
No. 1986-W, dated 23rd August 1880.
Report from Major Morant, R.E.

In returning the documents as per margin referred under your docket, No. 6624, of 19th October 1880, regarding the introduction of dynamite as part of the future equipment of Sapper and Miner Companies, &c., I have the honor, by order, to forward the accompanying letter* from the Commandant, "Queen's Own" Sappers and Miners, on the subject, and to state that the Provincial Commander-in-Chief concurs with the views therein expressed, and recommends that dynamite be not at present added to Sapper and Miner equipment.

From Major (Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel) C. SIM, R.E., Commandant, "Queen's Own" Sappers and Miners, to the Adjutant-General, Fort St. George, Madras; dated Bangalore, 28th January 1881, No. 160. (Forwarded through the Officer Commanding Mysore Division, dated Bangalore, 4th February 1881, No. 642-D).

In reply to your No. 2354, dated 23rd October 1880, returning accompaniment to G.O., No. 1986-W, dated 23rd August 1880, and which I regret press of other work has prevented my replying to before, I have the honor to report, for the information of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, that I took the opportunity of Major B. Blood's, R.E., Officiating Commandant, Bengal Sappers, visit to me last month to consult with him on the subject of the use of dynamite as an explosive substance for military purposes.

2. At present, it finds no place in the equipment of a British company, and it would seem to be extremely inadvisable to have those explosive substances (gunpowder, guncotton and dynamite) in the same equipment, requiring different circumstances of care. Colonel Cooke, R.E., (in his Aide-Memoire, Part I, an official publication) writes of dynamite as a solid of more or less pasty preparation of "Nitro-glycerine, which from the comparative high temperature at which it freezes and the slowness with which it thaws is a source of inconvenience and even of danger." Again, "Dynamite and guncotton possess the advantage over gunpowder that they produce but little smoke, but it is of a more deleterious nature and injurious to handle." "Guncotton and dynamite are safe for transport."

3. The experiments conducted by Major Morant, R.E., were quite exceptional, and were no test of the great objection to dynamite, *i.e.*, freezing properties and slowness to thaw.

For instance, such an explosive in Afghanistan would have been a source of great danger.

Under all circumstances, I think it very advisable not at present to add such an element of danger to the Sapper and Miner equipment,—at any rate not until we in India have become better acquainted with “guncotton,” a known useful explosive, and in use ten years ago elsewhere, but which has only just reached Madras.

No. 286. *From Major J. PENNYCUICK, R.E., Under-Secretary to Government, Public Works Department, to Colonel E. L. HANKIN, Acting Secretary to Government, Military Department; dated Chepauk, 5th February 1881, No. 324-W.*

I am directed to forward, for information, five copies of the paper on Alfred Nobel's Dynamite by Major Morant, R.E., referred to in para. 4 of his letter recorded with G.O., No. 1986-W, dated 23rd August 1880.

No. 287. ORDER THEREON, 15th February 1881, No. 947.

Recorded.

(True Extract.)

W. Hankin Colonel,

Ag. Secretary to Government.

To the Public Works Department. *sent 10th/2/81*
 „ Adjutant-General.