

Re: Paris Gun

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- *From:* Peter Stickney <p_stickney@xxxxxxxxxxxx>
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Pat Flannery wrote:

David Spain wrote:

'Tis of some note that the average shell velocity as reported in Pat's article of about 30 miles a minute, is about the same as the cruise velocity of an SR71 at altitude on afterburners.

That would surely reduce the time of my commute...

You are going to need a 800 mm Dora/Gustav shell to get enough internal room to ride around in though.

If you have no objection to flying over a shorter range though, try a "Karl" shell: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C3%B6rser_Karl

To save costs on making those shells, they were mainly made of cast concrete on the later ones with metal driving bands on the exterior.

Then there was this monster made for the invasion of Japan:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_David

What made "Little David" fun was the way it was loaded...you swung it down horizontal, engaged the pre-cut rifling bands on the shell into the rifling of the giant mortar's muzzle end, and then elevated it...while listening to the strange sound of the shell rotating itself down the interior of the barrel till it sat atop the propellant charge and was ready to fire....over around half a minute's time.

"Little David" was actually an improvisation of an improvisation.

The Aberdeen Proving Grounds needed something to test Armor Piercing bombs vs. various samples of armor plate. The bombs have to strike with various velocities, so that things like the minimum altitude for a drop against a particular target can be determined.

Just dropping them from an airplane wasn't sufficient – it depended too much on the ability of the crew to match the test criteria, the small targets

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were too small to reliably hit from altitude, and the whole shebang was very dependant on weather.

The solution was "Little David" A big honkin' mortar that could launch a sabotred bomb at a precise velocity, and hit a 20'x 20' (6m x 6m) target close by.

As we island-hopped toward Japan, we learned about the Japanese methods of digging in, and using natural caves & such as the basis for fortifications.

It was deemed useful to have something that could drop a Big Honkin' Armor Piercing projectile on these fortifications, so that we didn't need to keep doing the dangerous and slow Grenade and Flame-Thrower assaults that were pretty much the only things that worked. Somebody remembered Aberdeen's Bomb Test Mortar, and a bit of work was done to make it semi-mobile.

You've got to admire the simplicity of the concept – but one wonders about getting a whole set of bulldozers ready to go every time you wanted to change its traverse aim and had to re-dig the hole it was sitting in.

It sat on a rotating platform. The platform was dug in. That's not unusual at all for heavy pieces. The American 8" Gun (Not Howitzer) and 240mm Howitzer came with a clamshell crane and a set of bulldozers per battery (2 guns/battery) to dig the firing pits and assemble the weapons. (They broke down into 3 units each for travelling.)

Certainly, the Japanese defenders could easily evacuate any troops directly ahead of its firing line and watch it pummeling away at empty ground. :-)

Actually, they couldn't. Experience had shown that, especially during the daylight hours, we were able to keep the Japanese holed up in their fortifications – only small groups could exfiltrate. The danger was from the observation that these forts had, and the protected weapons – you couldn't just bypass them without getting shot from behind by them. They certainly weren't surrendering, so they had to be reduced. As a way to reduce these forts, Little David makes good sense. It didn't matter how long it took to emplace, or to load and fire. The Bad Guys weren't going anywhere.

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Pete Stickney

Any plan where you lose you hat is a bad plan

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