

George Washington -General Orders

Head Quarters, New York, May 19, 1776

The Colonels, and Officers commanding Corps, are immediately to have their men compleated with twenty-four Rounds of powder and ball, properly, and compleatly, made up into Cartridges, six rounds of which, each man is to have in his pouch, or cartridge box, for ordinary duty; the remaining eighteen, are to be wrapped up tight, in a Cloth, or coarse Paper, and mark'd with the name of the soldier to whom they belong, and carefully packed into an empty powder barrel. The Captains, or Officers commanding Companies, are to see that this is done, and to take into his own possession, the barrel, with the cartridges so packed, and to have them delivered to the men, as occasion may require:

To William Heath:

Head Quarters, Middle Brook, June 23, 1777.

I have long found the ill effect of the Wretched Cartouch Boxes generally in use, and I am very glad to find that Colo. Lee has found out a kind that will preserve the Ammunition; you will admit him to have them made and I should be glad of one by way of pattern. [William R. Lee, Colonel of one of the 16 Additional Continental Reg'ts of 1777, in Boston. His ranks contained British deserters. "The recruits under your command belonging to Colo. Lee's Regiment, who were either Prisoners or Deserters from the Enemy ..." - June 30, 1778]

Head Quarters, at Pennybecker's Mills, September 27, 1777.

Such regiments as have not already made up spare ammunition, so as to complete at least 40 rounds a man, are to do it this day without fail. The commanding officers of regiments are to see this done. And all this spare ammunition is to be marked and put into an ammunition waggon for, and to follow, each division. The men are to carry only their cartridge-boxes, and tin Cannisters full.

Head Quarters, Towamensing, October 13, 1777.

It is with real grief and amazement that the General observes, by the late returns, how deficient of arms and accoutrements the Continental troops are. He directs, that they may be immediately supplied with muskets, and if there is not a sufficiency of cartouch boxes, that the tin Cannisters be taken from those who have cartouch boxes, to supply the defect of such as have none.

to Continental Congress War Board

Head Qurs., near White Marsh, October 22, 1777.

I dont know how it would answer to make Cartouch Boxes of painted Canvass, instead of Leather, but I fear it would not do, as I am pretty certain that after they had been wet once or twice and little worn, that they would not turn rain. I would not wish to see a rash experiment tried upon an Accoutrement, on the goodness of which our whole safety depends. If the wood of the Cartouch box is not intirely covered with leather, it must be made of seasoned Oak or some hard Wood, for I am convinced, that poplar, of which they are commonly made, would admit water very easily.

to Continental Congress War Board

Head Quarters, Whitmarsh, November 3, 1777.

Sir: I am favored with yours of the 24th, and am glad to find that such supplies of Lead are upon the way to the different Elaboratories. Lining the flap of the Cartouch [boxes] with painted Canvas will certainly be of Service, considering the badness and thinness of the leather in general; but the greatest preservative to the Cartridges, is a small inside flap of pliant leather, which lays close upon the top of them and not only keeps them dry but from being rubbed.

Head-Quarters, White Marsh, November 22, 1777.

The troops just arrived from the northward, are immediately to have their Cartouch Boxes filled with cartridges. The whole army to have their ammunition in such readiness as to be completed to 40 rounds

to Continental Congress War Board

Head Quarters, Valley Forge, March 6, 1778.

The Cartouch Boxes made in this Country, are generally very bad, and I see little chance of their being made Substantial and fit to turn the weather until we can bring our manufacture of leather to a greater perfection; which is only to be done by letting it lay much longer in the Vats, than we can afford, under our present wants. Military Accoutrements of the leather kind are said to come exceedingly cheap and good from France, and I would therefore Suggest the propriety of ordering a quantity from thence, if it should not have been already done. The Hides of the Cattle killed in the Army might then be in a manner totally applied to procuring Shoes for them, by making contracts to exchange one for the other. Had not this method been fallen upon, the Soldiers must have been rendered totally unfit for Service, as they could not get Supplied upon any other Terms, but in a very small degree. I have very little doubt, but contracts of this kind may be so extended, as to procure a constant Supply of good Shoes for the whole Army. This is a matter worthy of the attention of the Board, as we have Suffered more for the want of Shoes than for any other Article [and those imported from France affording little more than a days wear.]

to Continental Congress War Board
Head Quarters, Valley Forge, May 1, 1778.

The Iron cartridge Cannisters should be by all means carried on. They will upon an emergency serve instead of the Cartouch Box and will always carry spare ammunition perfectly secure from Rain, and save tin of which the former ones were made.

to Continental Congress War Board
Head Quarters, Valley Forge, June 6, 1778.

Gentn.: I have lately received 1900 Stand of Arms from the Eastward, which will nearly, if not quite compleat the number of Men who are at present in want. But we are exceedingly distressed for Cartouch Boxes. By an exact return made a few days ago 1700 were wanting for the new Recruits, and to replace the old ones, worn out in the last Campaign. Since this a number of Recruits from New York and Maryland have arrived. The Deputy Commissary of Stores informs me, that Lebanon will furnish about 150 pr. week. The supply from that quarter will be so slow that we must not put any dependence upon it. I do not know what quantity has been made at Springfield, but Genl Knox inform'd me, that the manufactory there would be considerable; I shall be much obliged by your dispatching an Express to that place, with orders to send forward what are ready, with the utmost dispatch. In the mean time, if you have a number of the thin Iron Cannisters finished, be pleased to have them sent down, as they will serve as a substitute for leather Boxes. I am, etc

Head Quarters, V. Forge, Wednesday, June 17, 1778.

The Brigade Quarter Masters will call on the Commissary of Military Stores for their respective Proportions of Tin Cannisters which are to be kept by them with the Spare Ammunition, filled with Cartridges and delivered out proportionably to the several Regts. only in time of an Alarm or when the Troops are actually going to attack the Enemy, except to such Soldiers as are destitute of Cartridge Boxes, the Cannisters are to be delivered to them in lieu thereof, 'till they are furnished with boxes, when they are to be lodged with the Brigade Quarter Masters as before mentioned. As the Proportion of Cannisters will be but small it would be proper to intrust them to the Non Commissioned Officers only or some of the most trusty soldiers when the Brigades are completed with Cartridge Boxes.

Head Quarters, Middle Brook, Thursday, May 13, 1779.

Accurate returns of Arms, Ammunition and Accoutrements, good, bad and wanting to be sent in to the Orderly Office tomorrow morning 11 o'clock both by regiments and brigades; the former signed by the commanding officers of regiments and the latter by the officers commanding brigades: The causes of any deficiencies which have happened since the men were last completed up to forty rounds each, are carefully to be noted in the regimental returns. The number of cartridge boxes of the new construction now on hand, in the several regiments, are likewise to be certified.

Head Quarters, Middle Brook, Wednesday, May 19, 1779.

The Waggon of the several brigades are to be sent very early tomorrow morning to Pluckemin for Arms &c. to make up the present deficiencies. All the Cartridge Boxes on the old construction are to be sent and exchanged for new ones.

to Henry Knox

Head Quarters, Middlebrook, May 27, 1779.

Dr. Sir: I herewith transmit you an extract of a letter from the board of war of the 24th. instant, by which you will perceive that the factory at Philadelphia turns out 60 or 70 cartridge boxes pr. day; and that the armory is in a situation to enter upon the repairs of arms. You will be pleased to have all the old cartridge boxes now in store, or returned on the distribution of new ones, sent forward to Philadelphia for the purpose which the board mentions, and such arms as want repairs to the armory agreeably to the recommendation of the board.

Head Quarters, Morris Town, May 8, 1780.

Gentlemen: It appears by the inclosed Copy of a letter from Baron Steuben that about 1500 Muskets fitted with Bayonets and the same number of Bayonet Belts and Cartouch Boxes of the new construction, are wanting to compleat the troops in this Cantonment. You will be pleased therefore to direct the above quantity to be sent forward as speedily as our circumstances will admit. The Muskets which will be returned are for the most part in perfect order, except wanting Bayonets and the Cartouch Boxes are of the old kind. I am &c.

Head Quarters, Newburgh, Thursday, July 4, 1782.

The General having observed inconveniency and loss of Ammunition to attend the practice of carrying Cartridges loose or in bundles in the men's pockets or in the bottoms of their Cartridge boxes, directs that the troops carry about them no more ammunition than the number of cartridges their boxes are pierced for, in general twenty Nine rounds, except when parties or Corps are ordered on a particular service detached from their Ammunition Waggon. He persuades himself this rule will not be attended with any bad consequence as men cannot be considered unprovided with Ammunition when the Conductor has a sufficiency in Camp ready to issue at a moments warning. The Brigade Conductors, and Quarter Masters of Corps that have not Conductors are hereby called on to pay due attention to the instructions laid down in the regulations for the order and Discipline of the troops (Page 120 and 121) on this subject proportioning the quantity of spare Ammunition to the number of Men to be supplied.