

What Would You Do?

Background Information

Your group has just become the new officer of a small group of 20 Canadian soldiers due to a devastating artillery barrage on your position in the trenches near Ypres, Belgium during the First World War. The shelling killed the former officers and wiped out all of your stockpiled supplies. Although each remaining soldier has their rifle and a few bullets, there are no other weapons, ammunition, food, water or medical kits. You have only one wagon and two horses which can be sent to the closest supply depot over five miles away through heavy mud. For now, you can expect the wagon to be able to make one return trip, and due to the grim condition of the "road" it will be able to carry a maximum of 25 units of supplies on this trip. Good decision-making is of the utmost importance as a trench raid by the Germans can be expected at any time. You may or may not be able to send the wagon tomorrow.

Your task

As a group you must discuss, debate and decide on what supplies will be loaded onto the wagon for the trip from the supply depot to your position. The total supplies must not exceed 25 units. You must consider all the important needs of your group – defence, nutrition, health, morale and comfort.

Supplies Available at the Depot

Food rations

As your group is in the field, ration kits contain preserved meat, dry biscuits, tea, jam and sugar. Each kit will sustain one soldier for one day. Without food soldiers will become weak and unable to fight off a potential attack. The soldiers will also need water which is not included in the kit. Each ration kit is worth 1 unit.

Medical kit

Although there are currently no wounded soldiers in your group, in the case of an attack, having a medical kit could make the difference whether a wounded soldier lives or dies. Simple first aid would increase his chances of making his way back to a dressing station. This kit contains bandages, simple medications, a stretcher and crutches. Each kit is worth 4 units.

Water

Water is available for hauling to your position. Once there it will be stored in a large canvas container which is currently full of holes and leaking. It must be repaired prior to use. You are in desperate need of water as life will not go on without it. You should have one unit of water per day for each soldier.

Fodder for horses

Although you have only two horses to feed, they are critically important to your survival. Without their help it will be virtually impossible for you to resupply your troops. It will take many men to carry the same amount of supplies, leaving your position vulnerable. Each horse will require 1 unit of fodder per day as well as 1 unit of water. Remember you have 2 horses right now.

Sapper's kit

As your position has suffered a great deal of damage, your men are holding the line in craters rather than trenches. It is important you get a repair kit containing shovels that allow you to dig simple trenches as well as materials to repair the leaks to your water storage container. You also may need the kit to perform repairs to the communication kit in any future attack. Each repair kit is worth 3 units.

Communication kit

At the present you are isolated from commanders in the rear who provide critical orders and information. Although the risk that communications will be cut once again due to the fragile nature of the wires connecting you with the headquarters, it is vital that you attempt to replace the equipment. Each kit allowing you to reconnect with headquarters is worth 2 units.

Mortars and mortar bombs

As your men are armed only with rifles and bayonets, it is crucial to your fighting ability to rearm with trench mortars including mortar bombs. These simple guns fire in an arc and can reach the enemy positions, greatly enhancing your chances of defending against an attack. Having these weapons will improve the morale of the troops, however the weight of the weapons and bombs will limit what else can be carried on the wagon. Enough weapons and bombs to hold the line against the expected attack will cost you 10 units.

Comfort kit

Important to the overall morale of your troops, comfort kits put together by the Red Cross are available at the supply depot. Although none of the contents are critical to survival, emotional health can make a great difference in any future fighting. These kits contain Bibles, cigarettes and matches, chocolate, writing paper and pens, newspapers, as well as mail and care packages from home. It will cost you 4 units for this kit.

Hygiene kit

Life at the front line during the Great War is particularly unsanitary. Shortages of water, primitive toilet facilities, the close proximity of the men, diseases, rats and lice all take away from the health and stamina of your troops. This important kit contains soap, toilet paper, a pump to remove water from the trench, dry footwear, and shaving kits. This kit will take up 3 units of space.