

# WWI New Weaponry

## Machine Gun

Machine guns needed 4-6 men to work them and had to be on a flat surface. They had the firepower of 100 guns. Large field guns had a long range and could deliver devastating blows to the enemy but needed up to 12 men to work them. They fired shells, which exploded on impact.



## Poisonous Gas



The German army was the first to use chlorine gas in 1915. Chlorine gas causes a burning sensation in the throat and chest pains. Death is painful - you suffocate! The problem with chlorine gas is that the weather must be right. If the wind is in the wrong direction it could end up killing your own troops rather than the enemy.

Mustard gas was the most deadly weapon used. It was fired into the trenches in shells. It is colorless and takes 12 hours to take effect. Effects include: blistering skin, vomiting, sore eyes, internal and external bleeding. Death can take up to 5 weeks.

## Zeppelin

The Zeppelin, also known as blimp, was an airship that was used during the early part of the war in bombing raids by the Germans. They carried machine guns and bombs. However, they were abandoned because they were easy to shoot out of the sky.



## Tank



Tanks were used for the first time in World War I by the British. They were developed to cope with the conditions on the Western Front. The first tank was called 'Little Willie' and needed a crew of 3. Its maximum speed was 3mph and it could not cross trenches.

The more modern tank was not developed until just before the end of the war. It could carry 10 men, had a revolving turret and could reach 4mph.

## Airplanes



▲ A World War I pilot shows off an early air-to-ground communication device.

Planes were also used for the first time. At first they were used to deliver bombs and for spying work but became fighter aircraft armed with machine guns, bombs and some times cannons. Fights between two planes in the sky became known as 'dogfights.' It was soon realized though that bombs could be dropped from the planes onto the enemy causing as much damage as possible.

The most famous pilot of the Great War was a German pilot named Manfred Von Richthofen, better known as the Red Baron. He was responsible for shooting down over 80 Allied aircraft before he himself was killed when his aircraft was shot down over France in 1918.



## Submarines

The submarines were not considered much of a threat at the beginning of World War I, but it wasn't long until they became a major threat for both sides. Germany's submarines were called U-Boats. Most submarines are used in the war to attack enemy ships with torpedoes. The Germans used torpedoes to blow up ships carrying supplies from America to Britain.

In 1917, the focus of the war shifted to the high seas. That year, the Germans intensified the submarine warfare that had raged in the Atlantic Ocean since shortly after the war began. In January 1917, the Germans announced that their submarines would sink without warning any ship in the waters around Britain. This policy was called **unrestricted submarine warfare**.

The Germans had tried this policy before. On May 7, 1915, a German submarine, or U-boat, had sunk the British passenger ship **Lusitania**. The attack left 1,198 people dead, including 128 U.S. citizens. Germany claimed that the ship had been carrying ammunition, which turned out to be true. Nevertheless, the American public was outraged. President Woodrow Wilson sent a strong protest to Germany. After two further attacks, the Germans finally agreed to stop attacking neutral and passenger ships.



Desperate for an advantage over the Allies, however, the Germans returned to unrestricted submarine warfare in 1917. They knew it might lead to war with the United States. They gambled that their naval blockade would starve Britain into defeat before the United States could mobilize. Ignoring warnings by President Wilson, German U-boats sank three American ships.

In February 1917, another German action pushed the United States closer to war. Officials intercepted a telegram written by Germany's foreign secretary, Arthur Zimmermann, stating that Germany would help Mexico "reconquer" the land it had lost to the United States if Mexico would ally itself with Germany.

The **Zimmermann Telegram** simply proved to be the last straw. A large part of the American population already favored the Allies. In particular, America felt a bond with England. The two nations shared a common ancestry and language, as well as similar democratic institutions and legal systems. More important, America's economic ties with the Allies were far stronger than those with the Central Powers. On April 2, 1917, President Wilson asked Congress to declare war on Germany. The United States entered the war on the side of the Allies.