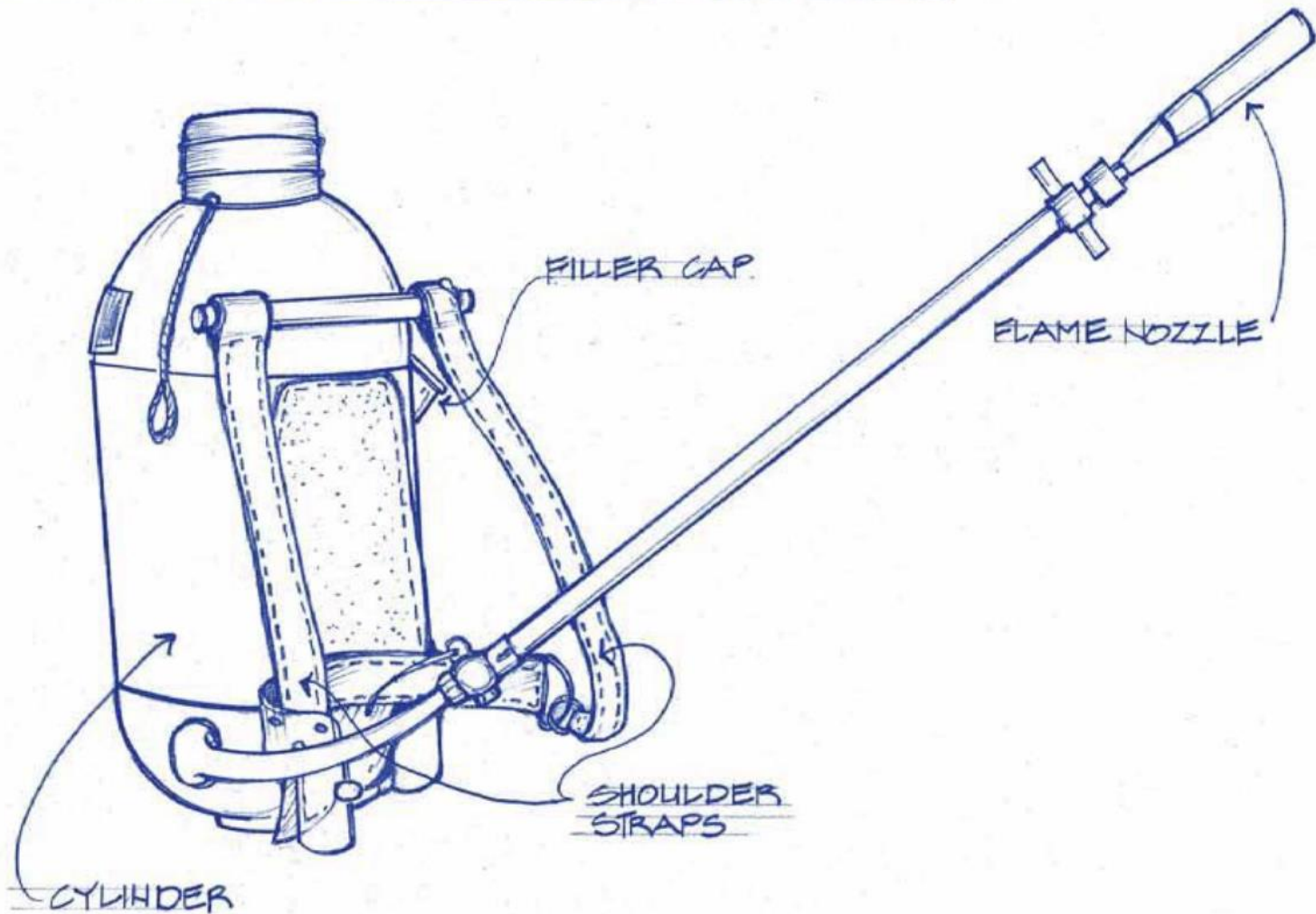


GERMAN FLAMMENWERFER



FLAMETHROWER

The Battle of Verdun, which began in February 1916 and lasted nearly ten months, is considered to be the longest battle of World War I. Early in this battle, the Germans introduced a new kind of flamethrower that consisted of a gas canister strapped on the back of a soldier. Attached to the canister was a nozzle that was lit on fire and that sprayed burning fuel on its victims. The Germans used this weapon to clear the area of enemy soldiers before the main army advanced. This weapon was dangerous not only to the enemy but also to the soldier operating it, because it was highly explosive. Even with this weapon, Germans still suffered heavy casualties.

Estimated Casualty Statistics for the Battle of Verdun

Allied Powers: 362,000

Central Powers: 336,000

Excerpt #7

It was yesterday evening, just as night fell, that it happened. The day had been fairly calm . . . and nothing forewarned us of a German attack. Suddenly one of my comrades shouted, "Hallo! what is this coming down on us? Any one would think it was petroleum [fuel]." At that time we could not believe the truth, but the liquid which began to spray on us was certainly some kind of petroleum. The Germans were pumping it from hoses . . . A few seconds later incendiary [fire-starting] bombs began to rain down on us and the whole trench burst into flame . . . the men began to scream terribly, tearing off their clothes, trying to beat out the flames . . . We had our eyebrows and eyelashes burned off, and clothes were burned in great patches and our flesh was sizzling like roasting meat.

- Philip Gibbs, "Story of the Evening of Liquid Flames," in *Soul of the War*, 1915