

# Wireless for the Warrior

## Compendium 5 – Radio Communications Equipment in the Army (Signal Communication Equipment used by Enemy Nations)

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In wartime it is essential to maintain an evaluation of one's enemy's capabilities and intentions. It is so important that it is carried out in peacetime as well; governments and their fighting forces keep watch on other countries' political intentions and their military capabilities even if there is no obvious or immediate threat of hostilities. Part of that evaluation is maintaining a watch on other armies' communications; What equipment do they have? What frequency does it operate on? Can I jam it to frustrate them? Can I listen to it in the hope of getting any warning about what might be going to happen? While battlefield communications systems operate at a tactical / "immediate" level rather than the strategic or political, knowledge of an enemy's communication equipment might just provide an operational advantage on the battlefield.

In publishing Compendia 3 & 4 Louis Meulstee gave the modern reader the opportunity to study German assessments of Allied radio equipment. In **Compendium 5** he reverses the position by reissuing a 1944 document prepared by SRDE, providing an analysis of numerous German, Italian and Japanese items of communications equipment, not all of it radio. There is a case to be made that 1944 was far too late for this information to have had much practical value, but of course it is possible that this version replaced an earlier one.

In many instances the analyses were based on an examination of the equipment in question; in others it was quite open in stating that the equipment had not been examined, presumably for the simple reason that it had not been possible to capture any examples. In these cases the assessments were "best guesses" and it was clear that SRDE wanted anything captured returned to the UK for examination without any parts being removed as trophies. To aid its intended recipients SRDE included comprehensive glossaries in all three enemy languages, and it is interesting to speculate about what those fighting in the Far East must have thought if they found themselves confronted by pages of Japanese characters likely to be found on radio equipment and their English translations. They are not easy to distinguish from one another when sitting in the comfort of one's own home; reading them while suffering the privations of jungle warfare may have had the Forgotten Fourteenth wondering if someone was having a laugh at their expense. The German – English glossary is likely to be of further help to those studying Compendia 3 & 4. It is clear that whoever undertook the examination of the various items of equipment was fairly impressed with the German equipment, rather less so with the early Italian equipment and much less so with the Japanese.

**Compendium 5** adds to the body of knowledge about wartime radio equipment and is a worthwhile historical document. It is also understood that similar to that published in Compendia 3 & 4 the source material is now extremely rare and it is fortunate that someone – Louis – has managed to track down a copy and make sure that it remains available for present and future study.