

INSTRUCTIONS.

COUNTERSIGN SIGNALS.

GENERAL ORDERS, }
No. 29. }

HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
Washington, October 17, 1861.

Day and Night Countersign Signals, by which friendly regiments may be distinguished, will be adopted in the Army of the Potomac. Major Albert J. Myer, Signal Officer, will take steps to carry out this order, upon the plan proposed by him.

Adjutants and color sergeants of regiments, or others detailed for signal service, will be guided by such instructions upon the subject as they may receive from the officers in charge of signals at the headquarters of divisions or separate commands. Commanding officers will afford every facility to the officers detailed as Signal Instructors.

Detailed orders and instructions for the use of Countersign Signals will be furnished from these headquarters prior to the first issue of supplies.

The officers in charge of the staff departments will furnish such supplies as may be necessary to carry out the design of this order.

By command of Major General McCLELLAN :

S. WILLIAMS,
Assistant Adjutant General.

HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
Washington, November 17, 1861.

The following instructions having been submitted to the General Commanding the Army of the Potomac, and approved by him, he orders that they be strictly observed.

By command of Major General McCLELLAN :

S. WILLIAMS,
Assistant Adjutant General.

HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
OFFICE OF THE SIGNAL OFFICER,
Washington, October 17, 1861.

In compliance with General Orders, No. 29, dated Headquarters, Army of the Potomac, Washington, October 17, 1861, the following Instructions, for the use of Countersign Signals, are furnished for the information of all concerned :

FORM OF COUNTERSIGN WITH COUNTERSIGN SIGNALS.

HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
Washington, October 17, 1861.

ORDERS.

Countersign and Countersign Signals for the week ending October 24, 1861.

COUNTERSIGN.	Flag.	COUNTERSIGN SIGNALS.
Sunday, Oct. 17. Washington	121 (Left, Right, Left)	Red—White.
Monday, Oct. 18. Napoleon	111 (Left, Left, Left)	Red.
Tuesday, Oct. 19. Wellington	112 (Left, Left, Right)	Green—White.
Wednesday, Oct. 20. Scott	212 (Right, Left, Right)	White—Red.
Thursday Oct. 21. Moultrie	221 (Right, Right, Left)	Green.
Friday, Oct. 22. Warren	222 (Right, Right, Right)	White.
Saturday, Oct. 23. Miller	122 (Left, Right, Right)	White—Green.

By command of Major General McCLELLAN :

JOHN JONES, A. A. G.

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Day Countersign Signals.

Day Countersign Signals are made by motions of the National Flag, a particular combination of motions being appointed for each day. To make these motions, the flag is waved to the right or to the left.

Each regiment or independent organization will carry a national flag suitable for making day signals.

The Regimental National Flag will be the Signal Flag for regiments.

For the purpose of signalling, these flags will be in charge of competent officers and non-commissioned officers, to whom this duty is assigned.

The Regimental National Flag can be seen in motion, and the Signals made by it can be readily distinguished with the naked eye, at the distance of a mile. With an ordinary opera-glass, they can be seen four (4) miles.

TO MAKE DAY COUNTERSIGN SIGNALS.

There are one Position and two Motions. They are styled the First Position, and the First or Second Motion.

THE FIRST POSITION is, when the flag is held vertically above the head of the flag-bearer; the butt of the flag-staff at the height of the waist, touching the belt-plate, and grasped by both hands; the hands separated from each other about eighteen inches.

THE FLAG BEING IN THIS POSITION,

THE FIRST MOTION is, to wave the flag to the ground, on the left hand side of the flag-bearer, and to instantly return it to the First Position.

THE SECOND MOTION is, to wave the flag to the ground, on the right hand side of the flag-bearer, and to instantly return it to the First Position.

The First Motion is known for signals as "one," and is indicated by the numeral "1."

The Second Motion is known for signals as "two," and is indicated by the numeral "2."

These motions are ordered by the command briskly given, "One" or "Left," and "Two" or "Right."

To make the signal "11" or "one-one" or "eleven," the flag having been brought to the First Position, the First Motion is made and instantly repeated.

To make the signal "111" or "one-one-one" or "one hundred and eleven," the flag is waved three times to the left, then stopping at the first or vertical position.

In this manner for any number of "ones" following each other.

To make "22" or "two-two" or "twenty-two," the flag having been brought to the first position, the second motion is twice made; that is, the flag is waved quickly twice to the right; it then stops at the first or vertical position.

To make "222" or "two-two-two" or "two hundred and twenty-two," the flag is waved quickly three times to the right, then stopping at the vertical position, and thus for any number of "twos" following each other.

To make "12" or "one-two" or "twelve," the flag being at the "First Position," the "First Motion" is made, and is followed instantly by the "Second Motion," without allowing the flag to pause at the vertical position between the motions; that is, the flag is waved quickly, once to the left—"1," and, without stopping, once to the right—"2." On the completion of the second motion, the flag stops at the vertical position.

To make "121" or "one-two-one," the flag is waved once to the left, once to the right, and again, without pausing, once to the left; it then stops.

To make "212" or "two-one-two," the flag is waved once to the right, once to the left, and again once to the right.

To make "221" or "two-two-one," the flag is waved twice to the right, and once to the left.

All combinations of One and Two are made in this manner: The flag must not be allowed to stop between the motions of a signal. When the flag stops in the vertical position, it indicates that the signal is completed.

The motions of the flag will be in general indicated in Countersign Orders by the numerals only.

When flag Countersign Signals are used, the signal for the day will be repeated three (3) times, the Signal Sergeant pausing until he counts three, at the close of each signal. He will then rest for a few moments, after which he will repeat the signal the same number of times. This will be continued until the signals are answered, or until a fair opportunity has been given the regiment signalled to notice them.

Any regiment noticing flag signals apparently addressed to it, will at once respond by making the Day Signal three (3) times.

Regiments or bodies of troops signalizing each other, and noticing that the countersign signal has been correctly made, indicate that it has been seen and understood, by making the countersign signal once. As thus: a regiment seeing a regiment not recognized makes the countersign signal three (3) times. The stranger regiment responds, making the countersign signal three (3) times. The first regiment then makes the countersign signal once, which is to say, "Your signals are seen and understood." The second responds by the countersign signal once given; this has the same meaning; no further signals are needed.

In noting flag Countersign Signals, it must be remembered that if the flag-bearer is standing with his back to, and is signalling away from, the observer, as to a regiment in front of the flag-bearer, while the observer is in his rear, the signals will appear reversed; thus, "212" would seem to be "121"—"22" would appear "11," &c., &c.

Night Countersign Signals.

Night Countersign Signals are made with Signal Cartridges, which give, when burned, an intense light, either of a single color, or burning first of one color, and then changing to another. These cartridges are burned at the muzzle of a signal pistol. They are lighted by the explosion of a cap, fired by a common percussion lock. They can be seen with the naked eye three miles.

The plan of Night Countersign Signals is this: A particular color, as "green," or a particular combination of colors, as red followed by white, that is, "red-white," is given as the Countersign Signal for each night. This signal is known and made by all friendly regiments.

Thus, with the form of Countersign Order here printed, on Sunday night regiments would instantly show, as their signal, at any moment there was occasion to use it, as on meeting an unknown force, an intense light, which would burn for about eight seconds Red, and then change and burn for eight seconds White—"Red-White."

On Monday they would show a clear Red light only; this would burn about sixteen seconds—"Red."

On Tuesday the light would burn, first, Green, and then White—"Green-White," and so on.

Each regiment and independent organization will be supplied with

- One (1) Signal Box containing Signal Cartridges,
- Two (2) Signal Pistols, for firing Signal Cartridges,
- Two (2) Signal Pistol Pouches,
- One (1) Signal Cartridge Pouch, (complete,)
- One (1) Signal Magazine, (complete,)
- One (1) Box Percussion Caps.

These articles will be in charge of the officers and non-commissioned officers to whom are assigned the signal duties. The Signal Box contains fourteen (14) sets of Signal Cartridges. The Signal Cartridges are packed in the Signal Box, in classes. Each class is separated from the next by a partition. All cartridges of the same class are alike.

The cases of Signal Cartridges are painted to exhibit the colors the cartridges will show when lighted, and the order in which they will show them. When cartridges are of two colors, the color at the "muzzle" of the cartridge will burn first.

A cartridge painted a single color, as Red, will burn "Red." A cartridge painted of two colors, as Red at the muzzle end, and White at the stock end, will burn, first, red, then white, that is, "Red-White."

A cartridge painted Green at the muzzle end, and White at the stock end, will burn, first, green, and then white, that is, "Green-White."

The small wooden end of the Signal Cartridge is called the "Cartridge Stock." The part which joins the stock is called the "Stock End." The large end of the cartridge, furthest from the stock, is called the "Muzzle End." The orifice in the stock is called the "Fuze Hole."

The end of the barrel of the pistol which receives the stock is the "Muzzle."

The Clamp which clasps upon and fastens the cartridge stock in the barrel is the "Cartridge Clamp." The point inside of and at the bottom of the pistol barrel is the "Fuze Point."

The Signal Cartridge Pouch is fitted to contain seven (7) signal cartridges. These cartridges are changed each day. They must always be of the proper color for the countersign signal of the night.

The Signal Magazine is intended to carry a supply of signal cartridges when the troops, moving in light marching order, are not accompanied by wagons. The magazine is fitted to carry twenty-eight signal cartridges, that is, in each compartment four cartridges proper for each night in the week. One style of signal magazine is fitted to carry six signal cartridges in each compartment. The total number of cartridges in this magazine will be forty-two.

TO EQUIP THE SIGNAL SERGEANT.

The signal pistol pouch, with pistol, is worn upon the belt, and on the right side. The signal cartridge pouch is worn upon the belt, and on the left side; it is filled with the proper signal cartridges for the countersign signal of the night. The cap box is filled with percussion caps.

TO LOAD AND LIGHT SIGNALS, AS FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF SERGEANTS.

The Sergeant being equipped, and standing at "attention," at the order,

Prepare to charge Signals!

The pistol is drawn from the pistol pouch, and is held in the left hand in front of, and near to, the cartridge pouch. The handle of the cartridge clamp is raised with the right hand, as far as it will go. The signal cartridge-pouch is opened, the right hand at the pouch,

Charge Signals!

A signal cartridge is taken from the signal cartridge pouch with the right hand, the cartridge stock is pressed into the muzzle of the pistol, care being taken that the tip of the stock is pressed well down upon the fuze point, until the paper covering the fuze

hole is thus broken; the handle of the cartridge clamp is closed strongly upon the side of the pistol fastening the cartridge; the pistol is held in the left hand, grasped in front of the lock, the cap box is opened, the right hand at the cap box.

Prime!

The hammer is sprung back by the right hand to the catch, a cap is placed upon the nipple, the hammer is let gently down upon the cap, the hands dropped at the sides, pistol held in right hand.

Ready!

The pistol is cocked, raised in the right hand above the head, the muzzle pointed obliquely upward to the right.

Signals—Light!

The pistol is fired, the cartridge lighting up almost instantly, at the explosion of the cap.

If it is not intended to load for practice, and a cartridge has been burned at the order,

Load Signal!

The handle of the cartridge clamp is raised from the side of the pistol, the old cartridge stock is thrown out; a fresh cartridge is pressed into the barrel, and fastened by the cartridge clamp; the hammer is raised; the old cap is thrown off; the pistol is re-capped; the hammer is let down upon the cap, and the pistol is carried in the right hand as before.

If, instead of "Load Signal," the order is given to—

Return Pistol!

The clamp handle is raised; the old cartridge stock is thrown out; the clamp handle is then closed upon the pistol; the hammer is raised, the old cap thrown off; the hammer is then let down upon the nipple; the pistol is returned to the pistol pouch.

Countersign Signals by Sound.

At night, in fogs or when Day Signals are not visible, and it is necessary to use Countersign Signals, they may be made by the beat of drum. One beat standing for "one," "(1)" and two beats standing for "two" "(2.)"

Thus, "111" or "one-one-one," would be three beats, with a marked interval, say two seconds of time between each beat. "222" or "two-two-two," would be six beats made in couples, the two beats of each couple made close together, there being a marked interval, say two seconds of time between each couple. "121" or "one-two-one," would be one beat followed by a couple, followed by one beat. "122" or "one-two-two," would be one beat followed by two couples, and so on.

So Countersign Signals may be made by the sound of bugle, or by the sound of a signal whistle, one short sound standing for "one," and a couple of short sounds standing for "two."

Ten seconds ought to be allowed to elapse after the completion of each Sound Signal before it is repeated.

OF THE CARE OF SIGNALS IN CAMP.

The Adjutant or other officer in charge of signals will see that the Signal Box, the Signal Magazine, one pistol, and one pistol pouch, when both pistols are not in use, and one box of percussion caps, are kept where they can be under his constant supervision, in the Adjutant's office, or in his quarters, if possible.

The signal magazine will be kept packed, containing four signal cartridges of each class or kind, twenty-eight cartridges in all. If the large style of magazine is used, it will contain six signal cartridges of each kind, forty-two in all.

A signal pistol and pouch and one signal cartridge pouch will be issued by the Adjutant or regimental officer in charge of signals to the Color Sergeant, or to the non-commissioned officer acting as Signal Sergeant. They remain in his charge, and are part of his equipments, charged to him.

The officer in charge of signals will be careful to provide himself with a copy of the countersign signals for each day.

He will require the Signal Sergeant or other non-commissioned officers acting to report to him with the flag, and fully equipped for night signals at *Reol react* each day.

He will then give to the non-commissioned signal officers the flag countersign signals for the day, giving it to them both by the numbers and by the orders "Right!" and "Left!" and will see that they make the signal correctly ten times in his presence.

He will take from the signal cartridge pouch the unused signal cartridges of the preceding day, and will replace them in the signal box.

He will fill the signal cartridge pouch with seven signal cartridges, proper for the night signal of the date.

He will see that signal cartridges of different kinds are not mingled in any compartments of the signal box.

He will examine the cap box to see that it is well supplied with caps, and will inspect the signal pistol, noting whether it is clean, the lock in good order, and the openings in the fuze point clear.

He will verify the flag signals he has given, and the colors of the cartridges he has issued, by reference to the written countersign order.

He will see that the non-commissioned officer places the belt, with the signal pouch, cap box, and pistol, where the non-commissioned officer can instantly obtain it, if called upon suddenly to march by day or at night.

The Signal Sergeant will not, when on duty, carry any other signal cartridges than those of the color for that day.

OF THE CARE OF SIGNALS ON THE MARCH.

It will be the duty of the Adjutant or officer in charge of signals to see that all signal supplies accompany the regiment on the march, and are so placed that they can be readily got at.

If the regiment is ordered suddenly to march, and without wagons, he will cause the non-commissioned signal officer to report to him fully equipped for signals before marching. He will give to a trusty non-commissioned officer or soldier previously selected for the purpose by the adjutant, the signal magazine packed, to be carried, and to be in his charge. This soldier will accompany the signal sergeant, and, in company with him, will report each day to the officer in charge of signals.

The officer in charge of signals will require the Signal Sergeant, and the non-commissioned officer or soldier in charge of the signal magazine to report to him equipped each day while the regiment is in the field at the usual hour for giving out the countersign signals, or as nearly at that hour as is practicable.

He will, each day at this hour, give the Signal Sergeant the flag countersign signal for the day.

He will take from the signal cartridge pouch the unused signal cartridges of the preceding night, and place them in one of the compartments of the magazine.

He will see that the signal pouch is supplied with four signal cartridges proper for the coming night. Six signal cartridges will be issued each day, if there are that number of each kind in the signal magazine.

If the regiment is to go into battle, the signal instructions will be given at a suitable hour beforehand.

The Adjutant or officer in charge of signals will see that there are other instructed sergeants present for duty in case of accident to the Signal Sergeant, and every means will be taken to secure the safety of the signal magazine in case of accident to the bearer.

When the regiment moves with wagons, the signal box will be carried, and the regular allowance of seven cartridges will be placed in the signal pouch each day.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS.

The object of Countersign Signals is to prevent collision between friendly troops.

COUNTERSIGN SIGNALS WILL NOT BE USED BETWEEN REGIMENTS KNOWN TO BE FRIENDLY. THEIR USE MUST BE RESERVED FOR THOSE OCCASIONS WHEN THERE ARE REASONS TO DOUBT THE CHARACTER OF THE APPROACHING FORCE, AND IT IS NECESSARY TO ASCERTAIN THEIR CHARACTER.

A SIGNAL IS ALWAYS A WARNING, AND INDICATES DOUBT.

FOR THIS REASON REGIMENTS WHICH ARE NOT KNOWN TO EACH OTHER, AND HAVE EXCHANGED SIGNALS, WILL NOT, IF IT CAN BE AVOIDED, APPROACH EACH OTHER WITHIN MUSKET SHOT, UNTIL BOTH HAVE SENT FORWARD OFFICERS TO MEET—EACH REGIMENT DISPATCHING ITS OFFICER AS SOON AS IT HAS SEEN THE COUNTERSIGN SIGNAL CORRECTLY MADE BY THE OTHER.

The officer in charge of signals with each regiment will see that a number of sergeants to be selected by the adjutant are practised in the general principles of the use of the flag and of the cartridges for countersign signals, to provide for the contingencies of accident.

The Signal Sergeant marching with the regiment on actual service, will be near the head of the column, and will accompany the Colonel, the Adjutant, or some reliable officer particularly designated by the Colonel, who will order him when to make signals.

On night marches, the Signal Sergeant, and the officer charged with signal duty, will be always a few paces in advance of the column, unless otherwise specially ordered.

To increase security, a reliable officer, the Sergeant Major, or a selected sergeant, may be equipped with a signal pistol and countersign light, and ordered to march with the rear of the column.

Detachments sent out from regiments at night will always be notified of the character of the Countersign Signal for that night.

The signal pistol will always be carried, charged, and capped in the hand of the Signal Sergeant, when the forces are moving at night.

When Signal Cartridges are fired at night, those near them must shield their eyes from the intense light, or they will be so affected, that they will not be able to distinguish the colors of the answering signals.

Regiments exchanging night countersign signals, will both instantly halt, and each send forward an officer to communicate.

A regiment fired upon, or opening fire at night, will always light its signal, unless absolutely certain they are engaged with the enemy.

Regiments having exchanged signals by day, and about to approach each other within musket range, will each send an officer rapidly forward to communicate.

If a regiment has lost its flag, it will reply to the countersign signal made to it with any banner, or with any temporary contrivance, such as a handkerchief upon a bayonet on a musket. It will halt, and at once send forward an officer.

A regiment marching at night without its night signals, and signalized by another with lights, will at once halt, make itself known as "friends," give the countersign signal by sound, if possible, and instantly send forward an officer.

Night Countersign Signals, or Countersign Signals by Sound, will be suspended by special order with any body of troops detailed for such duty as may render such suspension necessary. The regiment will, on the march, carry with them their signal equipments as usual.

A regiment carrying the American flag need not be fired upon, though failing to respond to the Countersign Signals. But the troops will be held in readiness to receive them as enemies.

Methods by which to verify Countersign Signals are furnished when necessary to Colonels, Commanding Officers, and acting Signal Officers in confidential orders.

OF SUPPLIES, REQUISITIONS, AND RETURNS.

Officers commanding regiments or other organizations, will not allow their commands to be, at any time, without properly instructed officers, and proper signal supplies.

Officers commanding forces which have not been supplied, or whose supply is nearly exhausted, will cause the Signal Officer to be at once officially informed of the fact.

Adjutants and officers in charge of signals will make requisitions upon the Signal Officer at Washington, in such a manner that the supply of signal cartridges on hand may be never less than seven full sets. These requisitions will state on their face the quantity remaining on hand.

They will make quarterly returns of articles of Signal Equipment and Signal Stores, showing the quantity on hand at last return, quantity since received, quantity issued, quantity expended, and quantity remaining on hand.

These returns will be made to the Signal Officer of the Army at Washington, D. C. Printed blanks for Invoices, Receipts, Requisitions, and Returns, and printed Circulars of Instruction, will be furnished from the office of the Signal Officer.

ILLUSTRATION OF THE USE OF COUNTERSIGN SIGNALS.

The form of Countersign with Countersign Signals is given above. Suppose, on Wednesday, the regiment had received orders to march. The Countersign word for Wednesday is "Scott." The day Countersign Signal, "212," or "two-one-two"—that is, to wave the flag "Right, Left, Right." The Countersign Signal is "White-Red," that is, a light burning, first, White, and then Red.

On Wednesday morning the Adjutant or officer in charge of signals, has caused the Signal Sergeant to report to him fully equipped; has instructed him to wave the flag once to the right, once to the left, and once again to the right, for that day's signal, and has filled his signal pouch with "White-Red" signal cartridges for the night signal.

If now, upon the march, the regiment approaches in the day a force not recognized, and not certainly known to be an enemy, the Signal Sergeant makes, at the order of the commander, the Adjutant, or officer in charge of signals, the Countersign Signal for the day three times.

He will repeat these signals at intervals, three times, until a fair opportunity has been given to observe it.

If the stranger force is friendly, it will instantly respond with the proper day signal, three times repeated. The challenging regiment, noting that these signals are correctly made, acknowledges them by making the countersign signal for the day once. The answering regiment acknowledges this signal as seen, and indicates "cease signalling" by, in its turn, making the countersign signal once.

As a further precaution, if about to advance within musket shot, both regiments will halt, and each send forward an officer. If the stranger force does not properly reply to the signal, and does not halt, they are enemies.

If the unknown force is approached at night, the Signal Sergeant fires at the order of the colonel or the proper officer, the signal for the night, and the U. S. regiment halts. If the stranger force is friendly, it instantly halts, and shows the Night Countersign Signal. If they continue to advance after the first signal is fired, they are enemies. The forces remain halted until officers sent forward from each have met.

If the regiment, moving in thick fog or amidst dense woods, another regiment is heard approaching, the Countersign Signal made three times by sound, as by beat of drum or sound of bugle, will be answered by friends by the same signal three times made, and both regiments halt until officers have met.

The special rules which have been given provide for contingencies.

ALBERT J. MYER,
Signal Officer, Major U. S. Army.

Note

This circular is in so far confidential that the officer receiving it will not make its contents public nor reveal them unless in the discharge of signal duty to others than officers actually in the service of the United States

Signal Service

1861

Confidential