

**NZAR ID 467, ARM TYPE: Machine Gun. Draft date (V1) 8 February 2016, Compiled by Phil Cregeen**  
**Pattern: "Gun, Machine, Besa 15 mm, Mark I, II & III\*";** air cooled heavy machine gun for armoured vehicles.  
Introduced into NZ service: 1941 Withdrawn: 1942  
Makers: Birmingham Small Arms Co. UK  
Calibre: 15 mm, Bore: 8 groove RH twist, Barrel length: 57.6 in. OA Length: 80.75 in. Weight: 125.5 Lb.  
Type of Action: gas operated; Cyclic rate: 450 rpm; Magazine: 25 round metal link belt. Sights: Telescopic



**Comparison: top BESA 7.92 mm, bottom BESA 15 mm**

In substance, the Besa 15 mm heavy machine gun was an enlargement of the 7.92 mm gun.(NZAR ID 188)and was based on the Czech ZB 60. It did, however, differ in that it could be fired on repetition (single shot) and had a cyclic rate of fire of 450 rpm. The Besa 15 mm was produced only in one mark and an attempt to convert the weapon to 20 mm calibre, to permit the use of the Hispano-Suiza 20 mm cartridge, was abandoned. Like the Besa 7.92 mm, the 15 mm gun employed an unusual method of cocking. Pushing forward the trigger guard body engaged the operating mechanism which was then brought back to the firing position when the trigger guard body was withdrawn to the rear. A cocking catch locked the trigger guard in the firing position. It fired a 75 gram bullet from a 15x104mm cartridge with a muzzle velocity of 2,685 ft/s at a rate of 450 rounds per minute.

140 ZB 60 guns were imported to Britain along with the manufacturing licence in early 1939 and production commenced in 1940. Over 3,200 guns were produced before it was made obsolescent in 1944 and became obsolete in 1949.

### **New Zealand Service**

The Besa 15 mm HMG was the main gun of the Humber Armoured Car which was used as command and reconnaissance vehicles by the NZ Armoured Brigade in the Libyan campaigns of late 1941.

Acknowledgements and Special thanks to:

<http://www.acant.org.au/Articles/BesaMGs.html> Article by- Don Davie

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Besa\\_machine\\_gun](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Besa_machine_gun)

<http://en.valka.cz/topic/view/32150/CZK-ZB-60> (photo)