

Tactical Structure in World War II

France (Vichy)

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Introduction &
Metropolitan Troops

GENERAL

With her defensive lines incoherent and Army shattered, France called on the Spanish ambassador on 17 June 1940 to sound out the Germans about an armistice. The Germans agreed to meet and on 20 June the unfortunate General Huntziger was sent out to meet a German delegation that turned out to include Hitler himself. The General's orders were vague, but it was understood that the French were in no position to bargain. The only conditions he was told he could not accept were German occupation of French colonies or handing over of the fleet. The Germans did not ask for these and finally, at 9 PM on 22 June the armistice was signed, to take effect 35 minutes after midnight on 25 June. France had surrendered.

For reasons of their own, the Germans chose only to occupy about half of France. They took the industrial northern regions of the country and the entire Atlantic coast to further prosecute the war against Britain, and, of course, Paris itself. Southern France, however, was left unoccupied to be governed by a quasi-puppet government under Marshall Petain based in Vichy. His writ, to the extent the Germans sanctioned it, covered the area bounded by a line from the Swiss border at Geneva west to just south of Orleans, thence south to the Spanish border about 40 miles from the Atlantic coast.

The presence of the Petain government substantially reduced the requirement for German occupation troops. The Germans, however, had to be certain of that regime's ability to control its area. In the wake of the campaign vast quantities of weapons of every description were scattered all around the French countryside. Any group with a mind to could have easily equipped several divisions just by scrounging and pilfering. A further consideration was that the Vichy government required an army of some sort simply to establish its international *bona fides*.

As a result, the armistice agreement signed in June provided that the Vichy regime could retain enough troops to "maintain domestic order". Exactly how many troops were enough would be determined in subsequent meetings.

The execution of the clauses of the armistice was to be overseen by two joint commissions: the *Commission allemande d'armistice* (CAA) in Wiesbaden, and the *Commission italienne d'armistice* (CIA) in Turin, with the former being by far the dominant. The French representatives to these meetings were drawn from a special new staff designated the *Direction des Services de l'Armistice* (DSA).

The first meeting of the CAA was held on 30 June 1940. At this meeting the Germans informed the DSA that the number of Vichy troops needed to maintain order in unoccupied France was exactly 100,000. This figure included the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Mobile Guards (formerly Republican Guards). Not coincidentally, this was the same number as was allowed Weimar Germany under the Versailles treaty following World War I.

Limitations were placed on troop strength overseas as well, these also being defined as the number necessary to maintain order. The quota for North Africa was initially 30,000 but this was increased dramatically following the British attack on the French fleet at Mers el-Kebir to 96,000, and then again to 126,000 following the Gaullist take-over of Chad. Other limitations included 63,000 men in Indochina; 65,000 in Equatorial Africa; 30,000 in the Levant (Lebanon and Syria) and 14,000 in Madagascar and Djibouti.

If the DSA thought they could escape with no more restrictions than a ceiling on numbers and a prohibition on tanks in unoccupied France they were disabused of this notion on 11 July when the CAA demanded an order of battle for the Vichy Army and copies of the relevant TO&Es. The French responded with their plan for France-based forces that provided for seven divisions, each to consist of the following:

- 2 Infantry Brigades (each of two regiments)
- 1 Cavalry Brigade, with
 - 1 Reconnaissance regiment (armored cars & motorcycles)
 - 1 Dragons Portees regiment
- 1 Artillery Brigade, with
 - 1 Field artillery regiment
 - 1 Anti-Aircraft regiment
- 1 Pioneer Battalion
- 1 Signal Group
- 1 Trains Squadron

On 5 August the CAA notified the DSA that this solution was entirely unsatisfactory. While Germany wanted a Vichy army strong enough to ensure control, they also wanted to be able to occupy the remainder of France without substantial effort should the need arise. One way to do this was to remove certain key elements from the Vichyists, including motorized combat units and anti-tank guns. The proposed organization had included a mechanized brigade in each division and a very modest allotment of three small 25mm anti-tank guns per infantry regiment. This was unacceptable. There were to be no motorized units and no anti-tank guns anywhere in unoccupied France.

Meetings were held between General Huntziger of the DSA and the Chief of the CAA, General Stulpnagel, and detailed guidance was provided to Vichy. A new, less capable, organization was worked out and approved in its general form on 29 August and detailed approval was granted in stages through September, with final approval coming on the 27th of that month. The organization of the Armistice Army was finally accomplished on 15 November.

The new organization set up a headquarters in each of the eight former military regions (redesignated military divisions) that comprised unoccupied France, each controlling various service and security units and a field division. The field divisions, which bore the numerical designation of the military region in which they were raised,

each consisted of the following:

- 3 Infantry Regiments (or demi-brigades of chasseurs)
- 1 Cavalry Regiment
- 1 Artillery Regiment of 3 battalions of 75mm guns
- 1 Engineer battalion of 2 companies
- 1 Signal Group
- 1 Trains Company

In keeping with German proscriptions the division included no anti-tank weapons, and only one artillery battery and the trains company of each division were motorized, the rest relying on horse-drawn wagons and carts.

For mobile reserve, the Army had four cavalry regiments that were grouped to form two cavalry brigades. These were horsed units as well.

The artillery branch raised seven anti-aircraft groups (roughly, regiments) comprising a total of 34 batteries of 75mm (each of four guns), 15 "batteries" of 25mm (each of three guns), and 7 batteries of searchlights. Since the army in France was forbidden weapons larger than 75mm no separate field or heavy artillery units were raised.

For the most part, the Armistice Army could do little but follow German diktats. This did not mean, however, that they did not try to circumvent the limitations whenever they could. Their one notable success in this was the demilitarization of certain slots in field units. The jobs of clerks, cooks, tailors, shoemakers, postal clerks, medical aides, and other trains personnel were removed from all TO&Es down to company level and their place taken by civilians taken from a *unite administrative* attached to each field battalion or regiment. Of course, these were the same people who had previously held these jobs as soldiers, and they still wore uniforms (albeit slightly different from the rest of the army), but as civilians, they did not count against the 100,000-man total. These "civilians" carried ranks; *agent* (equivalent to an officer), *sous-agent* (NCO), and *agent auxiliaire* (private). This little subterfuge, which the CAA either did not catch or chose to ignore, saved 142 men per infantry regiment, or 3,400 men in the infantry branch alone against the ceiling strength.

In November of 1940, the Germans also approved the organization plan for the overseas forces. This was generally similar to that adopted for the unoccupied zone of France, but the civilianized trains gimmick could not be used for lack of a suitable civilian base, and some anti-tank guns and tanks were permitted.

The ceiling on troop strength in the Levant meant that 45,000 men had to be brought back from that colony. These included 20,000 French reservists, who were brought home first and demobilized; 10,000 North Africans, the next to leave; and 15,000 members of the 86th Division that had arrived in 1939. The last of these to leave, Senegalese troops, arrived home in December 1940. The Germans, however, had

acted a bit precipitously. Increasing Axis activity in the middle east led the British to invade the Levant on 8 June 1941. Expecting a quick operation to disarm disheartened French soldiers, the Commonwealth expeditionary force found itself instead fighting a very determined foe. Finally, isolated and without support, the French forces in the Levant surrendered on 12 July. Under the terms of the local armistice, the 5,300 French who wanted to join the Free French were permitted to do so, while the remaining 23,000 troops were shipped back to France. Of these, 12,000 were demobilized and the remaining 11,000 were transferred to North Africa where they remained on active duty, the CAA having agreed to raise the ceiling there to accommodate them in light of their performance against the British.

Initially, it seemed that the 8,000 men in Madagascar, two-thirds of them native, would spend the war in a relative backwater. On 1 December 1941, however, the British Chiefs of Staff advised their cabinet that if Japan entered the war the Vichy government would probably be pressured into allowing both the Germans and the Japanese to establish bases on that island. This the British could not permit to happen and planning began for an invasion of that land. Japan did enter the war and on 4 May 1942, the British occupied the northern port of Diego Suarez against light opposition. They demanded military authority over the rest of the island but the local governor was firm in his commitment to the Vichy regime. Therefore, on 10 September British, South African, and East African troops landed and occupied the rest of the island against light opposition. The local French forces fled into the bush for the most part and those that remained were demobilized on the surrender.

In North Africa the troop ceiling had been allowed to reach 137,000 with the repatriation of North African troops from the Levant. This made the North Africa Army by far the largest and most powerful component of the Vichy Army. This was due not only to its size but also to the fact that they were permitted modest numbers of tanks and anti-tank guns, although these were for the most part obsolete by 1941.

The forces were organized into seven regional divisions plus the division-sized Tunisia Command. In the case of the Algerian divisions, these followed a standard format remarkably similar to the first proposal for the army in France, but without the anti-aircraft regiment and with the *Dragons Portes* replaced by a mounted cavalry regiment. The Moroccan divisions were less standard but still had significant combat potential.

Under Admiral Darlan, as CinC North Africa, and General Juin, commander of the Army in North Africa, efforts were made to further increase the capabilities of the forces. During 1941/42 some 55,000 rifles, 2,500 light MGs, 1,500 medium MGs, 210 mortars, 43 47mm and 32 25mm AT guns, 82 75mm field guns, 24 chenillettes, 23 armored cars, 5 tanks, 6,000 trucks, over 26 million rounds of ammunition and a variety of other equipment including radios and tools were smuggled into North Africa from the unoccupied zone, where they had been recovered without the Germans knowing.

Troops to man these weapons were also raised secretly. In Morocco special troops known as *goums* were recruited, ostensibly into the police. In actuality, depots were hidden in the mountains and the goums, secretly organized into infantry battalions called *tabors* were brought out there to practice and conduct maneuvers. By early 1942 some 21,000 goums were on strength, organized into 18 tabors.

The goums did not get a chance to demonstrate their secretly acquired skills immediately, however, for the US landings at Oran and Casablanca on 10 November 1942, coinciding with the British landing at Algiers, was prosecuted with sufficient vigor that on 12 November Admiral Darlan issued orders ending resistance to the Allies and a day later General Juin officially brought the North Africa Army over to the Allied side with orders to resist German efforts to occupy Tunisia and Algeria.

The heaviest fighting had taken place in Morocco, where the Casablanca division had fought the US for two days before conceding and had lost 490 dead. In Oran 94 more French soldiers had died, along with 11 more in Algiers. Some 449 American and 4 British soldiers died in the operations.

The order that ended the hostilities with the Americans, however, also sealed the fate of the Tunisia Command. It was beyond the reach of the Allied troops and the Germans moved in themselves. Amidst conflicting orders from Vichy, General Juin, and everyone else with access to a telegraph, the Tunisia Command pulled back into the mountains those troops that could get away and permitted the rest to be disarmed and demobilized.

General Juin's order, however, had brought the army back to the side of the Allies and a considerable portion of that army, particularly the Constantine Division, and an extemporized light mechanized brigade fought in the line for the remainder of the North Africa campaign. After the campaign, they were reequipped and reorganized along American lines as part of the Free French Army.

The defection of the North Africa Army shook German faith in the Vichy Army generally and on 12 November German and Italian forces crossed the demarcation lines and occupied the remainder of France. On 27 November the Army's posts were occupied and the combat units demobilized on German orders. Finally, on 2 December the army schools were disestablished. The Armistice Army had ceased to exist after a life of a little under two and a half years.

One anomaly, however, remained. In 1940 the Japanese had demanded right of passage through Indochina. The colonial governor, Admiral Catroux, was directed by the Vichy government to grant this right but stalled in the hopes that the US would support his position. To demonstrate their displeasure the Japanese attacked two forts on the Chinese border, killing 800 men before the French ran out of ammunition. Right of passage was granted and French Indochina's isolation was apparent to all. In

light of this Thailand decided this was an opportune time to readjust their eastern border and invaded Indochina in January 1941. The French colonial army did not perform well, although they did better at sea, but Thailand availed itself of the "good offices" of the Japanese, who in "mediation" awarded Thailand three Cambodian and two Laotian provinces. Again, there was little the French colonial forces could do. Finally, in July 1941 the Japanese demanded the right to garrison Indochina. The Vichy government, again pressured by the Germans, agreed and directed Catroux to accede to their demands. Once again the colonial government found itself on its own and had to give in. While the Japanese garrisoned Indochina and kept the French colonial Army on a very short leash, Catroux continued to exercise full administrative authority over the colony.

The occupation of southern France in 1942 ended all hopes of support from France, and in the fall of 1944 the puppet Vichy government itself finally disappeared. Catroux from that point did not have even the fiction of any outside authority for his rule, yet he continued to exercise full civil authority, although his army was by now almost completely restricted to their isolated posts by Japanese order. Finally, in March 1945, the Japanese tired of their charade and attacked the French colonial forces. For the most part, the posts were overrun quickly and the French and Indochinese soldiers were killed or made prisoner. By that time the number of troops had been reduced to about 50,000 through normal attrition, of which about 13,000 managed to break out of their forts. Of these, about 6,000 managed to make it to safety in China. Thus ended the last of the Armistice forces.

Framework

Under the initial proposals put forward by the DSA each of the seven divisions of the Vichy army would consist of two infantry brigades, a mechanized cavalry brigade, an artillery brigade and service troops.

The heart of the division, of course, was its two infantry brigades, each of which consisted of two infantry regiments. The infantry regiment TO&E promulgated on 2 July 1940 provided for a headquarters company, service company, and three infantry battalions.

Infantry

Although it was known that the Germans did not want the Vichy Army to retain anti-tank capabilities it was apparently felt that they might not object to the truly modest scale of one platoon of light weapons per regiment. This platoon consisted of a lieutenant platoon leader, platoon sergeant, three messengers (one with a bicycle), a carter with a one-horse ammunition cart, and three gun squads. Each of these gun squads was made up of a sergeant, a 5-man gun crew, and a carter, with a horse, an ammunition cart acting as a caisson, and a 25mm AT gun.

Along with the anti-tank platoon the HQ company also included a mortar platoon with three squads, each of which consisted of a sergeant, a six-man mortar crew, and two carters, with two one-horse carts: one for the mortar and one for ammunition.

	Officers	Sergeants	Corporals	Privates	Civilians	Light MGs	Medium MGs	Grenade Launchers	60mm Mortars	81mm Mortars	25mm AT Guns	Horses	Wagons & Carts	Motorcycles	Field Cars	Light Trucks	Trucks	Chenillettes
Table of Organization of 2 July 1940																		
Regiment Headquarters	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Headquarters Company	4	13	12	83	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	12	12	2	1	2	0	0
Company Headquarters	1	3	2	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Regiment Command Group	0	1	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Signal Platoon	1	1	4	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	0	0	0	0
Anti-Tank Platoon	1	4	3	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	4	0	0	0	0	0
Mortar Platoon	1	4	3	24	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	6	6	0	0	0	0	0
Service Company	2	15	3	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	8	1	0
Company Headquarters	1	2	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Trains Group	1	13	2	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	7	1	0
Three Infantry Battalions, each	14	62	49	408	0	27	12	0	3	0	0	15	15	0	1	4	0	0
Battalion HQ	2	2	1	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Three Rifle Companies, each																		
Company HQ	1	4	2	14	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
Three Rifle Platoons, each*	1	4	3	32	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Machine Gun Platoon	1	3	5	23	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	4	4	0	0	0	0	0
Table of Organization of 1 August 1940																		
Regiment Headquarters	24	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Headquarters Company	7	27	25	90	47	8	0	0	0	6	0	?	8	12	3	2	7	7
Company HQ	1	4	3	9	47	2	0	0	0	0	0	?	0	12	3	1	1	0
Signal Platoon	2	8	12	37	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	?	2	0	0	1	0	1
Pioneer Platoon	1	3	4	12	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	?	0	0	0	0	0	0
Motor Transport Section	1	3	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0
Mortar Platoon	2	9	6	28	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	?	6	0	0	0	0	0
Three Infantry Battalions, each	21	118	96	351	8	36	24	12	12	0	0	?	25	10	1	5	22	32
Battalion Headquarters	4	3	8	11	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	?	1	6	1	1	18	0
Four Mixed Rifle Companies, each																		
Company HQ	1	4	1	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	?	0	1	0	1	1	0
Three Rifle Platoons, each*	1	4	3	14	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Machine Gun Platoon	1	3	4	14	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	?	0	0	0	0	0	2
Anti-Air Section	0	3	2	8	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	?	0	0	0	0	0	2
Mortar Platoon	1	5	6	16	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	?	3	0	0	0	0	3

* one platoon is commanded by NCO in lieu of officer.

Provisional Infantry Regiment Organizations, July-August 1940

Rounding out the HQ company was the signal platoon, which was built around four messengers (two on bicycles, two on motorcycles) and four 6-man telephone squads.

There were no radios in the regiment.

The regimental service company provided six light trucks for transport purposes. Three of these were earmarked for the carriage of rations, the other three for use as needed. In addition, the trains group included a small maintenance section of seven men with one light truck for repairs and one medium truck for fuel.

The infantry battalion was built around three mixed rifle companies. Each of these companies had a HQ section that included a 3-man mess team, four messengers, two drivers with a 1.2-ton rations truck and kitchen trailer, and a 5-man mortar squad with a 60mm mortar and one-horse cart.

The rifle platoon, of which there were three in the company, consisted of a platoon leader, platoon sergeant, two messengers, and three rifle sections. Each of these sections consisted of a sergeant, a corporal, a 5-man LMG squad, and a 5-man rifle squad.

The machine gun platoon was made up of a platoon leader, platoon sergeant, transport corporal, messenger, and two MG sections, each of which in turn consisted of a sergeant, an armorer, a cart for the MGs, a cart for ammunition, and two 5-man MG squads.

Signal facilities for the battalion, included in the battalion HQ, consisted of a 3-man telephone team and four messengers, one of whom was provided with a bicycle.

Considering how desperately the French were trying to maximize the effectiveness of their forces within the manpower limitations imposed it is very surprising to note how abysmal the communications net was in the first proposed TO&E. Either the DSA had misread German intentions regarding the use of radios, or the lessons of the 1940 campaign had still not been learned.

Evidence that they had erred on the side of optimism, however, was quickly provided when the Germans absolutely vetoed the use of any anti-tank guns, even the marginal little 25mm. The General Staff went back to the drawing boards and on 1 August came up with a second TO&E for the infantry regiment.

This new organization abolished the anti-tank platoon and consolidated the regimental HQ and service companies. The most significant improvement to the regimental capabilities came with the expansion and re-equipping of the signal platoon. The new platoon provided six 2-man radio teams: five for internal liaison and one set for aircraft radio frequencies. This permitted one transceiver to be assigned to each subordinate battalion while retaining two at battalion HQ plus the air-ground radio. Unlike the 1940 predecessor, the new air-ground radio was a transceiver and not just a receiver. The signal platoon also included five 5-man telephone teams and seven optical signallers.

The mortar platoon was doubled in size to six weapons and consisted of a captain platoon leader and two sections, one commanded by a lieutenant and one by a sergeant. Each section was built around three 6-man mortar squads. The platoon had no organic signal facilities other than a runner in each section HQ, but could presumably use a regimental radio if required. The two sections were designed to be employed separately, although they could also be combined into a single firing platoon.

At the battalion level, the HQ group included a signal section with four 2-man radio teams for the internal net, a 2-man radio team for air-ground communications, and three optical signallers. Thus, radios could be distributed down to company level, a significant improvement over the preceding organization that contained no radios at all.

The rifle companies were smaller than the earlier TO&E provided for, but there were four of them instead of three and they were more heavily armed. The rifle platoon now consisted of a platoon leader, platoon sergeant, optical signaller, messenger, and three rifle squads, each of which was made up of a sergeant, a corporal, and four privates. Two of the privates were dedicated light machine gunners for the squad's Mle.1924/29 and were armed with pistols. The corporal and one of the privates were armed with rifles. In the case of the sergeant and the remaining private, an innovation was evident: they were armed with submachine guns, for the most part, Model 1921 Thompsons.

The machine gun platoon consisted of the platoon leader, platoon sergeant, messenger, optical signaller/range finder, and two MG squads. Each of these squads was made up of a sergeant and two four-man teams. The company also included an anti-aircraft section with two anti-aircraft machine guns. The intention was probably to use 20mm weapons in this role, but it seems unlikely that the Germans would permit the use of such weapons, so regular machine guns would have had to have been substituted.

The final element of the mixed rifle company was the mortar platoon, which consisted of a platoon leader, a messenger, a light mortar section, and a grenade-launcher section. The light mortar section was made up of a sergeant and three 5-man squads each with a 60mm mortar. The grenade launcher section consisted of a sergeant and three 3-man squads each with a 50mm mle.37 "grenade launcher". In the normal course of events, the grenade launchers would probably be distributed to the rifle platoons, while the light mortars would provide the company with its fire support.

The most striking feature of this new TO&E was the addition of a *unite administrative du regiment d'infanterie*, which provided many of the trains personnel for the regiment in the guise of civilians. Two clerks were provided to each rifle company this way, along with a clerk and three cooks at the battalion HQ, and a total of 47 men at the regimental HQ. These included four staff clerks, five pay clerks, twelve supply clerks,

two medical assistants, seven teamsters, and two postal clerks.

The German objections to this organization were very narrow. They would not permit trucks to be used, so the motor transport section had to be deleted, nor would they allow 20mm anti-aircraft guns, so the AA sections had to go.

Finally, with these changes made, along with others, the definitive infantry regiment TO&E was published on 1 September. This new organization provided for a regiment of a HQ company and three infantry battalions, with each battalion consisting of a headquarters group, a mortar platoon, and four mixed rifle companies.

The regimental signal platoon remained unchanged from its predecessor except for the deletion of the two motor vehicles and the addition of a private to each radio team. Similarly, the battalion signal sections were changed only to provide an additional man per radio.

The regimental pioneer platoon was increased in size by the addition of a fourth private to each of the four squads and three wagons with teamsters to the platoon HQ for tools and equipment.

The mortars formerly found at the regimental level were decentralized to the battalion level and made more numerous. The new battalion mortar platoon consisted of a small platoon HQ, a medium mortar section, and a light mortar section. The medium mortar section supported the battalion and consisted of a 5-man HQ with an ammunition cart and FDC capability, and three 7-man mortar squads with a cart for the mortar. The light mortar section could be broken up to provide fire support for the companies and was made up of a 4-man HQ and three 6-man squads.

The mixed rifle company, of which the battalion had four, was built around three rifle platoons and a machine gun platoon. The rifle platoon was commanded from a HQ squad that consisted of the platoon leader, platoon sergeant, optical signaller, and messenger. Fire support for the platoon came from the grenade launcher squad with six men and three "VB" rifle grenade launchers. Each of the platoon's two rifle sections consisted of a sergeant, a light MG squad of a corporal and three privates, and a rifle squad of a corporal and six privates. For the first time, the two squads of the French rifle section had squad leaders of the same rank. This organization also overcame the most serious objection to the 1 August TO&E, that it was far too thin on the ground in terms of the number of actual front-line infantrymen to be able to absorb casualties.

	Officers	Sergeants	Corporals	Privates	Civilians	Grenade Launchers	Light MGS	Medium MGS	60mm Mortars	81mm Mortars	Horses	Wagons & Carts	Motorcycles	Field Cars	Bicycles
Regiment Headquarters	9	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	0
Headquarters Company	4	18	19	93	69	0	6	0	0	0	19	11	3	1	49
Company Headquarters	1	7	3	29	69	0	0	0	0	0	10	6	3	1	10
Signal Platoon															
Platoon HQ	2	1	0	3	0	0	*2	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	*15
Telephone Section	0	3	5	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Radio Section	0	3	6	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Optical Section	0	1	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pioneer Platoon															
Platoon HQ	1	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	3	0	0	2
Two Pioneer Sections, each	0	1	2	8	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11
Three Infantry Battalions, each	17	105	98	475	23	36	26	16	3	3	60	40	1	1	30
Battalion Headquarters	3	7	7	30	7	0	0	0	0	0	20	9	1	1	5
HQ Group	3	5	1	17	7	0	0	0	0	0	19	8	1	1	5
Signal Section	0	2	6	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Mortar Platoon	2	10	7	33	0	0	2	0	3	3	8	7	0	0	5
Platoon Headquarters	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	*5
Light Mortar Section	0	5	3	14	0	0	1	0	3	0	3	3	0	0	0
Medium Mortar Section	1	5	3	18	0	0	1	0	0	3	4	4	0	0	0
Four Mixed Rifle Companies, each	3	22	21	103	4	9	6	4	0	0	8	6	0	0	5
Company Headquarters	1	5	1	7	4	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	0	0	4
Three Rifle Platoons, each**															
Platoon HQ	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grenade Launcher Squad	0	1	1	4	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Two Rifle Sections, each	0	1	2	9	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Machine Gun Platoon															
Platoon HQ	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Two MG Sections, each	0	1	2	11	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	2	0	0	0

* for distribution as needed

** one platoon commanded by officer, other two by sergeants

Infantry Regiment, from 1 September 1940

Transport for the infantry was entirely horse-drawn. Each MG platoon had four 1-horse carts, two for the machine guns and two for ammunition. The rifle company HQ had a 1-horse cart for rations and baggage and a 2-horse wagon as a field kitchen.

The battalion HQ had eight 2-horse wagons: three for rations and baggage, one for food, one serving as an ambulance, one for machine gun ammunition, one for mortar ammunition and grenades, and one for a blacksmith forge. Also included was one cart for the signal section.

The regimental HQ included four 2-horse wagons: two for office supplies and files, one as an ambulance, and one as a field kitchen. It also had two 1-horse carts: one for the supply office and one for rations and baggage. These were in addition to the two carts held by the signal platoon and the three wagons in the pioneer platoon.

The use of civilians to replace non-fighting military personnel was expanded with this

new organization. Each company now included four of these "civilians", two clerks, a supply clerk, and a cook. Each battalion HQ carried seven, later increased to nine: two clerks, a typist, four cooks, a barber, and a blacksmith. The regimental HQ was provided with no less than 69 civilians, a figure that had increased to no less than 164 a year later, including 15 medical personnel, 21 cooks, 11 clerks, 8 tailors, 8 shoemakers, 7 armorers, and 7 pay personnel.

The strict limitation on the overall number of troops and weapons permitted the Vichy army served to constrain further organizational evolution of the infantry regiment and no significant changes were made to it until the disbanding of the Army. The one exception to this statement was, of course, the continual accretion of civilian strength to the regiments, since these were not counted against authorized strength. Under the original 1 September 1940 TO&E each regiment was authorized 142 of these auxiliaries, but by amendment to the documents the number crept up to 240 by 1 September 1941. These subsequent additions did not replace military personnel but simply reflected a growing realization that the administrative services of the regiment had been too drastically cut back in the earlier organizations.

While the bulk of the metropolitan infantry regiments followed the organization outlined above, there were a few specialized exceptions optimized for mountain combat. There were a total of twenty-four infantry regiments (and regiment equivalents) in the metropolitan Vichy army. Of these, three were mountain infantry regiments, two were demi-brigades of *Chasseurs Alpins* and two were demi-brigades of *Chasseurs a Pied*.

The three mountain infantry regiments (43rd, 153rd, and 159th) were identical in organization to the regular infantry regiments except for the addition of 80 pack mules to the regiment for distribution as needed. No additional personnel were provided for these animals.

There were two demi-brigades of *Chasseurs a Pied*: the 1st (8th, 16th, and 30th Battalions) and the 4th (1st, 2nd, and 10th Battalions). These differed from the regular infantry regiment organization only in detail. For example, three staff captains (and their enlisted aides) were removed from the strength of the regiment HQ and distributed to the battalion HQs. Similarly, an officer and two sergeants, band/bugler leaders, were removed from the regimental HQ company strength, and assigned a sergeant assigned to each of the battalions where they functioned as signal personnel. There was some additional decentralization of the civilian personnel but on a relatively minor level.

There were also two demi-brigades of *Chasseurs Alpins*: the 2nd (20th, 24th, and 25th Battalions), and the 3rd (6th, 13th, and 27th Battalions). These were organizationally identical to the *Chasseurs a Pied*, but with 80 pack mules (but no personnel) added for distribution as required.

Finally, there was one separate infantry battalion in the metropolitan army, the 173rd

Infantry Battalion, subordinated to the 15th Division, to garrison Corsica. This used the normal infantry battalion TO&E, but reinforced by three officers and two privates in the battalion HQ. It was also provided with 30 pack mules for use as needed. The allocation of civilians was also increased slightly to an initial allotment of 59 which eventually increased to 72.

The British invasion of Syria and Lebanon in May 1941 led, not surprisingly, to a demand for reinforcements from the Vichy-loyal government there. On 23 June Army Headquarters ordered an infantry battalion to be readied, to be known as the *33ème bataillon de marche de chasseurs* to be drawn from personnel of the 7th Military Division. This, a sort of “expeditionary” battalion would use the organization of the standard infantry battalion of the metropole with minor changes. The most obvious, of course, was that they could not use civilians.

	Officers	Sergeants	Corporals	Privates	VB Grenade Launchers	Light Machine Guns	Medium Machine Guns	60mm Mortars	81mm Mortars	37mm Inf Guns	Motorcycles	Cars	Infantry Carts	One-horse carts	wagons	Bicycles
Battalion Headquarters	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Headquarters Platoon	1	12	8	33	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Trains Platoon	1	10	4	34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	3
Weapons Platoon																
Platoon HQ	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
Medium Mortar Section	1	4	3	18	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	3	0	0	0
Light Mortar Section	0	5	3	14	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0
Infantry Gun Section	1	4	3	17	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	6	0	0
Four Mixed Companies, each																
Company Headquarters	1	6	1	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3
Three Rifle Platoons, each																
Platoon HQ	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grenadier Squad	0	1	1	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Two Sections, each	0	1	2	9	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Machine Gun Platoon																
Platoon HQ	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Two Sections, each	0	1	2	11	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0

“Expeditionary” Infantry Battalion, from 23 June 1941

The battalion mortar platoon was expanded to a weapons platoon through the addition of a three-gun 37mm infantry gun platoon. Since the battalion would be operating away from the comfortable base of homeland France a small trains platoon was added with an 11-man medical section, a nine-man workshop/blacksmith section, a nine-man rations section with four wagons, and a nine-man resupply section with two ammunition wagons.

The battalion HQ platoon was little from the standard metropolitan battalion, with a signal section still with five 3-man radio teams and a six-man telephone squad.

Given the late start involved it seems unlikely the battalion would have made it to Lebanon before the cease-fire.

Cavalry

Such mobile forces as the metropolitan army was permitted were to be found in the cavalry branch. On 1 August 1940 Army HQ ordered the creation of seven mechanized cavalry brigades. Each of these was to consist of a "light" regiment of AMDs and motorcyclists and a "heavy" regiment of *Dragons Portees*. A start was made on organizing this force, but the CAA quickly put the brakes on this effort. On 22 August 1940, the definitive cavalry organization was agreed to, and it was implemented in September.

Under this arrangement, the cavalry branch was to raise eight divisional reconnaissance regiments and four more regiments for general reserve. There were to be no motorized units larger than squadron size.

The divisional reconnaissance regiment was organized into a headquarters, HQ squadron, a squadron-group of two bicycle squadrons, a squadron-group of two mounted squadrons, and a mixed squadron-group with one motorized and one bicycle squadron.

A mounted squadron consisted of a HQ platoon, three mounted platoons, and a heavy weapons platoon. A mounted platoon was made up of two rifle sections (each with an LMG-equipped 6-man rifle squad and a 6-man scout squad), a supplemental rifle squad, and a mortar squad (with a 50mm grenade launcher). The heavy weapons platoon had two 2-horse wagons each carrying a medium MG and two more wagons each with an 81mm mortar.

The bicycle squadron, like the mounted squadron, consisted of three rifle platoons and a heavy weapons platoon. In this case, a rifle platoon was made up of three rifle squads (each 6 men with a light MG) and a 4-man 50mm mortar squad. The most striking difference between the two types of squadrons was that in the bicycle squadron the heavy weapons were carried on light trailers that had to be towed behind two bicycles in tandem, a tricky operation at best.

The armored car squadron consisted of a headquarters platoon and four reconnaissance platoons, each of which comprised two Panhard AMD armored cars, four men sharing three motorcycles, a field car for HQ duties, and, surprisingly, eight men on bicycles to act as replacement crews for the armored cars. Due to the prohibition on anti-tank weapons the AMDs had to be modified. Most had the barrel of their 25mm gun cut off close to the breech to make it ineffective as an anti-tank weapon (not that it was very effective in that role to start with), while others had the gun removed entirely and replaced by a second machine gun. Unmodified guns were often hidden near the regimental depots against the time they would be needed, but the occasion to mount them never arose.

	Officers	Sergeants	Corporals	Privates	Civilians	Light MGs	Medium MGs	50mm Mortars	81mm Mortars	Armored Cars	Motorcycles	Field Cars	Light Trucks	Trucks	Tractors	Horses	Wagons & Carts	Bicycles
Divisional Reconnaissance Regiment																		
Regiment Headquarters	9	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	0	0
Headquarters Squadron	2	18	9	44	186	0	0	0	0	0	14	5	8	12	2	20	14	23
Squadron Headquarters	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1
Signal Platoon	0	6	4	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trains Group	0	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Transport Platoon	1	5	4	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	5	8	12	2	18	14	20
Attached Civilians	0	0	0	0	186	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mounted Squadron-Group	11	52	63	282	8	18	4	6	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	423	8	24
Group Headquarters	1	2	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	5	0	2
Two Mounted Squadrons, each																		
Squadron HQ	1	9	4	17	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	0	11
Three Rifle Platoons, each																		
Platoon HQ	1	2	1	5	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	0	0
Two Rifle Sections, each	0	1	2	10	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	0	0
Rifle Squad	0	0	1	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0
Heavy Weapons Platoon																		
Platoon HQ	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0
Machine Gun Section	0	2	4	16	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	26	2	0
Mortar Section	0	1	4	14	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	2	0
Bicycle Squadron-Group	7	42	42	187	8	18	4	6	4	0	4	3	3	0	0	14	0	218
Group Headquarters	1	2	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	2	0	0
Two Bicycle Squadrons, each																		
Squadron Headquarters	1	3	2	10	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	4	0	11
Three Rifle Platoons, each	1	4	4	19	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	28
Heavy Weapons Platoon	1	3	6	24	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	14
Mixed Squadron Group	9	44	48	163	4	9	2	3	2	8	22	7	3	1	0	10	0	148
Group Headquarters	1	2	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	2	0	0
Bicycle Squadron	3	20	20	91	4	9	2	3	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	6	0	109
Armored Car Squadron																		
Squadron Headquarters	1	6	6	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	1	1	1	0	2	0	7
Four Armored Car Platoons, each	1	4	5	13	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	8
GHQ Reserve Regiment																		
Regiment Headquarters	9	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	0	0
Headquarters Squadron	1	22	13	57	233	0	0	0	0	0	15	2	1	3	0	48	24	27
Squadron Headquarters	1	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	1
Signal Platoon	0	9	6	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	14	0	24
Trains Group	0	5	2	0	233	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Transport Platoon	0	6	5	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	2	1	3	0	28	24	0
Mounted Squadron-Group	10	54	49	259	0	18	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	381	8	24
Cyclist Squadron-Group	10	51	50	241	0	24	4	8	4	0	4	3	3	2	0	20	0	288
Heavy Weapons Squadron	4	28	25	116	0	0	12	0	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	188	20	11
Squadron Headquarters	1	9	4	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	22	8	11
Two Machine Gun Platoons, each	1	5	7	36	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	57	4	0
Mortar Platoon	1	9	7	26	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	52	4	0

Metropolitan Cavalry Regiments, from July 1941

The squadron-group HQs, in keeping with prior practice, were tiny tactical HQs, equipped only with a field car, a light truck (a horse-drawn wagon in the mounted squadron-group), and two motorcycles.

The regimental HQ squadron was broken down into a command/signal platoon, a

trains group of administrative personnel, a transport platoon, and the attached civilians. The transport platoon provided eight light trucks (including three ambulances and two radio trucks for the signal platoon), twelve medium trucks (including a mess truck with trailer for each squadron and four tanker trucks for fuel and water), and two recovery tractors with flatbed trailers. The platoon also included fourteen one-horse carts, including two for blacksmith equipment, three for rations and baggage, and two for ammunition.

The four GHQ reserve cavalry regiments were each organized into a HQ, HQ squadron, two mounted squadron-groups (each of two squadrons), and a heavy weapons squadron. The regiment had a strength of 31 officers, 156 sergeants, and 817 other ranks, with 1,210 horses. The mounted squadrons differed from those in the divisional reconnaissance regiments in having four rifle platoons and no heavy weapons platoon. The other main difference was the deletion of the 50mm mortar squad in the platoon organization.

This organization proved impossible to maintain, however. Too many cavalry horses had been lost in the 1940 campaign, and the horses left in the civilian market were too desperately needed for the economy. As a result, in July 1941 one of the squadron-groups in each GHQ reserve regiment was converted to a bicycle unit.

The bicycle squadron-group was similar to that of the divisional reconnaissance unit but featured an additional rifle platoon in each squadron.

Division Base

Fire support for the divisions was provided by the light artillery regiment organic to each. A light artillery regiment consisted of three battalions, each of three 4-gun batteries. The regiments were homogeneously equipped with 75mm field guns except in the case of the 2nd (14th Division) and 10th Colonial (15th Division) Artillery Regiments, where one battalion per regiment was equipped with mountain guns. One battery in each regiment was motorized, the rest being horse-drawn.

A mountain battery had a strength of 180 men and 88 pack mules, while a regular 75mm non-motorized battery had a strength of 130 men with 20 horse-drawn wagons. The motorized battery had 105 men with 5 artillery tractors, a recovery tractor, and 15 trucks. A battalion HQ battery had 82 men, including a 15-man close-defense section with four light MGs. It also included a small signal section with three 2-horse wagons for radio and telephone gear.

Pioneer support consisted of one battalion per division consisting of two companies, one of which was motorized. Other divisional elements consisted of a signal group and a motor transport company.

Other Units

The former *Garde Républicaine Mobile* was also reformed into the new *Garde* with six legions (= regiments) in the metropole, each carrying the traditions of a disbanded army cavalry regiment. The 2nd Legion, based at Marseille, for instance, was thus given the standards and traditions of the *22e Dragons*. Each of these metropolitan legions consisted of two groups, each with four squadrons, each, in turn, consisting of three platoons. Four of the squadrons in each regiment operated on foot, two were mounted cavalry, and two were motorcycle units. Their detailed organization is unknown but was presumably analogous to the cavalry units of the army.

With this organization the Germans had clearly achieved their aim of creating a force that was sufficient for internal security without giving it any real capacity for threatening the Wehrmacht. In the event, it was never really called on to undertake internal security duties, as no significant guerilla movement ever evolved in unoccupied France. Similarly, its capacity for resistance was never tested, as it permitted itself to be disarmed without a struggle in 1942. The actual military potential of the metropolitan Vichy army was thus never tested.