

Tactical Structure in World War II

France

Leland Ness

1 February 2024

Colonial Troops

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COLONIAL TROOPS

GENERAL

No aspect of French Army organization in the period up to 1940 is more confusing than that of the colonial troops. Part of the problem is conceptual: the French drew distinctions between various elements of their army based on a variety of racial and legislative criteria that led to overlapping and inconsistent categories. Part of the problem was that of nomenclature: identical terms were often used to mean different things depending on the context in which they were used, including the term *troupes coloniales* itself. And, not least, the colonial force was, of course, in a constant state of evolution with all the confusion that normally entails.

Any study of French colonial forces must begin with a mention of the French draft laws of the late 19th century, still essentially in force today, which specified that French conscripts could not be posted to duty outside France or Western Europe unless they volunteered for overseas duty. In response to this, the French formed a separate category of army units in 1900 called *troupes coloniales*, these being units made up of professional soldiers and conscripts who had volunteered for overseas duty. The name derived from the fact that, unlike the bulk of the army, these units were liable to service in the colonies. These units bore the Colonial appellation as part of their designation, i.e., *Régiments d'Infanterie Coloniale* and *Régiments d'Artillerie Coloniale*. This system was still in force in 1940, and indeed is still in use today although in a bow to public relations the term Colonial has been replaced by *Marine* since 1958. Thus, in the most restrictive sense of the word, *Colonial* meant French troops available for service in the colonies.

The term was also used in a wider sense, however, to indicate all troops or units that could be posted overseas. These included, in addition to the Colonial units themselves, units raised in the colonies using indigenous personnel commanded by white officers and under the management of the Colonial Ministry rather than the War Ministry. Such units were raised in all of France's major colonies. For the most part, these were formed into infantry regiments called *régiments de tirailleurs*. The normal peacetime establishment called for 17 regiments to be raised in French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa (*Tirailleurs Sénégalais*), 4 in Indochina (*Tirailleurs Tonkinois* and *Tirailleurs Annamites*), and one in Madagascar (*Tirailleurs Malgaches*). In addition, two regiments in

Madagascar combined white settlers with indigenous personnel (*Regiments Mixte de Madagascar*), two machine gun regiments, and nine separate Tirailleurs battalions. The Tirailleurs regiments served widely throughout the French empire. Each regiment had a permanent station as well as a depot base, and only in the case of the Indochinese were these usually collocated. The *Tirailleurs Sénégalais*, in particular, were based all over the French holdings, including France itself. In some cases, to spread scant resources, battalions and companies of tirailleurs were sometimes assigned to Colonial (white) regiments, with the result denominated a *Regiment mixte d'Infanterie Coloniale* (RMIC).

	France	Morocco	Algeria	Tunisia	Syria	West Africa	Equatorial Africa	West Indies	Indochina	Madagascar	China
Regiments d'Infanterie Coloniale	2, 3, 23, 51	"Maroc"	-	-	-	-	-	-	9, 11, 19	-	16
Regiments Mixte d'Infanterie Coloniale	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	-
Bataillons d'Infanterie Coloniale	one	one	-	-	-	-	-	one	-	-	-
Regiments de Tirailleurs Senegalais	4, 8, 12, 14, 16, 24	5, 6	13, 15	10, 18	17	1, 2, 7	"Tchad"	-	-	-	-
Bataillons de Tirailleurs Senegalais	-	-	-	-	-	seven	one	-	-	-	-
Regiments de Tirailleurs Tonkinois	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1, 3, 4	-	-
Regiments de Tirailleurs Annamites	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	one	-	-
Regiments de Tirailleurs Malgaches	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	one	-
Regiments de Mitrailleurs d'Infanterie Coloniale	41	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Regiments de Mitrailleurs Malgaches	42	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Regiments de Mitrailleurs Indochinois	52	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bataillons de Tirailleurs Cambodgiens	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	one	-	-
Regiments Mixte de Madagascar	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1, 2	-
Regiments d'Artillerie Coloniale	1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12	"Maroc"	-	-	"Levant"	6	-	-	4, 5	-	-
Groupes d'Artillerie Coloniale	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	two	one

Permanent Stations of Colonial Units, 1930-1939

The term colonial troops, as used in the broader sense by the French, then, comprised the Colonial units proper plus the tirailleurs from West Africa, Madagascar, and Indochina. Both groups provided infantry and the former artillery as well, the French being believers in keeping only white hands on artillery lanyards. With terms thus defined, the French category of colonial troops contained a number of anomalies, however, in comparison with what would

generally be understood as colonial units. First, the majority of the all-white Colonial units were not, in fact, based in the colonies, but in France itself. The French weakness in population vis-a-vis Germany would not permit any other deployment and the ability of these units to deploy to the colonies under any but the most favorable of circumstances (e.g., a passive, disarmed Germany) was for the most part theoretical. Second, the category of colonial troops did not include any of the North African units, which were organized on racial lines just as strict as those of the colonies.

The North African units, which were considered part of the regular French Army rather than colonial forces, were organized into a variety of different types of formations. The most numerically important were the infantry, which were denominated tirailleurs as in colonial units, specifically *Tirailleurs Algeriens*, *Tunisiens*, and *Marocains*. These regiments followed the lead of the colonial tirailleurs in being made up of local (Arab) personnel led by a cadre of white officers and NCOs. The large white settler population in North Africa also made it possible to raise infantry units of whites locally, and these were called *Zouaves*, these also receiving volunteers from metropolitan France. Cavalry units were also raised in North Africa, the *Spahis* being analogous to the tirailleurs and the *Chasseurs d'Afrique* to the Zouaves. Another type of unit not classified as colonial, although they served in North Africa, where the *Bataillons d'Afrique*, later redesignated *Bataillons d'Infanterie Legere d'Afrique*. These units included volunteers but were primarily seen as penal and rehabilitation units for white French soldiers. The North African forces, including the Zouaves, were collectively referred to as the *Armée d'Afrique*.

The final category of units to serve in the colonies was the famous Foreign Legion. Recruited from foreigners, particularly Germans, the Legion was liable for service in all the French colonies and served primarily in the infantry role.

The changing threat to the North African territories led to a reevaluation of the highly structured, if somewhat confusing, organization of the colonial units. Through the mid-1930s, the main threat to the French hold on North Africa had been perceived to be that of internal insurrection. The Italian build-up in Libya, however, largely concentrated along the Libyan-Tunisian and Libyan-Algerian borders, led to a decision to increase the firepower of the forces in North Africa. This primarily affected the artillery, although it also impacted tank units. Although it was clear that both arms needed strengthening to meet the Italian threat, the limited manpower available to the French Army would not permit the expansion needed. The result was a compromise, which permitted local Arab personnel to

serve in French Army artillery and tank units serving in North Africa. In keeping with former practice, however, the Arabs were limited to non-sensitive slots, such as truck drivers and messengers. These units, although based in North Africa and consisting of white settlers, French volunteers, and local Arabs, received no special designation, being serially numbered within the normal sequence of French Army units.

Infantry

There were two sets of TO&Es for the white colonial units (the Colonial units proper and the Zouaves): one for those units serving in France and another for service in the colonies. While serving in France the white units used the same tables of organization as the regular French Army infantry units. Units serving in the colonies, however, were organized on lighter lines with unique TO&Es. Six Zouaves regiments were serving in the army at the start of the war. Four of the Zouaves regiments (2, 3, 4, and 9) were mountain units in North Africa and used the same TO&Es as the mountain infantry regiments of the rest of the army in France (see section I). Of the remaining two Zouaves regiments one (1) was on a special light overseas TO&E (*Type Outre-Mer Reduit*), while the other (8) was in France on the NE Motorized TO&Es.

Geared toward the internal security role the light overseas-type infantry regiment had the full standard complement of automatic weapons but a very reduced scale of heavier support weapons. In fact, the regiment had no anti-tank weapons whatever and did not have the company-level 60mm mortar squads found in metropolitan infantry units. Motor transport was also reduced to a minimum, with reliance being placed on pack animals and one-horse carts.

The rifle platoon of the overseas-type infantry regiment was identical to that of the metropolitan infantry with 41 men with a total armament of seven pistols, ten carbines, twenty-four rifles (including four with VB grenade launchers), and three M.24/29 light machine guns. At the company level, the signal section was also identical to its metropolitan counterpart but with a pack mule added along with a handler to carry signal equipment.

The company trains section provided a 2-ton truck, three light Arabic-type carts (each pulled by a mule), and ten pack mules. The truck carried rations, baggage, and 7,650 rounds of LMG ammunition. One of the carts was used to carry a similar amount of LMG ammunition, while another carried 1,440 rounds of rifle ammunition, 192 VB rifle grenades, and 252 hand grenades. The third carried general supplies. Two of the pack mules carried LMG ammo (2,550 rounds apiece), two rifle ammunition (2,944 rounds each), two field kitchen equipment, one tools, and the remainder general supplies.

The machine gun platoon of the heavy weapons company was identical to that of the metropolitan infantry in terms of manpower and weapons but substituted pack mules for the horse-drawn carts found in France. Each two-gun section had five

	Officers	Sergeants	Corporals	Privates	Pistols	Carbines	Rifles	Light MGs	Medium MGs	81mm Mortars	Riding Horses	Pack Horses	Draft Horses	Carts	Motorcycles	Field Cars	Light Trucks	Trucks
Regiment Headquarters	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Headquarters Company																		
Company Headquarters	1	1	2	10	2	2	10	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0
Staff Section	0	1	1	14	1	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0
Signal Platoon	1	3	9	49	1	58	3	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	3	2	0	0
Pioneer Platoon	1	2	3	22	2	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Service Company																		
Company Headquarters	1	1	2	9	2	2	9	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	0
Transport/Maintenance Platoon	0	9	4	26	3	0	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	5
Rations Platoon	1	4	0	30	2	13	20	0	0	0	0	0	10	10	1	1	13	0
Medical Platoon	2	4	3	38	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Three Infantry Battalions, each																		
Battalion Headquarters	4	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Headquarters Platoon																		
Signal Section	0	3	3	26	1	26	5	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	1	1	0	0
Rations Section	0	2	1	10	1	5	7	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	1	0	0
Medical Section	0	1	2	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	3	0	0	0	0
Three Rifle Companies, each																		
Company Headquarters																		
Commander	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Signal Section	0	1	0	10	1	10	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trains Section	0	2	3	18	2	14	7	0	0	0	0	10	3	3	0	0	0	0
Four Rifle Platoons, each																		
Platoon HQ*	1	1	1	2	1	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Three Sections, each	0	1	1	10	2	3	7	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Heavy Weapons Company																		
Company Headquarters	1	4	3	27	4	22	9	0	0	0	1	9	3	3	0	0	1	0
Four MG Platoons, each																		
Platoon HQ*	1	1	1	1	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Two MG Sections, each	0	1	2	12	2	5	8	0	2	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mortar Section	0	1	2	20	5	0	18	0	0	2	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0

*one platoon commanded by NCO instead of officer

Infantry and Zouaves Regiment, Overseas Type, from January 1937

mules, two of which each carried a Hotchkiss MG, two each carried 3,456 rounds of ammunition, and the fifth carried armorer's tools, cleaning equipment, and 1,617 rounds of ammunition. The mortar section also used pack mules for its transport, with two each carrying an 81mm mortar and the remaining four each carrying 21 rounds of HE ammunition plus associated common equipment such as an aiming circle, plotting equipment, etc.

The signal section of the heavy weapons company was similar to that of the rifle company but exchanged the pack horse and handler for a fifth runner and added range-finder duties to two of the four optical signallers. The trains section was also similar, with the 2-ton truck carrying rations, baggage, and 96 rounds of 81mm ammunition (51 HE and 45 smoke). The two ammunition carts each carried 7,200 rounds of 8mm MG ammunition, while two pack mules each carried 1,728 rounds more.

The largest element of the battalion HQ platoon was the signal section. This provided a four-man radio team with a transceiver, a six-man telephone team with a switchboard, eight optical signallers, one motorcycle and one bicycle dispatch rider, a field car, a cart, and two pack mules for transport.

Support at the regimental level was provided by the HQ and service companies. The transport platoon of the service company provided two 1-ton trucks for postal service, a 2½-ton for workshop equipment, another for blacksmith equipment, two more for anti-gas material, and a 3-ton for fuel. It also included a small maintenance team of six men with two motorcycles (one with a sidecar). The transport of food was undertaken by the rations platoon which had ten one-mule carts for rations, ten 2-ton trucks for rations and forage, and three 1-ton trucks for fresh food.

The regimental signal platoon included radio, wire, and dispatch rider elements. The radio section operated three transceivers each with a four-man squad. In addition, they were expected to provide transport and support for an ER.26bis radio team that would normally be attached from the next higher HQ as part of the division (or task force) radio net. The telephone section consisted of four 6-man squads. The platoon also included eleven optical signallers and had three motorcycle dispatch riders and four bicycles for use as needed. The pioneer platoon was built around three squads, each of a corporal and seven privates, and had a 2-ton truck to carry its equipment.

The overseas-type infantry regiment was clearly organized with insurrection rather than invasion in mind. Not only did it have fewer support weapons than the infantry regiment in France, but those it did have were also, overall, provided with less ammunition. The exception to this was the section-level light machine gun. In both cases the rifle section carried 1,325 rounds of ammunition for its LMG while the company trains carried an additional 1,700 rounds per gun in the overseas type regiment to only 506 rounds per gun in the metropolitan regiment. This was presumably due to the difficulty in resupplying units in the wastes of the

North African desert and the high priority placed on this weapon in fighting Rifs and other recalcitrant locals. In the weapons company, however, only 89 rounds per mortar were carried compared with 150 in the metropolitan regiment, and 3,652 rounds per Hotchkiss compared with 5,362 for the regiments in France. In neither case were reserves of ammunition carried at the battalion or regiment level.

The overseas regiment was also considerably weaker in terms of signal assets. Where the metropolitan regiment had radios down to the company level, the overseas regiment had them only at the battalion level, relying on telephones, runners, and semaphore flags to carry messages lower.

As a result, the only all-white infantry units in North Africa capable of conventional warfare were the four Zouaves regiments that were organized on mountain lines. Since these used the same TO&Es as the mountain infantry regiments in France they were considerably better equipped but were specialized formations organized with mountain operations in mind. Fortunately, much of French North Africa had rugged mountains where these units could find profitable employment although this still tended to limit their operational flexibility.

A further eight Zouaves regiments were formed before May 1940. Four (11-14) were formed in France using regular metropolitan NE-type TO&Es, and four (21, 22, 23, and 29) in North Africa, one of them on mountain TO&Es and the other three on overseas TO&Es.

Seven colonial infantry divisions were formed in France pre-war (the 1st and 2nd Regular and the 3rd-7th Type A reserve), plus one more division from scratch on 30 April 1940, but only one was all-white, the rest relying heavily on Senegalese Tirailleurs regiments and battalions:¹

	Infantry	Cavalry	Artillery
1st Colonial Infantry Div	3 RIC, 12 & 14 RTS	76 GRDI	1 RAC, 201 RALC
2nd Colonial Infantry Div	RICM, 4 & 8 RTS	72 GRDI	2 RAC, 202 RALC
3rd Colonial Infantry Div	1, 21 & 23 RIC	73 GRDI	3 RAC, 203 RAL
4th Colonial Infantry Div	2 RIC, 16 & 24 RTS	74 GRDI	12 RAC, 212 RALC
5th Colonial Infantry Div	22 RIC, 44 & 53 RICMS	75 GRDI	21 RAC, 221 RALC
6th Colonial Infantry Div	43 RIC, 5 & 6 RICMS	76 GRDI	23 RAC, 223 RALC
7th Colonial Infantry Div	7 RIC, 33 & 57 RICMS	77 GRDI	32 RAC, 232 RALC
8th Colonial Infantry Div	4 RIC, 25 & 26 RTS	78 GRDI	8 RAC, 208 RALC

¹ ²For reasons that are unclear the mixed colonial/tirailleurs regiments in France were designated *régiments d'infanterie coloniale mixte sénégalaise* rather than the more normal formulation of RMIC.

In addition to the RTS and mixed units Senegalese and Malagasies also served in a number of the artillery and service support units of the divisions in the lower-ranking (and generally menial) slots.

The North African tirailleurs regiments (Algerian, Tunisian, and Moroccan) used three TO&Es: metropolitan, mountain, and overseas motorized. The metropolitan TO&E was used by the 14 North African tirailleurs regiments that were based in France at the start of the war and was almost identical to that of the regular French infantry regiment.

Of the 19 North African tirailleurs regiments based in French North Africa at the war's start 16 were on the mountain TO&E and the other three on the overseas motorized TO&E. The former was almost identical to the normal French mountain infantry regiment TO&E while the latter was a unique organization.

The TO&E used by North African tirailleurs regiments in France was identical to that used by the regular French infantry (non-motorized) except for the racial quotas established for the various personnel slots. The highest position that could be achieved by an Arab was platoon leader, one of these positions per rifle company being allocated to North Africans. These nine slots were the only officer positions open to North Africans in the regiment.

Until January of 1937, when the new series of infantry TO&Es were published, the mountain-type North African tirailleurs

	French				North African			
	Officers	Sergeants	Corporals	Privates	Officers	Sergeants	Corporals	Privates
Metropolitan Type								
Regiment Headquarters	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Headquarters Company								
Company Headquarters	1	2	2	3	0	0	0	0
Regt HQ Section	0	7	3	8	0	0	0	11
Signal Platoon	1	14	3	33	0	0	1	31
Pioneer Platoon	1	4	4	18	0	0	2	21
Motorcycle Scout Platoon	1	4	4	18	0	0	0	0
Service Company								
Company HQ & Trains	1	2	1	1	0	0	1	8
Resupply Platoon	1	9	2	15	1	0	1	34
Rations Platoon	1	3	3	9	0	0	0	19
Maintenance Section	1	1	2	9	0	0	0	2
Medical Platoon	1	5	2	17	0	0	1	22
Weapons Company								
Company HQ & Trains	1	4	2	8	0	1	0	12
Two Anti-Tank Platoons, each	1	3	2	6	0	1	1	13
Mortar Section	0	1	1	6	0	0	1	12
Three Infantry Battalions, each								
Battalion HQ & Platoon	4	6	4	17	0	0	2	47
Three Rifle Companies, each								
Company HQ & Trains	1	5	2	1	0	0	1	20
Four Rifle Platoons, each*	1	1	1	6	0	3	3	26
Weapons Company								
Company HQ & Trains	1	4	3	2	0	1	0	17
Four MG Platoons, each**	1	2	2	7	0	1	3	18
Weapons Platoon	0	4	2	8	0	1	2	24
Mountain Type								
Regiment Headquarters	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Headquarters Company								
Company HQ & Trains	1	2	2	3	0	0	0	9
Regt HQ Section	0	7	3	8	0	0	0	11
Signal Platoon	1	14	5	34	0	0	1	39
Pioneer Platoon	1	4	4	20	0	0	2	18
Motorcycle Scout Platoon	1	3	4	18	0	0	0	0
Service Company								
Company HQ & Trains	1	2	1	1	0	0	1	8
Resupply Platoon	1	9	2	15	0	0	1	18
Rations Platoon	1	3	3	16	0	0	0	12
Maintenance Section	1	1	2	8	0	0	0	2
Medical Platoon	1	5	2	18	0	0	1	20
Weapons Company								
Company HQ & Trains	1	4	2	9	0	1	0	15
Two Anti-Tank Platoons, each	1	3	2	6	0	1	1	16
Mortar Section	0	1	1	6	0	0	1	14
Three Infantry Battalions, each								
Battalion HQ & Platoon	4	7	6	25	0	0	2	61
Three Rifle Companies, each								
Company HQ & Trains	1	5	2	1	0	0	2	36
Four Rifle Platoons, each*	1	1	1	6	0	3	3	26
Weapons Company								
Company HQ & Trains	1	4	3	3	0	1	0	32
Four MG Platoons, each**	1	2	2	7	0	1	3	18
Weapons Platoon	0	4	2	8	0	1	2	29

* one platoon commanded by North African officer, one by NCO
 ** one platoon commanded by NCO
 NB: weapons, transport & equipment are identical to regular French Army regts

**North African Tirailleurs Regiments
 Metropolitan & Mountain Types, From 1937**

regiments used a light organization that featured a HQ, a service company, and three battalions, each of a HQ, a service company, three rifle companies, and a machine gun company. Heavy weapons for the regiment consisted of a light MG in each rifle section (twelve per company), sixteen medium machine guns in each MG company, and a heavy weapons platoon in each battalion service company with a 37mm infantry gun and two 81mm mortars.

As Italian belligerency and adventurism increased, however, it became clear that this organization, useful as it had proven against guerilla bands, would no longer suffice. Therefore, in early 1937 the North African tirailleur regiments denominated as mountain units adopted the French Army mountain infantry regiment TO&E with only a few minor modifications. Racial quotas were established identical to those described above for the tirailleurs regiment in the metropole. In addition a staff captain was added to regiment HQ (with an orderly in the HQ company) specifically detailed to deal with the special requirements of the North African troops. The only real organizational changes were the deletion of the ski scout platoon from the battalion organization, there being little opportunity for the use of skis in the North African mountains, and the addition of three Arabs to the supply platoon of the service company as supplemental chenillette drivers.

Three of the North African tirailleurs regiments based in North Africa remained on a light organization known as the overseas motorized ("*Outre-Mer Motorise*") pattern. It would appear that the appellation motorized was due solely to administrative inertia and dated back to the pre-1937 organization when the bulk of the tirailleurs regiments had only eight motor vehicles per regiment, for with the transformation of the mountain type regiments to the regular army TO&E the "motorized" regiments were actually less motorized than the mountain regiment.

The rifle platoon of the overseas motorized regiment had the same organization as all the other types of rifle platoons in the French infantry; that is, three 12-man sections each with a light machine gun and a rifle grenade launcher, and a 5-man platoon HQ with a fourth grenade launcher. The rifle company was identical to that of the mountain-type North African tirailleurs regiment (and thus to the French Army mountain regiment in all but racial quotas) except that it lacked the 60mm mortar squad of the mountain units.

The machine gun company was also identical to its counterpart in the mountain-type tirailleurs regiment except for the heavy weapons platoon. Where mountain units used a heavy weapons platoon of two 81mm mortars and two

	French				North African																		
	Officers	Sergeants	Corporals	Privates	Officers	Sergeants	Corporals	Privates															
Regiment Headquarters	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	
Headquarters Company																							
Company HQ & Trains	1	5	3	15	0	0	0	8	3	1	27	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	7	2
Regiment HQ Section	0	7	1	7	0	0	0	10	2	2	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	2	0	4	
Signal Platoon	1	7	9	34	0	0	2	33	5	74	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	3	0	2	0
Mounted Platoon	0	1	1	2	0	1	1	10	2	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pioneer Platoon	1	4	41	14	0	0	2	24	2	45	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Medical Platoon	1	5	2	3	0	0	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	2	1
Three Infantry Battalions, each																							
Battalion HQ & Platoon																							
Command Group	5	1	1	6	0	0	0	6	6	0	13	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	1	1	0	1
Signal Section	0	2	2	13	0	0	1	18	2	26	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	1	0	0	1
Service Company																							
Company HQ & Trains	1	2	1	1	0	0	1	8	2	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	2
Resupply/Rations Platoon	1	5	3	12	0	0	0	11	2	0	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	1	11	0
Blacksmith/Maint Platoon	0	3	0	6	0	0	0	3	3	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	1
Medical Platoon	0	2	0	3	0	0	1	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	1	0	0	0
Three Rifle Companies, each																							
Company Headquarters																							
Commander	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Signal Section	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	5	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Trains Section	0	3	1	0	0	0	2	22	1	17	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	0	0	0	1	1
Four Rifle Platoons, each*	1	1	1	6	0	3	3	26	8	10	23	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Heavy Weapons Company																							
Company Headquarters																							
Commander	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Signal Section	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	9	2	2	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Trains Section	0	3	3	2	0	1	0	23	1	19	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0
Four MG Platoons, each**	1	2	2																				

** *one platoon commanded by (French) NCO*

The gun section of the heavy weapons platoon had an infantry-gun squad of 10

men with three pack mules (one carrying the 37mm gun and the other two 64 HE and 32 AP rounds each) and a 9- man anti-tank squad with two mules pulling a caisson (24 rounds) and the gun and another mule pulling an ammunition cart (132 rounds).

The largest component of the battalion HQ was the signal platoon, which provided a 4-man radio team, a 6-man telephone team and seven optical signallers. The regimental signal platoon was similar to that in the overseas-type Zouaves regiment, having three radio teams, four telephone teams, about 20 optical signallers, and a requirement to support an ER.26bis transceiver team as an attachment from the next higher HQ. Thus, as was the case with the Zouaves, radio communications were only used for the regimental net with optical signaling used at the battalion level and lower, although one or two of the radios in the regimental signal platoon could be used to support detached elements.

The Overseas Divisions

The North African tirailleurs and Zouaves regiments were formed into divisions starting in 1928. The regiments based in France were used to form DINAs (*Divisions d'Infanterie Nord-Africaine*), the First and Second divisions being raised in 1928, the Third in 1935, the Fourth in 1936, and the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh after the start of the war. These divisions followed the pattern of the standard (non-motorized) French infantry division except for the substitution of North African units for the regular infantry (including the infantry anti-tank company). Since the Zouaves used the regular infantry regiment and AT company TO&Es when in France, and the tirailleurs the same TO&Es modified only to show racial quotas, the DINAs were organizationally indistinguishable from the normal infantry division.

The regiments in North Africa itself had been formed into quasi-tactical territorial divisions for some time. Thus, the final pre-war deployment of the major units of the *Armée d'Afrique* was:

	Infantry	Cavalry	Artillery
FRANCE:			
1st DINA	27 RTA, 28 RTT, 5 RTM	--	54 RANA, 254 RALNA
2nd DINA	13 & 22 RTA, 6 RTM	92 GRDI	40 RANA, 240 RALNA
3rd DINA	14 & 15 RTA, 24 RTT	93 GRDI	20 RANA, 220 RALNA
4th DINA	21, 23 & 25 RTA	94 GRDI	33 RANA, 233 RALNA
1st Spahi Bde	-	4 RSM, 6 RSA	-
ALGERIA (19th Corps)			
Algiers Division			
1st Brigade	9 Zouaves, 13 RTS	-	-
5th Brigade	1, 5 & 9 RTA	-	-
division troops	-	5 RCA, 1 RSM	65 RAA
Oran Division			
2nd Brigade	2 Zouaves, 13 RTS, 1 REI	-	-
4th Brigade	2 & 6 RTA	-	-
division troops	-	6 RCA, 2 RSA	66 RAA
Constantine Division			
3rd Brigade	3 Zouaves, 15 RTS	-	-
7th Brigade	3, 7 & 11 RTA	-	-
division troops	-	3 RCA, 3 RSA	67 RAA
TUNISIA			
Tunis Division	4 Zouaves, 4 & 8 RTT	-	-
Sousse Division	5, 10 & 18 RTS	4 RCA, 4 RST	62 RAA
MOROCCO			
no major HQs			
SYRIA/LEBANON			
no major HQs			

On the outbreak of the war, the territorial divisions in North Africa were

redesignated as infantry divisions and further divisions formed from other existing units. Thus were formed the 81st-88th DIAs (*Divisions d'Infanterie d'Afrique*) in Algeria and Tunisia and the 1st-3rd DMs (*Divisions Marocaine*) in Morocco.

Each of the DIAs had three infantry regiments (North African tirailleurs mountain or overseas motorized, or Zouaves mountain or overseas), an artillery component, a reconnaissance component, and division services.

	Officers	French			N. African			Medium MGs	Artillery Pieces	Riding Horses	Pack Horses	Draft Horses	Wagons	Motorcycles	Field Cars	Light Trucks	Trucks	Tractors	Bicycles
		Sergeants	Corporals	Privates	Sergeants	Corporals	Privates												
Regiment HQ & Battery	8	11	14	46	0	1	47	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	7	4	1	2
Draft Units																			
75mm Field Gun Battalion (Draft)																			
Battalion Headquarters	6	9	7	16	1	0	28	0	0	26	0	8	3	1	1	2	0	0	2
Three 75mm Batteries, each	3	11	8	33	2	5	80	1	4	27	0	88	15	0	0	1	1	0	1
Service Battery	4	7	9	22	1	4	42	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	6	7	1	1
155mm Howitzer Battalion (Draft)																			
Battalion Headquarters	6	9	7	16	1	0	28	0	0	26	0	8	3	1	1	2	0	0	2
Three 155mm Batteries, each	3	11	7	43	1	5	94	1	4	27	0	110	15	0	0	0	0	0	0
Service Battery	5	18	13	162	*	*	*	1	0	28	0	144	32	0	2	8	1	0	3
Pack Units																			
65mm Mountain Gun Battalion																			
Battalion Headquarters	9	9	6	8	0	3	39	0	0	25	1	16	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
Three Mountain Batteries, eac	3	15	9	42	0	4	149	2	4	23	122	14	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
Motorized Units																			
75mm Field Gun Battalion (Portee)																			
Battalion Headquarters	6	6	4	15	1	2	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	2	5	1	0	0
Three 75mm Batteries, each	3	12	10	32	0	3	36	1	4	0	0	0	0	3	2	1	11	2	1
Service Battery	5	15	9	42	0	3	43	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	3	3	23	1	0

* included in respective French strength figures. Racial breakdown unavailable.

DIVISIONAL ARTILLERY UNITS, OVERSEAS TYPE, from 1937

Division artillery for a DIA comprised, as a base, a regimental HQ and two battalions of 75mm field guns (carried portée-fashion in the 87th DIA, horse-drawn in all the others). In addition, five of the DIAs had a 155mm howitzer battalion each, motorized in the case of the 81st and 83rd Divisions and horse-drawn in the 84th, 85th, and 86th.

Except for the imposition of racial quotas, the overseas-type divisional artillery units were similar to those of the regular metropolitan army. There were, however, two differences. The service battery in the 75mm overseas battalion was a completely motorized formation, using one light and four medium trucks to

carry ammunition in place of the twelve 6-horse wagons used in the metropolitan battalion. The second difference was that the signal facilities in the overseas artillery were even more abysmal than in the metropolitan artillery. The radio assets for the divisional artillery regiment overseas consisted of one transceiver in each battalion HQ and two in the regimental HQ. There were thus no extra radios for the forward observer and liaison teams, who had to rely on telephone and optical devices.

Reconnaissance for the DIA was carried out by a small reconnaissance battalion. Under the original December 1936 TO&E this consisted of HQ elements, two mounted squadrons, and a machine gun platoon, and in June of 1937 an anti-tank platoon was added.

The mounted squadrons were similar to those in the overseas-type Spahis regiment with a pack machine gun section added. Each of the mounted platoons was built around two sections (each with a rifle and a scout squad) and a supplemental scout squad. For heavy weapons, each of the rifle squads was provided with a light MG, and the scout squads with a rifle grenade launcher. Fire support for the squadron was provided by a pack machine gun section and a 60mm mortar squad, both of which were also identical to those found in the overseas-type Spahis regiment.

The squadron HQ included a signal section and a trains section. The signal section included five dispatch riders on horses under a sergeant, three optical signallers, and a motorcycle dispatch rider. The trains section provided three light trucks: two for rations and ammunition and one for rations and baggage.

The most important element of the battalion HQ from the point of view of the reconnaissance role was the battalion signal section. This included two radio teams with transceivers and a third with a receiver tuned to aircraft frequency. It also maintained six ER.40 backpack radios that were distributed to the subordinate elements as needed to be manned by local personnel. It also included two 6-man telephone teams and 13 optical signallers along with ten motorcycle and eight horsed dispatch riders.

The reconnaissance battalion was somewhat small for a division-size unit and was not particularly well organized. It was, however, probably adequate for colonial warfare. The only reconnaissance elements of the battalion were eight mounted platoons. Fire support consisted of two pack machine gun sections, a motorized machine gun platoon, and a 2-gun anti-tank platoon. Neither these nor

the battalion's two 60mm mortars had any long-range performance to enable the battalion to undertake delaying actions without becoming closely engaged. The battalion also did not include any motorized elements to undertake road reconnaissance, the MG platoon with its two light trucks, each carrying two gun squads, being unsuited to scouting roles. The one bright spot in the overseas-type reconnaissance battalion's organization was that it had a better ratio of radios to scout and support units than any other non-motorized reconnaissance battalion in the French Army. However, it should be noted that few of the DIAs

[illegible]

had their full reconnaissance battalions. Of the five DIAs still in North Africa in May 1940 all but one were missing one of their two mounted squadrons. In two of the divisions, a pack machine gun section was added but this can hardly be considered an even trade.

Signal support for the division was provided by a radio company and a telephone company. The radio company provided two ER.13 transceivers in field cars, seven ER.26bis transceivers on a pack basis of three mules per radio, and five ER.12 transceivers each carried by one pack mule. Requisitioned civilian trucks were also provided to carry the latter two types of radios for road operations if

required. This provided a total of fourteen transceivers for the company, as compared with twenty transceivers and eight receivers in the radio company of a metropolitan division. The telephone company was similar in general outline to that of the metropolitan division but was smaller by one wire-laying platoon. Each platoon was also smaller by about 25%, but the number of motor vehicles remained the same. The telephone company lacked even the few cross-country vehicles that its metropolitan counterpart possessed, a serious shortcoming, but did include four pack mules for transport in each wire-laying platoon to facilitate operations in the mountains.

	<i>Personnel</i>	<i>Main Weapons</i>
DIVISION HEADQUARTERS		
RECONNAISSANCE BATTALION	557	
Battalion Headquarters	52	
Service Platoon	39	
Two Rifle Squadrons, each	205	8 LMG, 2 MG, 1 60mm mort
Motorized Machine Gun Platoon	29	4 MG, 1 AA MG
Anti-Tank Platoon	27	2 25mm AT
TWO TIRAILLEURS REGIMENTS (MOUNTAIN), EACH	3,385	
Regiment HQ & Company	224	
Service Company	154	
Heavy Weapons Company	115	6 25mm AT, 2 81mm mort
Three Infantry Battalions, each	964	
Battalion Headquarters	105	
Three Rifle Companies, each	211	12 LMG, 1 60mm mort
Heavy Weapons Company	226	16 MG, 2 37mm Inf G, 2 81mm mort
ZOUAVES REGIMENT (MOUNTAIN)	3,381	
Regiment HQ & Company	222	4 LMG
Service Company	152	
Heavy Weapons Company	115	6 25mm AT, 2 81mm mort
Three Infantry Battalions, each	964	
Battalion Headquarters	105	
Three Rifle Companies, each	211	12 LMG, 1 60mm mort
Heavy Weapons Company	226	16 MG, 2 37mm Inf G, 2 81mm mort
ARTILLERY REGIMENT	2,048	
Regiment Headquarters	127	1 AA MG
Two Field Gun Battalions, each	582	
Battalion Headquarters	67	
Three Batteries, each	142	1 AA MG, 4 75mm guns
Service Battery	89	1 AA MG
Field Howitzer Battalion	757	
Battalion Headquarters	67	
Three Batteries, each	164	1 AA MG, 4 155mm how
Service Battery	198	1 AA MG
ENGINEER TROOPS	612	
Two Pioneer Companies, each	281	
Field Park Detachment	50	
SIGNAL TROOPS		
Telephone Company	153	
Radio Company	141	
SERVICE TROOPS		
Draft Transport Company		
Medical Group		
Intendance Group		
Motor Transport Company		

TYPE AFRICAN INFANTRY DIVISION (DIA), 1940

The division also included two pioneer companies and a small engineer equipment park. Each of the pioneer companies was built around four platoons, each of 57 men with a 2-horse wagon and a 1½-ton requisitioned civilian truck for tools, explosives, etc.

Reinforcing the Metropole

Four of the DIAs were shipped to France to participate in the defense of the metropole. Three of these, the 82nd, 84th, and 87th, were brought to France during late

1939 while the other, the 85th, was brought over in desperation after the battle had been all but lost, arriving 5 June 1940.

Provision had been made for just such an eventuality in the tirailleurs and Zouaves TO&Es, with special amendments issued specifying how to reorganize mountain units into regular "North East"-type infantry regiments, i.e., where the additional people and transport would come from, what theaters were responsible for which items, etc. Despite these elaborate precautions the first two divisions brought over were not, in fact, mountain divisions. The 82nd DIA was rated as an "overseas" division with a Zouaves regiment and two tirailleurs regiments, the former presumably on the overseas reduced TO&E. The 87th was made up of three tirailleurs regiments and was rated as an "overseas motorized" division. Both divisions had been reorganized, without benefit of the wasted prior planning, as North East-type divisions by the end of November 1939. The reasons for bringing over the weaker infantry regiments rather than the much more capable mountain units envisioned in the 1937 TO&E are not clear, but presumably reflected continuing fears over the Italian build-up along the Libyan-Tunisian border. Certainly, provided the time was available to convert the overseas-type regiments into metropolitan type regiments, as there was in this case, the gain to the metropole was just as great without drawing down on North African defenses.

On 21 October 1939 the 87th DIA, an overseas-motorized type, was notified of its impending move to France and traded the 19th RTA to the 85th Division for the 9th Zouaves, giving it a white regiment. It shipped over to France in early November and reorganized as a northeast type division the rest of the month. In the pressure of a losing war, however, such niceties fell by the wayside and the final DIA to be brought to France, the mountain-type 85th arriving in early June 1940, remained on its mountain TO&Es through the battle.

When time was available the division base was modernized in those divisions shipped to France. Both the 82nd and 84th Divisions had artillery regiments consisting of two battalions of 75mm guns. In the case of the 82nd DIA, a third 75mm battalion was added to the regiment and a heavy artillery regiment of two 155mm battalions was added to the division on its arrival in France. In the 84th DIA shuffling of units took place which had the effect of adding a 155mm howitzer battalion to the regiment. A 47mm anti-tank battery was added to the 82nd DIA and one was permanently attached to the 84th. No infantry AT company was added to either division.

The reconnaissance battalions of the 82nd, 84th, and 87th DIAs were brought up to the standards of a regular infantry division. In the 87th Division, the light artillery regiment was reconfigured from two portée-carried 75mm battalions to

three horse-drawn battalions on arrival in France, while a heavy regiment with two 155mm battalions was added at the same time. No such changes were made to the division bases of the late-arriving 85th DIA.

On the outbreak of the war three of the eight DIAs left North Africa per pre-war plans: the 82nd and 84th to France and the 86th (with a Zouaves and two tirailleurs regiments of the mountain type) to Lebanon, with the 87th Division following to France shortly thereafter.

To fill out the divisions that remained in north Africa three metropolitan conscript and reservist regiments were shipped to there, organized under the "overseas reduced" TO&Es used by the Zouaves, a more than even trade for the homeland considering what had been provided to it. This series of eight divisions is sometimes referred to as "second-line" divisions, but the regiments were for the most part regular active-duty units of high standards, although experienced only in North African conditions. Their composition was:

	Infantry	Cavalry	Artillery
81st DIA	1 & 9 RTA, 218 RI	81 GRDI	65 RA
82nd DIA	1 Zouaves, 4 RTM, 6 RTA	82 GRDI	66 RA, 266 RAL
83rd DIA	3 & 7 RTA, 344 RI	83 GRDI	67 RA
84th DIA	4 Zouaves, 4 & 8 RTT	84 GRDI	62 RA
85th DIA	3 Zouaves, 11 & 19* RTA	85 GRDI	85 RA
86th DIA	2 Zouaves, 2 & 29* RTA	86 GRDI	86 RA, 286 RAL
87th DIA	9 Zouaves, 17* & 18* RTA	87 GRDI	87 RA, 287 RAL
88th DIA	10 & 18 RTS, 257 RI	88 GRDI	88 RA

*new units

In addition, further regiments were raised and brought to France so that, with some shuffling of units, it was possible to create a new 5th DINA in September 1939, a 6th a month later, and a 7th in April 1940. The infantry composition was now:

1st DINA: 5 RTM, 27 RTA, 28 RTT
 2nd DINA: 11 Zouaves, 13 RTA, 22 RTA
 3rd DINA: 12 Zouaves, 14 RTA, 15 RTA
 4th DINA: 13 Zouaves, 23 RTA, 25 RTA
 5th DINA: 14 Zouaves, 6 RTM, 24 RTT
 6th DINA: 11 REI, 9 RTM, 21 RTA
 7th DINA: 10 RTM, 20 RTT, 31 RTA

It will be seen that the object of the realignment was apparently to include one white regiment in each of the DINAs, the exceptions being the 1st DINA and the hastily-raised 7th DINA. Of note is the fact that all the new regiments, including Zouaves, brought over from North Africa for this force expansion were newly-raised units.

The Second Wave in North Africa

To replace the lost formations in North Africa a second wave of DIAs was raised, these numbered in 180s, plus two special divisions for Morocco. These units had the following components:

	Infantry	Cavalry	Artillery
180th Division	22 Zouaves, 5 & 33 RTA	180 GRDI	380 RA
181st Division	29 Zouaves, 13 RTS	one group	one battalion
182nd Division	1 REI, 2 RTS	one sqn	one battalion
183rd Division	23 Zouaves, 15 RTS	one group	one battalion
2nd Morocco Division	2 & 4 REI, 3 RTS, 323 RI	2 REC	RACM
3rd Morocco Division	3 REI, 21 Zouaves, 6 RTS	none	63 RA

Of the DIAs the first raised, the 180th, was the only one to adopt the appearance of the first wave of DIAs, lacking only the MG and anti-tank platoons in the reconnaissance battalion and having an artillery regiment with two 75mm and one 155mm battalions, all portee.

The 181st had a Zouaves regiment, a Senegalese tirailleurs regiment, a motorized reconnaissance group, a 65mm mountain gun battalion, and two transport companies. The 182nd had a Foreign Legion regiment, a Senegalese tirailleurs regiment, and a base identical to the 181st. The 183rd was identical to the 181st but had a horsed recon group instead of a motorized unit. All three of these later divisions completely lacked signal and pioneer units, the former especially rendering them essentially garrison units.

For reconnaissance, the 180th DIA had a regular overseas-type reconnaissance battalion, while the 183rd had a battalion consisting simply of two mounted squadrons. The 181st and 182nd DIAs had separate Chasseurs d'Afrique motorized battalions, which are described in the cavalry portion of this section.

In addition to the DIAs listed above, which were drawn from Algerian and Tunisian troops, Moroccan troops were also formed into divisions. The 1st DM (*Division Marocaine*) was formed on the outbreak of the war from regular troops with three Moroccan tirailleurs regiments of the mountain type and was shipped

to France in October 1939 where it was reconfigured as a northeast-type division along with the first two DIAs, including the addition of a heavy field artillery regiment.

Shortly thereafter the 2nd and 3rd DMs were formed from garrison troops in Morocco, although the 2nd DM was reconverted back to "*Troupes de Protection du Maroc*" in the Spring of 1940. The 2nd DM was made up of a Senegalese tirailleurs regiment and three more 2-battalion regiments (two of Foreign Legion and one of metropolitan French Army). These were supported by an artillery regiment with three battalion HQs and a total of seven batteries (four of 75mm mountain guns, two of 65mm mountain guns, and one of 105mm mountain howitzers). Outside the regimental structure, the divisional artillery included a battalion of 105mm field howitzers and a battalion of 155mm field howitzers. Also included in the division was the 2nd Foreign Legion Cavalry Regiment with two mounted squadrons, two armored car squadrons, and a weapons squadron. A motor transport company also formed part of the division, but there was no divisional signal or medical unit.

The 3rd DM had the organization of the first-wave type DINAs except that it lacked the reconnaissance battalion. The artillery regiment was made up of two battalions: one of 75mm field guns (motorized) and one of 65mm mountain guns. It should be noted that the DMs were so named because of their geographical location rather than their composition. Indeed, while the 1st DM was built around three Moroccan tirailleurs regiments, the 2nd and 3rd DMs did not have a single Moroccan unit between them, with the 3rd Division being based on one Foreign Legion, one Senegalese and one Zouaves regiment.

Guarding the Mareth Line

There was one more division-equivalent in North Africa, the *Region Fortifiee du Sud Tunisien* which manned the Mareth Line facing Italian Libya and was an overseas version of the fortified sectors of the Maginot Line. The main infantry strength of the region was found in three tirailleurs regiments, one each Tunisian, Senegalese, and Algerian. Artillery support was provided by a non-mobile artillery regiment that commanded a battalion of 105L howitzers, three battalions of 120L obsolete guns, four batteries of 90mm obsolete guns, and fourteen independent sections (9 of 75mm, 2 of 105L, 1 of 155 L16 and 1 of 155 L17). The region also included five engineer companies, a signal company, three transport companies, and other support services, but no reconnaissance.

The Mareth Line was newer than the Maginot Line and it was not until February

of 1940 that the orders went out to organize the fortified region. The orders directed the conversion of the 5th RTS into a defensive formation and the raising of two additional units (32nd RTT and 35th RTS) onto this organization as well, along with the creation of a fortress demi-brigade from light infantry battalions.

The basis for the new defensive units was the machine gun company, which consisted of three 28-man MG platoons (each four medium MGs) and two 41-man rifle platoons (each three light MGs) to give the company a total of 4 officers, 23 sergeants, and 164 other ranks. Transport for the company consisted of four pack horses in each MG platoon plus three more in company HQ. A battalion had three such companies plus a weapons/rifle company. This was made up of a 55-man mortar platoon (six 81mm mortars), three 22-man AT platoons (each three 25mm guns), and two rifle platoons, to give the company a strength of 228. Transport consisted simply of a pack horse for each mortar, a draft horse for each gun, and twelve pack horses in company HQ. The 71-man headquarters rounded out the battalion. The defensive regiment consisted of three of these machine gun battalions plus a headquarters company (similar to that of the alpine fortress regiment) and fortress weapons crew company of no fixed organization. The regiment thus had a total strength (not including the weapons crew company) of 2,820 with 247 pack and draft horses and 20 trucks.

The fortress demi-brigade was to be formed from the 1st and 12th Light Infantry Battalions and was to consist of one battalion for Tatahouine, one battalion for Ben Gardane, and a detachment for Medenine. The Tatahouine battalion consisted of two fortress companies and a rifle company. One of the fortress companies had three platoons controlling a total of three 17-man light MG sections (each three light MGs), four 11-man medium MG sections (each two MGs), and one 10-man anti-tank squad. The second company had four platoons controlling ten light MG sections, seven medium MG sections, and two AT squads. In each case, the company HQ had ten pack horses and a light truck, but otherwise, the companies were without transport. The rifle company had three mountain-type rifle platoons and a machine gun platoon. The 152-man first company plus the 245-man second company and the 204-man rifle company gave the battalion a total strength of 978.

The Ben Gardane battalion consisted of two fortress companies and two rifle companies. In this case, the two fortress companies were identical, each consisting of a 47-man HQ (with 10 pack horses and a light truck) and two 64-man platoons. Each of these platoons was made up of three 9-man light MG sections (each 2 LMGs), two 9-man medium MG sections (each 2 MGs), and an

18-man weapons section (one 47mm and two 75mm guns). The rifle companies were identical to those of the Tatahouine battalion. The Melenine detachment consisted of one fortress and two rifle companies.

The remaining infantry in North Africa was to be found primarily in five light infantry battalions. Two of these, the 1st and 12th, were assigned to the fortified region and name notwithstanding were actually fortress troops, the 25th was part of the 2nd DM and Troupes de Protection du Maroc, the 21st was based at Ain-Sefra on the Algerian-Moroccan border, and the 11th was in the Oasis Group garrisoning southern Algeria. In addition, there were seven more light infantry battalions of this type in France (15th, 16th, 18th, 19th, 23rd, 24th, and 28). There were two TO&Es for light infantry battalions: a non-mobile organization for the units on the Mareth Line (prior to their reorganization) and a more mobile one for other battalions. All were denominated as *Bataillon d'Infanterie Legere d'Afrique* except the two in Tunisia which were simply *Bataillons d'Infanterie Legere* although the use of terminology was not always consistent.

The normal organization provided for a headquarters, a headquarters company (officially denominated a platoon), three rifle companies, and a machine gun company. The battalion HQ consisted simply of four officers: a lieutenant colonel, an aide (a captain), and two medical officers. The HQ company was made up of signal/pioneer, heavy weapons, medical and trains platoons. The first platoon included a four-man radio team with a transceiver, a seven-man telephone team, ten pioneers, and an Arabic interpreter. The second platoon was commanded by a sergeant and was made up of an infantry gun squad and a mortar squad. Each of these squads was made up of a corporal, three gun crew and three pack mule handlers, with the former providing a 37mm infantry gun and the latter an 81mm mortar. Transport was provided by six pack mules. The third platoon was made up of six medics and seventeen members of the band, who doubled as stretcher-bearers in combat. The 51-man trains platoon included the usual support personnel and was provided with 26 pack mules, six of which carried ammunition, six rations and baggage, and two each for signal equipment, water, and medical equipment.

The 226-man rifle company was divided into a 39-man headquarters platoon and four 46-man rifle platoons. The HQ platoon included two optical signallers as its only communications personnel, a medic, four stretcher-bearers, and handlers for 17 pack mules. Five of these carried ammunition, six rations and baggage, and one water. The rifle platoon was made up of a platoon leader, three sergeants, six corporals, and thirty-six privates but its internal composition is not known. In

addition to these elements, the company also included a sergeant and two corporals "for replacement" that were carried distributed among the rifle platoons.

The machine gun company, with its strength of 217 men, was divided into a 46-man HQ platoon and four 42-man MG platoons. The company HQ was similar to that of the rifle companies but added a range-taker, deleted the stretcher-bearers, and added 14 pack mules. Thirteen of these extra mules carried ammunition (including 37mm ammunition for the infantry gun in the HQ company). The MG platoon was made up of a platoon leader, platoon sergeant, transport corporal, three extra gun crew, and two sections. Each of these sections consisted of a sergeant, two gun commanders, two 4-man gun crews, an armorer, and six mule handlers. Two of the pack mules in each section carried the machine guns, while the other four carried ammunition.

With its total strength of 17 officers and 1,000 enlisted it was a strong formation in terms of manpower, but contained several serious weaknesses in its organization that rendered it unsuitable for modern, high-intensity combat. The most notable of these was the poor communications net, which consisted of one radio and one telephone at battalion HQ, and only runners and a small number of optical signallers for use within the battalion. The second weakness was the shortage of heavy weapons. Although automatic weapons strength was certainly adequate, the provision of only one light infantry gun and one mortar was not, all the more so for the lack of the communications and personnel to enable the mortar to work effectively in the indirect fire role. This was made more serious by the fact that the BILAs were not regimented, and thus had no supporting weapons at higher level.

The Tunisian-type light infantry battalion was similar in overall outline but, being destined for fortification duties sacrificed almost all its pack mules. Retained were the sixteen mules that carried the medium MGs in the machine gun company and four mules in the headquarters company, all others being deleted. The other major change was an increase in the strength of the rifle platoon to a platoon leader, three sergeants, six corporals, and forty-four privates. This balanced out the loss of the pack mule handlers and the Tunisian-type battalion ended up with exactly the same total enlisted strength as the regular BILA.

Divisions in the Levant

North Africa was not alone in forming colonial divisions. In July of 1939 the Levant (Lebanon and Syria) raised the 1st and 2nd Mixed Brigades of the Levant using troops mainly drawn from North Africa. As these became more numerous

the brigades were redesignated the 1st and 2nd Divisions of the Levant. Finally, on 5 October 1939, they were again redesignated, this time in the overseas territorial series as the 191st and 192nd Infantry Divisions. By the time of the German offensive of 10 May the 191st Division included the 24th RIC, 16th RTT, and the 10th *Demi-Brigade Nord Africaine* (two RTA and one RTM battalion) and three unregimented artillery battalions (one 75mm gun, one 105mm mountain, and one 155mm C). The 192nd Division was made up of the 17th RTS, 12th RTT, and 6th Foreign Legion plus three artillery battalions (one 65mm mountain, one 75mm gun, one 155mm C). Each division also had a small GRDI, a divisional anti-tank company (25mm), two engineer companies, two signal companies, a motor transport company, and a horsed transport company.

The small divisional reconnaissance battalion (GRDI) consisted of one mounted squadron-group (drawn from the 1st RSM), an armored car squadron (from the 8th Armored Car Group), a machine gun platoon, and an anti-tank platoon.

The Colonial Tirailleurs

The infantry discussed up to now have all been North African, which came under the supervision of the Army. However, the "colonial" infantry (as the term was used by the French) were organized on slightly different lines authorized by the Colonial Office. The Senegalese, Indochinese, and other colonial Tirailleurs were originally organized into two groups: units intended merely for garrison duties and *forces mobiles* that were field forces that could if needed, be dispatched to France to fight in European wars. As the external threats to French colonies increased, however, an increasingly large percentage of the colonial units were reorganized onto "mobile" lines, and by 1940 all or virtually all Tirailleurs units were so organized.

These Tirailleurs regiments were of two types: draft transport and pack transport. The rifle company of the draft transport type, which was the more common, was similar to the standard infantry rifle company except that it had only three rifle platoons instead of four. The rifle platoon consisted of three rifle squads (each a light MG and a VB grenade launcher) and a platoon HQ with a fourth VB. The company HQ provided a 60mm mortar team and four 2-horse carts (two for ammunition, one for equipment, and one for rations and baggage). Battalion fire support was provided by the two machine gun and one mortar/infantry gun platoon of the heavy weapons company. Command and control of the battalion was conducted primarily through the battalion signal platoon, which provided a 4-man team for an ER.17 transceiver and a 3-man R.11 receiver for the battalion station plus four 2-man ER.40 teams for distribution to the companies.

The light machine guns of this type formation were provided with 1,325 rounds per gun carried with the squads plus 867 rpg in the company transport and 578 rpg in the battalion trains. The 60mm mortars were provided with 96 rounds per gun carried with the mortar squad, supplemented by 48 rpg in the company trains. For the medium MGs 3,960 rpg were carried with the sections plus 1,680 in the company trains. The 81mm mortars had 128 rpg carried with them and 32 rpg in the battalion trains.

The pack transport type battalion was almost identical, but substituted pack horses for carts in some roles, particularly front-line transport of ammunition and weapons. This resulted in a reduction of about 10% in 60mm mortar ammunition carried and 50% in 81mm mortar, but otherwise, allocations were almost identical.

	White							Local			Pistols	Carbines	Rifles	Light MGs	Medium MGs	60mm Mortars	81mm Mortars	25mm AT Gun	37mm Infantry	Riding Horses	Pack Horses	Draft Horses	Carts	Bicycles
	Officers	Sergeants	Corporals	Privates	Sergeants	Corporals	Privates																	
Infantry Battalion (Draft Transport)																								
Battalion Headquarters	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0
Headquarters Platoon																								
Staff & Command Group	0	4	3	1	2	3	16	1	15	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Signal Section	0	3	6	6	0	2	17	1	32	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Trains Section	0	3	5	0	0	2	25	1	4	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	36	17	0	0
Three Rifle Companies, each																								
Commander	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Headquarters Platoon																								
Platoon Leader	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Signal Squad	0	1	1	0	1	0	8	0	5	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Trains Section	0	1	1	0	0	1	15	0	6	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	4	0	0
Mortar Squad	0	1	1	0	0	0	4	1	1	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Three Rifle Platoons, each																								
Platoon Headquarters	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Three Rifle Squads, each	0	0	0	0	1	1	10	2	0	10	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Heavy Weapons Company																								
Commander	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Headquarters Platoon																								
Platoon Leader	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Signal Squad	0	1	1	1	1	0	9	0	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Trains Section	0	1	2	0	1	2	12	0	5	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	4	0	0
Two Machine Gun Platoons, each																								
Platoon Headquarters	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Two MG Squads, each	0	1	1	3	0	1	9	4	6	5	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	0
Heavy Weapons Platoon																								
Platoon Headquarters	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mortar Section	0	1	2	2	0	0	16	4	4	13	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4	0	0
Infantry Gun Squad	0	1	1	1	0	0	5	2	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	
Infantry Battalion (Pack Transport)																								
Battalion Headquarters	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0
Headquarters Platoon																								
Staff & Command Group	0	4	3	1	2	3	16	1	15	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Signal Section	0	3	6	6	0	2	17	1	32	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Trains Section	0	3	5	0	0	3	40	1	40	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	26	16	8	0	0
Three Rifle Companies, each																								
Commander	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Headquarters Platoon																								
Platoon Leader	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Signal Squad	0	1	1	0	1	0	8	0	5	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Trains Section	0	1	1	0	0	1	22	0	15	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	4	2	0	0
Mortar Squad	0	1	1	0	0	0	5	1	1	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
Three Rifle Platoons, each																								
Platoon Headquarters	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Three Rifle Squads, each	0	0	0	0	1	1	10	2	0	10	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Heavy Weapons Company																								
Commander	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Headquarters Platoon																								
Platoon Leader	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Signal Squad	0	1	1	1	1	0	9	0	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trains Section	0	1	2	0	1	2	19	0	14	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	4	2	0	0
Two Machine Gun Platoons, each																								
Platoon Headquarters	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Two MG Squads, each	0	1	1	3	0	1	12	4	8	6	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0
Heavy Weapons Platoon																								
Platoon Headquarters	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mortar Section	0	1	2	2	0	2	18	4	6	13	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0
Infantry Gun Squad	0	1	1	1	0	0	6	2	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
note1: Draft battalion: infantry gun squad replaced by AT section (2 x 25mm) in 1938																								
note2: Pack battalion: infantry gun squad replaced by infantry gun section (2 x 37mm) in 1938																								
Colonial Tirailleurs Battalions (Mobile Type) from November 1937																								

The battalions were grouped under a regimental structure that comprised a HQ (5 officers), a headquarters platoon, a weapons platoon, and three battalions. The HQ platoon had 65 men (71 in the pack transport regiment) and provided a trains element with seven 2-horse carts (5 carts and 9 pack horses in the pack regiment) and a 39-man signal section that operated two ER.17 transceivers and an R.11 receiver as well as two 6-man telephone squads. The regimental weapons platoon had 28 men (31 in the pack regiment) and manned three horse-drawn 25mm AT guns.

Although this organization was sufficient for local security and the communications facilities quite advanced for its time, the scale of issue of heavy weapons, particularly anti-tank guns, was clearly insufficient for Tirailleurs units deployed to France. To remedy this the Office of Colonial Troops in the Metropole proposed a minor reorganization in December 1938.

The changes, which were eventually adopted by all Colonial Tirailleurs regiments around the world, involved replacing the 37mm gun squad in the draft-type infantry battalion weapons company with a 16-man, 2-gun 25mm AT section. These weapons were not introduced into the pack-type battalion, which was intended for operations in marginal terrain, but in that case, the 37mm squad was to be expanded to a 20-man, 2-gun section. Two chenillettes were also to be added to each battalion HQ (of both types), and three added to the regimental HQ. At the same time, a 26-man motorcycle scout section was to be added to the regiment HQ. These changes brought the colonial Tirailleurs regiments to a standard near that of the metropolitan infantry.

Of course, in the overseas territories, considerable flexibility was allowed in light of manpower constraints and weapons availability. In many cases the battalion HQ and heavy weapons elements were consolidated into a single HQ company, sometimes losing a machine gun platoon in the process. In other cases, the overseas units were actually stronger than the TO&E allowed. The seizure of ex-Soviet 7.62mm AT rifles from Spanish Republicans fleeing their lost cause provided an example of this². Several hundred of these weapons were appropriated and an agreement was reached to ship them to China via Indochina. The outbreak of the war, however, resulted in their being seized by the colonial army in Indochina and they were distributed freely, usually based on one per rifle section (3 per platoon), possibly the most liberal distribution of AT rifles in the

²The description of these weapons as 7.62mm Soviet AT rifles, taken from the official French Army history of the Army in Indochina, is confusing. The Soviets are only known to have produced trials models of such weapons, and it is not clear what AT rifles the Spanish Republicans used.

world.

Other units based their organization on what resources were available. The 1939 order of battle for French West Africa provided for the following forces:

- HQ, French West Africa (Dakar)
- Dakar Command (Dakar)
 - 7th *Régiment de Tirailleurs Sénégalais*
 - 6th *Régiment d'Artillerie Coloniale*
- 1st Brigade (Saint Louis)
 - 1st *Régiment de Tirailleurs Sénégalais*
 - Régiment Mixte d'Infanterie Coloniale de l'A.O.F.*
 - 1st *Bataillon de Tirailleurs Sénégalais*
- 2nd Brigade (Kati)
 - 2nd *Régiment de Tirailleurs Sénégalais*
 - 2nd *Bataillon de Tirailleurs Sénégalais*
 - 4th *Bataillon de Tirailleurs Sénégalais*
- 3rd Brigade (Abidjan)
 - 3rd *Bataillon de Tirailleurs Sénégalais*
 - 5th *Bataillon de Tirailleurs Sénégalais*
 - 6th *Bataillon de Tirailleurs Sénégalais*
 - 8th *Bataillon de Tirailleurs Sénégalais*

In this case, the independent tirailleurs battalions adopted organizations suited for the area assigned, usually covering large areas of desert or scrub country. The organization of these units was:

- 1st Battalion [Mauritania]: 7 companies and 4 nomad groups.
- 2nd Battalion [Mali]: 1 company and 2 nomad groups.
- 3rd Battalion [Niger]: 6 companies and 3 nomad groups.
- 4th Battalion [Guinea]: 6 companies
- 5th Battalion [Ivory Coast]: 3 companies
- 6th Battalion [Upper Volta]: 6 companies
- 8th Battalion [Dahomey]: 4 companies

A nomad group usually consisted of about 200 men divided into an infantry element, usually of black soldiers, and a camel-mounted cavalry element of desert tribesmen.

A similar pattern was followed in French Equatorial Africa, which was garrisoned by the *Régiment de Tirailleurs Sénégalais de Tchad* of four battalions, four nomad groups, and a motorized company; the *Bataillon de Tirailleurs Sénégalais de l'A.E.F.* of four companies in Gabon and the Congo; and the *Bataillon de Tirailleurs Sénégalais de l'Oubangui* of four companies in what is now the Central African Republic.

A similar process of forming regional divisions and brigades took place in Indochina. The 1939 order of battle for this colony was as follows:

Division du Tonkin

1st Brigade (Haiphong)

5th *Régiment Étranger d'Infanterie*

19th *Régiment Mixte d'Infanterie Coloniale*

2nd Brigade (Bac-Ninh)

9th *Régiment d'Infanterie Coloniale*

3rd *Régiment de Tirailleurs Tonkinois*

3rd Brigade (Hanoi)

1st *Régiment de Tirailleurs Tonkinois*

4th *Régiment de Tirailleurs Tonkinois*

4th *Régiment d'Artillerie Coloniale*

Division de Cochinchine-Cambodge (Saigon)

11th *Régiment d'Infanterie Coloniale*

Régiment de Tirailleurs Annamites

Bataillon de Tirailleurs Cambodgiens

5th *Régiment d'Artillerie Coloniale*

Brigade d'Annam (Hue)

10th *Régiment Mixte d'Infanterie Coloniale*

Bataillon de Tirailleurs Montagnards du Sud-Annam

With mobilization in 1940 the Cambodian battalion was expanded to the *Régiment de Tirailleurs Cambodgiens* of two battalions while a second regiment in Annam (the *Régiment de Tirailleurs Annamites - bis*) of three battalions was raised.

A special organization was required for the small and isolated French Somaliland. With the Italian invasion of Ethiopia a Senegalese Tirailleurs battalion was formed in 1935, and this expanded to *régiment de tirailleurs sénégalais de la Côte française des Somalis* in January 1939, consisting of two infantry battalions, a battery of 75mm guns, an armored car platoon and engineer elements. By the outbreak of war this had increased to seven infantry battalions, a company of twelve FT tanks and the six-vehicle armored car platoons.

Internal organization of the garrison is not clear, but in October 1939 the French Somaliland commander proposed joint action with the British should the Italians join the war. The expeditionary force that would be contributed by the French garrison would be as shown.

The force was notable on two points. The first was the reliance on motor transport, even for the mountain artillery, understandable in the generally un

[illegible]

forgiving terrain. The second was the reduced scale of heavy weapons support compared to the normal colonial and tirailleurs battalions.

Colonial Machine Gun Units

Although the bulk of the colonial infantry was formed into Tirailleurs regiments, one other type of infantry formation was also created, the colonial machine gun battalion (*Bataillon de Mitrailleurs Indigenes Coloniaux*). The mobilization plan called for six such battalions to be formed in France for three *demi-brigades* of *Mitrailleurs Coloniaux*, the 41st and 42nd using Malagasy personnel and the 52nd with Indochinese personnel. In fact, however, the Malagasies were used for other units, primarily the artillery of the 6th Colonial Division, so the 41st DBMC was all-white and the 42nd nearly so, with only 300 Malagasies.

	White				Native																
	Officers	Sergeants	Corporals	Privates	Sergeants	Corporals	Privates														
Battalion Headquarters	4	0	0	0	0	0	0		4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0
Headquarters Company																					
Command & Staff Section	0	3	3	1	1	3	17	0	17	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Signal Platoon	0	5	7	8	1	3	26	1	45	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Trains Platoon	0	3	5	0	1	4	29	1	3	38	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	46	22	0
Two Machine Gun Companies, each																					
Company Commander	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Headquarters Platoon																					
Signal Section	0	1	1	1	1	0	9	0	9	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Trains Section	0	2	2	0	1	2	13	1	3	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	5	0
Three Machine Gun Platoons, each																					
Platoon HQ	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Two MG Sections, each	0	1	1	3	0	1	9	4	0	11	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	0
Rifle Company																					
Company Commander	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Headquarters Platoon																					
Signal Section	0	1	1	0	1	0	8	0	8	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Trains Section	0	2	1	0	0	1	15	1	5	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	4	0
Three Rifle Platoons, each																					
Platoon HQ	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Three Rifle Squads, each	0	0	0	0	1	1	10	2	0	10	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Heavy Weapons Platoon																					
Platoon HQ	1	1	0	0	1	2	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Light Mortar Section	0	2	3	0	0	0	8	1	3	9	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0
Medium Mortar Section	0	1	2	2	0	0	16	1	4	16	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	4	4	0
Infantry Gun Section	0	2	3	2	0	0	10	1	4	12	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	2	0
Anti-Tank Section	0	4	2	4	0	0	9	1	7	11	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	3	3	1
Colonial Machine Gun Battalion, from 1937																					

The basic building-block of these units was the machine gun section, which consisted of a sergeant section leader, two gun squads, and three carters. The section had a one-horse cart to carry each machine gun and a third cart for ammunition, providing 3,960 rounds for each gun. The company trains carried a further 1,760 rounds per gun. The rifle company of the MG battalion was similar to that of the Tirailleurs regiments but lacked the 60mm mortar. The weapons platoon provided two 60mm mortars (with 144 rpg), two 81mm mortars (with 128 rpg), two 37mm infantry guns (with 288 rpg), and two 25mm AT guns (with 120 rpg). The battalion trains carried a further 32 rpg of 81mm and 1,280 rpg of machine gun ammunition. The battalion signal platoon was similar to that of the infantry battalions but had an additional ER.17 team.

The 42nd and 52nd Demi-Brigades served in France itself pre-war and found themselves in one of the most critical locations at the start of the German onslaught. They were stationed on the far left wing of the Maginot Line, covering the area between the fortifications and the "impassible" Ardennes. They quickly found themselves struggling to hold back the left shoulder of the German breakthrough. Although they fought well it was a task they were simply not up to. They lacked significant anti-tank firepower and, even more important, they had such limited mobility that once forced out of their positions they often had to abandon their weapons to pull back. As a result, the unit disintegrated a few days after combat began.

Tanks Overseas

The 1936 infantry TO&Es introduced a new type of unit to the French Army, the overseas-type (originally Mediterranean-type) tank battalion. These were specifically designed to be applied to the four infantry tank battalions then overseas: the 61st, 62nd, and 64th battalions in North Africa and the 63rd Battalion in Syria. All were at this time equipped with the venerable FT model tank. In North Africa two regiment-level HQs were also available: the 521st and 522nd *Commandements du Groupe de Bataillons de Chars*.

Several features distinguished the overseas-type tank battalions from their metropolitan counterparts. The most obvious of these was, of course, the employment of non-Whites in specified slots, mainly as truck drivers and orderlies. A second major feature was the provision for a fourth tank platoon in the tank companies of the battalions in North Africa. Also unlike the metropolitan

	French				Local				FT Tank (MG)	FT Tank (37mm)	FT Tank (75mm)		Motorcycles	Field Cars	Light Trucks	Trucks	Tractors
	Officers	Sergeants	Corporals	Privates	Sergeants	Corporals	Privates										
Infantry Tank Battalion (North Africa)																	
Battalion Headquarters	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Headquarters Section	0	1	2	7	0	2	14	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	1	0	0
Service Platoon																	
Administrative Group	0	5	1	4	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	0	0
Assault Tank Group	1	4	8	12	1	1	15	0	0	6	1	1	1	1	8	0	0
Three Tank Companies, each																	
Company Headquarters	1	2	2	7	0	0	7	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0
Four Tank Platoons, each*	1	1	4	6	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Service Platoon																	
Platoon Headquarters	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tracked Section	0	5	6	10	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wheeled Section	0	2	1	1	2	4	39	0	0	0	1	1	1	27	1	0	0
Maintenance Section	0	1	2	6	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Infantry Tank Battalion (Syria/Lebanon)																	
Battalion Headquarters	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Headquarters Group																	
Command Section	0	1	2	0	0	1	8	0	0	0	1	2	2	1	0	0	0
Administrative Section	0	2	6	1	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Maintenance Section	0	2	6	7	2	1	16	5	6	0	1	1	2	3	1	0	0
Assault Tank Group	1	5	6	6	1	2	14	0	0	6	1	1	1	8	0	0	0
Three Tank Companies, each																	
Company Headquarters	1	2	2	3	0	0	4	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
Three Tank Platoons, each **	1	1	4	3	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Service Platoon																	
Platoon Headquarters	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tracked Section	0	4	4	4	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wheeled Section	0	2	2	2	1	4	35	0	0	0	1	1	1	24	1	0	0
Maintenance Section	0	1	3	5	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
*only three platoons until 1939																	
**one platoon commanded by NCO																	
Infantry Tank Battalions (FT.17 Equipped), Overseas Type, From February 1936																	

battalions, the overseas tank units included trucks for carrying the aged and fragile FT tanks in non-tactical situations. This was presumably made necessary by the long distances and lack of local facilities in those theaters. The final difference was the incorporation into the TO&Es of a strange variant of the FT tank in which the normal turret was replaced by a small casemate mounting a short-barrel 75mm gun.

In the North African battalion the tank company signal assets were confined to seven French and two local soldiers who served as runners and telephonists (one also serving as a barber), since there were no radios in the company. The company trains provided 22 five-ton and 5 three-ton trucks. Eighteen of the heavier trucks were used to carry the FT tanks, while two were tanker trucks (1 for fuel and 1 for water), one carried baggage, and one was for equipment. Four of the 3-ton trucks carried personnel, while the fifth carried ammunition. In addition to trucks the service platoon also included a "tracked" section that served as a reserve pool of three tanks (with trailers for transport but no trucks) with not only crew but a total of 13 mechanics as well.

At the battalion level signal facilities were once again limited to a small squad of telephonists and runners since there were radios there either. The service platoon included the assault tank section, consisting of six 75mm-armed FT tanks along with the standard allotment of two mechanics per tank and trucks to carry the tanks and tools.

The old FTs were not the only tanks held overseas. The entire production run of D1 tanks was shipped to North Africa in the mid-1930s and used to re-equip the 61st Tank Battalion and form two more battalions, the 65th and 67th. All three battalions were based in Tunisia. In mid-1939 45 R.35 tanks were shipped overseas, the normal complement of a tank battalion. Instead, however, 30 tanks went to the 62nd Battalion and the other 15 to the 63rd. These two battalions were brought up to full strength in R.35s in early 1940. The FT tanks displaced by the entry into service of the D1s and R.35s were used to form a new battalion (66th) in Morocco and to add a fourth tank company to each of the FT battalions. Thus, at the time of the German invasion of France, the French tank strength overseas consisted of the 63rd and 68th R.35 battalions in Syria and Lebanon; the 61st, 65th, and 67th D1 battalions in Tunisia; the 62nd R.35 battalion in Morocco; the 64th FT battalion in Algeria; and the 66th FT battalion in Morocco. In addition, the FTs displaced from the 63rd battalion were kept in Syria, probably in storage, and were later encountered by Australian troops in 1941. It is not known what TO&Es were used by the D1 and R.35 battalions overseas, but it

seems unlikely they were radically different from those in the metropole as they had the same tank strengths.

In addition to the North Africa and Levant tank units, there were a few other tanks held overseas. There were two light tank companies on the strength of the colonial forces, one in Tientsin and one in Hanoi. Both were equipped with ancient FT models organized into 5-tank platoons. Such a platoon consisted of three gun-armed and two MG-armed tanks with a strength of one officer, two sergeants, two corporals (all tank commanders), five drivers, and ten mechanics. The company consisted of two such platoons plus a headquarters and a trains platoon. The former had 17 men with a field car and two motorcycles, while the latter provided a 14-man maintenance section (with one tank of each type as a reserve) and a 15-man trains section with four trucks. There were, of course, no radios in the company, only one D2 telephone set. On the withdrawal of French forces from China in 1940 the tank company was dispatched to Indochina, where it was broken up into separate platoons. There was also an independent tank platoon in Tananarive in Madagascar, this being similar to the regular tank platoon but supplemented by a 13-man trains detachment with two trucks, a field car, and a motorcycle. These tank units, with their museum-piece equipment, did not play a significant role in the war.

Cavalry

The Spahis

The most famous of the French colonial cavalry were undoubtedly the Spahis, North African troopers with French officers. Twelve regiments of these troops existed as regular units of the French Army. The regiments were numbered in two series: one for Moroccan Spahis (*Régiments de Spahis Marocains*) and the other for Algerian (RSA) and Tunisian (RST) regiments. The four Moroccan regiments were designated 1st-4th RSMs; the Algerian regiments 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th RSAs; and the Tunisian regiment the 4th RST. There was no 5th Spahis regiment in either system.

The normal peacetime station assignments of these regiments called for half of the regiments to be based in their own lands. Four regiments (6th, 7th and 9th RSAs and 4th RSM) were based in France as the components of two Spahis Brigades. One Algerian regiment (8th RSA) was based in Morocco and one regiment (1st RSM) was based in Syria. These dispositions were still in effect at the outbreak of the war in September 1939.

The Spahis regiments based in France used the TO&E of the regular French cavalry regiment with only minor changes. Racial quotas were established that provided that only Whites would hold the officer slots and, in principle, they were also given the technical NCO slots, such as medics, supply, signal, armorers, and drivers. The only organizational change to the regimental TO&E was that the machine gun platoons of the heavy weapons squadron used pack horses for transport in the Spahis regiment as opposed to the wagons in the regular French cavalry.

The Spahis machine gun squad consisted of a corporal and eight privates, all on riding horses, with a pack horse to carry the machine gun and two more for ammunition. Two such squads plus a 3-man HQ group comprised the machine gun section. Two sections and a 5-man HQ squad made up the MG platoon. Unlike the regular cavalry's MG platoon, the Spahi platoon did not have the two machine guns for anti-aircraft use; instead, four MGs for this purpose were carried in the heavy weapons squadron's ammunition trucks.

The Spahis brigade used an identical HQ as the regular cavalry brigade and, like that unit, was composed of a headquarters and two regiments. This gave the brigade a total strength of about 1,940 men, of whom about 80% were North Africans. It suffered from the same defects as the regular cavalry regiment,

Two such brigades were in existence in France at the outbreak of the war, the 1st Brigade de Spahis (with the 4th RSM and the 6th RSA) based at Compiègne, and the 2nd Brigade de Spahis (7th and 9th RSAs) at Vienne. Both were at full strength and regarded as elite units, and both participated in the 1940 campaign. The 3rd Spahis Brigade was formed on 3 November 1939 under the 9th Army by bringing over from North Africa the 2nd RSA and the 2nd RSM. On formation, the two constituent Spahis regiments were still using the overseas TO&Es.

The overseas Spahis used a different set of TO&Es. The Spahis regiments based outside France were somewhat lighter formations, especially at the lower levels.

The Spahis (overseas) rifle section was made up, like all the other French cavalry rifle sections, of a scout squad armed with rifles and a rifle squad that included a light machine gun. Each squad consisted of a corporal and five privates and the section was commanded by a sergeant. The rifle platoon was made up of a platoon headquarters, two rifle sections, and an extra scout squad. The two rifle sections in the platoon were not identical, one being entirely manned by North Africans and the other including a French sergeant and corporal. The platoon thus had a heavy weapons armament of two light machine guns (one per rifle squad) and three "VB" rifle grenade launchers (one per scout squad). It was lighter than the standard French mounted platoon in that the extra squad directly under the platoon leader was a scout squad, whereas in all the other cavalry units it was a rifle squad, providing the platoon with a third light machine gun.

The rifle squadron was made up of four rifle platoons, a headquarters platoon, and a mortar squad. The largest component of the squadron HQ group was the signal squad of a sergeant and five privates, who operated one optical signal device, one heliograph, and one set of semaphore flags as well as handling any carrier pigeons they might have with them. The combat trains had sixteen pack mules and five horses with carts. Five of the mules carried LMG ammunition, six carried rations and baggage, two water, one food, and two equipment. The carts were used for rations and baggage. In terms of ammunition, this supplemented the 2,290 rounds of LMG ammunition carried by each rifle squad with a further total of 6,075 rounds. The field trains had four light trucks; two of which carried blacksmith equipment, one reserve rations, and the fourth baggage.

The regiment was provided with two squadron-group HQs (*Etat-Major de Groupe d'Escadrons*) and these, as in the regular cavalry regiment, could be used to command the rifle squadrons in groups of two, or any detached unit the regimental commander created. In some cases the regiment commander preferred to control his four rifle squadrons directly, leaving the squadron-group HQs with little to do. The HQ was a very small tactical formation, consisting simply of the squadron-group commander, a sergeant to act as his aide, two mounted and one motorcycle dispatch riders, and three observers who could also act as radiomen when equipment was provided.

The regimental heavy weapons squadron was made up of a headquarters platoon, two pack machine gun platoons, an infantry gun squad, and, in the case of four regiments, two anti-tank platoons. The machine gun platoons were similar to those in the France-based Spahis regiments except for the loss of a corporal

and a private in each section HQ. The infantry gun squad was made up of a sergeant, a 3-man gun crew, a guard for the horses, and three pack-horse leaders. One of the pack horses carried the 37mm Mle 1916 infantry gun and the other two carried a total of 128 rounds of HE and 32 rounds of AP ammunition. In addition, two of the Spahis regiments had horsed anti-tank platoons identical to those of the regular divisional cavalry regiment, and two more had motorized anti-tank platoons identical to those of the *Dragons Portés* regiment of the DLC, although it is not known what vehicles were used in the latter case.

Command and control of the regiment was exercised through the headquarters platoon, which was built around a large signal section. This section provided two telephone teams each of a corporal and five privates, a 13-man optical unit with 3 optical signaling devices, 3 heliographs, and 3 sets of semaphore flags; and a radio squad with two transceivers for command purposes and a receiver tuned to aircraft frequency. The radio squad was also responsible for six ER.40 backpack transceivers that were distributed to the line squadrons and squadron-group HQs as needed to be operated by those personnel. The signal section also had an all-French 11-man motorcycle squad with nine solo and two sidecar motorcycles, the latter each being armed with a light machine gun.

There were, of course, considerable variations in the actual organization of the different overseas Spahis regiments. The 2nd RSA and the 2nd RSM were shipped to France in October 1939 to form the 3rd Spahis Brigade. As in the first two such brigades, this new formation consisted simply of the two Spahi regiments and a brigade HQ, with no combat or service support units. The 2nd RSA and 2nd RSM kept their overseas organization and were still operating under these TO&Es when the Germans invaded, although reinforced slightly by the addition of 15 truck drivers to operate motor vehicles loaned to the regimental HQ squadrons by the Army. The 1st and 3rd RSAs, formed into the 7th Mounted Cavalry Brigade of the 6th DLC in North Africa, were also at full strength, including their anti-tank platoons. The 4th RST followed the normal standards but was reinforced by a platoon of 20mm Mle 39 anti-aircraft guns. Two Spahis regiments were operating considerably understrength: the 8th RSA was missing a complete squadron-group, and the 3rd RSM was missing a squadron-group and the heavy weapons squadron. In addition to the regiments themselves, a number of regimental depots raised independent rifle squadrons for service in North Africa. Thus, "7th Squadrons" were raised by the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd RSAs, and "8th Squadrons" by the 1st and 2nd RSAs. These squadrons operated in the Sahara and other southern zones and were not tactically part of the parent regiment.

The Chasseurs d'Afrique

The other type of colonial cavalry were the *Chasseurs d'Afrique*, formed from the White settlers to operate against the Rifs and other tribesmen who rebelled against the French rulers in the 1920s and 1930s. This mission required a fair amount of firepower and high mobility so that these units could also contribute to the defense of North Africa, but there were no plans to use them in France proper. Five such regiments were raised: three in Algeria (2nd, 3rd, and 5th *Régiments de Chasseurs d'Afrique*) and one each in Morocco (1st RCA) and Tunisia (4th RCA).

Initially all the *Chasseurs d'Afrique* regiments were mounted cavalry, but by the time the 1936 TO&Es came out the Moroccan and Tunisian RCAs had been converted to armored cars. The mounted regiment consisted of a headquarters platoon, headquarters squadron, a squadron-group of two mounted rifle squadrons, and a machine gun squadron consisting of a HQ platoon, two machine gun platoons, and a horse-drawn 25mm anti-tank platoon. All the components of the horsed RCA used the TO&Es of the overseas-type Spahis regiment, except that all the slots were filled by whites. By 1940 only the 5th RCA was still operating under this TO&E.

The motorized-type RCA consisted of a headquarters platoon, service squadron, two squadron-group HQs, and four armored car squadrons. The armored vehicles used were older types and fell into two categories: reconnaissance (AMD) and scout (AMR). The former consisted primarily of Laffly 50, 80, and S15 TOE models, each of which had a four-man crew and armed with a short-barrel 37mm gun and a light machine gun. The AMRs had 3-man crews and were armed solely with light machine guns. The AMRs were apparently not the tracked vehicles used in the metropole, but small armored cars.

The AMD and AMR platoons had identical personnel strengths but differing organizations. The AMD platoon had three AMDs, each with a sergeant vehicle commander and three crewmen, a motorcycle dispatch rider, a field car with a driver carrying the platoon leader and platoon sergeant, and a light truck with a driver carrying five reserve personnel. The platoon leader could, of course, take over one of the AMDs if he wished. The AMR platoon had five armored vehicles, two of which were crewed by a sergeant and two corporals each, and three by a corporal and two privates each. The platoon also had a field car with driver for the platoon leader and platoon sergeant, a motorcycle dispatch rider, and a truck with two men. As in the AMR platoon, the platoon leader would normally take

over one of the armored vehicles in combat. In both types of platoons, one of the armored vehicles per platoon had a transceiver, this being the vehicle used by the platoon leader. The truck included in each armored platoon carried the items need for independent platoon operations, including about 20,000 rounds of MG ammunition, but no 37mm ammunition.

The squadron HQ platoon was composed of signal, trains and maintenance sections. The signal section had four motorcycle dispatch riders, a nine-man optical signal unit (with 2 optical signal devices, 2 heliographs, and 2 sets of semaphore flags), and a 4-man radio team with a command version armored car with a transceiver and an aircraft-frequency receiver. The trains section provided two light trucks (one for water and one for ammunition) and three medium trucks (one for fuel, one for baggage and rations, and one field kitchen). The maintenance section included a medium truck with an A-frame for lifting and two armored vehicles, each with two crewmen, as replacement vehicles.

The squadron-group HQ was a small tactical formation consisting simply of the commander, an adjutant, a sergeant assistant, a driver with a field car, and two motorcyclists.

Service support for the regiment was provided by the service squadron. The most unusual feature of this squadron was the automotive

	Officers	Sergeants	Corporals	Privates	Pistols	Carbines	Light MGs	Armored Cars	Motorcycles	Field Cars	Light Trucks	Trucks	Tractors
Regiment Headquarters	7	0	0	7	7	7	0	0	0	7	0	0	0
Headquarters Group													
Headquarters Platoon	0	5	7	39	3	48	0	5	13	0	2	0	0
Two Motorcycle Rifle Platoons, each													
Platoon Headquarters	1	1	1	3	2	4	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
Two Rifle Sections, each	0	1	2	7	2	9	2	0	5	0	0	0	0
Service Squadron													
Squadron Headquarters	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Headquarters Platoon	0	2	2	12	2	14	0	0	1	0	0	2	0
Trains Platoon	1	4	1	40	3	42	0	0	0	0	8	4	0
Medical Platoon	2	1	1	16	12	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0
Automotive Platoon	0	3	10	64	3	74	0	0	1	0	2	24	3
Two Squadron Groups, each													
Group Headquarters	2	1	0	3	2	2	0	0	2	1	0	0	0
Two Armored Car Squadrons, each													
Squadron Headquarters	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Headquarters Platoon													
Signal Section	0	3	1	16	5	15	0	1	4	0	0	0	0
Trains Section	0	3	2	11	3	13	0	0	1	0	2	3	0
Maintenance Section	0	1	2	16	1	18	0	2	0	0	1	1	0
Four AMR Platoons, each	1	4	7	10	17	5	0	5	1	1	1	0	0
or Four AMD platoons, each	1	4	7	10	14	8	0	3	1	1	1	0	0
Motorized Chasseurs d'Afrique Regiment, from 1936													

platoon, which included a 5-man maintenance team for squadron vehicles, a 27-man regiment maintenance group, and a 45-man transport group. The transport

group provided ten fuel tanker trucks and ten medium trucks for forward supply. In addition, the trains platoon provided a light truck for food, 2 medium trucks for food, and 2 more for ammunition. These two ammo trucks carried a total of 12,150 rounds of 7.5mm ammunition for LMGs, 60,480 rounds of 8mm machine gun ammunition, and 1,620 rounds of 37mm ammunition.

The regimental headquarters group combined the HQ platoon elements and two motorcycle rifle platoons, although in the TO&E the designation headquarters platoon was applied to the whole, anomalously including the two motorcycle platoons. The HQ platoon included a 31-man signal section which provided two optical signal devices, two heliographs, two sets of semaphore flags, and, most importantly, five radio-equipped armored command vehicles. Because of the importance attached to aerial reconnaissance in the counter-guerilla operations in North Africa, the five command vehicles all included receivers set to aircraft frequency. The motorcycle rifle platoons were identical to those in the armored car regiment of the cavalry division.

The neat division between the mounted *Chasseurs d'Afrique* in Algeria and the armored car variants in Tunisia and Morocco originally planned in 1936 did not last long. A new TO&E was issued specifically for the 3rd RCA in July 1938. This provided for a headquarters group, a service squadron, one squadron-group HQ, two mixed squadrons, and a heavy weapons squadron. The HQ group was similar to that of the motorized RCA but lacked the two motorcycle rifle platoons. The service squadron was similar to the motorized RCA, but had ten fewer trucks in the automotive group. The squadron-group HQ was identical to that in the motorized RCA. Each mixed squadron was made up of a headquarters platoon, two armored car (AMD) platoons with the same organization as in the motorized RCA, and one motorcycle rifle platoon as in the armored car regiment of the cavalry division. The heavy weapons squadron was made up of a headquarters platoon, two machine gun platoons, and two anti-tank platoons. The HQ and machine gun platoons used the TO&Es of the separate *Chasseurs d'Afrique* group. The HQ platoon was made up of signal and trains sections and a maintenance squad. The signal section had a transceiver, two optical signaling devices, and two sets of semaphore flags as well as four motorcycle dispatch riders. The machine gun platoons were each carried on three light trucks, one for the platoon HQ and one for each 2-gun section. The anti-tank platoons were identical to those of the *Dragons Portés* regiment of the cavalry division. This gave the 3rd RCA the following configuration:

Regiment HQ & Platoon (55)
Service Squadron (131)
Squadron-Group HQ (6)
Two Mixed Squadrons, each (125)(4 LMG)(9 AMD)
Heavy Weapons Squadron (154)(8 MG, 4 25mm AT)

With the decision to create a cavalry light division in North Africa in late 1939 a reorganization of two of the RCAs was required to form the light mechanized brigade. In furtherance of this, the 1st RCA was converted from a motorized RCA to a heavier armored unit, and the 2nd RCA from a mounted unit to a light portee infantry unit. For this role, the 1st RCA was reconfigured into a HQ, a service squadron, an armored car squadron, two squadrons of Hotchkiss tanks (H.39s with short 37mm guns and H.35s) and a motorcycle rifle squadron. Presumably, these used the same TO&Es as the cavalry units in the metropole. The 2nd RCA was reconfigured into a HQ, a service squadron, a motorized rifle squadron, a mixed armored car/motorcycle squadron, and a machine gun squadron. This unit probably used the TO&Es of the 3rd RCA for the armored car/motorcycle, heavy weapons, and service squadrons and that of the *Dragons Portés* of the DLC for the motorized rifle squadron.

The Cavalry Brigades

The five RCAs and seven Spahis regiments resident in North Africa at the outbreak of the war were grouped into five *Brigades de Cavalerie d'Afrique* numbered 3 through 8 with two regiments held as independent units. When the 6th DLC was formed the 6th and 7th Brigades were chosen to form the body of the division, with the 7th being redesignated the *7^e Brigade à cheval* and the 6th the *16eme Brigade Légère Motorisée*. This gave the 6th DLC the following appearance in April 1940:

HQ, 6th Cavalry Light Division
7th Mounted Cavalry Brigade
 1st *Régiment de Spahis Algériens* (type overseas)
 3rd *Régiment de Spahis Algériens* (type overseas)
16th Light Motorized Brigade
 1st *Régiment de Chasseurs d'Afrique*
 1 arm car sqn, 2 light tank sqns, 1 m/c sqn
 2nd *Régiment de Chasseurs d'Afrique*
 1 mot rifle sqn, 1 arm car-m/c sqn, 1 hvy wpns sqn
1st Colonial Motorized Artillery Regiment
 two battalions 75mm field guns
190/1 Engineer Company
190/84 Signal Company
290/28 Horse Transport Company

390/28 Motor Transport Company
190 Intendance Group
190 Divisional Medical Group

At the start of the 1940 campaign in France, the division was based in the Gafsa-Feriana area of Tunisia as a mobile reserve.

The departure of the 2nd RSA and 2nd RSM to France in October 1939 depleted the cavalry strength in North Africa and the formation of the 6th DLC left only six regiments of cavalry to cover the rest of North Africa. The 4th *Brigade de Cavalerie d'Afrique* controlled the 4th RSA (with two squadrons of AMRs and two of AMDs) and the horsed 4th RST under the command of the South Tunisian Front. The 5th Brigade had under its control the 3rd RSM and the 8th RSA, both mounted units and missing a squadron-group each. This 5th Brigade was based in Morocco. The 3rd Brigade formerly controlled the two Spahis regiments that were sent to France and remained in existence, but as a headquarters unit only, occasionally commanding the 3rd RCA as required by the theater commander. Most of the time the 3rd RCA was assigned territorial duties in Constantine while the 5th RCA assumed the same duties in Algiers.

This distribution of the cavalry graphically demonstrates the revival of French concern over Italian intentions in North Africa. Through the 1930s the basing of cavalry regiments (*Spahis* and *Chasseurs d'Afrique*) in North Africa was unchanged: 6 in Algeria, 4 in Morocco, and 2 in Tunisia. By the spring of 1940, however, the disposition had changed to incorporate the 6th DLC and the 4th Brigade (6 regiments) in Tunisia, the 5th Brigade (2 regiments) in Morocco, and 2 separate regiments in Algeria.

Chasseurs d'Afrique Squadron Groups

In addition to these regiments, the depots of the 2nd and 5th *Chasseurs d'Afrique* each raised an independent squadron-group for use as divisional reconnaissance units. The TO&E for this type of unit published in 1936 provided for a formation of a headquarters platoon, service platoon, reconnaissance squadron, and a heavy weapons squadron. The reconnaissance elements of the group, the armored car AMD platoons and motorcycle rifle platoons, were identical to those in the DLC. Fire support for the group was provided by a squadron with machine gun and heavy weapons platoons. Each of the machine gun platoons was carried on three light trucks, one for the headquarters components and one for each of the 2-gun sections. The heavy weapons platoon also had three light trucks, one to carry a 37mm infantry gun team and two each carrying a 60mm mortar crew. The ratio of supporting to support units in the group was unusually

high but this probably reflected the group's role as a mobile force for anti-guerilla operations rather than a need for unusually heavy reconnaissance units. The separate squadron-group of the 5th RCA was at full strength except for lacking one motorcycle platoon and was assigned to the 181st African Infantry Division (DIA), while that of the 2nd RCA lacked the heavy weapons squadron and both motorcycle platoons, although it had an extra armored car platoon. This group was assigned as the reconnaissance element of the 182nd DIA.

	Officers	Sergeants	Corporals	Privates	Pistols	Carbines	Light MGs	Medium MGs	37mm Inf Guns	60mm Mortars	Armored Cars	Motorcycles	Field Cars	Light Trucks	Trucks	Tractors
Group Headquarters	7	0	0	7	7	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0
Headquarters Platoon																
Command Section	0	2	4	12	2	16	0	0	0	0	0	13	0	1	0	0
Signal Section	0	3	5	18	1	25	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0
Service Platoon																
Platoon Headquarters	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Trains Section	0	5	5	41	2	49	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	5	0
Medical Section	0	1	2	10	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	0
Maintenance Section	0	2	3	19	2	22	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	4	1
Pioneer Section	0	1	2	11	1	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
Reconnaissance Squadron																
Squadron Headquarters	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Headquarters Platoon																
Platoon Headquarters	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Signal Section	0	3	3	20	5	21	0	0	0	0	1	9	0	1	0	0
Trains Section	0	3	1	13	3	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	2	0
Maintenance Section	0	2	2	15	3	16	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	3	2	0
Two Armored Car Platoons, each*	1	3	3	9	3	13	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0
Two Motorcycle Rifle Platoons, each*	1	3	5	17	6	22	4	0	0	0	0	13	0	0	0	0
Heavy Weapons Squadron																
Squadron Headquarters	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Headquarters Platoon																
Platoon Headquarters	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Signal Section	0	1	3	15	2	17	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	2	0	0
Trains Section	0	3	2	14	3	14	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	2	0
Maintenance Squad	0	1	0	4	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0
Two Machine Gun Platoons, each																
Platoon Headquarters	1	1	1	6	2	7	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	0
Two Machine Gun Sections, each	0	1	2	7	4	6	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Heavy Weapons Platoon																
Platoon Headquarters	1	1	0	7	3	6	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	3	0	0
Mortar Section	0	1	2	10	5	8	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Infantry Gun Squad	0	1	1	4	3	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
*same organization as in armored car regiment of DLC																
Independent Squadron-Group, Chasseurs d'Afrique, 1936-40																

Artillery

There appear to have been few TO&Es issued by the artillery branch for overseas units other than those discussed for divisional field artillery. The GHQ reserve for North Africa included only two artillery regiments: the *Régiment d'Artillerie Coloniale de Tunisie* (with two motorized battalions of 75mm guns) and the 288th Artillery Regiment. Under the numbering sequence used by the French this latter unit should have been a divisional heavy regiment for the 88th DIA; however, no such units were assigned to African Infantry Divisions. Instead, as a GHQ unit, it consisted of one battalion each of 75mm portee, 75mm mountain, 155mm GPF, and 220mm C.

Two artillery regiments served in Indochina, the 4th and 5th RACs. The former was a component of the *Division du Tonkin* and consisted of three mountain battalions and an AA/coastal battalion. The latter was part of the *Division de Cochinchine-Cambodge* and consisted of two mountain battalions and an AA/coastal battalion. On mobilization in September 1939 the 4th RAC was expanded to four mountain battalions, an AA battalion, and a coastal battalion; while the 5th RAC added a mountain battalion. The most common weapon was the 75mm mountain gun (51 in service), but the only modern pieces were twelve 105mm mountain howitzers (all in the 4th RAC). The rest of the mountain artillery was equipped with elderly 65mm and 80mm weapons. The AA batteries were provided with 37 25mm guns, 20 old 75 Mle 13 guns, 8 ex-Soviet 76mm guns from the Spanish civil war impounded on their way to China, and two modern 90mm guns. There were seven modern coastal guns, four of 105mm and three of 140mm, along with 64 older guns of 75-95mm. The two regiments also manned the few fixed defenses along the China border with 12 old 155mm M77 guns and 42 old 75mm on static mounts.

Anti-aircraft units tended to be somewhat scarce in the overseas territories. In North Africa, modern air defense was concentrated in four batteries: 31/62, 32/62, 31/65, and 32/65. These were equipped with 75mm Mle 1917/1934 guns. In addition, there were six batteries of the old 75mm Mle 15/34 static weapon in Tunisia, nine more in Algeria, and about six more in Morocco.

Under the 1936 TO&E for the Mle 1917/34 battery promotion for North Africans was certainly limited. All of the 4 officer, 25 sergeant, and 29 corporal slots in the battery were restricted to whites. The only jobs open to North Africans were 30 of the 109 private soldier and 13 of the 50 driver positions.

The battery was divided into a headquarters platoon, a firing battery, a resupply platoon, and a trains platoon. The headquarters platoon provided a direct fire direction center (8 men) and indirect fire direction center (11 men), two listening device posts (7 each), a telephone squad (14 men), and a radio squad (5 men). The 69-man firing battery manned the four 75mm guns, each of which was provided with an artillery tractor for mobility. The firing battery also included a 4-man machine gun team and six trucks. The 33-man resupply platoon provided six heavy trucks, three of which carried ammunition and one fuel. The 40 men of the trains platoon provided the usual administrative services.

The organization of the static batteries is not known but is unlikely to have differed significantly from the metropolitan model.

To provide modern low-level air defense for units in North Africa a group of light AA batteries began mobilization in March 1940. Seven batteries were to be raised: 16/62, 17/62, 18/62, 16/64, 17/64, 16/65, and 16/66. The TO&E for these units was published on 2 March 1940 and was almost identical to the 25mm AA battery TO&E used in the homeland for field operations. The weapons and vehicle allocations were identical except for the addition of one field car in the firing battery. The personnel distribution was also similar but increased somewhat due to the inclusion of 19 cadre and supplemental North African personnel in the firing battery and three more North Africans in the HQ and trains elements. As with the 25mm batteries in France proper, it was planned to expand these units from two 3-gun sections in the firing battery to three sections, but this transformation never came about. Indeed, it is questionable to what degree these new batteries were ever equipped, with post-war reports indicating that only one 25mm gun was present in Algeria at the time of the armistice in 1940, and only eight more in Tunisia, with the quantity in Morocco unknown.

Other Units

The Moroccan *Goums*, who were to play such a major part in the rebirth of the French Army in 1943, were originally formed in 1908 as supplemental troops with a primary mission of internal security. Recruited on a tribal basis, the goums performed well in the Rif war, due in part to the French practice of using goums recruited from different tribes against the rebellious elements. By 1934 there were 50 goums each consisting of three rifle platoons (each with a light machine gun), a machine gun section, and a trains group with 25 pack mules for a total goud strength of ten French officers and NCOs and 161 Moroccans. In addition, some *goums auxiliaires* were raised in the late 1930s as a form of tribal levy, to activated as need be on the order of the Resident General of Morocco.

In September 1939 the goums were placed on a war footing and a number of auxiliary goums called up into active service. A total of 124 goums were incorporated into the armed forces as *goums de marche* and to simplify command and control 16 *groupements de goums*, each of four goums and a headquarters platoon, were formed. Four of the goud groups participated in the skirmishing between French and Italian forces on the Tunisian-Libyan border in 10-25 June 1940.

Twelve goums were also formed in Tunisia, comprising three on foot (*goums à pied*), two on horse, four on camels, two mixed and one motorized.