

By 1940 Thailand was the only independent nation remaining in South East Asia. Indochina had been taken by the French, the East Indies by the Netherlands, Malaya and Burma by the British, and the Philippines by the United States. The independence had not come without a price, however. In the early 1800s the Siamese Kingdom had controlled a number of vassal states in Cambodia, Laos, Burma and Malaya. During the colonial era, these states had been lured or forced away from Siamese suzerainty and incorporated into the surrounding Western holdings. Whether the lot of populations of these areas improved with the change in masters is questionable. What is not in doubt, however, is that the Thais thereafter nurtured a burning belief that "their" land and subject people had been stolen.

The modern Thai Army dates from the early 1900s. King Rama V returned from a trip to Europe in 1897 impressed with the military might he saw there. He placed a field marshal of his, a graduate of the Danish Military Academy, in charge of reorganization. In 1910 three army HQs and ten division HQs were established to rationalize command. Nevertheless, the maneuver units were only constituted in cadre form, to be filled out when needed by local levies. With the new, more nationalistic governments following the 1932 coup placing increasing emphasis on military autarky the process began of converting the field units to permanent entities with a fully embodied strength.

A general headquarters and general staff were established in Bangkok, along with a logistics organization, these providing the mechanism for centralized control. The country was divided into five military regions (also called "military circles") that commanded a variable number of infantry, cavalry, artillery, and engineer units of battalion size, along with elements needed to carry out local military administration such as conscription, record-keeping, hospital services, etc.

On mobilization, a field army would be formed. This would be commanded by a new Supreme HQ formed by the general HQ in Bangkok. Each military region would form a division HQ and one, two, or three regimental HQs. These division and regimental HQs would then take to the field commanding all or a portion of the combat and combat support units in their region. A residual portion of the regional HQ would be left behind, along with the administrative elements and any field units not needed by the division to carry out the normal territorial duties.

The active force was built around 21 infantry battalions. In peacetime, each battalion consisted of a headquarters, two rifle companies, and a machine gun company. As a first stage in mobilization conscripts and recalled reservists would be used to fill out the battalions with a third rifle company each. A second stage in mobilization would see each region form additional infantry battalions.¹ Also included in the peacetime order of battle

1 From the numbering system in the order of battle it would seem that each region was to bring itself up to a strength of nine infantry battalions. This would be the most logical explanation for the

were five cavalry regiments, eight artillery battalions, and two engineer battalions. The artillery battalions were to go through the same mobilization effort as the infantry, enlarging from two batteries to three per battalion and then spinning off a cadre to form eight more battalions. The only units held directly under GHQ control were one of the artillery battalions, a small armored regiment, and a three-battalion anti-aircraft regiment.

That mobilization would come was becoming ever more inevitable through the late 1930s. On 26 December 1938, the ultra-nationalistic Luang Phibun became prime minister, one of only a few people destined to leave an indelible mark on Thai history. A harbinger of things to come, one of Phibun's first acts was to change the name of Siam to Thailand in 1939. Ominously, this was regarded as marking a change in the way the people and the government looked at themselves. Siam was a geographical area but the Thai people (as defined by the use of the Thai language) extended considerably beyond the borders of old Siam. To bolster national autonomy conscription was stepped up and paramilitary youth training organizations brought into being.

Rhetoric gave way to action in late 1940. Thailand and France had been negotiating over disputed territory since 1936. Specifically, Thailand claimed that portion of Laos west of the Mekong River and a good deal of Cambodia. When France fell to the Germans in June 1940 negotiations came to a standstill. The rump Vichy government felt it lacked the moral authority to give away portions of the French empire and instead engaged in some rather transparent stalling techniques. The fact that the French colonial government in Indochina could no longer count on significant military assistance from the homeland presented an opportunity almost too great to resist. Further compounding the situation was that as French authority waned in the Far East the Japanese were moving in quickly to fill the void. In September 1940 the Japanese, availing themselves of German pressure on the Vichy government, secured transit and basing rights in Indochina. A brief window of opportunity presented itself, while the French were declining in power and before the Japanese could secure their hold on Indochina, for Thailand to act.

To be on the safe side Thailand concluded a non-aggression pact with Japan on 22 September, but this was just a minor prelude of what was to come. On 20 October the Thai government announced its intention to revoke all past territorial agreements and on 13 November the wartime position of Supreme Commander-in-Chief was created, a first step towards the transition from a peacetime to a field army. A definitive step was taken on 25 November when two Army HQs were officially established (Eastern and Northeastern) to control operations and the army ordered mobilized.

The mobilization differed from earlier plans because of the need to concentrate forces. Existing forces were brought up to strength, but only six new infantry battalions were

allocation of the 1st-9th peacetime Infantry Battalions to the 1st Region, the 10th-12th for the 2nd Region, the 19th-22nd for the 3rd Region, etc.

formed (Nos. 4 and 38-42). The artillery was proportionally strengthened to a higher degree, forming six new battalions (Nos. 2, 3, 6, 9, 13, and 15) to complement the eight peacetime battalions. Five of the new infantry battalions and two of the new artillery battalions were deployed to the Malay Peninsula, presumably to guard against a British reaction or a French amphibious counterattack.

In contrast to earlier mobilization plans, which called for each military region to form a division HQ, a total of 13 "divisions" were formed, each equating to a regiment or brigade. To command groups of these "divisions," a new echelon of command was created, the "mixed division", which thus equated roughly to a western division in size.

For operations against Cambodia the new Eastern Army commanded two mixed divisions and a division essentially formed from the 1st and 2nd Military Regions. The Prachin Mixed Division consisted of the Vatana Division (the former 2nd Military Region, less one artillery battalion) and the Lop Buri Division (one new and two regular infantry battalions from the 1st Region plus the artillery battalion from the 2nd Region). The Aran Mixed Division consisted solely of the Bangkok Division, representing the remaining strength of the 1st Region. On the coast was the small Chantaburi Division.

To the north of the Eastern Army was the Northeastern Army, which was built around the elements of the 3rd Region reinforced by an infantry battalion from the 1st Region and an artillery battalion (and possibly two infantry battalions) from the 4th Region.

The Bangkok Mixed Division consisted of the 5th Military Region troops plus those elements of the 1st Region that had not yet been assigned to a combat theater. The Southern Mixed Division was an entirely new command to control the new infantry and artillery battalions assigned to the Malay Peninsula, while the Northwestern Division was based around Chiang Mai in the far north.

These units were mobilized on the TO&Es in force during 1939-40. The largest maneuver unit of fixed size was the infantry battalion which consisted, on mobilization, of three rifle companies², a machine gun company, an infantry gun platoon, a signal platoon, and a service platoon, along with the small headquarters. The rifle company consisted simply of a small headquarters and three rifle platoons. The company HQ was composed of the company commander (a captain, with a riding horse), a sergeant, a corporal, a private first class, and nine privates. Each of the rifle platoons was made up of a headquarters (a lieutenant, a platoon sergeant, a private first class, and three privates), while each squad consisted of a corporal, a private first class, and ten privates. The rifle squad appears to have been divided into two fire teams, one a five-man fire support team armed with four rifles and Madsen light machine gun, the other a six-man maneuver team armed

2 The Thais referred to these as "machine gun companies" since they had been reequipped with light machine guns, while the fourth company was referred to as a "heavy machine gun company". Standard Western usage has been adopted here.

exclusively with rifles. The standard infantry rifle was a Japanese Arisaka model in 8mm, with one rifle in each maneuver team and one in the platoon HQ equipped with a rifle grenade launcher attachment. The rifle company held no transport assets other than the riding horse for the commander and a single bicycle for a messenger. The company carried as its basic load 954 rounds of pistol ammunition, 5,025 rounds of rifle ammunition, 9,450 rounds for the Madsen guns, 72 rifle grenades, 108 offensive hand grenades, and 18 smoke grenades. For signaling the company had two flare guns, two semaphore flag sets, and two bugles.

	Officers	Sergeants	Corporals	Privates	Pistols	Rifles	Rifle Grenade Launchers	Light Machine Guns	Medium Machine Guns	M84 Mortars	M49 Guns	M77 Guns	Riding Horses	Pack Horses	Oxen	Carts	Wagons	Bicycles	Motorcycles	Trucks, 2-ton
Battalion Headquarters	2	2	3	11	3	12		0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	4		0
Signal Platoon	1	1	3	41	1	44		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5		0
3 Rifle Companies, each	4	4	10	121				9	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1		0
Company Headquarters	1	1	1	11	14	113		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1		0
Three Rifle Platoons, each	1	1	3	37			4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
Machine Gun Company	5	8	13	359				0	12	0	0	0	1	13	0	0	0	1		0
Company Headquarters	1	2	1	11	20	289		0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1		0
Three MG Platoons, each	1	2	3	73				0	4	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0		0
Ammunition Platoon	1	0	3	129				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
Infantry Gun Platoon (Type A)	1	4	0	55	4	52		0	0	0	2	1	1	0	20	10	0	0		0
Medical Platoon	1	3	2	37	2	0		0	0	0	0	0	1	2	4	2	0	0		0
Service Platoon	1	5	1	158	2	146		0	0	0	0	0	1	0	76	38	0	0		0
Battalion Total	23	35	52	1024	75	882		27	12	0	2	1	10	15	100	50	0	13		0

Infantry Battalion, from 1940

The battalion machine gun company was a huge formation of 385 men divided into a headquarters, three machine gun platoons, and an ammunition platoon. The company HQ was similar to that of the rifle company but added a senior sergeant and a private. Each of the machine gun platoons consisted of a small headquarters (a lieutenant, a corporal, and a private) and two sections each of a senior sergeant, a corporal, two PFCs, and 34 privates. Each section was provided with two Vickers water-cooled machine guns and a pack horse for each gun. The ammunition for the guns was man-carried, and this apparently explains the very large manpower requirements. A gun detachment seems to have consisted of a PFC gun commander, a gunner, two loaders, two first-line ammunition bearers, and a horse handler for the pack animal. The remainder of the privates in the section, some 22 of them, were apparently used as ammunition bearers and for local security with their rifles. The company's ammunition platoon provided a further massive contingent of ammunition bearers, consisting of a headquarters (lieutenant, three corporals, and three privates) and three squads each of two PFCs and 40 privates. The company thus provided a total of 258 ammunition bearers (not including the first-line bearers with the gun crews) for 12 MGs, or better than 21 men per gun. These men carried the company's basic load of 48,000 rounds of Vickers ammunition, along with rations and other supplies. Rifle ammunition was carried at the ratio of 54 per weapon,

which was slightly greater than that of the rifle company, indicating perhaps that the ammunition bearers of the machine gun sections were expected to fight as riflemen in combat. Signal facilities for the MG company were similar to those of the rifle company.

The infantry gun platoon consisted of a headquarters (lieutenant, senior sergeant, and eight privates) two M49 infantry gun squads, and an M77 dual-purpose gun squad.³ Each of the M49 squads consisted of a senior sergeant, a PFC, and nine privates. The M77 gun squad was considerably larger, with a senior sergeant, a PFC, and 26 privates. The infantry gun platoon was the only combat element of the battalion with organic draft transport, having ten carts each drawn by two oxen. Signal facilities held by the platoon comprised four sets of semaphore flags. The platoon's basic load comprised 192 rounds of M49 HE ammunition and 65 rounds of M77 AP ammunition.

The battalion signal platoon consisted of a 3-man headquarters, an 18-man telephone section, a 16-man visual signaling section, and a 9-man messenger squad. The telephone section was provided with five field telephones and 6 km of wire. This enabled a telephone team to be sent to each rifle company, the MG company, and the gun platoon, with one team retained at battalion HQ. The visual section was provided with fourteen sets of semaphore flags, three Model 81A signal lamps, and one Model 70 signal lamp. The platoon also held a single flare gun for battalion use.

The service platoon was divided into two sections, one of four squads and 72 men and the other of six squads and 90 men. This platoon held the bulk of the battalion's transport: 31 cargo and 7 water carts, drawn by oxen⁴. The platoon also carried the bulk of what

3 No further information is available on the identities of these weapons. It seems likely from the crew size that the M49 was probably the French 37mm Mle16 or its Japanese copy. US and French intelligence identified the M77 as a unique weapon with two barrels, interchangeable in the field, that could configure the gun either as a 47mm anti-tank gun or a 75mm infantry howitzer. Two firms made such 47/75mm weapons, the Dutch Siderius and the French Schneider.

4 These unusual vehicles were unique to the Thai Army. The US Military Attache described them as follows:

The Kien or bullock cart, drawn by two animals, is universally used in Eastern and Central Thailand. The cart differs from the one commonly known in India or Burma, it being of lighter build and has a long narrow body with two axles fitting between the body and an outrigger on either side. These characteristics are more exaggerated in the southwest of Central Thailand, there the body is but 18 inches wide and often 10 feet long. Bullock carts carry about 300 pounds and their speed in good country reaches nearly two and a half miles per hour, for a day's journey of 15 to 17 miles. In the southwest, they are seldom used except between the fields and the villages. With the making of cart tracks, carts are now becoming popular in the North, and the numbers are rapidly increasing.

pioneer equipment the battalion had. About 380 of the soldiers in the rifle and MG companies carried entrenching tools, 140 carried small spades, and about 50 carried small axes. The service platoon added 13 each of regular shovels, big spades, and mattoxes, along with 500 sandbags and ten 25-meter lengths of barbed wire. Also carried was the battalion's reserve of heavy weapons ammunition, some 93,000 rounds of machine gun ammunition, 324 offensive hand grenades, 243 defensive (fragmentation) hand grenades, 216 rifle grenades, and 54 smoke grenades. No additional infantry gun ammunition was carried, and rifle ammunition totaled only 4,470 rounds.

The organization of the cavalry regiment is not known in detail but consisted of a headquarters, two rifle squadrons, and a machine gun squadron with a total mobilized strength of about 600 men. A rifle squadron was divided into four platoons each of three sections. One of the sections in each platoon was a fire support unit with nine men armed with seven carbines and a Madsen light machine gun. The other two sections were maneuver units each of twelve men armed solely with carbines. The machine gun squadron was organized into three firing platoons and an ammunition platoon. A firing platoon consisted of two sections each of twelve men, three of them (armed with pistols) being the gun crew for the Vickers weapon, two (armed with carbines) being ammunition bearers, and the remainder (also with carbines) horse-leaders and holders for the pack animals.

Only ponies were bred in Thailand, which severely limited the usefulness of the cavalry. During the late 1930s proper riding horses were imported from Australia, but it is unlikely that enough were purchased to fully remount the cavalry force. The cavalry trooper carried a sabre slung from a waistbelt and a carbine with 30 rounds of ammunition.

The artillery branch in peacetime comprised two motorized battalions (1st and 13th) equipped with 75mm M63 mountain guns (Bofors weapons, probably the L/22), five more battalions (4th, 7th, 8th, 10th, and 15th) with horse-drawn M63s, one mixed horse-drawn battalion (15th) with two batteries of M63s and one of M51 (Japanese) 75mm field guns, and one heavy battalion (16th) with one battery of 105mm M78 (Bofors) 105mm guns and one of M78 (Bofors) 150mm howitzers. Despite the widespread use of mountain guns pack transport was not used by any of the artillery units.

Each battalion, except the 15th, consisted of two batteries in peacetime, planned for expansion to three in war. It is not clear, however, if this expansion took place. A battery consisted of two platoons (each with two gun sections) and a support platoon. In a 75mm battery, the support platoon was divided into an ammunition and trains section and an observation and signal section. In a 105mm/150mm battery, the support platoon consists of a signal section and a reconnaissance/observation section.

Fire support for the field army was thus effectively composed of relatively small numbers of 75mm mountain guns. The utility of the branch was further undermined by the lack of modern communications, reliance being placed exclusively on telephones for the vital observer/firing position link. Given the nature of much of the Thai border areas responsiveness in anything but fixed positions must have been rather low.

The anti-aircraft regiment consisted of two light battalions and one heavy battalion. The 1st and 2nd (Light) AA Battalions were each made up of two batteries of 40mm Model 76 guns (Bofors L/60)⁵ and one company of 12.7mm Model 80 machine guns. The 3rd (Heavy) AA Battalion had two batteries of 75mm Model 77 (Bofors M29), one of 8mm machine guns, and one of searchlights.

A 40mm battery was divided into three firing platoons and a headquarters platoon. Each firing platoon was composed of two sections each with a 40mm gun. The HQ platoon provided air observers and buglers, as well as eight machine gun teams with 8mm weapons for defense of the battery on the move. The heavy AAMG company/battery also consisted of three firing platoons and a headquarters platoon. Each firing platoon had four 12.7mm machine guns on high-angle mounts. The battery was provided with a commander's vehicle, an ammunition vehicle, an observation vehicle, and six gun vehicles (each carrying two machine guns).

A heavy AA battery had two firing platoons (each with two 75mm guns) and a headquarters platoon, the latter including the fire control instruments. The predictor in use with these batteries had a maximum ceiling of 6,400 meters (corresponding to a fuze setting of about 16 seconds) and could compute for targets with speeds of up to 150 meters per second (about 325 mph) when used with the M77 gun. The light AAMG battery had two dissimilar firing platoons. The first platoon had one 4-gun section for attachment to battalion HQ and two more 4-gun sections for attachment to the 75mm batteries. The second platoon had two 4-gun sections for attachment to the searchlight battery. The battery had a truck for the commander and the battery instruments, a second truck for ammunition, and one truck for each MG section. The searchlight battery had two light platoons each with four searchlights and three sound locators. Both lights and sound locators were of Dutch manufacture.

With these forces mobilized the Eastern Army began moving to border positions near Cambodia. Skirmishing and air battles began in late November 1940 and on 5 December the Thais began moving across the border near Aranya Prathed. On 9 January the Aran and Prachin Mixed Divisions began their invasion of Cambodia, forcing the French border troops back. The French command ordered a counterattack on 10 January with two battlegroups totaling seven infantry battalions and two artillery battalions, designed to

5 The Thais also used the Vickers 2pdr AA gun and there may have been a mixture of Vickers and Bofors weapons in the 40mm batteries.

cripple the Thai thrust into Cambodia. Launched on 16 January north of Sisophon the attack failed, being poorly executed and irresolutely led. On 24 January the 31st Infantry Battalion, representing the advance guard of the Northwestern Division, reached Den Chai and then moved northeast to strike into Laos, the northern prong of the Thai strategic plan.

Although the Thais had been concerned about Japanese ambitions in Indochina, they need not have worried. When they approached Tokyo to help settle the matter on terms favorable to Thailand the Japanese responded with alacrity. As a result of Japanese urgings, the Germans pressured the Vichy government into accepting a ceasefire on 25 January that went into effect on 28 January. The truce went into effect as scheduled on the Cambodian front but up north communications were worse, perhaps conveniently so, and the 31st Battalion continued its advance and occupied Ban Thadue on the Mekong near Luang Prabang on 2 February and even sent a scouting squad across the river and a further 12 km into Laos before it was ordered back.

A peace conference held under Japanese auspices was begun on 7 February that to no one's surprise awarded Thailand 69,000 square kilometers of French Indochina, comprising that portion of Laos west of the Mekong (the province of Sayaboury in the north and Champassak in the South) and the Cambodian provinces of Battambang and Siem Reap.

With objectives attained and a Japanese-sponsored truce in place neutralizing the colonial French forces, the Thai Army demobilized on 30 April. Announced Thai casualties had totaled 583, of which 401 (94 killed, 136 seriously wounded and 218 lightly wounded) had been Army personnel. Valor streamers were awarded to the 3rd, 6th, and 8th Infantry Battalions for their role in the "liberation" of Cambodia.

With the demobilization, the Army returned to its peacetime stations. This would not last long, however. As a result of the war the United States placed trade sanctions against Thailand. At the same time, Thai fears of Japanese motives and goals resurfaced as Japan became ever more belligerent. Feeling alone and threatened Phibun ordered a partial mobilization of the Army on 26 August 1941. The mobilization increased the size of the army considerably, from the normal peacetime 21 infantry battalions to 39 although this time, inexplicably, no new artillery units were raised. The new units remained under military district control, although the post of Supreme Commander was reestablished on 12 November. The 1st Military Region at Bangkok was not changed significantly by the mobilization, but all the other regions were substantially reinforced, to the point where the 5th MR was split into two with the 5th Region now restricted to the northern base of the Malay Peninsula and the new 6th Region for the southern half.

The August 1941 mobilization also brought into effect a new TO&E for the infantry battalion. No significant changes were made to the battalion HQ, the signal platoon, the rifle companies, or the medical platoon. The machine gun company was, however,

extensively modified. The machine gun platoon was increased slightly in size, gaining seven privates although inexplicably losing supervisory personnel in the form of a sergeant, a corporal, and two PFCs. More significant was that each section, previously armed with a pair of Vickers machine guns and rifles, was now given two Japanese light machine guns as well, some 300 of these weapons having been purchased in 1939-40. Like the Madsens of the rifle companies, these new weapons were man-carried although the company retained its horse for each Vickers gun. The ammunition platoon of the company was drastically reduced in size, losing all six PFCs and 49 privates. Nevertheless, the machine gun company remained a huge, awkward unit of 341 men.

	Officers	Sergeants	Corporals	Privates	Pistols	Rifles	Light Machine Guns	Medium Machine Guns	M84 Mortars	M49 Guns	M77 Guns	Riding Horses	Pack Horses	Oxen	Carts	Wagons	Bicycles	Motorcycles	Trucks, 2-ton
Battalion Headquarters	2	3	3	9	2	12	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
Signal Platoon	1	1	3	41	1	21	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5	0	0
3 Rifle Companies, each	4	5	13	118	4	113	9	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Machine Gun Company	5	6	11	319	5	208	12	12	0	0	0	1	14	0	0	0	0	0	0
Infantry Gun Platoon	1	1	2	40	1	40	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Anti-Aircraft Platoon	1	1	2	19	1	9	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Medical Platoon	1	3	2	37	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0
Service Platoon	1	5	2	173	1	178	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	90	42	3	0	0	0
Forage/Veterinary Squad	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Battalion Total</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>994</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>807</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>90</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>

INFANTRY BATTALION, from 26 August 1941

The infantry gun platoon lost one of its M49 squads, being reduced to just one weapon of each type. This was presumably due to the expansion of the infantry and the limited number of weapons available. An anti-aircraft platoon was added to the battalion, this consisting simply of a three-man headquarters and two squads, each of a corporal and nine privates. A squad manned two more of the Japanese machine guns, here on high-angle mounts for anti-aircraft use.

All transport, except riding horses and bicycles and those pack horses needed for medical equipment and the Vickers guns, were now concentrated in the service platoon. The platoon now held 90 oxen that pulled 35 general-purpose carts, seven water carts, two general-purpose wagons, and one water wagon.

It was with this organization that the Thai Army faced the momentous events of 7/8 December 1941. The resurgent Thai suspicions of Japanese motives were well-founded. Thailand occupied a crucial geographical leverage point in Tokyo's plans for Malaya and

Burma. If unconditional basing and transit rights could not be secured Thailand would have to be subjugated.

In the early morning of 8 December, the Japanese ambassador to Bangkok presented his demands to the Thai government. Almost simultaneously Japanese troops began to pour across the Cambodian border and land from ships in the Gulf of Siam. Skirmishes broke out at Prachuap Khiri Khan, Chumporn, Nakorn Sri Thamarat, Songkhla, and Pattani. Resistance was futile and at 1000 hours Phibun ordered a ceasefire. The IJA moved into Thailand and occupied vital airfields and other strategic locations.

Seeking to turn necessity into an advantage Phibun immediately began negotiations to ally Thailand with Japan. Looking for common ground, it quickly became apparent that a portion of Burma claimed by Thailand also represented an inactive northern flank of the Japanese advance into Burma. Phibun agreed to garrison this area in exchange for Japanese "title" to this portion of Burma. On 21 December a Thai-Japanese Treaty was signed, bringing Thailand into the war and granting them the area bounded by the Mekong River to the east, the Sulaween River to the west, and the Chinese border to the North. For reasons that are still debated Thailand gratuitously declared war on the United States a month later, although the Thai ambassador to Washington refused to deliver the declaration.⁶

To implement the occupation of the newly acquired territory a new command, the Northwestern Army, was activated on 24 December 1941. At the same time, the army structure was completely reconfigured to yield a full field force. The old semi-improvised system of "divisions" and "mixed divisions" was abolished and replaced by a modern structure of regiments and divisions with realistic spans of control. For the Northwest Army the 2nd Military Region, reinforced by a regiment from the 4th Region, was rebuilt into the 2nd Division. The 3rd Region was reformed into the 3rd Division, and the 4th Region, with a regiment from the 1st Region, was formed into the 4th Division. The bulk of the cavalry elements were brought together to form the new Cavalry Division. Outside of the Northwest Army, the 1st Region (less elements detached to the 4th Division) formed the 1st Division as a reserve around Bangkok, while the 5th and 6th Regions combined to form the 6th Division for southern Thailand.

On 9 May 1942, the 4th Division under the Northwest Army began its advance into the ceded territory. The advance went slowly, although apparently without opposition, but on 1 June the 13th Infantry Regiment seized the town of Laug, 12 km south of the China border. In late May the 3rd Division had also begun its advance and on 5 June it seized the provincial town of Keng Tung. On 17 June the 3rd Division officially replaced the 4th Division as the occupation force in the new Thai Derm United province of Thailand.

6 This would later prove fortuitous, for at the end of the war the US resisted British pressure to "punish" Thailand by simply refusing to recognize that a state of war had ever existed.

With the occupation complete the Army reverted to a modified version of its peacetime organization. The division HQs were disbanded and control reverted to the military regions. The regimental HQs, however, were retained, as was the expanded force structure of 41 infantry battalions and 12 artillery battalions. In this new structure, the regimental HQs and the district HQs coexisted, with the regiments and region HQs commanding the combat units and the district HQs the depot and service units. The only known exception to this rule was the Surin Military District of the 3rd Region, which included a reconnaissance platoon, a signal company, and an artillery battery.

In August 1943 Thailand further benefitted from Japanese largesse when the Malay states of Kelantan, Terengganu, Perlis, and Kedah were handed over to Bangkok. By this time, however, signs were beginning to appear that all was not well with the Japanese war effort. In September the army was expanded and ordered into the field again. Nine new infantry battalions were mobilized (numbered 54 and 60-67),⁷ along with two new regimental HQs (20th and 21st, by drawing off cadres from the 8th and 7th Regiments, respectively). Four more artillery battalions (2nd, 6th, 12th, and 14th) were also activated.

Of equal significance was the issuance at the same time of a whole new set of TO&Es for field army units. The infantry battalion was drastically reduced in size, losing over 250 men. The rifle company was little changed, retaining the same armament and ammunition load as before. Similarly, the signal platoon continued to rely on five telephones, six km of wire, and four signal lamps.

Two units, however, were significantly changed. The former machine gun company was redesignated a heavy weapons company and reduced to a single machine gun platoon and an infantry gun platoon. The MG platoon was made up of a lieutenant, a sergeant, four corporals, three PFCs, and 69 privates and was split into three sections, each manning two Vickers medium machine guns. The infantry gun platoon had a strength of a lieutenant, two corporals, a PFC, and 41 privates, and was made up of an M49 gun squad, an M77 gun squad, and an ammunition squad. For transport the company was provided with six pack horses for the Vickers guns, 30 for Vickers ammunition, four for the M49 gun, and ten for the M49 ammunition. It also had two trucks, one for the M77 gun and one for its ammunition. It would seem, however, that due to equipment shortages, only the infantry battalions in the North West Army included infantry gun platoons. Not surprisingly, trading in the bulk of the 21 ammunition bearers per machine gun found in the earlier companies for 5 pack horses reduced ammunition carriage in the company from 4,000 rounds per gun to 2,700. For the gun platoon, the company carried 100 rounds of M49 HE, 24 rounds of M77 HE and 27 rounds of M77 AP ammunition.

⁷ Five more infantry battalions, numbered 55-59, were also officially activated but apparently only existed as cadre units until 1944/45 when the 56th and 57th show up in the order of battle.

	Officers	Sergeants	Corporals	Privates	Pistols	Rifles	Light Machine Guns	Medium Machine Guns	M84 Mortars	M49 Guns	M77 Guns	Riding Horses	Pack Horses	Bicycles	Motorcycles	Trucks, 2½-ton
Infantry Battalion																
Battalion Headquarters	3	5	3	35	3	23	0	0	0	0	0	3	5	1	0	0
Signal Platoon	1	1	3	42	1	24	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0
3 Rifle Companies, each																
Company Headquarters	1	2	1	16	4	113	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Three Rifle Platoons, each	1	1	4	39			3	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Heavy Weapons Company																
Company Headquarters	1	1	1	18	3	55	0	0	0	0	0	1	50	1	0	0
Machine Gun Platoon	1	1	4	72			0	6	0	0	0	0		0	0	0
Infantry Gun Platoon	1	0	2	42			0	0	0	1	1	0		0	0	0
Medical Platoon	1	3	2	37	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0
Service Platoon	1	1	0	92	1	41	0	0	0	0	0	0	127	0	0	2
Forage/Veterinary Squad	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Battalion Total</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>711</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>482</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>184</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>4</i>
Infantry Regiment Base																
Regiment Headquarters	9	16	8	35	19	5	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	3	2	3
Headquarters Company																
Company Headquarters	1	2	1	17	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	6	0	0
Defense Platoon	1	1	2	23	1	10	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mortar Platoon	1	1	4	71	1	20	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Scout Platoon	1	1	3	31	1	28	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Signal Company																
Company Headquarters	1	4	2	17	2	21	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	2	1	2
Radio Platoon	1	2	7	47	1	34	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	
Wire Platoon	1	2	11	82	1	62	0	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	
Medical Platoon	2	2	4	50	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
Veterinary Platoon	1	1	1	14	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0
Supply Platoon	2	6	5	48	2	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	8
Ammunition Platoon	2	5	1	29	2	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Transportation Platoon	2	6	1	30	2	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	12

Infantry Battalion & Regiment, 1943

The battalion service platoon was also much reduced in size and traded in its 45 ox carts for 127 pack horses. The platoon consisted of six squads: one in support of each rifle company, one for the weapons company, one for the battalion HQ elements, and one for rations and kitchen duties. The supply platoon carried 28,200 rounds of reserve rifle and MG ammunition.

Another innovation was the introduction of the standardized infantry regiment base. In addition to its two or three infantry battalions a regiment now had a fixed composition of a

headquarters, a signal company, a weapons company, and medical, veterinary, supply, ammunition, and transport platoons.

The regimental signal company was made up of a 24-man HQ, a 57-man radio platoon, and a 96-man telephone platoon. The radio platoon was provided with three RS.5 and four RS.6 transceivers, permitting the establishment of a regimental wireless net. The telephone platoon had ten M.82 telephones, two switchboards, 30 km of wire, and five hand wire reeling machines.

The weapons company was divided into a 21-man HQ, a 77-man mortar platoon, a 27-man defense platoon, and a 36-man reconnaissance platoon. The mortar platoon was armed with a pistol, 20 rifles, and three M84 mortars with 288 rounds of ammunition. The reconnaissance platoon was made up of a lieutenant, a sergeant, three corporals, three PFCs, and 28 privates and was armed with a pistol, 28 rifles, and three light machine guns. The defense platoon was apparently divided into two large sections, was composed of a lieutenant, a sergeant, two corporals, and 23 privates, and was armed with a pistol, ten rifles, and four light machine guns. The company had no organic signal facilities other than semaphore flags and signal panels.

The regimental supply platoon was divided into a 26-man HQ, a 17-man section, and an 18-man section. Its eight trucks carried rations, cooking gear, 11,000 rounds of rifle and MG ammunition, and 288 rounds of M84 mortar ammunition. The ammunition platoon was built around three 7-man squads plus a 16-man HQ. It carried 145,500 rounds of rifle and MG ammunition, 288 rounds of M84 mortar ammunition, and 2,700 hand grenades. The transportation platoon of four squads used its trucks to lift elements of the regiment and to supplement the "pipeline" of the supply and ammunition platoons.

Analogous to the standardization of the infantry regiment was the new standardization of the components of the division base. TO&Es were issued for the divisional signal battalion, the pack transportation battalion, the motor transport platoon, the medical battalion, the veterinary platoon, and the ammunition platoon.

The main elements of the divisional signal battalion were its signal company and the permanent wire platoon. The signal company consisted of a 25-man HQ, a 74-man radio platoon, and a 94-man telephone and visual platoon. The radio platoon was divided into five squads each with an RS.5 transceiver and six squads each manning an RS.6 or Model 83 transceiver. The other platoon was made up of nine telephone squads and a visual squad and was provided with a total of 15 M.56 telephones, three switchboards, 50 km of wire, and visual panels. For transport, the company had only twelve riding horses, four bicycles, four motorcycles, and four trucks. The permanent wire platoon, with a dozen riding horses, a truck, and a motorcycle, was responsible for utilization of the civilian telephone and telegraph system.

A TO&E was issued for a divisional pack transport battalion. In fact, however, there is no record of divisions receiving such a unit and it is possible that only one such battalion was activated. The battalion was built around three transportation companies, each of which had 552 pack horses plus whatever civilian carts and vehicles they could requisition. The pack horse handlers were civilians for the most part, and the large numbers involved suggest that they may have been used as porters as well.

The divisional motor transport platoon was broken into two squads, one with five trucks for the division HQ and one with four trucks for the division artillery. The ammunition platoon of the division had two squads each of five trucks. In the field, the transport platoons of the infantry regiments were usually attached to the divisional motor transport platoon and the infantry regiment ammunition platoons to the divisional ammunition platoon.

The medical battalion was a fairly large formation but must have been crippled by its immobility. The only motor vehicles were ten trucks in the ambulance platoon and one more in the sanitation platoon, while the only other transport was the 25 ox carts in the supply platoon.

Lacking a transport battalion the divisions had to rely on army or GHQ assets to bring supplies forward. Each army had a transport company of 118 men with 45 cargo trucks. The GHQ transport battalion was built around two motor transport companies, similar to those in the field armies, and a water transport company. The latter was a large unit of 561 men in four 133-man platoons and a 29-man HQ. The water company was provided, according to the TO&E, with nine "steamers", 14 "motorboats" and 80 "ship carriers", although the exact meaning of the latter term is unknown.

Thus transport must certainly rank among the most critical of the army's shortcomings. It seems unlikely that the army could have supported more than one or two divisions in heavy combat for any appreciable length of time, especially given the limited Thai road network.

Fire support for the army was another serious problem. Under the 1943 TO&Es there were to be three battalions (1st, 5th, and 8th) of M.80 guns, two battalions (2nd and 3rd) of M.80 howitzers, one battalion (19th) of M.51 field guns, twelve battalions (4th, 6th, 7th, 9th-15th, 17th and 18th) of 75mm M.63 mountain guns and one heavy battalion (16th) of 105mm M.51 guns and 150mm M.78 howitzers, although the 17th, 18th and 19th Battalions do not appear to have been activated during 1943. Surprisingly, the artillery branch may have been motorized during 1941-43, at least implied by the official Thai organizational history.

The most common weapon was still the Bofors 75mm M.63 mountain gun, and it was this weapon that commonly provided fire support for the divisions. Each M63 battery consisted of a 14-man headquarters, two 38-man gun platoons, and a 38-man signal platoon. Each

battery was provided with six trucks to tow the guns and carry instruments and equipment, and four more ammunition trucks. The latter provided carriage for 72 rounds of HE ammunition per gun. Signal equipment held by the battery comprised four telephones, a switchboard, 6 km of wire, two sets of M70 signal lights, and panels and flags. The battalion's supply platoon carried 400 litres of fuel, rations, and baggage, but no ammunition. The battalion HQ included its own signal platoon with six telephones, two switchboards, 12 km of wire, and four signal lights. The medical platoon provided a six-man squad to each battery.

Several facets of the above organization are instructive. The first was the absence of radios. All communications with supported units had to be by telephone and the small quantity of wire carried probably often mandated that the observer net be tied into an outside command net, as the six km of wire held by the batteries would just barely be enough to reach an observer in the defense. It seems unlikely that fire support could have been maintained in a fluid battle, although the French discovered in their 1941 counterattack in Cambodia that a 24-hour period of consolidation was enough time for the Thais to set up their artillery control net.

A second feature was the absence of ammunition transport above the battery level. The TO&E notes simply that "ammunition transport was the responsibility of next higher unit (Division, Army)".

The other field artillery units were generally similar. The M80 gun and M80 howitzer batteries apparently used larger trucks, for they were able to dispense with the ammunition trucks and still carry 100 rounds per gun. An M51 gun battery carried

	Officers	Sergeants	Corporals	Privates	Pistols	Rifles	Light Machine Guns	Artillery Pieces	Trucks, 2-ton
Artillery Battalion (75mm M.80 Gun)									
Battalion Headquarters	4	10	5	47	8	14	0	0	3
Supply Platoon	1	2	2	27	1	16	0	0	5
Medical Platoon	1	2	1	16	1	0	0	0	1
Two Batteries, each	4	8	7	71	8	27	2	4	6
<i>battalion total</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>232</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>84</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>21</i>
Artillery Battalion (105mm M.80 Howitzer)									
<i>as above, except:</i>									
Two Batteries, each	4	8	7	79	8	35	2	4	6
<i>battalion total</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>248</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>21</i>
Artillery Battalion (75mm M.63 Mountain Gun)									
<i>as above, except:</i>									
Two Batteries, each	4	8	5	73	8	31	2	4	10
<i>battalion total</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>236</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>29</i>
Artillery Battalion (75mm M.51 Gun)									
Battalion Headquarters	4	10	5	57	8	14	0	0	3
Supply Platoon	1	2	3	37	1	24	0	0	6
Medical Platoon	1	2	2	21	1	0	0	0	1
Three Batteries, each	4	8	5	73	8	31	2	4	10
<i>battalion total</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>324</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>131</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>40</i>
Artillery Battalion (Heavy)									
Battalion Headquarters	4	10	5	47	8	14	0	0	3
Supply Platoon	1	2	4	47	1	32	0	0	7
Medical Platoon	1	2	3	26	1	0	0	0	1
M.51 Gun Battery	4	8	5	73	8	31	2	4	6
M.78 Gun Battery	4	8	7	91	8	43	2	4	14
Two M.78 Howitzer Batteries, each	4	8	7	103	8	51	2	4	14
<i>battalion total</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>580</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>222</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>69</i>

Artillery Units, from September 1943

108 rounds per gun, while the heavy artillery batteries each carried 100 to 106 rounds per gun. In all cases, signal equipment was the same as that carried by the M51 battalion.

The reduction in the number of Vickers guns per infantry battalion enabled the infantry branch to raise two new types of units, machine gun battalions. Two TO&Es were issued for these units, one for a "machine gun battalion" and the other for a "heavy machine gun battalion (support)".

The machine gun battalion was a line unit built around a rifle/weapons company and three machine gun companies. Each of the machine gun companies consisted of a 14-man headquarters, three 71-man MG platoons, and a 41-man rifle platoon. The rifle platoon, which presumably supplied the reconnaissance and reserve elements for the company, was made up of a small HQ (a lieutenant, a sergeant, and three privates) and three rifle squads (each of a corporal, a PFC, and ten privates). Each of the rifle squads was provided with a light machine gun in addition to their rifles. A machine gun platoon had a HQ (a lieutenant, two sergeants, and four privates), two medium machine gun sections (each a corporal, a PFC, and 18 privates), and two rifle squads (identical to those in the rifle platoon). Each medium machine gun section manned two Vickers guns. The company thus had a total of nine light and twelve medium MGs. The light MGs and their ammunition were hand-carried while the Vickers teams were allocated three pack horses per gun crew, one for the gun and two for ammunition. With these assets, the company carried a total of 169,200 rounds of rifle and MG ammunition, along with 1,020 hand grenades.

The rifle/weapons company was made up of a headquarters, a mortar platoon, an infantry gun platoon and two rifle platoons. The mortar platoon consisted of a headquarters (a lieutenant, a sergeant, a PFC, and six privates) and three squads (each a corporal, a PFC, and six privates). The TO&E shows a total of eight M85 mortars so presumably the headquarters, as well as the squads, was responsible for manning two weapons. The infantry gun platoon was made up of a HQ (a lieutenant, a sergeant, and four privates), two gun sections (each a corporal, a PFC, and 22 privates), and an ammunition section (a corporal and 16 privates). A rifle platoon was made up of a headquarters (a lieutenant, a sergeant, a corporal, and six privates) and three rifle squads (each a corporal, a PFC, and nine privates). The company thus fielded six light MGs (in the rifle platoons), eight M85 mortars, and two M77 dual-purpose guns. For transport, the company had three pack horses each carrying 112 rounds of M85 mortar ammunition, two horses towing the M77 guns, and two more towing ammunition carts for these weapons with a total of 48 HE and 54 AP rounds, along with one pack horse for general equipment.

The battalion also included a reconnaissance platoon with a 3-man HQ and three scout squads each of a corporal, a PFC, and nine privates. The battalion signal platoon was made up of a 3-man HQ, a 30-man telephone section, a 16-man visual signaling section, and a 9-man messenger squad. The platoon held a total of seven M.82 telephones, a

switchboard, and 10 km of wire in the telephone section; six M.81A signal lamps, one M.70 signal lamp, and six semaphore flags in the visual section. These supplemented the assets of the line companies, where each company had nine M.81 lamps and one semaphore set. The supply platoon consisted of a 2-man HQ, an 18-man section, three 24-man sections, and one 27-man section. It was allotted 188,280 rounds of rifle and MG ammunition, 336 rounds of M85 ammunition, 1,556 hand grenades, and 54 rounds (30 HE/24 AP) of M77 ammunition. It also held three to six dozen each of axes, shovels, picks, etc., along with rations, camouflage material, etc. For transport, however, it had only fifteen carts and no animals to pull them.

While the normal machine gun battalion was a discreet line element, capable of holding a section of front on its own, the support heavy machine gun battalion was a pool of Vickers guns designed for attachment as needed to regular infantry units. For this role, it consisted simply of a battalion base and three machine gun companies. The machine gun company consisted of a headquarters (a major, a captain, a first sergeant, a sergeant, a corporal, a PFC, and seven privates), two machine gun platoons, and a headquarters platoon. A machine gun platoon was made up of a headquarters (a lieutenant, two sergeants, and four privates) and four machine gun sections (each a corporal, a PFC, and 18 privates). Each section manned two Vickers guns and was provided with two pack horses to carry the guns and four more for ammunition. The headquarters platoon consisted of a 3-man HQ, a 16-man ammunition section, and a 16-man rations section. This platoon had a further 18 pack horses for ammunition and 18 more for general transport. The company carried a total of 84,970 rounds of rifle and machine gun ammunition, along with 320 hand grenades.

The battalion signal platoon was made up of a 3-man HQ, a 30-man telephone section, a 39-man visual signaling section, and a 9-man messenger squad. Equipment was similar to that of the normal MG battalion's signal platoon except that it had 18 signal lamps and 18 semaphore flags instead of six. The battalion supply platoon was a motorized unit with twelve 2-ton trucks. It carried 150,750 rounds of rifle and MG ammunition along with 1,128 hand grenades, rations, water, baggage for the officers, medical equipment, etc.

Four battalions were officially formed in September 1943, the 1st and 2nd Machine Gun Battalions and the 10th and 11th Heavy Machine Gun Battalions (Support). It would seem, however, that the 2nd and 11th Battalions remained in cadre form only through the war as only the 1st and 10th Battalions show up on the army's order of battle.

The army's mobile force continued to be found in its cavalry arm. The cavalry regiment was strengthened under the September 1943 reorganization with the addition of light mortars, but few other changes were apparently made. The mounted platoon now consisted of a headquarters (a lieutenant, two PFCs, and eight privates), two rifle squads (each a sergeant and 13 privates), and a mortar squad (a sergeant and six privates). Each rifle squad was armed with twelve rifles and a light machine gun, while the mortar

squad had three M47 mortars. The platoon HQ also apparently manned a single M85 mortar. A mounted rifle squadron consisted of a 46-man HQ and four rifle platoons. In addition to the riding horses, the squadron was provided with 52 pack horses, including eight used for carrying the light MGs. The squadron carried a total of 15,420 rounds of rifle and 11,520 rounds of light MG ammunition, along with 280 hand grenades, 160 rounds of M47 and 48 rounds of M85 mortar ammunition.

	Officers	Sergeants	Corporals	Privates	Pistols	Rifles	Light Machine Guns	Medium Machine Guns	M47 Mortars	M85 Mortars	M49 Infantry Guns	Riding Horses	Pack Horses	Motorcycles	Cars & Trucks	Bicycles
Cavalry Regiment																
Regiment Headquarters	3	4	2	19	4	15	0	0	0	0	0	28	8	0	0	0
Signal Platoon	1	5	6	58	2	52	0	0	0	0	0	70	16	0	0	0
Two Rifle Squadrons, each	5	14	2	209	14	196	8	0	12	4	0	230	52	0	0	0
Machine Gun Squadron	4	9	5	147	19	127	0	6	0	0	1	132	64	0	0	0
Medical Platoon	1	3	1	31	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	37	7	0	0	0
Veterinary Platoon	1	5	1	22	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	29	6	0	0	0
Service Platoon	1	8	1	62	2	58	0	0	0	0	0	50	31	0	5	3
Cavalry Brigade Headquarters Units																
Brigade Headquarters	10	7	4	34	12	19	0	0	0	0	0	49	16	2	0	3
Signal Squadron	3	9	6	77	4	62	0	0	0	0	0	87	21	1	0	2
Defense Platoon	1	3	2	40	3	39	2	0	3	1	0	46	7	0	0	0
Medical Platoon	1	2	1	23	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	27	5	0	0	0
Veterinary Platoon	1	3	1	15	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	5	0	0	0
Service Platoon	1	6	2	78	2	69	0	0	0	0	0	63	44	0	5	0

Cavalry Units, from September 1943

The cavalry regiment's machine gun squadron consisted of a 29-man HQ, a 76-man machine gun platoon, an 18-man gun platoon, and a 42-man ammunition platoon. The machine gun platoon was made up of a small HQ (a lieutenant and a sergeant) and three sections, each of a sergeant, three corporals, and 20 privates. Each section manned two Vickers guns, each carried on a pack horse. The gun platoon consisted simply of a five-man HQ and a single 13-man firing section manning one M49 infantry gun. The ammunition platoon had a 4-man HQ, three 7-man squads for MG ammunition, and a 17-man section for M49 ammunition. The squadron was provided with a total of 64 pack horses: 8 for the M49 gun, 6 for the machine guns, 36 for MG ammunition, and 14 for general equipment. It carried 36,000 rounds of Vickers ammunition and 48 HE rounds for the M49 gun. Signal facilities in both the rifle and MG squadrons were the same: four visual teams each with an M.81 signal lamp and a semaphore flag set.

The regimental signal platoon, which consisted of an 11-man HQ, a 6-man visual squad, an 18-man radio section, and a 35-man telephone section, was provided with five telephones, a switchboard, five km of wire, two radios, and signal panels. The supply platoon carried the unit ammunition reserve (10,800 rounds for rifles, 7,680 rounds for machine guns, 96 rounds for the M47 mortars, and 560 hand grenades) as well as small quantities of tools.

Also established for the first time was a TO&E-defined structure for the 35th Cavalry Brigade base elements. The largest component was the signal squadron, consisting of a 12-man HQ, a 26-man radio platoon, and a 57-man telephone and visual platoon. The radio platoon manned one large base radio and five smaller FM.5 models. The larger platoon was built around a 47-man telephone section (with 6 telephones, a switchboard, and 12 km of wire), and a 7-man visual squad.

The brigade's defense platoon, responsible for the security of the HQ elements, was identical to the rifle platoon of a mounted squadron. The supply platoon used pack horses and trucks to carry rations and kitchen gear.

Engineering support to the field army was provided by the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 37th Engineer Battalions, although it seems that not all were in existence at the same time. An engineer battalion consisted, under the 1943 TO&Es, of a 12-man headquarters, a 149-man HQ company, three 154-man engineer companies, and a 38-man medical platoon.

An engineer company was made up of a 16-man HQ and three 46-man platoons and was armed with 96 rifles and six Japanese light machine guns. It held no tools or transport of its own, all these assets being held by the battalion HQ company. This company was built around a 36-man "special" platoon that handled maintenance and provided some skilled craftsmen, and a 149-man supply platoon that kept and issued eleven platoon carpenter sets, nine each of platoon demolition and platoon post engineer sets, four each of blacksmith and tinsmith sets, and other assorted equipment. The company HQ included a signal section with seven telephones, a switchboard, and 18 km of wire. The company also included the battalion's motor transport, two cars, 25 trucks, and two motorcycles.

Few major additions were made to the RTA's order of battle after September/October 1943. Two cadre infantry battalions (56 and 57) were mobilized and three new infantry battalions were raised (77, 88 and 99). A new division, the 37th, was formed but primarily by redistribution rather than accretions to strength. To form the division the 9th Infantry Regiment was taken from the 3rd Division and the 35th Cavalry Brigade from GHQ reserve. The three new infantry battalions plus one battalion from 2nd Army reserve rounded out the line strength of the division. Fire support was provided by two new artillery battalions, the 27th and 28th.

By mid-1944 it was become increasingly evident that the Axis was in deep trouble. When Tojo's government fell in Japan on 18 July the Thai assembly acted and ousted Phibun's government six days later. Thereafter the Thais followed a desperate dual-track approach of maintaining good surface relations with the Japanese while frantically reassuring the Allies (and particularly the US) through back channels that they wanted no part of the war. As the British drive through Burma brought them closer to the Thai border Bangkok's concern grew. On 6 August 1945 Hiroshima was destroyed by an atomic bomb and on 14 August Japan surrendered. Two days later the Thai government issued a decree proclaiming the earlier declaration of war on the UK and the US to be "void" and 16 August was declared national "Peace Day".

It was fortunate for the RTA that peace had come before they had had to fight the by-now very tough and very expert British 14th Army. Great progress had been made in organizing the RTA along modern lines during the period 1935-45, but it was still a long way from being a capable field force by 1945 standards. In part, this was due to a chronic shortage of equipment. With the start of the war modern weapons and vehicles became difficult to buy because so many industries were now fully committed to meeting their own nations' needs. Progressive alienation of potential suppliers did little to help and after December 1941 the only supplier left was Japan, which itself needed all the equipment it could get its hands on. The Thai Army thus found its equipment park all but frozen at 1940 levels of quantity and capabilities while other armies improved almost exponentially.

Tactical communications did not improve materially, the infantry battalion net relied in 1945 on telephones, flags, and runners, just as it had in 1935. Similarly, the artillery observer net was still based on landlines, which rendered it all but impotent in a maneuvering battle. By 1945 there was not a single dedicated anti-tank gun in the country, nor were there any tanks of more recent vintage than the late 1930s, nor were there any motorized maneuver forces and the anti-aircraft force had increased merely from three battalions to five.

Even given the lack of modern equipment, however, it cannot be said that the Thai Army had shown a disposition to organize for modern combat. The failure to provide an engineer battalion, even one poorly equipped with power tools, for each division is inexplicable unless the Thais were prepared to engage in the notoriously unreliable *levee en masse* of labor. This was especially true in light of the poor communications net available in Thailand at the time. Similarly, the failure to provide a supply pipeline to the field forces would have spelled doom to any force engaging in heavy combat. The provision of a "platoon" of seven trucks to each division for its resupply needs is indicative of an army more intent on garrisoning ceded territory than on fighting.

Thus, by 1945 the RTA could not be considered a significant field force, although on internal lines of communication and for short periods it could theoretically put up a fight. Not surprisingly the activity and disposition of the RTA was not a source of serious concern in SEAC even through mid-1945.

Sources

Almost nothing has been written in Western languages about the Thai Army during World War II. Even the official French history *La Présence Militaire Française en Indochine 1940-1945* when discussing the 1941 Franco-Thai war cites only French military attaché reports of the period for its information on Thailand.

Thus it is surprising that the one book that does cover the subject is directed specifically at TO&E and order of battle aspects. It thus forms the basis for this chapter:

Thailand, Royal Thai Army, Operations Division; *The Unit Organization During the Indo-China Conflict and the Great East Asian War* (Bangkok, n.d.)

The only copy that the author has seen of this book, photocopied from an apparent mimeographed original is held, uncatalogued, by the Pentagon Library (with their number UA 853 .T36 A1) in two volumes (with a duplicate copy of Volume 1). The book includes detailed TO&Es and orders of battle for different periods, although TO&Es for units other than the infantry battalions are presented only for the September 1943 reorganization.

Unfortunately, the translations in the book are both poor and inconsistent. "Battalions" on one page become "companies" on another, "trucks" turns out to mean both hand carts and "trunks" as well as motor vehicles, a unit translated as a "maintenance section" in one part of a TO&E is translated as a "mess section" in another, etc. Nevertheless, with a bit of care and trouble by the reader the book is a gold mine of information not available anywhere else.

For more general comments and some points on earlier organization use was made of an excellent 30-page summary report entitled "The Organization of the Thai Army " filed by the US Military Attaché in Bangkok on 10 August 1941 (Report No.2), now held by the National Archives in RG 319 Box 1022. The material in the report is consistent with the RTA book cited above.