

## Vehicle Markings in 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group 1944-1945

N.B. I have only listed those units that might appear in a BF game - I have not included divisional/corps/army headquarters, AGRAs and other rear-echelon units, nor have I bothered mentioning units (such as para/commando battalions) where there are no vehicles mentioned in the TO&Es. I have included field artillery regiments because OP vehicles would carry the markings of one of the divisional batteries.

<b>Armoured Divisions</b>				
<b>Brigade/Group</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Square Colours</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Armoured Brigade	Brigade Headquarters	50	Red	White tacsigns
“	Senior Armoured Regiment	51	Red	Red tacsigns
“	2 <sup>nd</sup> Armoured Regiment	52	Red	Yellow tacsigns
“	Junior Armoured Regiment	53	Red	Dark blue tacsigns
“	Motor Infantry Battalion	54	Red	Green tacsigns
Infantry Brigade	Brigade Headquarters	60	Green	
“	Senior Infantry Battalion	61	Green	
“	2 <sup>nd</sup> Infantry Battalion	62	Green	
“	Junior Infantry Battalion	63	Green	
RA Artillery Group	Senior Field Artillery Regt	74	Red-over-dark blue	
“	Junior Field Artillery Regt	76	Red-over-dark blue	
“	Anti-Tank Regiment	77	Red-over-dark blue	
“	Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment	78	Red-over-dark blue	
RE Engineer Group	Senior Field Squadron	41	Cobalt blue	
“	Junior Field Squadron	46	Cobalt blue	
RASC Transport Group	1 <sup>st</sup> Transport Company	81	Diagonal red/green	Troop-carrying detachments would have their RASC flash painted above the infantry battalion's flash
“	2 <sup>nd</sup> Transport Company	82	Diagonal red/green	“
“	3 <sup>rd</sup> Transport Company	83	Diagonal red/green	“
“	4 <sup>th</sup> Transport Company	84	Diagonal red/green	“
Divisional Troops	Independent MG Company	64	Black or green	MMGs, 4.2” mortars & Wasps.
“	Armoured Recce Regiment	45	Green-over-cobalt blue	White tacsigns
“	Armoured Car Regiment	44	Green-over-cobalt blue & white stripe across top of square signifying corps troops.	White tacsigns – usually carried the corps badge, but later some adopted the badge of the armoured division to which they were attached

- The arm-of-service flashes described above were carried on the front-right and rear-right hull/bumper of the unit's vehicles, while the divisional badge (or in the case of armoured cars, AGRAs, etc, the corps or army badge) was carried on the front-left and rear-left.
- Divisional badges for the armoured divisions were: the stylised white eye on blue angular shield, edged red, of the Guards Armoured Division; the red desert rat, in white circle, on red square, of the 7<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division (the infantry had a red rat, edged white, on a black square) and the black bull on yellow rectangle of the 11<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division. The 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Armoured Division had an orange circle, superimposed with a Late-Mediaeval Polish 'Winged Hussar's 'wing' in black, edged white. Polish tanks also often had a white oval with 'PL' in black painted centrally on the front and rear. I will include Canadian badges at a later date.
- Tanks of the 7<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division also carried the badge of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Armoured Brigade – being a red stag's head on a white square. This was painted on the right-hand side – directly above the unit flash.
- Corps badges (worn by armoured car regiments) included the white spearhead on red diamond of I Corps, the white charging knight on red rectangle of VIII Corps, the three green & brown trees on white oval, on black rectangle of XII Corps and the black boar on white circle in black square of XXX Corps. Many of the armoured car regiments continued to carry corps insignia even after their incorporation into the armoured divisions in August 44. For example, 2<sup>nd</sup> Household Cavalry Regt continued to carry the VIII Corps badge during Operation Market Garden, despite having been transferred to XXX Corps AND to Guards Armoured Division!

- Tacsigms were the coloured geometric shapes painted on tanks to signify the squadron/regiment to which the tank belonged. They went in sequence: HQ Sqn – hollow diamonds, A Sqn – hollow squares, B Sqn – hollow triangles, C sqn – hollow circles, D sqn (only used by armoured car regiments) – solid vertical bar. Brigade HQs used diamonds. The colour system went white, red, yellow, blue, green, in descending order of seniority, from brigade HQ (white) to the 4<sup>th</sup> most senior regiment of the brigade (bright green). Non-brigaded regiments, such as a division's Armoured Recce Regiment or an armoured car regiment, would always have white tacsigms. SP anti-tank or artillery never used tacsigms.
- The positioning and usage of tacsigms varied widely from division to division, but they were only ever used on armoured vehicles of tank regiments, motor battalions, armoured car regiments and recce regiments, though positioning on the vehicles varied widely from unit to unit. For example, the Guards Armoured only painted them on vehicle hulls, with the individual tank number painted in white inside the tacsigm. In the other hand, 7<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division would paint them on the turret with no individual number. The 27<sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade and the 79<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division tended to paint the tacsigm on the hull, with a large red-and-white 'panzer-style' number on the turret. Many Churchill regiments only painted them on the turret rear.
- Armoured car units, recce regiments, motor battalions and light armoured vehicles often did not have the tacsigms painted on the side at all, though all units had a small tacsigm painted centrally on the front and rear bumper of the vehicle.
- Units kept their original brigade seniority and markings, despite being swapped around between brigades during the battlegroup reorganisations of the post-Normandy period.

## Infantry Divisions

Brigade/Group	Unit	No.	Square Colours	Notes
Senior Brigade	Senior Brigade HQ	81	Red	
“	Senior Infantry Battalion	55	Red	
“	2 <sup>nd</sup> Infantry Battalion	56	Red	
“	Junior Infantry Battalion	57	Red	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Brigade	2 <sup>nd</sup> Brigade HQ	87	Green	
“	Senior Infantry Battalion	60	Green	
“	2 <sup>nd</sup> Infantry Battalion	61	Green	
“	Junior Infantry Battalion	62	Green	
Junior Brigade	Junior Brigade HQ	94	Brown	
“	1 <sup>st</sup> Infantry Battalion	67	Brown	
“	2 <sup>nd</sup> Infantry Battalion	68	Brown	
“	3 <sup>rd</sup> Infantry Battalion	69	Brown	
RA Artillery Group	Senior Field Artillery Regt	42	Red-over-dark blue	
“	2 <sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery Regt	43	Red-over-dark-blue	
“	Junior Field Artillery Regt	44	Red-over-dark-blue	
“	Anti-Tank Regiment	46	Red-over-dark blue	
“	Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment	47	Red-over-dark blue	
RE Engineer Group	Senior Field Squadron	49	Cobalt blue	
“	2 <sup>nd</sup> Field Squadron	50	Cobalt blue	
“	Junior Field Squadron	51	Cobalt blue	
RASC Transport Group	1 <sup>st</sup> Transport Company	70	Diagonal red/green	Troop-carrying detachments would have their RASC flash painted above the infantry battalion's flash
“	2 <sup>nd</sup> Transport Company	71	Diagonal red/green	“
“	3 <sup>rd</sup> Transport Company	72	Diagonal red/green	“
“	4 <sup>th</sup> Transport Company	73	Diagonal red/green	“
Divisional Troops	Machinegun Battalion	64	Black	MMGs, 4.2” mortars & Wasps
“	Recce Regiment, RAC	41	Green-over-cobalt blue	White tacsigms

- The vehicles of infantry divisions conform to the same general rules as for the armoured division, though the only unit that wore tacsigms was the recce regiment.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division's badge was a black equilateral triangle, superimposed with an inverted red triangle.
- 5<sup>th</sup> (Yorkshire) Infantry Division's badge was a white 'Y' on a khaki square.
- 15<sup>th</sup> (Scottish) Infantry Division's badge was a red Scottish lion rampant on a yellow circle, edged white – often on a black square.
- 43<sup>rd</sup> (Wessex) Infantry Division's badge was an orange wyvern passant on a dark blue square.
- 49<sup>th</sup> (West Riding) Infantry Division's badge was a white Polar Bear standing on a small white ice floe on a black square.
- 50<sup>th</sup> (Northumbrian) Infantry Division's badge was a black square with two red, overlapped 'T's.

- 51<sup>st</sup> (Highland) Infantry Division's badge was a red 'HD' inside a hollow red circle, all superimposed onto a light blue square. The background was khaki instead of light blue when worn on the uniform.
- 52<sup>nd</sup> (Lowland) Infantry Division's badge was a blue shield, edged in white and superimposed with a white saltire cross. The motto below, in white on a blue scroll, was 'MOUNTAIN'.
- 53<sup>rd</sup> (Welch) Infantry Division's badge was a stylised red 'W' (khaki backing on sleeve badge, or bright green on vehicles).
- 59<sup>th</sup> (Staffordshire) Infantry Division's badge was a white square, charged with a stylised black 'slag heap', superimposed with a stylised red pithead winding gear (it actually looks like a keyhole), symbolising the mining country of Staffordshire.

## Special Service Group

Brigade	Unit	No.	Square Colours	Notes
1 <sup>st</sup> SS Brigade	1 <sup>st</sup> SS Brigade HQ	81	Red	
4 <sup>th</sup> SS Brigade	4 <sup>th</sup> SS Brigade HQ	100	Red-over-black	
SS Group Troops	2 <sup>nd</sup> Armoured Support Regt	2	Royal blue square with central horizontal yellow-over-green-over-red stripe	No tacsigs, though turrets were marked all round with a compass scale.
SS Group Troops	4 <sup>th</sup> Armoured Support Regt	4	Royal blue square with central horizontal yellow-over-green-over-red stripe	No tacsigs, though turrets were marked all round with a compass scale.

- There does not seem to have been a unit badge for the armoured support regiments – they just wore the arm-of-service flash described above on the front-left and rear-left of the vehicle, where the unit badge would normally be placed.
- My own speculation is that the Royal Marines' tanks simply carried the battery number on the flash – 1<sup>st</sup> RMASR would therefore have 1 & 2, 2<sup>nd</sup> RMASR would have 3 & 4, while 5<sup>th</sup> (Independent) Armoured Support Battery, RM would have 5 – it's only a guess though.

## Airborne Divisions

Brigade/Group	Unit	No.	Square Colour	Notes
Senior Para Bde	Senior Para Brigade HQ	81	Red	
Junior Para Bde	Junior Para Brigade HQ	87	Green	
Airlanding Bde	Airlanding Brigade HQ	94	Brown	
“	Senior Airlanding Battalion	67	Brown	
“	2 <sup>nd</sup> Airlanding Battalion	68	Brown	
“	Junior Airlanding Battalion	69	Brown	
RA Artillery Group	Airlanding Light Regiment	46	Red-over-dark blue	
“	Airlanding Anti-Tank Regt	47	Red-over-dark blue	
“	Airlanding Light AA Regt	48	Red-over-dark blue	
RASC Transport	Universal Carrier Detachments	70	Diagonal red/Green	
“	“	71	Diagonal red/Green	
“	“	73	Diagonal red/Green	
Divisional Troops	6 Airborne Armd Recce Regt	79	Maroon	Light Blue '79'. White tacsigs.
“	1 Airborne Recce Squadron	41	Green-over-cobalt blue	This was also used by 6 Airborne Armoured Recce Regt when they converted to Locusts.

- The badge for both the 1<sup>st</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Divisions was the light blue Bellerophon-on-Pegasus on a maroon square.

## 79<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division

Brigade	Unit	No.	Square Colours	Notes
30 <sup>th</sup> Armoured Bde	30 <sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade HQ	50	Red	White tacsigs
“	22 <sup>nd</sup> Dragoons	51	Red	Sherman Crabs – red tacsigs
“	1 <sup>st</sup> Lothian & Border Horse Yeomanry	52	Red	Sherman Crabs – yellow tacsigs
“	2 <sup>nd</sup> Co. London Yeomanry (Westminster Dragoons)	53	Red	Sherman Crabs – blue tacsigs

1 <sup>st</sup> Army Tank Bde	1 <sup>st</sup> Army Tank Brigade HQ	121	Green	White tacsigns
“	11 <sup>th</sup> RTR	122	Green	CDLs, then Buffaloes & Kangaroos in 1945 – red tacsigns
“	42 <sup>nd</sup> RTR	123	Green	CDLs, then Buffs & Kangaroos in 1945 – yellow tacsigns
“	49 <sup>th</sup> RTR	124	Green	CDLs, then Buffs & Kangaroos in 1945 – blue tacsigns.
1 <sup>st</sup> Assault Bde, RE	HQ, 1 <sup>st</sup> Assault Brigade, RE	1232	Cobalt blue	
“	5 <sup>th</sup> Assault Regt, RE	1233	Cobalt blue	AVREs then Buffaloes
“	6 <sup>th</sup> Assault Regt, RE	1234	Cobalt blue	AVREs
“	42 <sup>nd</sup> Assault Regt, RE	1235	Cobalt blue	AVREs
“	149 <sup>th</sup> Assault Park Squadron	1236	Cobalt Blue	Other Specialist Vehicles
“	87 <sup>th</sup> Assault Dozer Squadron	819	Cobalt Blue	Armoured Bulldozers
Divisional Troops	1 <sup>st</sup> Canadian Armoured Carrier Regiment	157	Green-over-cobalt blue	Ram Kangaroos
“	49 <sup>th</sup> Armoured Carrier Regiment	158	Green-over-cobalt blue	Ram Kangaroos

- The badge for the 79<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division was a black, white & red bull's head, inside an inverted hollow black triangle, all superimposed onto an inverted yellow triangle.

## Independent Armoured & Army Tank Brigades

Brigade	Unit	No.	Square Colours	Notes
4 <sup>th</sup> Armoured Bde	4 <sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade HQ	121	Red	Shermans – White tacsigns.
“	Royal Scots Greys	122	Red	Shermans – Red tacsigns
“	3 <sup>rd</sup> Co. of London Yeomanry	123	Red	Shermans – Yellow tacsigns
“	44 <sup>th</sup> RTR	124	Red	Shermans – Blue tacsigns
“	2 <sup>nd</sup> Bn/KRRC	125	Red	Motor Bn – Green tacsigns
6 <sup>th</sup> (Gds) Tank Bde	6 <sup>th</sup> (Guards) Tank Brigade HQ	151	Green†	Churchills – White tacsigns
“	4 <sup>th</sup> Bn/Grenadier Guards	152	Green†	Churchills – Red tacsigns
“	4 <sup>th</sup> Bn/Coldstream Guards	153	Green†	Churchills – Yellow tacsigns
“	3 <sup>rd</sup> Bn/Scots Guards	154	Green†	Churchills – Blue tacsigns
8 <sup>th</sup> Armoured Bde	8 <sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade HQ	993	Red†	Sherman DDs – White tacsigns
“	4/7 <sup>th</sup> Royal Dragoon Guards	994	Red†	Sherman DDs – Red tacsigns
“	24 <sup>th</sup> Lancers (replaced by 13/18 <sup>th</sup> Hussars 29/7/44)	995	Red†	Sherman DDs – Yellow tacsigns
“	Nottingham Yeomanry (Sherwood Rangers)	996	Red†	Sherman DDs – Blue tacsigns
“	12 <sup>th</sup> Bn/KRRC	475	Red†	Motor Bn – Bright green tacsigns
27 <sup>th</sup> Armoured Bde (disbanded 29/7/44)	27 <sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade HQ	50	Red	Sherman DDs – White tacsigns
“	13/18 <sup>th</sup> Hussars	51	Red	Sherman DDs – Red tacsigns
“	Staffordshire Yeomanry	52	Red	Sherman DDs – Yellow tacsigns
“	East Riding Yeomanry	53	Red	Sherman DDs – Blue tacsigns
31 <sup>st</sup> Army Tank Bde (until 5/9/44)	31 <sup>st</sup> Army Tank Brigade HQ	990	Green‡	Churchills – White tacsigns
“	7 <sup>th</sup> RTR	991	Green‡	Churchills – Red tacsigns
“	9 <sup>th</sup> RTR	992	Green‡	Churchills – Yellow tacsigns
“	141 <sup>st</sup> RAC	993	Green‡	Churchills – Blue tacsigns
(Transferred to 79 <sup>th</sup> Armoured Division 5/9/44)	1 <sup>st</sup> Fife & Forfar Yeomanry	991	Green‡	Crocodiles – Red tacsigns
“	4 <sup>th</sup> RTR	992	Green‡	Buffaloes (tacsigns?)
“	7 <sup>th</sup> RTR	993	Green‡	Crocodiles – Yellow tacsigns
“	1 <sup>st</sup> Canadian Armoured Carrier Regt	157	Green-over-cobalt blue	Ram Kangaroos
“	49 <sup>th</sup> Armoured Carrier Regt (ex-49 <sup>th</sup> RTR)	158	Green-over-cobalt blue	Ram Kangaroos
33 <sup>rd</sup> Army Tank Bde (13/6/44 to 15/8/44)	33 <sup>rd</sup> Army Tank Brigade HQ	172	Red†	Shermans – White tacsigns
“	1 <sup>st</sup> Northamptonshire Yeomanry	173	Red†	Shermans – Red tacsigns
“	144 <sup>th</sup> RAC	174	Red†	Shermans – Yellow tacsigns
“	148 <sup>th</sup> RAC	175	Red†	Shermans - Blue tacsigns

(16/8/44 to 18/1/45)	33 <sup>rd</sup> Army Tank Brigade HQ	151	Red†	
“	1 <sup>st</sup> Northamptonshire Yeomanry	152	Red†	Buffaloes & Kangaroos
“	East Riding Yeomanry	153	Red†	Buffaloes & Kangaroos
“	144 <sup>th</sup> RAC	154	Red†	Buffaloes & Kangaroos
34 <sup>th</sup> Army Tank Bde	34 <sup>th</sup> Army Tank Brigade HQ	155	Green‡	Churchills – White tacsigns
“	107 <sup>th</sup> RAC	156	Green‡	Churchills – Red tacsigns
“	147 <sup>th</sup> RAC	157	Green‡	Churchills – Yellow tacsigns
“	153 <sup>rd</sup> RAC, replaced on 4/9/44 by 9 <sup>th</sup> RTR	158	Green‡	Churchills – Blue tacsigns

† These units had a white stripe across the bottom of the flash, signifying Army Troops of British 2<sup>nd</sup> Army and/or Canadian 1<sup>st</sup> Army.

‡ These units had a diagonal white stripe across the flash, from bottom left to top right, which signified Army Group Troops of 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group.

- 4<sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade's badge was a black desert rat on a white square.
- 6<sup>th</sup> (Guards) Tank Brigade's badge was a white shield bearing a blue-red-blue diagonal stripe (bottom left to top right), superimposed with a downward-pointing sword.
- 8<sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade's badge was a yellow disc, superimposed with a red-brown fox's mask. This brigade often painted its badge on a square, directly above the unit flash.
- 27<sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade's badge was a dark blue shield, bearing a white sea horse with a yellow spine.
- 31<sup>st</sup> Army Tank Brigade's badge was a green 'diablo' (like a bow tie placed vertically).
- 33<sup>rd</sup> Army Tank Brigade's badge was identical to the 31<sup>st</sup>'s but the lower half was black.
- 34<sup>th</sup> Army Tank Brigade's tanks wore two badges – a white shield with mid-blue cross, superimposed with a downward-pointing sword and a red shield, charged with a yellow diagonal stripe (top left to bottom right) and superimposed with a white armoured arm swinging a mace.

## Other Types of Flashes, Markings & Other Details

- Almost all vehicles had a star painted on the upper surfaces as an air recognition feature. This was often the star-in-circle, though not always. If a vehicle did not have much in the way of upper surfaces (such as the Universal Carrier), the star was often painted onto a plate or tarpaulin, which was strapped on top of whatever load was being carried. Tanks NEVER had stars on the front, but armoured cars and SPs did on occasion. Stars on the hull or turret sides were very rare indeed, but some units did sport them – particularly Polish and Canadian tanks and armoured car units. A star on the turret or hull rear was common on all vehicle types. Stars were reasonably common on the sides of carriers (including Kangaroos and half-tracks) and scout cars and were very common on the sides of softskins.
- Divisional troops such as headquarters, provost, medical, training & postal units had black flashes with white numbering.
- Headquarters signals units (of the Royal Signals) had white-over-blue flashes with red numbering.
- Royal Army Ordnance Corps (RAOC – logistics) units had dark blue-over-red-over-dark blue flashes.
- Royal Electrical & Mechanical Engineers (REME) units had dark blue-over-yellow-over-red flashes.
- The Royal Artillery used a fiendishly complicated system of additional (usually smaller) red-and-blue flashes to indicate sub-units within a regiment or battery. For example, a battery commander's OP tank might have a red-over-blue flash with a white 'X'. Another variation on this same flash is a blue square, with the top right quarter being red, again superimposed with an 'X'.
- The Dutch Independent Brigade Group had as its badge, a black shield with an orange lion rampant. The Belgian Independent Brigade Group officially had a blue shield with red St George's cross, superimposed with a gold lion's mask – however in practice they frequently had a large 'B' painted in white, with the national black/gold/red roundel centrally on the rear. The Czechoslovak Independent Armoured Brigade Group had a white-edged shield, checked in red & light blue and superimposed with a white lion rampant (in practice the shield looked like it was red with light blue cross). This was sometimes painted in white outline only. On the rear-left of the vehicle, the Czechs carried a white oval with 'CS' in black instead of the shield badge.
- All vehicles had a bridge/weight rating, which was displayed on a yellow disc with black numbering displayed on the front-right of the vehicle. Typical weights included: Jeep (2), M5 half-track (9), Daimler AC (9), White SC (5), Humber FWD (3), 15cwt (5), Bedford QLT (7), Dingo (4), Sherman (30), Cromwell (27), Stuart (15), Churchill (40), Sexton (27), Humber Mk IV AC (7), Universal Carrier (4) & Staghound AC (14). These discs proved to be a little too visible in the field, and were often discarded (if bolted-on plates), painted over or repainted in less-visible schemes. The most common of these alternative schemes was a hollow yellow circle with narrow white numbers. This should not be confused with the tacsign (which would probably be alongside it on the vehicle front).
- I have been unable to track down firm information on RAF 'Tentacle' half-tracks, but I believe they would have displayed the RAF blue-white-red roundel on the front-right and rear-right bumpers of the vehicle (which is how RAF Regiment

armoured cars were marked) – possibly with the divisional badge on the front and rear-left. In the field, RAF personnel would normally wear khaki battledress with blue RAF insignia & rank badges. However, forage caps and officer's peaked caps are quite likely to have been RAF blue-grey, while many FAC officers were photographed wearing standard RAF officers' No.1 uniform.

- Camouflage paint schemes were fairly rare on tanks and heavy armoured vehicles – usually just plain bronze green, olive drab or khaki drab. Softskins however, were regularly painted in black-and-green camo – usually the 'Mickey Mouse' pattern. A popular variation on this was; the top of the vehicle/tarpaulin being painted black, with rounded areas of black paint extending part-way down the sides of the vehicle. Light armoured vehicles such as carriers are sometimes seen camouflaged in photographs. Where tanks were camouflaged it was usually no more imaginative than wide bands of black painted onto the green base. Another fairly popular method was to paint rounded areas of black near the corners of the tank as an attempt to break up the sharp outline. I have seen photos of Tetrachs painted in black bands, while Bovington has an example painted in dark earth bands. Some Buffaloes are recorded as being painted in alternating bands of olive drab, black and chocolate brown.
- A number of British-built vehicles, particularly softskins, were to be found painted in Dark Earth – often with black camouflage. Some of the Royal Marines' Centaurs were known to be painted in Dark Earth on D-Day.
- Anti-tank guns and artillery pieces are very rarely seen with markings or painted-on camo in contemporary photographs. There might be a personal name on the gun though. The only such marking I have seen was a star-in-circle painted as an air recognition marking, just above the breech on a 5.5-inch gun.