

Battlefront: WWII

British & Commonwealth TO&Es v1.01

I Burma Corps January to May 1942 (The Fall Of Burma)

By R Mark Davies

These Tables of Organisation & Equipment (TO&Es) are intended to help the **Battlefront: WWII** player construct a realistic miniature force for British Imperial and Commonwealth forces in Burma 1942. They are constructed in exactly the same manner as the US, Soviet and German TO&Es provided with the **Battlefront: WWII** Rulebook. See Page 57 of the Rulebook for a guidance on how to read and use the TO&Es.

These TO&Es are intended to complement the forthcoming **Battlefront: WWII Far East & Pacific Card Supplement** and incorporate the new unit card numbers (these start with '14A-'). However, it is possible to find the occasional vehicle here that is not covered by the new supplement. Units marked 'BR-' may be found in the **Late War Supplement** and the **Blitzkrieg Supplement** and units marked 'BR-P' or 'CA-P' can be found in the Prototype Card Database on the website Extras Page.

Please feel free to cut and paste any part of these TO&Es to help you build your own scenarios, but copyright remains that of Fire & Fury Games.

British Imperial Forces In Burma 1942

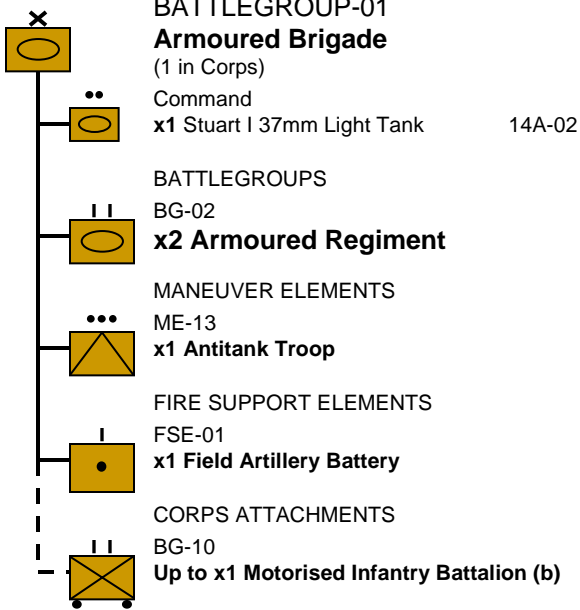
These TO&Es cover the period from the Japanese invasion of Burma in January 1942, to the retreat of the British Imperial forces across the Chindwin River, into India in May 1942. At the start of 1942, Burma was only defended by 1st Burma Division, backed up by Stilwell's unreliable Chinese 5th Army. However, this force was soon boosted by the arrival of 17th Indian Division and in February by the 7th Armoured Brigade and further British battalions from North Africa. General Bill Slim was then ordered to take over, with I Burma Corps being formed on 19th March 1942.

However, he was too late to save half of 17th Indian Division, which was trapped on the wrong side of the Sittang Bridge, when the only escape route was prematurely blown up. Consequently, the shattered remnants of 17th Indian Division were a mere shadow of the theoretical TO&Es shown here, though they continued to fight hard for over another two months, until India was reached. 1st Burma Division too, had to fight its way out of encirclement during April, losing most of its heavy equipment in the process.

What this means is that these TO&Es, more so than any other I have previously written, are only the loosest possible guide to the British Imperial forces in Burma 1942. They should be used as a 'starting point' for assembling your own battlegroups, taking into account the likely heavy losses caused by constant air attack, encirclement, ambush, straggling and retreat. Actual organisations are almost impossible to discover, though occasional snippets of information do appear in the written record. For example; during March, Slim formed a group from an armoured regiment and four battalions from 17th Indian Division. These four infantry battalions are recorded as actually amounting to no more than a battalion and a half in terms of strength! This would imply that by April, most battalions were probably down to company strength and many had been combined to form ad hoc units (though the distinction between divisions and brigades was maintained until the end of the campaign).

I Burma Corps also contained General Sun's 38th Chinese Division from April until the end of the campaign. I will leave the TO&Es for this formation until another day, but it is worth noting that Chinese forces fought bravely alongside British Imperial forces in many engagements of the campaign, though they were let down by generals who were notoriously reluctant to engage the enemy – they refused to help even when an entire Chinese division was trapped by the Japanese, much to Stilwell's rage. Nevertheless, General Sun was considered a reliable ally and a sound tactician and his division was considered reliable compared to their compatriots. 38th Chinese Division formed a combined battlegroup with 7th Armoured Brigade in April in order to rescue the 1st Burma Division from encirclement. However, the almost complete lack of radios in 38th Division made co-ordination almost impossible and in the end 1st Burma Division was forced to fight its own way out in small groups.

I Burma Corps Battlegroups 01-02

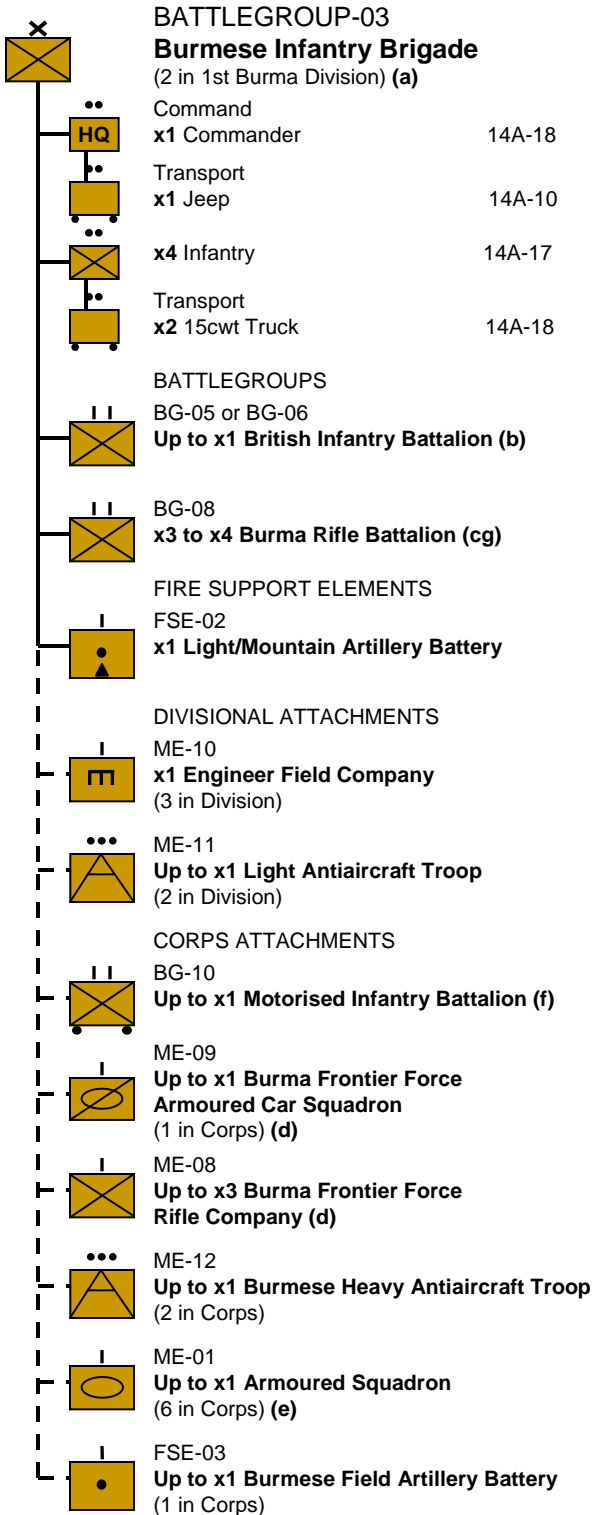


(a) 7th Armoured Brigade was the only Allied armoured formation in I Burma Corps, consisting of 2nd RTR, 7th Hussars, 414th Battery RHA (Essex Yeomanry) and a troop of 95th Antitank Regiment RA. It arrived in Rangoon on 21st February, just in time to cover the retreat north by the rest of the army in Burma. Slim continually tried unsuccessfully to wrest the initiative from the Japanese by utilising his limited mobile forces for manoeuvre. Invariably these schemes involved the 7th Armoured Brigade, being grouped variously with 48th Indian Brigade, 1st Burma Brigade, 38th Chinese Division and 1st Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment.

(b) Only available from early March, when the 1st Gloucesters (the Rangoon Garrison) looted US Lend-Lease stores for vehicles and heavy weapons. The battalion was used as the Corps Recce Regiment.



I Burma Corps Battlegroups 03



(a) Initially the only force available to face the Japanese in Burma until relieved by 17th Indian Division in January 1942, 1st Burma Division consisted of the 1st & 2nd Burmese Brigades, 13th Indian Brigade and a battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment, which formed the Rangoon Garrison. However, 2nd Burmese Brigade spent the first few weeks of the campaign attached to 17th Indian Division, while the rest of 1st Burma Division remained on observation duties in the Shan States.

(b) 1st Burmese Brigade contained a single British Infantry Battalion. 2nd Burmese Brigade did not have a British Battalion. The British battalions of 1st Burma Division seem to have been organised according to the pre-1939 garrison establishment and were certainly lacking many heavy weapons.

(c) 1st Burmese Brigade had three Burmese Infantry Battalions. 2nd Burmese Brigade had four Burmese Infantry Battalions.

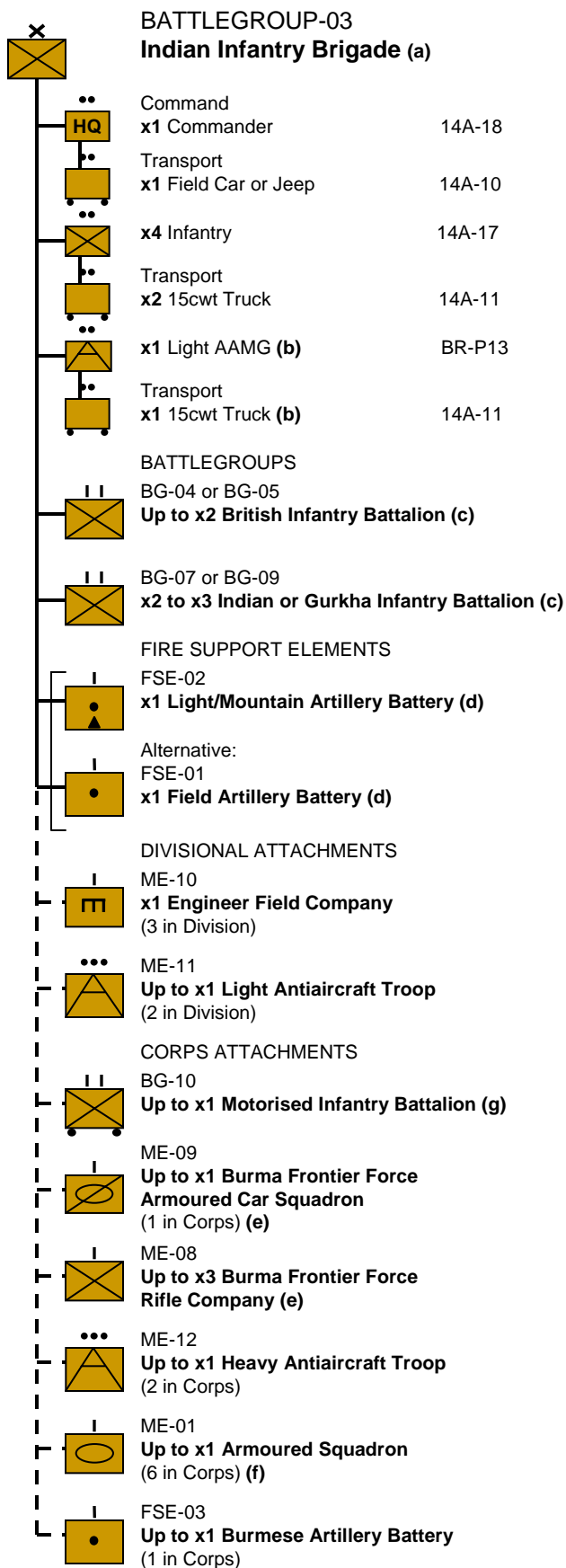
(d) The Burma Frontier Force was a paramilitary border police formation, though was used repeatedly during the campaign for reconnaissance and screening duties.

(e) The armour is from 7th Armoured Brigade, which was the only Allied armoured formation in Burma.

(f) Only available from early March, when the 1st Gloucesters (the Rangoon Garrison) looted US Lend-Lease stores for vehicles and heavy weapons. The battalion was used as the Corps Recce Regiment.

(g) Some other Burmese battalions (being used for garrison or lines-of-communication duties) were also picked up along the route of the retreat. However, by that stage, the Burmese (never great enthusiasts for British rule) had already suffered heavy losses from casualties and desertion.

I Burma Corps Battlegroups 04



(a) The 1st Burma Division had one Indian Brigade (13th Indian Brigade). The organisation of 17th Indian Division was a lot more complex. The Divisional Headquarters arrived in Burma on 9th January 1942 with *no* brigades under command, having already sent 44th Brigade to Malaya and 45th Brigade to Iraq (then diverted to Singapore). Its 46th Brigade was still under training, though would be sent to Rangoon as soon as possible. It was also waiting for its divisional artillery, engineers and most of its motor transport, which would arrive with 46th Brigade. Consequently, 16th Indian Brigade was attached to the division in Burma, with the temporary addition of 2nd Burmese Brigade. This was the parlous state of 17th Indian Division when it first met the Japanese invasion at Tenasserim. 46th Indian Brigade arrived on 16th February and immediately formed the divisional reserve, though it was still badly in need of training. The excellent 48th Indian Brigade arrived on 3rd February, finally allowing 2nd Burmese Brigade to return to 1st Burma Division. On 23rd February, the Sittang Bridge was blown prematurely, trapping a large proportion of the division on the wrong side of a fast-flowing, mile-wide river. 46th Brigade ceased to exist after this disaster and the survivors were used as replacements in the 16th and 48th Brigades. 63rd Indian Brigade arrived in early March, along with 7th Armoured Brigade, which also came under command for a time.

(b) Only the 48th Indian Brigade had a Brigade Antiaircraft Platoon.

(c) The mix of British, Indian and Gurkha Infantry Battalions was:
 13th Brigade – **x3** Indian Battalions (joined by **x1** British)
 16th Brigade – **x2** Indian and **x1** Gurkha Battalions
 46th Brigade – **x2** British, **x1** Gurkha and **x2** Indian Battalions
 48th Brigade – **x3** Gurkha Battalions
 63rd Brigade – **x2** Indian and **x1** Gurkha Battalions

Most of the above were very poorly-equipped – particularly in respect of mortars (both 2-inch and 3-inch), Boys Antitank Rifles, Carriers and motor transport. In particular, most Gurkha battalions (definitely the three regular Gurkha battalions of 48th Brigade) were still organised according to the pre-1939 scales of equipment. However, 17th Indian Division was reinforced during the campaign by a British Infantry Battalion (2nd Btn, Duke of Wellington's Regt) which served as the divisional reserve battalion and had the full scale of heavy weapons and equipment – it was probably unique in this respect. The battalions of 13th Brigade (1st Burma Division) and 46th Brigade were probably rather more badly equipped than the others.

(d) 48th and 63rd Brigades had Field Batteries equipped with 25pdr field guns. The remainder had 3.7-inch Mountain Howitzers.

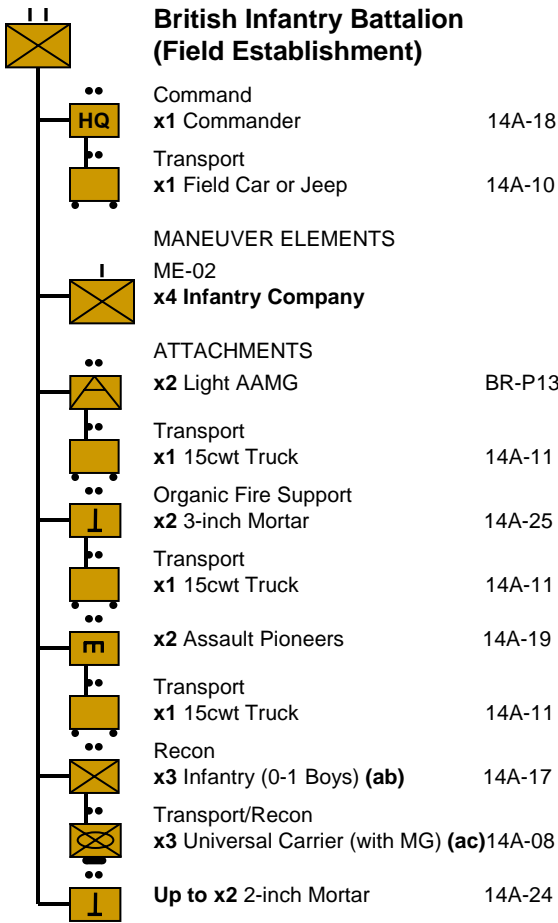
(e) The Burma Frontier Force was a paramilitary border police formation, though was used repeatedly during the campaign for reconnaissance and screening duties.

(f) The armour is from 7th Armoured Brigade, which was the only Allied armoured formation in Burma.

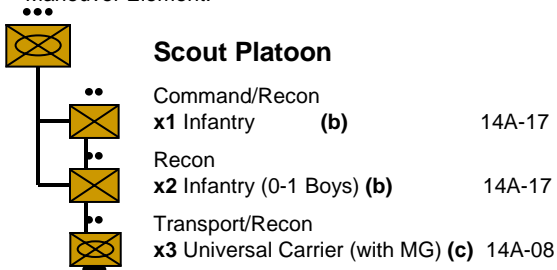
(g) Only available from early March, when the 1st Gloucesters (the Rangoon Garrison) looted US Lend-Lease stores for vehicles and heavy weapons. The battalion was used as the Corps Recce Regiment.

I Burma Corps Battlegroups 05-07

BATTLEGROUP-05 British Infantry Battalion (Field Establishment)



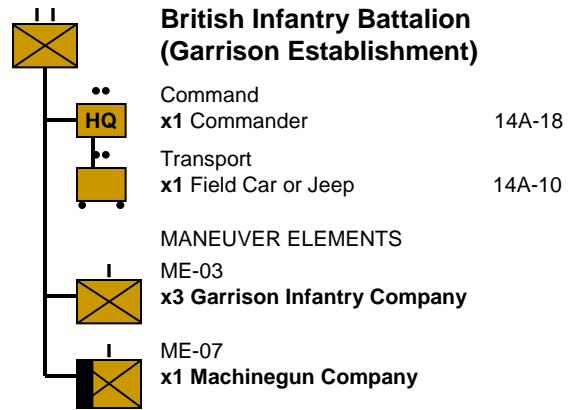
(a) The Scout Platoon may be deployed as a separate Maneuver Element:



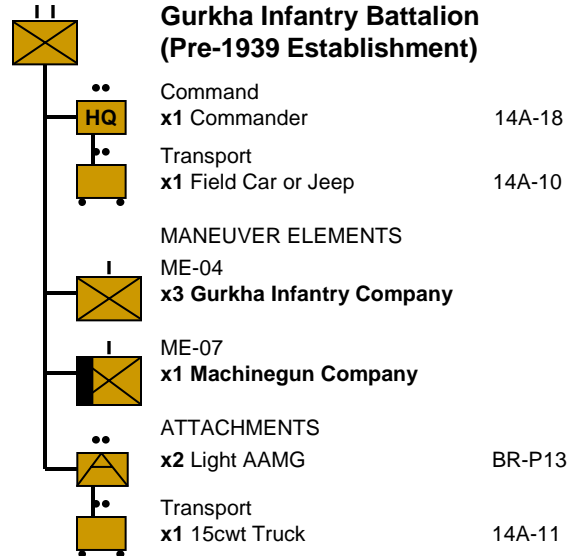
(b) The Scout Platoon infantry may alternatively dismount as:
Bren Light Machine Gun 14A-22

(c) The Carriers fire without MGs when the infantry dismount as Bren LMGs.

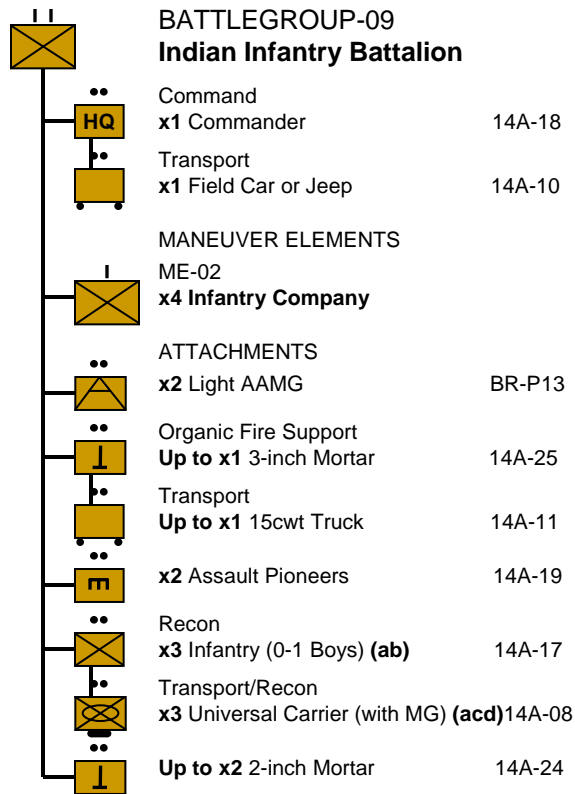
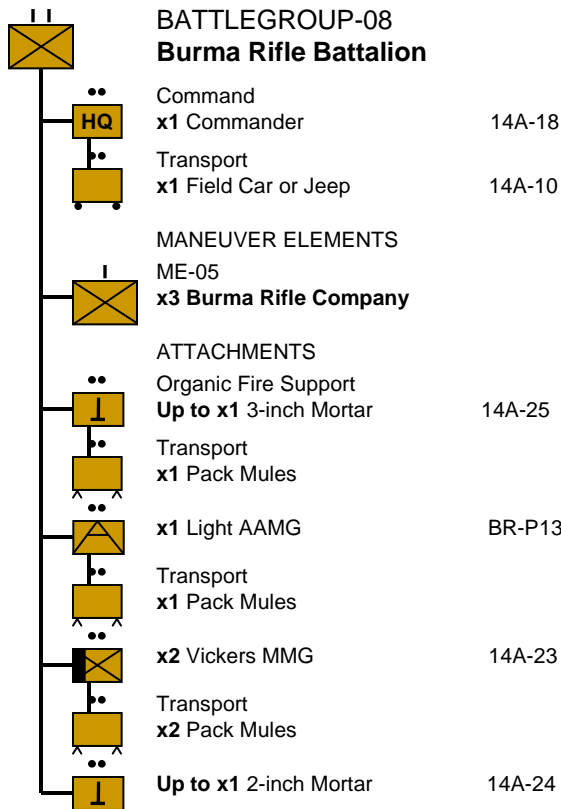
BATTLEGROUP-06 British Infantry Battalion (Garrison Establishment)



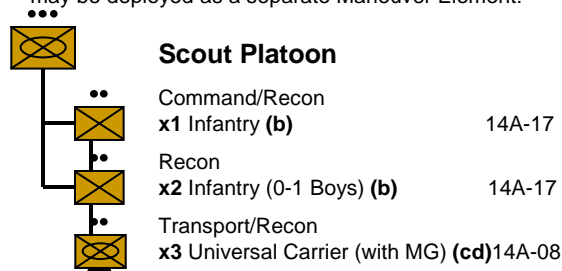
BATTLEGROUP-07 Gurkha Infantry Battalion (Pre-1939 Establishment)



I Burma Corps Battlegroups 08-09



(a) Not all battalions had a Scout Platoon. If present, it may be deployed as a separate Maneuver Element:



(b) The Scout Platoon infantry may alternatively dismount as:
Bren Light Machine Gun 14A-22

(c) The Carriers fire without MGs when the infantry dismount as Bren LMGs.

(d) May replace Universal Carriers with:
x2 15cwt Truck 14A-11

I Burma Corps Battlegroups 10

BATTLEROUP-10

Motorised Infantry Battalion

(March-May 1942) (a)

Command
x1 Commander 14A-18

Transport
x1 Jeep (no MG) 14A-10

MANEUVER ELEMENTS

ME-06
x4 Motorised Infantry Company

ATTACHMENTS
x2 Light AAMG BR-P13

Transport
x2 Jeep (MG when mounted) 14A-11

Organic Fire Support
x4 3-inch Mortar (b) 14A-25

Transport
x4 M3 White Scout Car (b) BR-35

x2 Assault Pioneers 14A-19

Transport
x1 15cwt Truck 14A-11

x1 Böhler 47mm Antitank Gun use KNIL-13

Transport
x1 Jeep (no MG) 14A-10

Recon
x3 Infantry (1 Boys) (cd) 14A-17

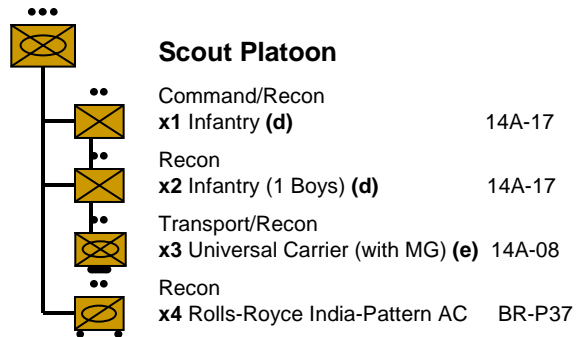
Transport/Recon
x3 Universal Carrier (with MG) (ce) 14A-08

Recon
x4 Rolls-Royce India-Pattern AC (c) BR-P37

(a) The 1st Gloucesters were the Rangoon Garrison Battalion and as such were officially organised as BG-05. However, with the evacuation of Rangoon in March 1942, the Gloucesters were given licence to loot the city's military depots; in particular the stocks of US lend-lease weapons and equipment intended for the Chinese. Consequently, they suddenly found themselves the best-equipped battalion in the theatre by a very wide margin! They also commandeered armoured cars from the Burma Frontier Force, as well as a platoon of Italian antitank guns. The battalion was used as the corps Recce Regiment for the duration of the campaign, though aside from the Scout Platoon, I would hesitate to give them 'Recon' status, as they were not trained reconnaissance specialists.

(b) The mortars may be fired from the Scout Cars, provided the vehicle has emplaced. These were an unidentified type of mortar carrier, built by the USA for the Chinese and presumably based on the M3 or M2 Scout Car. Don't use the Dutch White Scout Car card (KNIL-05), as it has enhanced firepower values for multiple MGs.

(c) The Scout Platoon may be deployed as a separate Maneuver Element:



Scout Platoon

Command/Recon
x1 Infantry (d) 14A-17

Recon
x2 Infantry (1 Boys) (d) 14A-17

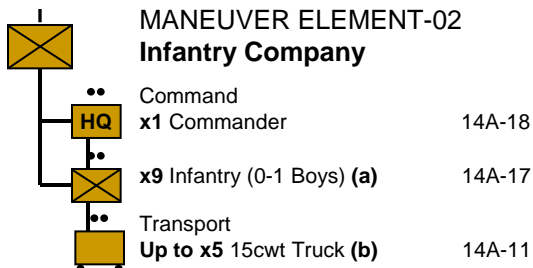
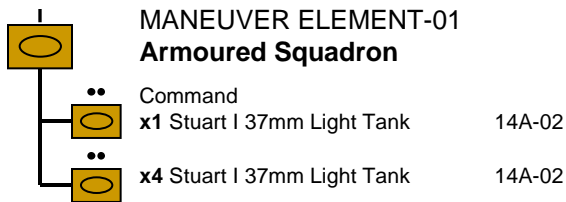
Transport/Recon
x3 Universal Carrier (with MG) (e) 14A-08

Recon
x4 Rolls-Royce India-Pattern AC BR-P37

(d) The Scout Platoon infantry may alternatively dismount as:
 Bren Light Machine Gun 14A-22

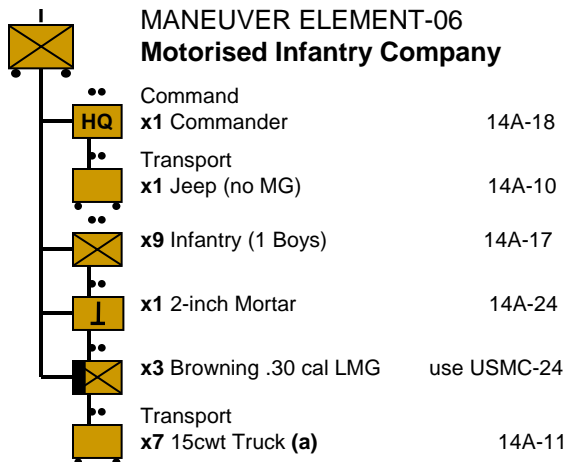
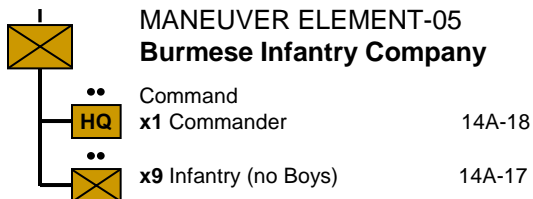
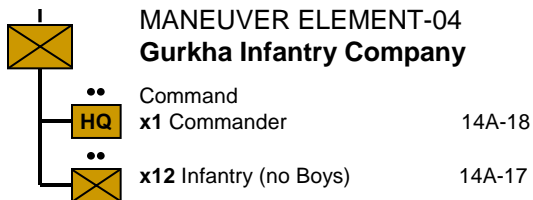
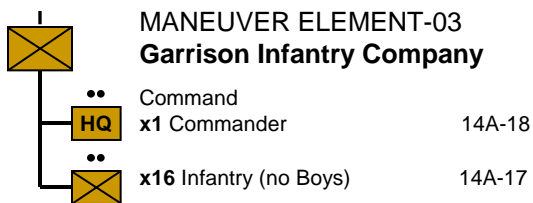
(e) The Carriers fire without MGs when the infantry dismount as Bren LMGs.

I Burma Corps Maneuver Elements 01-09

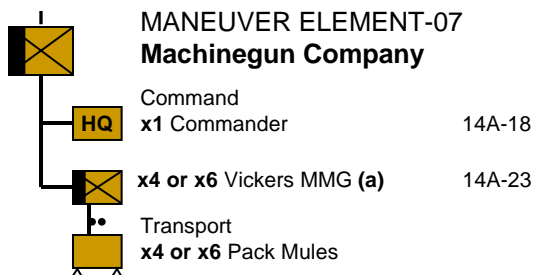


(a) A maximum of two companies in the battalion may have a Boys Antitank Rifle and most battalions did not even have that many.

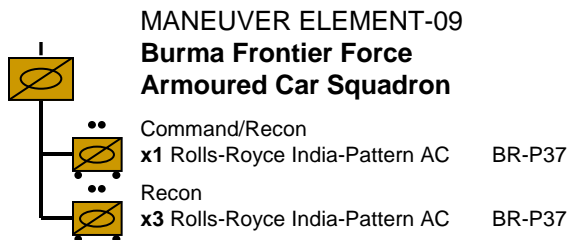
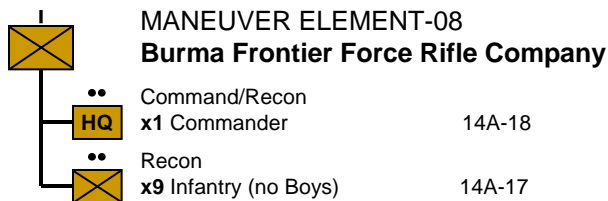
(b) Some British battalions had motor transport as shown here. Indian battalions may not have transport.



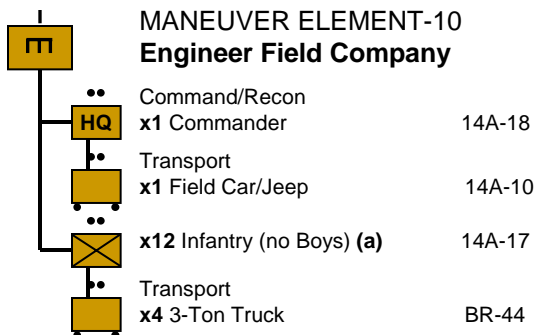
(a) May replace some or all 15cwt Trucks with:
Dodge 1½ Ton Light Truck use US-14



(a) Gurkha Machinegun Companies only have two platoons (x4 weapons) while British Companies have three platoons (x6 weapons). Unlike Late-War Machine Gun Companies, these may not be split into individual platoons.



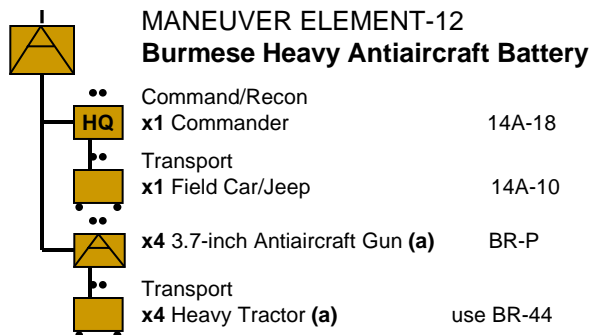
I Burma Corps Maneuver Elements 10-13



MANEUVER ELEMENT-10 Engineer Field Company

Command/Recon
x1 Commander 14A-18
 Transport
x1 Field Car/Jeep 14A-10
x12 Infantry (no Boys) (a) 14A-17
 Transport
x4 3-Ton Truck BR-44

(a) These infantry may perform engineering tasks as detailed in the website Prototype Engineering Rules.



MANEUVER ELEMENT-12 Burmese Heavy Antiaircraft Battery

Command/Recon
x1 Commander 14A-18
 Transport
x1 Field Car/Jeep 14A-10
x4 3.7-inch Antiaircraft Gun (a) BR-P
 Transport
x4 Heavy Tractor (a) use BR-44

(a) The battery may alternatively be deployed as two troop-sized Maneuver Elements:



MANEUVER ELEMENT-11 Light Antiaircraft Battery

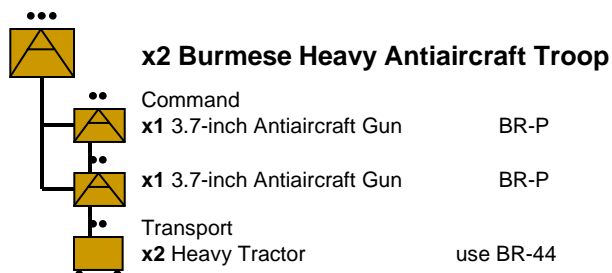
Command/Recon
x1 Commander 14A-18
 Transport
x1 Field Car/Jeep 14A-10
x4 40mm Bofors Antiaircraft Gun (a) 14A-14
 Transport
x4 15cwt Truck (a) 14A-11

(a) The battery may alternatively be deployed as two troop-sized Maneuver Elements:



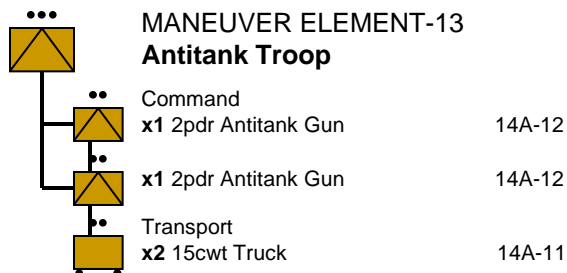
x2 Light Antiaircraft Troop

Command
x1 40mm Bofors Antiaircraft Gun 14A-14
x1 40mm Bofors Antiaircraft Gun 14A-14
 Transport
x2 15cwt Truck 14A-11



x2 Burmese Heavy Antiaircraft Troop

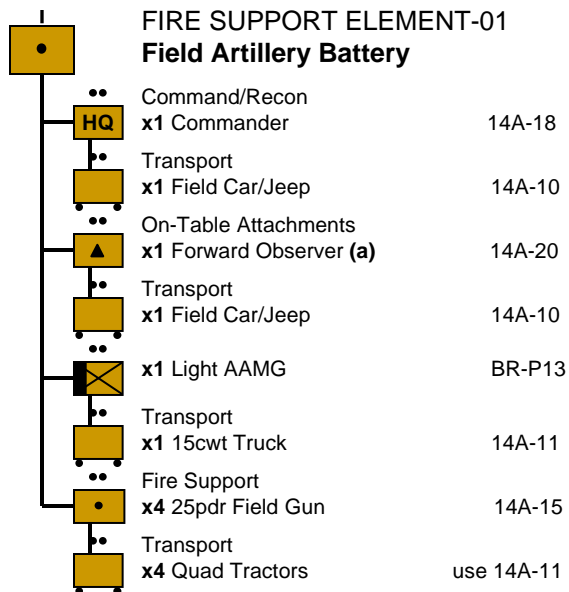
Command
x1 3.7-inch Antiaircraft Gun BR-P
x1 3.7-inch Antiaircraft Gun BR-P
 Transport
x2 Heavy Tractor use BR-44



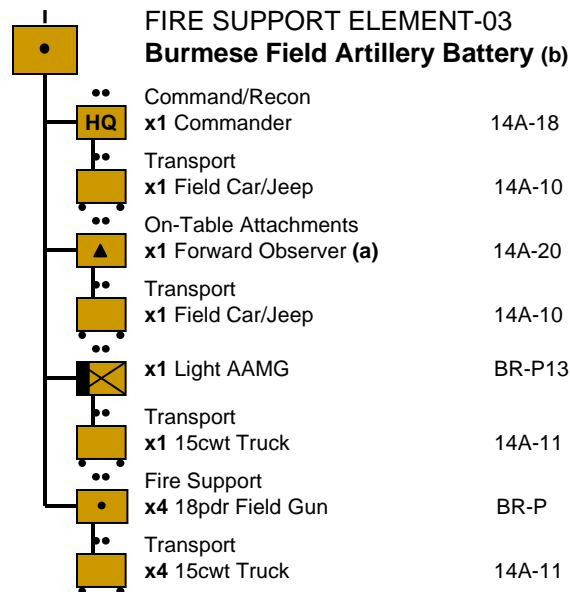
MANEUVER ELEMENT-13 Antitank Troop

Command
x1 2pdr Antitank Gun 14A-12
x1 2pdr Antitank Gun 14A-12
 Transport
x2 15cwt Truck 14A-11

I Burma Corps Fire Support Elements 01-03

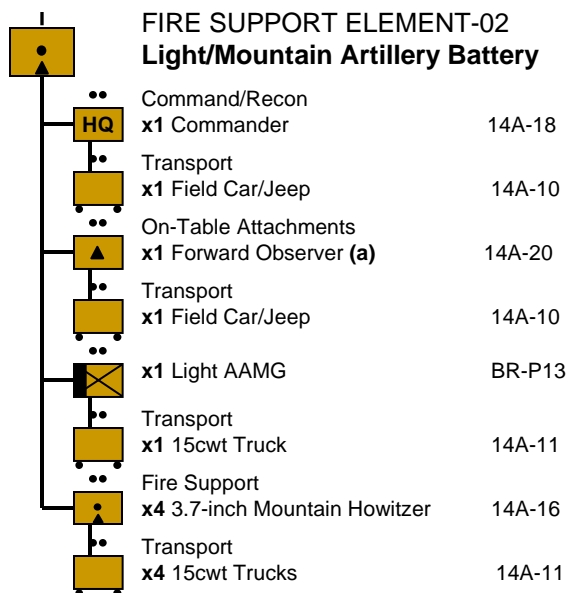


(a) Normally there would be two FOs – one for each troop (half-battery), though I Burma Corps was so lacking in equipment that there was frequently only one radio per battalion or battery. Reducing the number of FOs is one way of simulating the artillery command and control problems experienced in Burma 1942.



(a) Normally there would be two FOs – one for each troop (half-battery), though I Burma Corps was so lacking in equipment that there was frequently only one radio per battalion or battery. Reducing the number of FOs is one way of simulating the artillery command and control problems experienced in Burma 1942.

(b) This battery (5th Field Artillery Battery, Burmese Auxiliary Force) is the Corps' only General Fire Support unit. It spent most of the campaign under the command of 27th Mountain Regiment, Indian Artillery (1st Burma Division)



(a) Normally there would be two FOs – one for each troop (half-battery), though I Burma Corps was so lacking in equipment that there was frequently only one radio per battalion or battery. Reducing the number of FOs is one way of simulating the artillery command and control problems experienced in Burma 1942.

Close Air Support Notes

Support from the RAF was virtually non-existent in Burma, 1942. Despite reinforcements in the form of two squadrons of Hurricanes, the RAF was overwhelmed by the Japanese onslaught and Japanese aircraft patrolled the roads and battlefields at will. All the British accounts record being under almost constant air attack and Slim complained strongly that his only air support in evidence was from three elderly transport aircraft!

So to cut it short – you don't get any, but the Japs get lots!

Suggested Troop Qualities

Raw

Independent Battalions, Burma Rifles
1st Burmese Brigade
2nd Burmese Brigade
Indian Battalions, 46th Indian Brigade

Trained

2nd Battalion, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, 1st Burma Brigade
7th Battalion, Burma Rifles, 1st Burmese Brigade
Rifle Battalions, Burma Frontier Force
Armoured Car Squadron, Burma Frontier Force
Artillery & Heavy AA Batteries, Burma Auxiliary Force
British & Gurkha Battalions, 46th Indian Brigade*
13th Indian Brigade
16th Indian Brigade
63rd Indian Brigade
1st Gloucesters (Recce Regiment)

Experienced

1/7th Gurkhas, 16th Indian Brigade*
1/3rd, 1/4th & 2/5th Gurkhas, 48th Indian Brigade
7th Armoured Brigade
1st Battalion, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (attached 1st Burma Division)
1st Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (attached 1st Burma Division)
All Indian Artillery units
All Royal Artillery and Royal Horse Artillery units

* The 1/7th Gurkhas from 16th Brigade were combined with the 3/7th Gurkhas from 46th Brigade on 24th February, after the Sittang disaster, to form a fourth (composite) Gurkha battalion under 48th Brigade.

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Gunners At War 1939-1945 – Peter Mead
Tank Tracks To Rangoon – Bryan Perrett
Defeat Into Victory – Field Marshal, Viscount Slim

My Thanks To...

All those who have helped and continue to help with this project. The ones who spring immediately to mind are (in no particular order - My apologies if I've missed your name – please let me know):

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John Broughton
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Playtester-In-Chief; Sam Spiers

And Chris and Sidney Jones for inspiring me to wargame in the first place!

Special Dedication

To John Broughton, father of my wargames-buddy Al Broughton, formerly known as Corporal Broughton J, 1st Battalion, Somerset Light Infantry, who fought at (among other places) the legendary 'Admin Box' and served throughout India, Burma and the Arakan with 7th Indian Division, 20th Indian Division and 36th Infantry Division, 1942-1946.

And to the late John Hurley, once a Captain of the Hertfordshire Regiment, seconded to the King's African Rifles (11th East African Division, 14th Army). He was once kind enough to indulge a small boy's fanatical interest in military history and gave him the cap badge and captain's pips he wore at Kohima, which he treasures still, 25 years later.

I hope you'll join me in raising a glass and a thought to them, their comrades who fought in the 'Forgotten Army' and particularly to those who never returned home.