

France 1914 - The mobilization

The French Army, 1914 by T. Claudius

Introduction

The field army was divided into five armies and numbered approx. 1,500,000 men. In addition, reserve and national defense units in fortresses and depots. The total strength of the army was approx. 2,000,000 men.

Organization

The army was organized in

- 21 corps in two divisions. 5
- independent divisions (one of these was part of 6. Army Corps, which thus consisted of three divisions). 25
- reserve divisions. 1
- Moroccan division (this had only 24 guns). 8

Kriegsgliederung
eines Armeekorps in normaler Zusammensetzung.
(49 000 Mann.)

I. Armeekorps. ¹⁾				30—6—36
2. Inf. Div.		1. Inf. Div.		
4. Inf. Brig.	3. Inf. Br.	2. Inf. Brig.	1. Inf. Brig.	
8.	33.	1.	43.	
110.	73.	84.	127.	
Kavallerie ²⁾ von der Korps-Kav.		Kavallerie ²⁾ von der Korps-Kav.		
Div. Art. Regt. 27		Div. Art. Regt. 15		
■ San. Form. ³⁾ ■ Bl. R.		■ San. Form. ³⁾ ■ Bl. R.		
Chasseurs- oder Husaren-Regt.				
Korps-Art. Regt. 41				
Scheinw. Zug	■ San. Form. ³⁾	■ Bl. R.	■ Dr. Tr. R.	= Pionier-Partkomp.
Munitionskolonnen und Trains.				
101. Ref. Inf. Brig. ⁴⁾				
Ref. S. R. 243				
Ref. S. R. 327				
* Verstärkungsbatterien (batteries de renforcement) ⁵⁾ .				

- land defense divisions (with 24 guns each). 1 Moroccan
- brigade of five battalions.

In addition, there were hunters and alpine hunters, which included a total of 31 battalions (of six companies, of 254 men) and 31 reserve hunter battalions (of four companies). Most hunter battalions were assigned to corps and divisions

to fill out the framework (there were not enough line regiments) partly as reinforcement of some corps.

The corps consisted of 2 divisions (each 4 regiments, each 3 battalions); all infantry battalions consisted of 4 companies (254 men each). Each corps was reinforced with 2 reserve regiments (of 2 battalions) or an equivalent number of fighter battalions, but no additional artillery belonged to these battalions.

2. Corps had an additional brigade (without artillery).

The Colonial Corps had a line brigade instead of a reserve brigade. Three corps had an additional fighter battalion.

Each division - including the independent ones - had 36 units. 75 mm field guns. The corps artillery numbered 48 pamphlets, so that the corps had a total of 120 pamphlets. However, 6th Corps had 156 pamphlets, while 14th Corps had 12 pieces. 65 mm mountain guns extra.

The 19th Army Corps was not set up as a corps, its two divisions (37th and 38th Divisions) acting as independent divisions; the corps artillery was lacking, so that each division had only 36 guns. The other two independent divisions (44th and 45th Divisions) had 48 and 36 guns respectively.

The reserve divisions consisted of 6 reserve regiments (each with 2 battalions, each with 4 companies) and 36 guns. Four reserve divisions each had 3-4 extra battalions. Two reserve divisions had only 32 field guns each.

The land defense divisions had 4 land defense regiments (each with 3 battalions, each with 4 companies) and 24 units. 75 mm field guns. A single division had only 12 guns.

The infantry

The infantry lined up:

- 163 line regiments 10
- fortress regiments; these did not belong to the field army, but to the fortresses. 12
- colonial regiments (each with 3 line battalions).
- 8 Zouave regiments. 7
- Algerian and Tunisian rifle regiments (19 battalions in total). 4
- Moroccan rifle regiments (11 battalions in total). 12 Alpine
- Hunter Battalions; each alpine hunter battalion had I battery of 65 mm mountain guns.

- 19 fighter battalions.

The Zouave regiments were raised by Frenchmen living in France and North Africa, while the rifle regiments from Algiers, Tunis and Morocco consisted of native troops. The regiments were multiplied in so-called marching regiments, which usually consisted of 2 line battalions and 1 reserve battalion.

- 173 reserve regiments (each with 2 battalions); the 167 reserve regiments were part of the field
- army. 1 colonial marching
- regiment. 8 colonial reserve regiments (each with 2 battalions).

Of the land defense regiments (of 3 battalions), 37 were part of the 8 land defense divisions and 1 land defense brigade; most divisions were of 4 regiments.

The cavalry

The field army included 9 cavalry divisions (of 6 regiments, of 4 squadrons) and 1 cavalry division (of 4 regiments). Each cavalry division included 6 machine guns and 12 guns. The 10. However, the Cavalry Division only had 4 machine guns and 8 guns.

The cavalry fielded 85 regiments for the field army, including 2 Spahi regiments. The cavalry divisions included 58 regiments (each with 4 squadrons). The other regiments were assigned corps and infantry divisions; 19 of these regiments were in 6 squadrons, the rest in 4. A squadron numbered approx. 150 riders.

In addition, the cavalry provided 54 reserve squadrons to the reserve divisions and 16 land defense squadrons to the land defense divisions.

Machine guns

In both the infantry and the cavalry, the machine guns were organized in sections of 2 guns and approx. 25 men:

- Cavalry regiments assigned to army corps each had 1 section. In contrast, there was only 1 section for each cavalry brigade (of 2 regiments) in the cavalry divisions.
- For the infantry there were 2 sections per regiment (of 3 battalions), but none in the native rifle regiments. Each reserve regiment had 1-2 sections, while the national defense regiments had none

machine guns. The hunter battalions (each of 6 companies) had 2 sections and the reserve hunter battalions (each of 4 companies) had 1 section.

The artillery

The French batteries, regardless of caliber, were all of 4 pamphlets.

Field Artillery

The army's field gun was the famous 75 mm gun - popularly called *the Soixante-quance* - which was light and fast-firing. Even at maximum range, the highly reliable gun was far superior to the corresponding German 77 mm field gun.

Corps Artillery

The French army lacked contemporary heavy field artillery. The batteries were assigned to the various armies, and on average there were 8 usable heavy pamphlets per army corps. These pamphlets were not as good as the corresponding German ones.

There were only 26 batteries with 155 mm rapid-firing Rimmel howitzers and 24 batteries with 120 mm long-bore guns. In addition, there were 4 motorized batteries that were also equipped with 120 mm cannon; these 4 batteries also formed an exception in the number of pamphlets, being of 6 guns per battery. In addition, there were 21 batteries of short 120 mm guns with a short range.