

The Swedish Army 1939-1945 - Infantry

Introduction

The background for this description of the Swedish army during the Second World War is the desire to investigate how the Swedish units that could have participated in Operation Rädde Danmark were equipped and organized.



Swedish parade, approx. 1943.

From Source 9.

During the period, the Swedish defense developed into quite a powerful force, although the defense system, which was adopted in 1942, was only quantitatively and qualitatively in place after the end of the war.

At the end of the war, the army numbered 300,000 men, organized in e.g. 10 infantry divisions and 3 armored brigades.

The picture gives an exciting impression of the tanks of the time, armored vehicles, heavy artillery (*15.2 cm Kustartilleripjäs m/37* and *Terrängdragbil m/Skoda 1*) and a cyclist unit.

Note Unless

otherwise stated, the following illustrations of handguns and heavy weapons are from Source 7.

Organisation



Principle sketch:

Command stand for the commander of the 1st Division.

Own production according to [Source 2 2](#)).

In 1943, Sweden was divided into 7 military regions (*militärmöllder*), which included a total of 67 local defense units (*försvarsmöllder*). The military region organized 1-2 divisions, local defense units and corps units. The Swedish term for a division at the time was *distribution*.

1. Division, ca. 1943

The division, which was one of the units included in the plans for Operation Rädde Denmark, was organized as follows:

- Staff and staff company
- Northern Skåne Infantry Regiment (I 6) - Cyclist Regiment Kronoberg
- Regiment (I 11) - Motorized Infantry Regiment Northern Småland Regiment
- (I 12)
- Wendes artillery regiments (A 3)
- 1st Division/ Scanian Cavalry Regiment 3) (K 2) - cavalry squadron, cyclist squadron and armored car squadron Engineer
- Battalion/Göta Ingenjörskår (Ing 2) - 2 companies and 1 park company Anti-tank company - possibly equipped with 57 mm guns (an "enlarged" 37 mm anti-tank gun)
- Air Defense Battery/ Skåne Air Defense Corps (Lv 4)
- Guard battalion Telegraph
- company/Signal regiment Trænbataljon/
- Scania Trångkåren (T 4) - incl. sanitation units.

And the svensk infantry regiment in 1943

- Boss with staff
- Staff Company; including connection sharing and training
- Machinery Company (13th Company)
- Gun company (14th company) 3 infantry
- battalions of 3 light and 1 heavy company

A war-strength regiment in 1940 consisted of approx.:

- 3,600 men and 504 horses
- 264 horse-drawn wagons, of which 21 wooden
- wagons 60 cargo wagons and 3 staff wagons

Source 1 summarizes the distribution of weapons as follows, which, however, does not entirely agree with the organizational information:

The regiment in total	3 battalions, each with	
Medium machine guns 42	Machine guns	4
Anti-aircraft machine guns	5 Anti-aircraft machine gun	1
Light mortars	35 Medium Machine Guns	10
Medium weight mortars	18 Light mortars	11
Heavy mortars	3 Medium heavy mortars	6
Anti-tank guns	6 anti-tank guns	11
Machine guns	546 Machine guns	149
Flamethrowers	5 Submachine guns	92

Connection sharing



Radio men, with 10 Watt portable radio station w/ 39-43 4).

In addition to radio equipment, the liaison division also had field telephone equipment (telephones, switchboards, line construction equipment, etc.)

In addition, a number of motor ordinances were included in the connection division.

Training company



Terrain car w/ 42.
From Source 12.

The truck is Volvo's TLV141.

Fencing training

Baggage train

Ammunition sharing
Sanitary division
Catering sharing
Transportdeling

58 lorries were part of the regiment's organization from 1942.

Infantry battalions

The battalion consists of

- Battalion staff (approx. 50 men)
- Staff company, including a patrol platoon (*jäger platoon*)
- 1. Company (*gunner company*)
- 2nd Company
- 3rd Company
- 4th (heavy) Company (*heavy company*)

The light infantry companies

- Chief and command group and train 4
- platoons on platoon line and 4 groups Heavy
- platoon on 1 machine gun section and 1 mortar group.

4 easy divisions

Sharing strap

1 platoon leader
1 non-
commissioned
officer 2 orderlies 1 mortar team (47 mm
mortar w/40) 1 anti-tank gun team (20
mm w/42)

4 groups (See also Appendix - An infantry group in 1944)

1 squad leader (machine gun w/37-39) 1
second-in-command (6.5 mm rifle w/96 or machine gun) 1
machine gunner
(6.5 mm light machine gun w/37) 5 riflemen (rifle w/96) 2 riflemen
(automatic rifle w /42)

Special equipment in the groups: 1 barbed wire scissors, 2 pickaxes and 6 spades.



*Swedish soldiers cross a stream, approx. 1944.
From the Association of Standby Time 1939-1945.*

Soldier No. 2 from the left carries a m/37 light machine gun, while the soldier on the far right is believed to carry the platoon's anti-tank rifle m/42.

The soldiers are wearing steel helmets w/26.



9 mm submachine gun w/37-39.



6.5 mm light machine gun w/37.

Rifle m/38 was in principle rifle m/96 with improved sights; both editions were issued concurrently.



6.5 mm rifle w/38.



*6.5 m sniper rifle m/41, with scope
m/41.*



6,5 mm automatgevær m/42.



47 mm mortar m/40.



20 mm anti-tank gun w/42.
From Source 13.

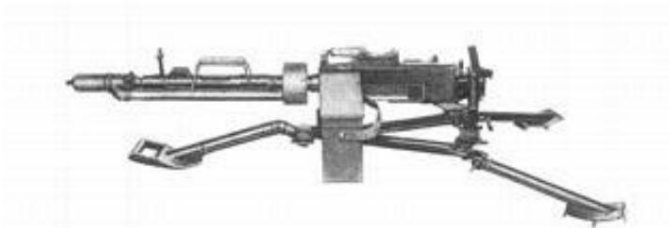
Anti-tank rifle m/42 was introduced from 1944 and was one of the earliest man-borne recoilless anti-tank weapons. The gun weighed 11 kg and could penetrate 40 mm armor at a distance of 100 m.

For further information on the anti-tank rifle, see the reference in Source 6.

Heavy division

The heavy division consists of:

- 1 machine gun section (two medium heavy machine guns m/36 (water cooled) or (from 1943) m/42 (air cooled) 1 mortar
- section (medium heavy mortar m/29).



6.5 mm machine gun w/42.



6.5 mm machine gun w/36.

**Machine gun section 2
machine gun groups**

- 1 section leader
- 1 non-commissioned officer 1
- foot orderly 1
- private 1 group leader 1
- second-in-command 8 privates 1 medium-heavy machine gun w/36



8 cm mortar m/29.

Mortar section

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 observer team 1 section leader 1 non-commissioned officer 1 officer 1 non-commissioned officer 2 food orderlies 3 privates | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 mortar group 1 group leader 1 second-in-command 9 privates 1 medium-heavy mortar w/29 |
|--|---|

train

- Ammunition truck
- Kitchen trolley
- Luggage trolley

Source 5 states that the train was horse drawn, with each wagon pulled by 2 horses.



Medium heavy mortar w/29, summer 1943.

From the Association of Standby Time 1939-1945.

The heavy companies of the battalions

The battalions' heavy companies consist of:

- Chief and command group
- Mortar division of 2 sections of 2 mortar groups (medium mortar w/29)
- Machine gun section with 2 machine gun groups (medium machine gun w/36)
- Machine gun division has 4 machine gun groups (machine gun w/40).



20 mm maskinkanon m/40.

**Mortar section 2
observer teams 2
mortar groups**

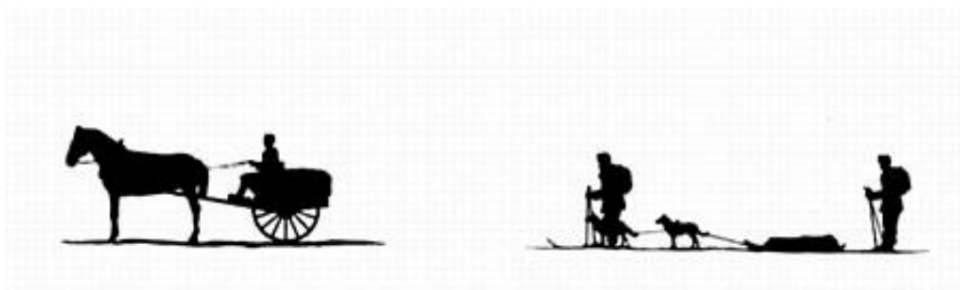
1 section leader 1
non-commissioned
officer 1
officer 1 non-
commissioned officer
2 foot
ordnance officers
3 privates 1 group leader 1
second-in-
command 9 privates 1 medium-heavy mortar w/29

**Machine gun section 2
machine gun groups**

1 section leader 1
non-commissioned
officer 1 foot orderly
1 private
1 group leader 1
second-in-command 8
privates 1
medium-heavy machine gun w/36

The organization of the machine gun division is not disclosed.

The regiment's machine gun company (13th Company)



Transport of medium heavy machine gun, approx. 1939.
From Source 3.

The cart was pulled by 1 horse, while the sled was pulled by 2 dogs.

Cyclist units and motorized infantry units have provided more modern means of transport.



Medium heavy machine gun m/36, 1943.

From the Association of Standby Time 1939-1945.

The regiment's machine gun company (*cannon company*) consists of:

- Commander and command
- group 3 platoons of 2 sections, each with 2 machine gun groups with 1 medium machine gun (m/36)

The sections in the machine gun company were organized like the sections in the battalions' heavy companies.

The medium machine gun was also available in an 8mm version.

The regiment's gun company (14th Company)

The regiment's cannon company (*special company*) consists of:

- Chief and command group
- Anti-tank division with 6 units. 37 mm anti-tank guns (m/38)
- Anti-aircraft division with 4 pcs. double barrel machine guns (m/36)
- Pioneer division, i.a. with 5 pcs. flamethrowers w/41
- Machine gun division with 4 pcs. 20 mm machine guns (m/40)
- Heavy mortar division with 3 pcs. 120 mm mortar (m/41) and 1 observer team.

Anti-tank division



37 mm anti-tank gun w/38.

Division strop

6 gun groups

1 platoon leader
non-commissioned
officers foot
ordnance
privates 1 group
leader 1 second in command
1 foot ordnance 11
privates 1
anti-tank gun

Sources do not mention the platoon specifically.



20 mm machine gun w/ 40, in the anti-tank slave w/ 40.
From Source 6.

Machine gun division

The machine gun was a *dual-purpose* weapon - anti-aircraft and anti-tank in one.

Deployed as anti-tank, the machine gun could be mounted on a special anti-tank slave, a tripod, whereby a very low firing position could be achieved.

When the machine gun was mounted in the anti-tank gun, it could only fire single shots.



Anti-aircraft machine gun, approx. 1938.
From Source 1.

Anti-aircraft division

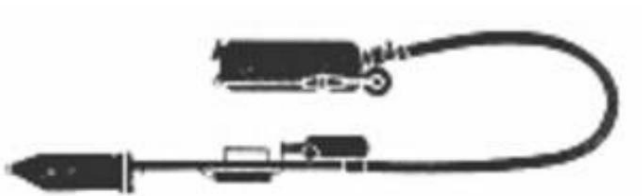
Division sling

4 anti-aircraft machine gun groups

1 platoon leader
1 non-commissioned officer
1 foot orderly
1 group leader
1 second-in-command
5 privates
1 anti-aircraft machine gun in double barrel

The anti-aircraft machine guns could be of the older model - m/14 (Schwarzlose) - or the newer m/36 (Colt-Browning).

Pioneer division



Flamethrower w/41.
From Source 8.

Delingstrop 4 pioneer groups

1 platoon leader
1 non-commissioned officer
2 food orderlies
3 privates

1 group leader 1
second in command 10
privates

The pioneer platoon had 5 flamethrowers of *the fire spruta m/41 type*.

Heavy mortar division



120 mm mortar m/41.

From Source 13.

The mortar was developed by the Finnish arms factory *Tampella*, and had the designation m/40 in the Finnish army.

Swedish arms factories such as Bofors and Husqvarna licensed the mortar, whose maximum firing range was approx. 5 km.

The regiment's heavy mortar platoon was supplemented in April 1943 with an observer team with, I assume, associated observation and signaling equipment.

The observer team could be like the equivalent team in the medium heavy mortar sections of the infantry companies or the heavy companies of the battalions.



Motorized Infantry.
From Source 13.

Closing

I am not currently aware of whether, and if so how, the organization of cyclist regiments and motorized regiments differed from the organization listed here.

Sources

1. *Citizen's book on national defense* by Erik Malmström (ed.), General Staff, Stockholm 1939.
2. *Militärkalendern 1944*, Åhlén & Åkerlunds Förlag, Stockholm, 1943.
3. *Heere pocket book* by Kurt Passow, JF Lehman Verlag, Munich/Berlin, 1939.
4. *Second World War and Sweden - History and myth-making* by Jan Linder, Swedish Military Historical Library, Luleå 2002, ISBN 91-974056-3-9.
5. An Introduction to The Royal Swedish Army in WWII by Ingólfur Björgvinsson.
6. Mats' Weapons Page - a good introduction to Swedish weapons (mostly) and organization (less). See i.a. since description of Anti-tank rifle m/42, 20 mm machine gun m/40 and supplementary image material.
7. *Descriptions of the police forces' weapons* by Vidar Andersen, Norsk Våpenhistorisk Selskap, Oslo 2003, ISBN 82-90867-20-4.
8. Armésoldat 1959 (excerpt) - a Swedish counterpart to the Danish Textbook for the Private Army), found in a Swedish internet discussion forum under SoldF.com.
9. Pansarcentralen v/Thorleif Olsson.
10. Grön Radio - A virtual museum about Swedish military radio stations.
11. A compilation of the army's light radio stations 1920-1960s by Sven Bertilsson, Försvarets Historical Telecollections.
12. *Historic Military Vehicles Directory* af Bart Venderveen, After the Battle, London 1989, ISBN 0900913-57-6.
13. At one time a larger image collection was available via Wermlands Militär Historiska Förening's website, but unfortunately it has not been possible for me to trace this source.
14. Militaria - Svensk Militärhistoria v/ Hans Högman - a good introduction to Swedish military units, including their names and numbers.

15th Swedish Army Infantry Division 1-8 by Ola Spang. The document is stated to be an extract from a

forthcoming book on the organization of the Swedish army in the 20th century, published under the auspices of the Indian website Orders-of-Battle. The information may not be reliable in all areas.

Supplementary material about the Swedish defense of the period

- Operation Save Denmark
- The Swedish Army 1939-1945 - Armored troops
- The Swedish Army 1939-1945 - Artillery
- The Swedish Army 1939-1945 - Luftvärnsartilleriet
- The Swedish Army 1939-1945 - Engineer troops
- The Swedish Navy 1939-1945 - The Navy
- The Swedish Navy 1939-1945 - The coastal artillery
- The Swedish Air Force 1939-1945 - Operation Rädde Danmark
- The Swedish Air Force 1939-1945 - Experiments with airborne units

Per Finsted

To note:

1) Thanks to Mats T. Persson, who has assisted me in identifying the cannon and cannon tractors. The cannon and the cannon tractors are discussed in more detail in *The Swedish Navy 1939-1945 - The Coastal Artillery*.

2) Command posts for divisional and higher commanders as well as independent brigades were introduced in 1943; went out of use in 1960. Source Ceremonial Regulations for the Armed Forces, 2003.

3) In 1942, *the Skånska Cavalry Regiment* was transformed into *the Skånska Armored Regiment (P 2)*, but whether this had an impact on the division's organization is not currently known.

4) From the website of the Swedish Military Historical Library.

Addendum - An infantry group in 1944

Group leader

Machine gun w/37-39 200

cartridges w/39

Magazine bag for 4 magazines (+2 in backpack)

Bayonet

Waist belt

Field light

Compass

Signal whistle

Card case

Paper, pencil, signal forms, notebook (strength list) Field spade Box with foot

care items

Barbed Wire Scissors

m cord 80 cartridges

Deputy commander/group

Submachine gun w/37-39

Rifleman (supply)

Rifle w/96 w/bayonet and accessories 80

cartridges, loaded in 4 machine gun magazines

Magazine bag, waist belt and shoulder

straps Ax pickaxe

Marksmanship

Sniper rifle m/41 with bayonet and accessories 80 cartridges,
of which 40 armor cartridges

Binoculars, in metal carrier

Cartridge belt

Rifleman

Automatic rifle m/42 with bayonet and accessories 20

Cartridge belt

Field spade

200 cartridges w/39

Magazine bag for 4 magazines (+2 in backpack)

Bayonet

Waist belt

Ax pickaxe

Machine gunner

Light machine gun w/37 80

cartridges, loaded in 4 machine gun magazines

Tool bag 1

Magazine bag, waist belt and shoulder straps

Helps

Rifle w/96 w/bayonet and accessories 80

cartridges, loaded in 4 machine gun magazines

Tool bag 2

Interchangeable pipe

Magazine bag, waist belt and shoulder straps

Field spade

Rifleman

Automatic rifle m/42 with bayonet and accessories 80

cartridges

Cartridge belt

Field spade

Rifleman

Rifle w/96 w/bayonet and accessories 80

cartridges

Magazine bag

Field spade

Rifleman (group pioneer)

Rifle w/96 w/bayonet and accessories 80

cartridges

Cartridge belt

Field spade

Hearing protection

Water bag

The above information comes from Source 6.