

Tables of Organisation



Since I like to game with historical formations and I couldn't find any source that matched the theoretical TOEs with the actual numbers seen **in practice**, I wrote my own. I don't really see the point of worrying about official structures in a war that they were basically never followed (and certainly not after the first contact with the enemy).

I welcome any corrections.

The first version was really intended for use with the Principles of War rule set, but since I have indicated the unit strengths by numbers of bayonets/sabres it is pretty universal.

[Tables of organisation](#) in pdf

The second version is specifically for *Red Actions!* since it assumes that players are using bases as the standard measure of strength and forming company-sized units (often titled battalions, however). Generally I have worked on the basis that a base represents 30-40 rifles or sabres, 4 MGs or 2 guns.)

[Tables of organisation for Red Actions!](#) in pdf

Notes to the Tables

Key

Cavalry Brigade Captain

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3 Cavalry Regiments

| (2)

6 Squadrons

(3)

This indicates that a Captain will typically be commanding a Cavalry Brigade.

That Brigade is formally of 3 Regiments, but the brackets indicate that usually only 2 are in the field.

Each Regiment is composed of 6 Squadrons, and the green indicates that this is the correct level to use when gaming company-sized units.

However, the brackets indicate only 3 squadrons should be fielded, either because that is the number seen in practice, or because the squadrons were so small that you need to combine two to get an appropriate sized unit.

Coverage

The tables are for mid-1919 through 1920 only. Prior to that units tended to be assembled with whatever was at hand rather than in any sort of recognised structure, and

old Imperial practice is a reasonable guide.

The ranks shown are indicative only, since the Red ranks do not translate very well into English and the Whites often used men with different ranks for the same level of command, having a surplus of officers.

The theoretical structures are shown but only for the purposes of knowing possible maximums, it is the "actual" values which are more important. Likewise technical support units listed on paper were often completely absent in practice.

Strengths shown

The Red units are mostly based on typical strengths at Orel-Kromy and at the battle of Warsaw. Poles on the battle of Warsaw. AFSR units are more speculative, since they varied so wildly according to the fortunes of the army. The number of men indicated for units, while based on an observation of real strengths, are nevertheless given solely as indicative averages and units might vary above or below the ranges shown by quite a lot (depending how the campaign was going). The requirement for sensible unit sizes on the table means that sometimes in order to "normalise" the size of units, I have merged two or more small units (especially cavalry) when allocating "actual" rather than theoretical strengths.

It should be noted that the Reds counted differently from

the Poles and AFSR, so mere comparison of strengths found in much literature can be misleading. Pilsudski discusses this a bit in his book *Year 1920*, and Tom Hillman explains it further in some old posts on the Yahoo Russian Civil War group. Basically the Whites tended to count only actual bayonets or sabres, while the Reds used the number of men in the unit. Often the supposed numerical superiority of the Soviet forces is largely removed when one actually looks a bit deeper at the figures.

Corps or Army level assets are generally not included, unless allotted on a semi-permanent basis. Therefore there are no tanks, trains, boats, balloons etc, which were scarce and usually only allocated for battles around strong defensive positions (e.g. Tsaritsyn, Radzymin and Perekop).

Artillery provisions are lighter than recorded strengths to take account of the difficulties of repair and transport which often led to guns being unavailable for combat. If a set-piece battle is intended then artillery strengths can be increased (and army-level heavy guns added as well in many cases).

It can be assumed that all artillery units had one or two integral machine-guns per battery (mounted as tachankas for the horse artillery). For company-level games, I would normally expect this to be included in the general factors for the guns – adding slightly to the close range shooting

factors and increasing the melee levels (especially against flank attacks).

Notes on specific armies

Red Rifle Divisions

These varied enormously in size, but ones in the front line in important sectors were less variable. When strengths fell they sometimes pared down to two brigades, which tends to average out battalion size a bit.

The two actual battalions fielded per regiment is to represent it having about six companies (of 50 bayonets each). This may be represented by two "battalions" of 4 to 6 bases, but may equally be represented by three "battalions" of 3 to 4 bases. The men were moved around inside a division to even out numbers, so units will tend to be equal sized.

The Reds raised whole brigades at a time, and preferred to withdraw them in their entirety to refit or absorb reinforcements. Therefore normally the type of all units in a normal rifle brigade was be the same, though different brigades in the same division might differ slightly in experience or origin.

An exception to this were the not uncommon brigades raised in an emergency, which might include regiments (but not smaller units) hastily thrown together, although it

would be rare for good quality units to be mixed with poor quality. Therefore one might see brigaded together regiments of sailors, kursanty (Red officer students), "Internationalists" and/or dedicated communist factory workers or another with pressed Cossacks, rounded up deserters and units crossed over from the enemy (i.e. all conscripts). Such brigades would normally be short on artillery and technical support and might be independent of any divisional structure (or co-opted to an existing division for a short period).

The cavalry of rifle regiments was most often of poor quality. It was mainly for scouting and supplying messengers, not charging.

The artillery lacked trained commanders and often had faulty ammunition, which decreased its effectiveness considerably.

The elite divisions, such as the Latvians, tended to be larger and better equipped. They might have the full complement of 3 brigades, each of 9 battalions, with MG company, and increased support units to match. Even then battalions might not have three companies each.

"Commissars" (technically member of the RevCom – revolutionary committee) were ordered during this period to keep their noses out of purely military matters, though they were to keep a close eye on unreliable former Tsarist officers. Depending on the commissar in question, he

might or might not obey the order.

Red Cavalry Divisions

There is no integral infantry in a Red cavalry unit, and foot and mounted rarely worked together – the Konnarmiya had several infantry divisions with it, but these were almost completely ignored by Budënniy (instead they performed garrison and rear area security missions and they were very ordinary as infantry).

Tachankas and reasonably plentiful horse artillery supplied the required fire-power. Although it is often cited that the Konnarmiya had lots of technical support, these could not keep up with the blistering pace it tended to move at, or are largely imaginary anyway (especially the air support) – so the most that might be expected is an occasional armoured car.

Independent cavalry brigades were not uncommon in the Red Army. They were frequently Cossack or other minority groups such as Bashkirs or Tatars.

As with the infantry, units will tend to be of equal skill level and size within brigades, but brigades in a division might vary in quality.

Red cavalry divisions were proper cavalry, quite prepared to charge mounted, but were equally happy to use firepower to achieve an objective, and often dismounted *en masse*. Lancers were rare, but more common towards

the end.

ASFR Infantry Divisions

The central drive for uniformity was not as strong in the AFSR, and men and captured equipment were not transferred between units much, leading to greater variety in strengths and organisation. The older units of the VA were particularly prone to going their own way.

Regiments often had an old officer core which stuck together in the first battalion, but they also frequently added new recruits wholesale as new battalions or companies to existing units, so regiments might have battalions of very different types and quality. However, all the regiments in the division would tend to have the same sort of mixture of troop types, whatever that might be.

Normally the regiments had three battalions, but over-large first battalions might require four wargames units to be fielded. Alternatively, the extra unit might represent the "officer" companies of the older regiments, in which case it would be smaller than a normal battalion (although still large for a company). Four battalions was also the old Imperial practice, so perhaps some retained it into the RCW.

Sometimes a brigade had a fourth regiment, which was the depot or reserve regiment. This was normally smaller (often just a battalion) and of lower quality. Often it was in

the rear anyway.

The regimental cavalry was true cavalry. The armoured cars were technically attached, rather than permanent.

The elite "coloured" units tended to form the spearhead of any attack by the Volunteer Army. They varied tremendously in size over time, but when they were at their peak they included their greatest number of new recruits and the quality dropped considerably, especially in the 3rd and 4th battalions. At their largest (i.e. Orel) the battalions were large enough to justify splitting into a couple of units for the table (the theoretical number of companies was four). At all times the coloured units were the most heavily endowed with support in terms of heavy artillery, armoured trains, planes etc.

The AFSR tended to have complete dominance of the air, but planes generally only attacked massed targets and the rear areas.

Note: when the Whites counted "bayonets" or "sabres" they usually meant exactly that, meaning even machine-gunners were not counted, which tends to make their numbers look much smaller than they actually were.

ASFR Cavalry Divisions

Part of the success of the White armies in south Russia, and particularly the VA, is that cavalry operated much more in conjunction with infantry. A weakness was that

horses were often in short supply, so the attached infantry might actually represent cavalry without horses (they could well be the third brigade).

A division is either Cossack or Regular, not mixed, even though many of the troopers forming the regular cavalry were, in fact, ethnic Cossacks. Recruits into the cavalry tended to be trained horsemen, so there is no equivalent of the conscript battalions found in the infantry.

Almost all units of cavalry were half lance armed, except that the Caucasian Mountaineers, Kuban and Terek Cossacks never used them. Men were much more reluctant than the Reds to dismount or use mounted firepower (and anyway they more often had decent infantry to call on).

Although very old-fashioned in many respects, the White cavalry were not stupid and realised the value of tachankas to a mounted force, even if they did not use as many as the Reds. They also knew the value of armoured cars and trains, but these tended to hinder their ability to move fast and freely so they were not normally attached to cavalry divisions.

Cossack Divisions

Cossack divisions use normal AFSR structures but with a tendency to be much smaller and frequently lacking parts of the structure. Mixed units of half infantry and half

cavalry were quite common, especially in the Don Host.

Don units, and to a lesser extent Kuban ones, had some supporting arms like planes, armoured trains and armoured cars, though not to as great an extent as the AFSR. The Terek and Mountaineer units tended to be very small and contain much more cavalry and little supporting arms.

On the whole the Cossack and regular AFSR units fought separately, though sometimes a brigade or division of one sort might be attached to the other for a while.

White armies in Siberia and the North-west

Siberian armies used old Imperial organisations.

According to Valery Klaving:

By order of Admiral Kolchak, dated 3 January 1919, the new Russian army was to have the structure and composition of the old Russian army under Nicholas II. That is the structure was based on a company (150 bayonets each), battalions (of 4 companies), regiments (4,100 bayonets, in 4 battalions or 16 companies), divisions (16,500 bayonets in 4 regiments) and corps (37,000 of two divisions each).

It was unlikely that official strengths were kept at the front line, but it provides a base.

Though there was a some good cavalry the infantry

tended to be far more uneven. There were fewer officer units and veterans and lots more conscripts (many extremely unreliable). Artillery and other technical support was less plentiful. Again the Cossacks tended to fight separately.

Yudenich's army was supplied with good technical support, but lacked large cavalry formations. The infantry was mediocre and lacked the big elite units found in the south and, to a lesser extent, east. In any case, his army is small enough – and altered size so wildly – that using actual units would normally be better than using formal TOEs.

Polish Infantry Divisions

The size of Polish units varied very considerably and the average size is not terribly useful, especially since the amount of support weapons varied just as wildly but quite independently of the number of bayonets. Therefore the base units might be the three companies of each battalion, or the whole battalion might only number a couple of hundred men. The MG support might or might not match.

The army absorbed an enormous number of new recruits just before (and during) the 1920 campaign against the Soviets. The higher numbered battalions might therefore be almost untrained, even in very old regiments, although Pilsudski's favoured Legion units would have had the best

recruits and suffered the least in this regard.

An infantry division seems to have been supplied with anything from a small squadron to a whole regiment of divisional cavalry, apparently at random. The cavalry units in the infantry tended to be the lower quality ones, though mostly still "real" cavalry.

Poles had total air superiority. They particularly liked attacking the supply system, Bolshevik cavalry on the march and trains.

Polish Cavalry Divisions

The highest proper formation of the Polish cavalry was the brigade. Sometimes two (rarely three) were grouped into divisions, but this was really still a grouping of brigades – there were no divisional assets. The Polish cavalry brigades not only had no integral infantry, they virtually always operated independently.

As with the Polish infantry, average sizes can be misleading. Regiments were frequently reduced to tiny sizes during a campaign, but because they recruited separately it was not unusual for one to have less than 200 sabres but be fighting alongside one, from the same brigade, with 400 effectives.

The fifth squadron of a regiment was a "technical" squadron, which was meant to supply scouts, messengers, communications, engineering assistance

etc. In practice the fast moving campaigns and shortage of manpower meant they usually fought alongside the other squadrons.

The Poles were very fond of tachankas and sometimes had extraordinary numbers of them.

Estonian and Latvian Divisions

The dispersed nature of the fighting meant that the divisions were really just groupings of regiments, so artillery and cavalry would normally be permanently attached to a regiment. The structure was very flexible – companies were often chopped and changed temporarily across to other regiments in a division to strengthen a particular point, and regiments moved to reinforce other divisions.

Companies might vary quite a bit in size but the bulk of a regiment would normally be of the same basic type. The exceptions would be for new recruits forming a fourth company or, rarely, a fourth battalion. For game purposes small companies might need to be merged.

Estonian regiments might also be strengthened by the addition of either an elite company or battalion from the armoured train division, either with or without their trains. An armoured car or two might also work with a division.

Nationalist cavalry was generally neither numerous nor very good, although the Estonians formed a couple of

separate regiments. Its main roles were to scout and provide messengers and orderlies and to get into the enemy's rear. They should probably be considered mounted infantry, able only to charge with sabres against enemy already retiring or baggage elements.

The scouts were divided into foot scout and horse scout companies. There were often quite a few of them and the foot scouts, in particular, frequently acted as another (small) infantry company.

The HMG ratio was fairly low but supplemented by LMGs (and the companies also usually had a few).

Freikorps Columns

The Freikorps structure was very loose, and it is hard to give any sort of average. The basic unit structures followed the German ones for the end of WWI, but shortages of manpower meant units were very short handed.

A typical battalion would normally have three companies (not often the standard four) but sometimes only two, each not often more than 100 men, and usually an MG company of up to 8 HMGs. A small mortar unit was a common addition, although often just a couple of light mortars. There were also several battalions of specialist MG "sharpshooters" with three MG companies and perhaps an infantry company or two in support.

The Freikorps tended to fight in independent columns, based around a "regiment" of two or three such infantry battalions, one of which might be a MG sharpshooter battalion. The column would most often have a small squadron of cavalry (rarely more) and several batteries (often including howitzers). It might also include an engineer company, bicycle platoon or an armoured car. Flame-throwers, infantry support guns and armoured trains existed, but were not so common. Aerial support was normal, though generally limited to spotting and dropping messages.

The Freikorps had a much higher proportion of HMGs, LMGs, cavalry and artillery than their nationalist opponents. Thus, although they were heavily outnumbered in the infantry, approximately equal numbers of support weapons were fielded. They were very well equipped with radios, telephones, field glasses etc.

Freikorps cavalry does not seem to have charged mounted during the period, but I cannot firmly state that they would never have done it. They were lance armed, it seems.