

Basic Organization of a Canadian Armoured Regiment

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The Canadian Armoured Corps was formed, as a new branch of the 'Active Militia of Canada,' effective 13 August 1940. Canadian units converted to Armoured Regiments, in this new branch, were organized under the then current British war establishment for an Armoured Regiment, which called for the regiment to be organized, and consist of:

a **Regimental Headquarters**, of five officers and 12 other ranks, equipped with four cruiser tanks

a **Headquarters Squadron**, of five officers and 120 other ranks, within:

- a Squadron Headquarters
- an Intercommunication Troop, equipped with ten scout cars
- an Administrative Troop

Three Squadrons:

- each of seven officers and 138 other ranks, within a Squadron Headquarters and four Troops
 - each Squadron Headquarters was equipped with two cruiser tanks, and two close support tanks
 - each Troop was equipped with three cruiser tanks

for a total regimental strength of 31 officers and 546 other ranks, equipped with 46 cruiser tanks, six close support tanks, and ten scout cars.

Due to a lack of equipment and production delays, an amendment of 18 November 1940, stated that the scout cars, may vary in type, and that the tanks of an armoured regiment, may consist of a combination of various types of tanks.

The British war establishment for an Armoured Regiment, was replaced by a new Canadian war establishment for an Armoured Regiment, effective 30 September 1941. Under this Canadian war establishment, the basic allotment of scout cars and tanks remained the same, but there was an increase of two other ranks in regimental strength, bringing the total for an Armoured Regiment, to 548 other ranks. Also, under this new war establishment, provision was made for the attachment to an Armoured Regiment, of a paymaster (Royal Canadian Army Pay Corps), a medical officer (Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps), and two Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps armourers (for the maintenance and repair of weapons). Effective 1 April 1942, Canadian Armoured Regiments, that were equipped with five-man crewed tanks, were allowed an increase of 55 other ranks, to their overall regimental strength.

This new Canadian war establishment, was the war establishment, under which the six Armoured Regiments of the 1st Canadian Armoured Division (later renamed the 5th Canadian Armoured Division), were organized under, upon the formation of the division, effective 27 February 1941. The six Armoured Regiments of the 4th Canadian Armoured Division, were also organized under this war establishment, upon the conversion and renaming of the 4th Canadian Division, to that of the 4th Canadian Armoured Division, effective 26 January 1942.

By the end of 1942, the Canadian Army Overseas, due to the effects of manpower restrictions, and a serious shortage of shipping, from Canada, decided to completely reorganize based on British war establishments, in order to facilitate co-operation between formations and units of

the British Army, and First Canadian Army. This reorganization of the Canadian Army Overseas, came into effect on 11 January 1943. As part of this reorganization, and to conform more closely to the British war establishment for an Armoured Regiment, a new Canadian war establishment, to replace that of 30 September 1941, was authorized, effective 1 January 1943. Under this war establishment, a Canadian Armoured Regiment was organized, and consisted of:

a **Regimental Headquarters**

- equipped with one command tank, and 11 cruiser tanks (eight of which were to be anti aircraft tanks, if available)

a **Headquarters Squadron**, with:

- a Squadron Headquarters
- a Reconnaissance Troop, equipped with ten universal carriers
- an Intercommunication Troop, equipped with nine scout cars
- an Administrative Troop

Three Squadrons:

- each of a Squadron Headquarters and five Troops
 - each Squadron Headquarters was equipped with four cruiser tanks
 - each Troop was equipped with three cruiser tanks

for a total regimental strength of 37 officers and 646 other ranks, equipped with 68 cruiser tanks, one command tank, ten universal carriers, and nine scout cars.

In addition, this new war establishment, allowed for an increase in regimental strength, of 64 other ranks, for those Armoured Regiments equipped with five-man crewed tanks, and an increase of 125 other ranks, for those equipped with six-man crewed tanks, and an increase of 189 other ranks, for those equipped with seven-man crewed tanks. The six Armoured Regiments of the reorganized 4th and 5th Canadian Armoured Brigades, in the United Kingdom, adopted this new war establishment, effective 31 January 1943.

Effective 8 May 1943, one recovery tank with three tradesmen, was allotted, to each Squadron Headquarters of an Armoured Regiment, and the strength of Regimental Headquarters, was increased by eight other ranks. Later in the month, a new war establishment was issued, effective 29 May 1943, which replaced that of 1 January 1943. This new war establishment, provided for a total strength of 37 officers and 727 other ranks, per Armoured Regiment. It also allowed for an increase in regimental strength, of 125 other ranks, for those Armoured Regiments equipped with six-man crewed tanks, and an increase of 189 other ranks, for those equipped with seven-man crewed tanks. Under this war establishment, a Canadian Armoured Regiment was organized, and consisted of:

a **Regimental Headquarters**

- equipped with one command tank, and 11 cruiser tanks (eight of which were to be anti-aircraft tanks, if available)

a **Headquarters Squadron**, with:

- a Squadron Headquarters
- a Reconnaissance Troop, equipped with ten universal carriers
- an Intercommunication Troop, equipped with nine scout cars
- an Administrative Troop

Three Squadrons

- each of a Squadron Headquarters and five Troops
 - each Squadron Headquarters was equipped with four cruiser tanks, and one recovery tank
 - each Troop was equipped with three cruiser tanks

for a total regimental strength of 37 officers and 727 other ranks, equipped with 68 cruiser tanks, one command tank, three recovery tanks, ten universal carriers, and nine scout cars.

This war establishment, stayed in effect, until it was replaced by a new Canadian war establishment for an armoured regiment, effective 12 January 1944. Under this war establishment, a Canadian Armoured Regiment was organized, and consisted of:

a Regimental Headquarters

- equipped with four cruiser tanks

a Headquarters Squadron, with:

- a Squadron Headquarters
- a Reconnaissance Troop, equipped with 11 light tanks
- an Anti-Aircraft Troop, equipped with six anti-aircraft tanks
- an Intercommunication Troop, equipped with nine scout cars
- an Administrative Troop

Three squadrons:

- each of a Squadron Headquarters, an Administrative troop, and five Troops
 - each Squadron Headquarters was equipped with four cruiser tanks, and one recovery tank
 - each Troop was equipped with three cruiser tanks

for a total regimental strength of 38 officers and 657 other ranks, equipped with 61 cruiser tanks, 11 light tanks, three recovery tanks, six anti-aircraft tanks, and nine scout cars.

By this time, as the 'Sherman' tank with a crew of five, had become the standard cruiser tank used by a Canadian Armoured Regiment, the increases to regimental strength, for six-man, and seven-man, crewed tanks, was removed. The three Armoured Regiments of the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade (Independent), who were at this time, in Italy, where they were organized on a special British war establishment for an Armoured Regiment, Middle East, did not adopt this new Canadian war establishment, until April 1944. Based on the special British war establishment for an Armoured Regiment, Middle East, the three Armoured Regiments of the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade (Independent), in Italy, were organized, and consisted of:

a Regimental Headquarters

- equipped with four cruiser tanks, and one anti-aircraft tank

a Headquarters Squadron, with:

- a squadron headquarters
- a reconnaissance troop, equipped with six scout cars, and ten universal carriers
- an intercommunication troop, equipped with eight scout cars
- an administrative troop

Three Squadrons:

- each of a squadron headquarters, an administrative troop, and five troops
 - each squadron headquarters was equipped with three cruiser tanks, and one anti-aircraft tank
 - each troop was equipped with three cruiser tanks

Due to the favourable air situation which developed in both Italy and North-West Europe, later in 1944, the anti-aircraft troop with its six anti-aircraft tanks was deleted, and provision was made for the addition of seven tracked armoured vehicles, per armoured regiment, for the carriage of ammunition to replenish tanks in forward areas during 'active' battle conditions, effective 15 October 1944.

A new Canadian war establishment for an armoured regiment, which replaced that of 12 January 1944, was authorized effective 30 November 1944, and was the war establishment under which Canadian armoured regiments were organized, through to the end of hostilities, in North-West Europe, in May 1945. Under this war establishment, a Canadian armoured regiment was organized, and consisted of:

a **Regimental Headquarters**, of five officers and 16 other ranks, equipped with four cruiser tanks

a **Headquarters Squadron**, of nine officers and 172 other ranks, within:

- a squadron headquarters
- a reconnaissance troop, equipped with 11 light tanks
- an intercommunication troop, equipped with nine scout cars
- an administrative troop, equipped with one tracked armoured ammunition carrier

Three Squadrons:

- each of eight officers and 153 other ranks, within a squadron headquarters, an administrative troop, and five troops
 - each squadron headquarters was equipped with four cruiser tanks, two tracked armoured ammunition carriers, and one recovery tank
 - each troop was equipped with three cruiser tanks

for a total regimental strength of 38 officers and 647 other ranks, equipped with 61 cruiser tanks, 11 light tanks, seven tracked armoured ammunition carriers, three recovery tanks, and nine scout cars.

A note on squadron organization within Armoured Regiments

In some Canadian Armoured Regiments, the three Squadrons were each organized as consisting of a Squadron Headquarters, equipped with three cruiser tanks (instead of four), and four Troops (instead of five), each equipped with four cruiser tanks (instead of three), which still gave the Squadron a total of 19 cruiser tanks each.

Adoption of the Canadian war establishment for an Armoured Regiment, by Armoured Reconnaissance Regiments

The creation of an Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment, for each Canadian Armoured Division, had been part of the reorganization of the Canadian Army Overseas, in early 1943. Both regiments, upon conversion from that of 'an Armoured Regiment,' to that of 'an Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment,' were organized under the newly created and authorized Canadian war establishment for an Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment. This was subsequently replaced, by a new war establishment, effective 14 May 1943, which in turn, was replaced by

another new war establishment, for an Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment effective 12 January 1944. In March 1944, so that an Armoured Division could at any time split into two brigade groups, each of two Armoured Regiments, and two Infantry Battalions, General B.L. Montgomery, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, 21st Army Group,¹² directed that all the Armoured Reconnaissance Regiments, within 21st Army Group, adopt the war establishment of an Armoured Regiment, effective 13 March 1944.

As such, the 29th Canadian Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment (The South Alberta Regiment) of the 4th Canadian Armoured Division, reorganized under the then, current Canadian war establishment for an Armoured Regiment, and subsequently, that of 30 November 1944.

The 3rd Canadian Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment (The Governor General's Horse Guards), of the 5th Canadian Armoured Division, who at this time (March 1944), were in Italy, remained organized, under the Canadian war establishment for an Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment, of 12 January 1944, until they moved to North-West Europe, in March 1945, at which time, they too, reorganized under the then, current Canadian war establishment for an Armoured Regiment, as per the 21st Army Group policy, of Armoured Reconnaissance Regiments, adopting the war establishment of an Armoured Regiment.

Sources:

















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- General Orders 1940, as issued to the Canadian Militia/Army by order of the Minister of National Defence.
- Part "A," General Orders 1941, as issued to the Canadian Army by order of the Minister of National Defence.
- Part "A," and Part "B," General Orders 1942, as issued to the Canadian Army by order of the Minister of National Defence.
- Part "A," and Part "B," General Orders 1943, as issued to the Canadian Army by order of the Minister of National Defence.
- Part "B," General Orders 1944, as issued to the Canadian Army by order of the Minister of National Defence.
- Part "B," General Orders 1945, as issued to the Canadian Army by order of the Minister of National Defence.
- The Governor General's Horse Guards, 1939-1945, The Canadian Military Journal, Toronto and Montreal Publicists (undated).
- South Albertas, A Canadian Regiment at War, by Donald F. Graves, Robin Brass Studio, Toronto, Ontario, 1998.

Endnotes:

1. The 'Active Militia of Canada,' was renamed the Canadian Army, effective 7 November 1940.
2. The Canadian designed and built Ram cruiser tank (Mark I or Mark II).
3. For the purposes of reference and description, that portion of the Canadian Army (Active), serving in the United Kingdom and Europe, was designated the Canadian Army Overseas, effective 7 November 1940.
4. First Canadian Army was the senior Canadian operational formation in the United Kingdom and Europe during the period of the Second World War, and was formed in the

United Kingdom, on 6 April 1942, with Headquarters First Canadian Army, having been embodied, effective 1 April 1942.

5. On 26 September 1939, the Minister of National Defence authorized the creation of a Canadian Military Headquarters overseas (located in London, England). This headquarters held responsibility for coordinating the arrival, quartering, completing equipment requirements, and training of Canadian Active Service Force units and formations and to command and administer these units and formations in the United Kingdom and at base in the theatre of operations. In addition, the headquarters had an important liaison role, particularly liaison with the British War Office and with the General Officer Commanding Canadian Forces in the theatre of operations, as well as furnishing information to the Canadian High Commissioner in London.
6. The American M3 Medium tank built to British specifications, and known in British and Commonwealth service, as the Grant (or Grant I).
7. The American designed and built M3 Medium tank, which in British and Commonwealth service, was known as the Lee (or Lee I).
8. As part of the reorganization of the Canadian Army Overseas, the 4th and 5th Canadian Armoured Divisions, were reorganized as Armoured Divisions of one Armoured Brigade, and one Infantry Brigade each, from their previous organization of two Armoured Brigades, and an Armoured Divisional Support Group each, which left the 4th Canadian Armoured Division, with the 4th Canadian Armoured Brigade, and the 5th Canadian Armoured Division, with the 5th Canadian Armoured Brigade.
9. A recovery tank was essentially a towing vehicle, which was used to recover a stuck, broken-down, or battle-damaged or mine-damaged tank from the battlefield to a location where unit mechanics could attempt quick repairs.
10. The American designed and built M4 Medium tank, which in British and Commonwealth service, was known as the Sherman.
11. The two regiments concerned, were converted from an 'Armoured Regiment' to that of an 'Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment,' effective 1 January 1943.
12. 21st Army Group, was a British headquarters formation, in command of two field armies and other supporting units, consisting primarily of the Second British Army, and First Canadian Army, which was established in London during July 1943, under the command of Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, it was assigned to Operation Overlord, the Allied invasion of Europe, and was an important Allied force in the European Theatre of Operations. 21st Army Group operated in Northern France, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany from June 1944, to the end of hostilities in North-West Europe, in May 1945.

Squadron	Senior Regiment in Brigade	Middle Regiment in Brigade	Junior Regiment in Brigade
"HQ"			
"A"			
"B"			
"C"			
 1st Cdn Armoured Brigade	11th Canadian Armoured Regiment (The Ontario Regiment)	12th Canadian Armoured Regiment (The Three Rivers Regiment)	14th Canadian Armoured Regiment (The Calgary Regiment)
 2nd Cdn Armoured Brigade	6th Canadian Armoured Regiment (1st Hussars)	10th Canadian Armoured Regiment (Fort Garry Horse)	27th Canadian Armoured Regiment (The Sherbrooke Fusilier Regiment)
 4th Cdn Armoured Division	21st Canadian Armoured Regiment (The Governor General's Foot Guards)	22nd Canadian Armoured Regiment (The Canadian Grenadier Guards)	28th Canadian Armoured Regiment (The British Columbia Regiment)
 5th Cdn Armoured Division	2nd Canadian Armoured Regiment (Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians))	5th Canadian Armoured Regiment (8th Princess Louise's (New Brunswick) Hussars)	9th Canadian Armoured Regiment (The British Columbia Dragoons)