

British Forces in North Africa 1940 to 1943

Note: The following lists have been constructed by drawing upon various written and internet sources such as *Panzer Battles* by F.W. von Mellenthin, *The Crucible of War* by Barrie Pitt, Wikipedia, Tanks-Encyclopedia.com, BayonetStrength.uk and many others. As many records of what the reality was on the ground were destroyed or simply were not kept in the heat of battle, it's hard to be precise about what equipment was available and when. However, by comparing different sources of images, equipment production dates, dates shipments of reinforcements are recorded to have arrived etc. I have done my best to come up with approximate times that specific support options would have been available where possible between June 1940 until the Axis forces surrendered in Tunisia in May 1943.

MOTOR PLATOON

(Representing the dedicated truck borne infantry of the armoured divisions who had their own dedicated transport vehicles)

Platoon force rating: Regular, -2

Command Dice: 5

PLATOON HEADQUARTERS
Lieutenant, Senior Leader, with pistol
Sergeant, Senior Leader, with SMG
2" mortar, two crew

SECTIONS ONE TO THREE	
Corporal, Junior Leader, SMG	
LMG TEAM	RIFLE TEAM
Bren gun Three crew	Boys AT rifle Two crew Two riflemen

Notes: The HQ section of the motor platoon and each section would each have had their own dedicated 15-cwt truck as transport. In late 1941 the Motor Battalion wasn't issued any dedicated AT guns as the expectation was they would have tank support. Instead, each platoon had three AT rifles as part of the platoon, one for each section. The AT rifle crew were also issued rifles so feel free to use them as riflemen when not operating their AT weapon (however, clearly they can't fire both in the same activation!). From late 41 3 " mortars were available as battalion support. I have read that from mid 42, the AT rifle numbers were reduced as a result of battalions beginning

to be equipped with 2lb AT guns in the form of the 2lb "portee". Also by mid 42 vickers MMGs had begun to appear as battalion assets, however the 2" mortar had been removed from the platoon. Feel free to model this by removing the 2" mortar from the list above and by replacing the section AT rifles and crew with 2 riflemen instead - the force rating will then become -3).

From late 1942 a 6lb portee was also available. It may be that leaders would have not had SMGs available on deployment in 1940. If you wish to model this, remove the SMGs from the list and the Force Rating becomes -3.

RIFLE PLATOON

(Representing the standard british rifle brigade from a dedicated infantry division and transported by the Royal Army Service Corps)

Platoon force rating: Regular, -1

Command Dice: 5

PLATOON HEADQUARTERS
Lieutenant, Senior Leader, with pistol
Sergeant, Senior Leader, with SMG
2" mortar, two crew
Boys AT rifle, two crew

SECTIONS ONE TO THREE	
Corporal, Junior Leader, SMG	
LMG TEAM	RIFLE TEAM
Bren gun Three crew	Six riflemen

Notes: The 2" mortar was taken out of platoons during the deployment to the desert in mid 1942 so feel free to adjust the platoon make-up for mid 1942 if you wish. It won't affect the platoon force rating. It may be that leaders would have not had SMGs available on deployment in 1940. If you wish to model this, remove the SMGs from the list and the Force Rating becomes -2.

RECONNAISSANCE REGIMENT ASSAULT TROOP

(Representing the truck borne combat infantry of the Reconnaissance Regiments who had their own dedicated transport vehicles)

Troop force rating: Regular, +1

Command Dice: 5

TROOP HEADQUARTERS
Lieutenant, Senior Leader, with pistol
Sergeant, Senior Leader, with SMG
2" mortar, two crew

SECTIONS ONE TO FOUR	
Corporal, Junior Leader, SMG	
LMG TEAM	RIFLE TEAM
Bren gun Three crew	Boys AT rifle Two crew Two riflemen

Notes: The section was transported in one jeep, five 15-cwt trucks and two motorcycles. As part of a Reconnaissance Regiment a common support would be carrier sections. Reconnaissance Battalions landed with 1st Army in operation Torch and it is likely that 56 Recce was the first into Tunisia. The use of Reconnaissance Battalions in the 8th Army was much more limited, with 50th Recce operating as standard organisation for only a very short period from April to August 42 during Gazala. After this they were reorganised into different roles by Monty (e.g. mine clearance/carrier units).

COMMANDO SECTION

(Representing the men of No.1 and No.6 Commando who fought in Tunisia from November 1942 until it's fall in 1943. This list represents the 31 men of one section of a full 62 man troop. Note that 31 is the exact number required to fill an Assault Landing Craft)

Section force rating: Elite, +1
Command Dice: 6 (1 red)

SECTION HEADQUARTERS
Lieutenant, Senior Leader, with SMG
2" mortar, two crew
Boys AT rifle, two crew

SUB-SECTIONS ONE AND TWO	
Corporal, Junior Leader, SMG	
LMG TEAM	RIFLE TEAM
Bren gun Three crew One trooper with rifle	Seven troopers with rifles One trooper with SMG

Notes: Section commanders were given great flexibility in how they organised their sections. As such, the troopers assigned to the anti-tank rifle and/or mortar teams may be reabsorbed into the sub-sections if desired (adding up to two men to each sub-section). This does not affect the section's force rating. Commando troops had 3" mortars in support if required. The Boys AT rifle team can be replaced with a two man Tank Killer team armed with the No. 75 Hawkins Grenade if desired.

(This is the 1940 organisation which was re-adopted in February 1942. This organisation is based on the information on commando platoon organisation here:
<http://www.lonesentry.com/articles/ttt08/commandos.html>)

PARATROOP PLATOON

(Representing the men of the 1st Parachute Brigade who fought in Tunisia during operation torch from November 1942 until it's fall in 1943.)

Platoon force rating: Elite, +8
Command Dice: 6 (1 red)

PLATOON HEADQUARTERS
Lieutenant, Senior Leader, with SMG
Sergeant, Senior Leader, with SMG
Boys AT rifle, two crew

SECTIONS ONE TO THREE	
Corporal, Junior Leader, SMG	
LMG TEAM	RIFLE TEAM
Bren gun Three crew	2" mortar Two crew One trooper with SMG One trooper with rifle grenade Two troopers with rifles

Notes: The paras were well equipped when compared to their regular counterparts. Each section was also provided with a 2" mortar as well as a cup discharger. Whether the mortar was equipped with both smoke and HE rounds is up for debate, but we'll assume that the paras would more likely than not have chosen to take some HE with them. The Boys AT rifle team can be replaced with a two man Tank Killer team armed with the No. 75 Hawkins Grenade if desired. Going by the WE tables the Lieutenant was only assigned a pistol, however, with a large number of stens in the paras pool of weapons it is highly likely he would have one so I have made that the case here.

General notes:

6lb guns began replacing 2lb guns in late 42.

I've not included the LDRG and SAS as these are very specific, difficult to model units that others have already had a good go at.

Info on how they fought:

<http://www.desertrats.org.uk/useofarms.htm>

British Forces in North Africa 1940 to 1943: Supports

LIST ONE	Army	From	To
Medical Orderly	8th 1st	Jun 40	May 43
Engineer Mine Clearance Team, 3 men	8th 1st	Jun 40	May 43
Engineer Wire Cutting Team, 3 men	8th 1st	Jun 40	May 43
Engineer Demolition Team, 3 men	8th 1st	Jun 40	May 43
Adjutant	8th 1st	Jun 40	May 43
Minefield	8th 1st	Jun 40	May 43
Barbed Wire	8th 1st	Jun 40	May 43
Road Block	8th 1st	Jun 40	May 43
Car, no crew	8th 1st	Jun 40	May 43
15 cwt Truck, no crew	8th 1st	Jun 40	May 43
Entrenchments for one team	8th 1st	Jun 40	May 43
LIST TWO		From	To
Boys AT Rifle Team, 2 men	8th 1st	Jun 40	May 43
2" Mortar Team, 3 men	8th 1st	Jun 40	May 43
Pre-game Barrage	8th 1st	Jun 40	May 43
2lb Anti-Tank gun with five crew and Junior Leader	8th 1st	Jun 40	May 43
2lb Anti-Tank gun "portee" with Junior Leader	8th 1st	Mar 41	May 43
LIST THREE		From	To
Sniper Team	8th 1st	Jun 40	May 43
Morris CS9 Armoured Car with Junior Leader	8th	Jun 40	Nov 41
Daimler Dingo Scout Car with Junior Leader	8th 1st	Jun 40	May 43
Marmon Herrington MkII Armoured Car with Junior Leader	8th	Mar 41	Dec 41
Marmon Herrington MkIII Armoured Car with Junior Leader	8th	May 41	May 43
Rolls Royce Armoured Car with Junior Leader	8th	Jun 40	Nov 41
Universal Carrier with Team and Junior Leader	8th 1st	Jun 40	May 43
Morris Light Reconnaissance Car with Junior Leader	1st	Nov 41	May 43
Bofors 37mm Anti-Tank gun with five crew and Junior Leader	8th	Jun 40	Feb 42
Bofors 37mm Anti-Tank gun "portee" with Junior Leader	8th	Mar 41	Feb 42
Matilda Scorpion Mk. II	8th*	Nov 42	May 43
LIST FOUR		From	To
Marmon Herrington MkII Armoured Car (PaK 36) with Junior Leader	8th	May 41	May 43

Marmon Herrington MkII Armoured Car with Breda 20mm AA	8th	May 41	May 43
Marmon Herrington MkII Armoured Car with 2.8 cm sPzB 41 (AT Rifle)	8th	Oct 42	May 43
Vickers Light Tank Mark VI A/B with Junior Leader	8th	Jun 40	Aug 42
Engineer Section with Junior Leader	8th 1st	Jun 40	May 43
Humber Mk. I/II with Junior Leader	8th	Nov 41	May 43
Humber Mk. III (identical stats to Mk.I/II) with Junior Leader	8th 1st	May 42	May 43
Daimler Mk. I Armoured Car with Junior Leader	8th 1st	Jun 41	May 43
AEC Armoured Car Mk. I	8th	Nov 42	May 43
M3 "Honey" Stuart Recce with Junior Leader	8th	Nov 41	May 43
M3 "Honey" Stuart Kangaroo	8th	Nov 41	May 43
Bofors 40mm AA gun with 5 crew and Junior Leader	8th 1st	Jun 40	May 43
6lb Anti-Tank gun with five crew and Junior Leader	8th 1st	May 42	May 43
6lb Anti-Tank gun "portee" with Junior Leader	8th 1st	Sep 42	May 43
Regular Vickers MMG on tripod mount, 5 crew	8th 1st*	Jun 40	May 43
Forward Observer with 3" Mortar Battery	8th 1st	Jun 40	May 43
A9 with Junior Leader	8th	June 40	Jun 41
A10 with Junior Leader	8th	Jun 40	Dec 41
A13 Mk. II with Junior Leader	8th	Jun 40	Dec 41
Valentine Mk. II/IV with Junior Leader	8th 1st	Nov 41	May 43
Valentine Mk. III/V (Same stats as Mk (II/V) with Junior Leader	8th 1st	Aug 42	May 43
A15 Crusader Mk. I/II with Junior Leader	8th 1st*	Jun 41	May 43
Breda 20mm AA with 5 crew and Junior Leader	8th	Dec 40	May 43
LIST FIVE		From	To
A9 CS with Junior Leader	8th	Jun 40	Jun 41
A12 Matilda Mk. II with Junior Leader	8th	Jun 40	Jun 42
A12 Matilda Mk. II CS with Junior Leader	8th	Jun 40	Jun 42
Matilda Scorpion Mk. I with Junior Leader	8th*	Oct 42	May 43
M3 Grant Scorpion Mk. III/IV with Junior Leader	8th*	Jan 43	May 43
A15 Crusader Mk. I/II CS with Junior Leader	8th 1st	Jun 41	May 43
Regular Infantry Squad with Junior Leader	8th 1st	Jun 40	May 43
Recce Section of two Universal Carriers, three crew each. One Junior Leader	8th 1st	Jun 40	May 43
25lb gun with 5 crew and Junior Leader	8th 1st	Jun 40	May 43
M3 "Honey" Stuart with Junior Leader	8th	Nov 41	May 43
LIST SIX		From	To

A15 Crusader Mk. III with Junior Leader	8th 1st	Oct 42	May 43
Valentine Mk. VIII	8th* 1st	Oct 42	May 43
Valentine Mk. IX (6lb gun) with Junior Leader	8th 1st	Mar 43	May 43
Vickers Light Tank AA MkI/II	8th* 1st*	Jun 40	May 43
AEC Armoured Car Mk. II	8th	Nov 42	May 43
LIST SEVEN		From	To
M3 Grant with Junior Leader	8th	May 42	May 43
Churchill Mk. III with Junior Leader	8th* 1st*	Oct 42	May 43
Bishop SPH 25lb with Junior Leader	8th 1st	Oct 42	May 43
M7 Priest 105mm SP with Junior Leader	8th	Oct 42	May 43
LIST EIGHT		From	To
M4 Sherman with Junior Leader	8th 1st*	Sep 42	May 43
Churchill Mk. II CS	1st	Feb 43	May 43

‘PORTEE’ VEHICLES

As the desert war progressed it became clear that motor battalions were in need of some dedicated anti-tank support. As such, ‘portee’ versions of infantry anti-tank guns began to be fielded. Essentially these were a 2lb or 6lb gun on the back of a flatbed truck. These would either be dismounted before battle, or could be fired from the back of the vehicle if a quick getaway was required. A dismounted portee can be represented as a normal towed gun.

When used mounted, portee vehicles are deployed and fire as towed artillery (i.e. can deploy to a jump off point). For the purposes of movement and receiving fire they are treated as a soft skin, open topped vehicle, with the following exceptions:

- The gun crew (passengers) benefit from heavy cover (rather than the standard light cover) when receiving infantry fire from within the 90 arc directly in front of any gun shield.
- On the soft-skins successes table (12.2), for Zero/One success on the roll of a 6 the gun may not fire in its next phase. On Two successes, the vehicle is destroyed (which includes the mounted gun and crew). (Note: just to clarify, as the portee would generally have its rear towards the enemy, where it says “Reverse 1D6 immediately” this means “Travel 1D6 away from the enemy” and “Drive flat out forwards” would be “Travel full speed towards the enemy”. Some common sense is needed here!)

VICKERS MMGs

First Army landed without their MG Battalions and it wasn’t until April 43 that the guns began to arrive. However, they didn’t have specialists in these weapons. You may wish to model this by classifying these teams as ‘green’.

Motor platoons also didn’t have Vickers MMGs as battalion assets until mid 42. As such, you may wish to restrict their use by these formations or bump up the support cost.

VALENTINE VIII

These were upgunned versions of the Valentine III. As such, they sacrificed the co-axial MG to allow for the larger 6lb gun to be accommodated. It seems that 6th Armoured landed with these vehicles during operation Torch. However, it also seems that Valentines in front line duties at the second battle of El Alamein may also have been these upgunned versions.

M4 SHERMAN

Arriving for the 8th Army in the run up to the second battle of El Alamein, the British units of 1st Army didn’t

receive Sherman tanks until April 43 when they began to replace their older crusader and valentine tanks.

CHURCHILL TANKS

Churchill tanks were first used in North Africa at the second battle of El Alamein where 6 Churchill IIIs took part in order to ascertain how well they fared in desert conditions. After this they were withdrawn. Churchill III and II CS tanks were part of First Army in Operation Torch, arriving in theatre in Feb 43.

VICKERS LIGHT TANK AA MkI/II

This was a stop gap tank using the Vickers Light Tank chassis and armed with 4 linked Besa Machine Guns to provide AA cover for HQ units. Though it is not a front line combat unit, I include it here in case you have a scenario in which it may make sense for it to make an appearance. There is pictorial evidence of its use in the Western Desert theatre. I don't know either way if it saw service in Tunisia with 1st Army so feel free to go with your heart on that one!

SCORPION FLAIL TANKS

In order that a British advance would be possible at the second battle of El Alamein, the enormous minefields in the area needed to have safe paths cleared. As part of the effort to do this, development began on a "flail tank" leading to the Matilda Scorpion, which used a rotating drum covered in chains to trigger unexploded mines. The mine sweeping process was slow, however the Scorpions raised such a huge dust cloud when used in the desert that they obscured themselves from German gunners. As you may expect, this cloud also blinded the drivers. During the battle, the Scorpions were less successful than hoped. While reasonably effective at mine clearing, the hastily developed flail system was unreliable and broke down frequently. Also, there were frequent engine failures, as the air filters were overwhelmed by the volume of dust produced by flailing or the engines overheated because of the desert environment. One unexpected advantage was that the noise, dust and terrifying appearance of an approaching flail tank caused several Axis infantry units to surrender without resistance. After the battle, a Mark II version of the Scorpion was produced by removing the main gun, as that was thought to be unnecessary and seals and filtration was improved for the crew. Mark III and Mark IV Scorpions were later developed that were based on the M3 Grant. A small number of these Grant Scorpions were produced and were used during the remainder of the North African campaign.

Due to the specific conditions in the desert, and the primitive nature of the flail technology at this time, I suggest the following rules for the scorpion flail tanks as an alternative to those found on p68 of the rulebook (though, by all means feel free to ignore these and use the standard rules!).

The junior leader can give the scorpion flail tank an order to commence mine clearance operations. The flail tank will then proceed, without further orders necessary, to move in a straight line, clearing a D6" path through the minefield at the beginning of each phase. Whilst mine clearance is in progress, the tank is considered to be in a 5" radius "smoke" cloud. This cloud acts as smoke (i.e. blocks line of sight for those wishing to fire into, out of or through the smoke) though ending a turn will not clear the smoke and it will not drift from being centred on the tank. If the scorpion tank wishes to turn then it must be ordered to cease mine clearance operations by the junior leader (in which case the smoke cloud is removed), use that phase to turn and then recommence mine clearance during the next phase.

Tanks moving through the cleared minefield will only move with 1D6 as their crew keep watch for uncleared mines.

Infantry contacted by a scorpion flail tank count the shock on each team as 1 higher than its current level.

A15 CRUSADER Mk. I/II

It is unlikely that 1st Army had Crusader Mk. Is but may have had some Mk. IIs as command vehicles due to their more roomy turret.

British Forces in North Africa 1940 to 1943: Arsenal Tables

BRITISH ARSENAL TABLE					
TANKS					
VEHICLE	ARMOUR	A.P.	H.E.	SPEED	NOTES
Vickers Light Tank Mark VI A/B	3	1	HMG	Fast	Small
A9	3	5	1	Average	Co-ax MG and Two MG Turrets
A9 CS	3	1	7	Average	Co-ax MG and Two MG Turrets
A10	4	5	1	Slow	Hull and Co-ax MG
A13 Mk.II	4	5	1	Fast	Co-ax MG
Valentine Mk. II/III/IV/V	6	5	1	Slow	Co-ax MG
Valentine Mk. VIII	6	7	4	Slow	
Valentine Mk. IX	6	7	4	Slow	Co-ax MG
A12 Matilda Mk. II	7	5	1	Slow	Co-ax MG
A12 Matilda Mk. II CS	7	1	7	Slow	Co-ax MG
A15 Crusader Mk. I/II	5	5	1	Average	Co-ax MG (plus hull MG on Mk. I)
A15 Crusader Mk. I/II CS	5	1	7	Average	Co-ax MG (plus hull MG on Mk. I)
M3 "Honey" Stuart	4	5	3	Fast	Hull and Co-ax MG
A15 Crusader Mk. III	5	7	4	Average	Co-ax MG
M3 Grant	5	5 (7)	3 (6)	Average	Turret (Hull)
M4 Sherman	7	7	6	Average	Hull and Co-ax MG, Ronson, Fast turret
Churchill Mk. II CS	8	1 (5)	7 (3)	Slow	Hull 2lb gun and Co-ax MG
Churchill Mk. III	8	7	4	Slow	Hull and Co-ax MG
Matilda Scorpion Mk. I	7	5	1	Slow	Co-ax MG, Flail
Matilda Scorpion Mk. II	7	-	-	Slow	Flail
M3 Grant Scorpion Mk. III/IV	5	5	3	Average	Flail
SELF-PROPELLED GUNS					
VEHICLE	ARMOUR	A.P.	H.E.	SPEED	NOTES
Bishop SPH 25lb	6	8	7	Slow	Hull MG
M7 Priest 105mm SP	4	5	10	Average	Top Mounted AA MG, Open Top

2lb AT "portee"	-	5	1	Wheeled	Open Topped
6lb AT "portee"	-	7	4	Wheeled	Open Topped
TRANSPORT AND ARMoured CARS					
VEHICLE	ARMOUR	A.P.	H.E.	SPEED	NOTES
Stuart Recce	4	-	MG	Fast	Hull and Pintle MG, Open Turret, Low Profile
Stuart Kangaroo	4	-	MG	Fast	Hull or Pintle MG, Capacity - 1 Team, Open Turret, Low Profile
Car	0	-	-	Wheeled	Low Profile, Small, Capacity - 1 Team
15 cwt Truck	0	-	-	Wheeled	Capacity - 1 Section
Morris CS9 Armoured Car	1	3	MG	Wheeled	Open Turret, Low Profile
Daimler Dingo Scout Car	2	-	MG	Wheeled	Small, Low Profile, Open Topped
Marmon Herrington MkII/III Armoured Car	2	3	MG	Wheeled	Small
Marmon Herrington MkII Armoured Car with Breda 20mm AA	2	4	6	Wheeled	Small, Open Turret
Marmon Herrington MkII Armoured Car with 2.8 cm sPzB 41 (AT Rifle)	2	5	2	Wheeled	Small, Open Turret
Rolls Royce Armoured Car	2	3	MG	Wheeled	Open Turret, Small
Universal Carrier	2	Wpn	Wpn	Fast	Low Profile, Open Topped
Morris Light Reconnaissance Car	2	3	MG	Wheeled	Low Profile
Marmon Herrington MkII Armoured Car (PaK 36)	2	5	3	Wheeled	Small
Humber Mk. I/II/III	3	1	HMG	Wheeled	
Daimler Mk. I Armoured Car	3	5	1	Wheeled	Co-ax MG
AEC Armoured Car Mk. I	4	5	1	Wheeled	Co-ax MG
AEC Armoured Car Mk. II	4	7	4	Wheeled	Co-ax MG
AA VEHICLES					
VEHICLE	ARMOUR	A.P.	H.E.	SPEED	NOTES
Vickers Light Tank AA MkI/II	3	-	12	Fast	Small, Open Turret
GUNS AND SUPPORT WEAPONS					
WEAPON		A.P.		H.E.	
Boys (AT Rifle)		3		1	
2lb Anti-Tank gun		5		1	
Bofors 37mm Anti-Tank gun		5		3	

Bofors 40mm AA gun	5	7
6lb Anti-Tank gun	7	4
25lb gun	8	7
Breda 20mm AA	4	6