

6th Armoured Division ⁽¹⁾

Headquarters, 6th Armoured Division

26th Armoured Brigade ⁽²⁾

Headquarters, 26th Armoured Brigade & Signal Section

16th/5th The Queen's Royal Lancers

17th/21st Lancers

2nd Lothians and Border Horse

10th (Tower Hamlet's Rifles) Bn. The Rifle Brigade (Prince Consort's Own) ⁽²⁾

38th (Irish) Infantry Brigade ⁽³⁾

Headquarters, 38th (Irish) Infantry Brigade & Signal Section

2nd Bn. The London Irish Rifles

1st Bn. The Royal Irish Fusiliers

6th Bn. The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers

Divisional Troops ⁽⁴⁾

1st Derbyshire Yeomanry ⁽⁵⁾

Headquarters, 6th Armoured Divisional Royal Artillery

12th Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery (Honourable Artillery Company)

152nd (The Ayrshire Yeomanry) Field Regiment, Royal Artillery

72nd Anti-Tank Regiment, Royal Artillery

51st (Devon) Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery ⁽⁵⁾

Headquarters, 6th Armoured Divisional Royal Engineers

5th Field Squadron, Royal Engineers ⁽⁶⁾

8th Field Squadron, Royal Engineers

144th Field Park Squadron, Royal Engineers

8th Bridging Troop, Royal Engineers

6th Armoured Divisional Signals, Royal Corps of Signals

NOTES:

1. The 6th Armoured Division formed in the United Kingdom on 12 September 1940, under the command of Major General J. T. CROCKER, who later commanded IX Corps in the Tunisian campaign. On formation, the division complied with Basic Organisation III, with two armoured brigades (the 20th and 26th) a support group and an armoured car regiment. In April 1942, it changed to Basic Organisation V, which reduced the establishment to one armoured brigade, so the 20th Armoured Brigade left the division. The support group disbanded in June 1942, the artillery and engineer units becoming divisional troops. The division came under command of V Corps on 15 July 1942, in preparation for the invasion of North Africa. It left the U.K. on the 8th November 1942 to sail for North Africa under command of Major General (Temporary) Charles Fredric KEIGHTLEY, *p.s.c.*. Unusually, the division had a deputy commander with the appointment of Brigadier (Temporary) Cameron Gordon Graham NICHOLSON, D.S.O., M.C.*, *p.s.c.*. Elements of the division landed with the 78th Infantry Division on the 12th November 1943 and formed 'Blade Force' (see below) during the initial rush to secure Tunisia. The divisional headquarters landed on 22 November 1942, remaining under command of V Corps. 'Blade' Force disbanded on 6 December 1942. The division fought its first battle between the 18 and 25 January 1943 at Bou Arada. It transferred to IX Corps on 12 March 1943 and fought in the battle of Fondouk between 7 and 11 April, and at El Kourzia between 22 April and 26 April. It then took part on the final battle for Tunis between 5 and 12 May, outflanking the final German defence line to secure the Cape Bon peninsula. Following the surrender of the German forces in North Africa, the division returned to V Corps on 26 May 1943, remaining in Tunisia until transferring to Italy on 18 March 1944.
2. The 26th Armoured Brigade was formed on 30 May 1940 as the 1st Motor Machine Gun Brigade. It was redesignated as the 26th Armoured Brigade on 12 October 1940. Two of its constituent regiments were Regular Army cavalry units. At the outbreak of the war, the 16th/5th Queens Royal Lancers were a horsed regiment in India, and the 17th/21st Lancers were based at Colchester under command of the East Anglia District. The 2nd Lothians and Border Horse were a second line Territorial Army regiment, formed at Ladybank in Fife by the duplication of its parent unit. Brigadier (Temporary) Charles Anderson Lane DUNPHIE, C.B.E., *p.s.c.* commanded the brigade throughout the Tunisian campaign.
3. The first infantry brigade to join the division was the 38th (Irish) Infantry Brigade. Brigadier (Acting) Nelson RUSSELL, M.C. commanded this brigade from 1 July 1942 until 19 February 1944. On arrival in North Africa, there were problems with the 1st Infantry Brigade (Guards) serving in the 78th Infantry Division to do with seniority of commanders. Therefore, on 16 February 1943, the 38th Infantry Brigade left this division to transfer to the 78th Infantry Division. It was replaced on 24 March 1943 by the transfer in from the 78th Infantry Division of the: (see next page)

1st Infantry Brigade (Guards)

Headquarters, 1st Infantry Brigade (Guards) & Signal Section

3rd Bn. Grenadier Guards

2nd Bn. Coldstream Guards

1st Bn. The Hampshire Regiment (4)

Brigadier (Temporary) Felix Alexander Vincent COPLAND-GRIFFITHS, D.S.O., M.C. commanded this brigade from 14 July 1940 until 13 April 1943, when he was succeeded by Brigadier (Temporary) Stewart Arthur FORSTER, C. Gds.

4. This battalion sustained heavy casualties in the Battle for Tebourba. It left the brigade to be reconstituted, being replaced by the 3rd Bn. The Welsh Guards.
5. On formation of the division, the artillery units were part of the 6th Support Group. This was disbanded in June 1942 and the artillery became divisional troops.

Blade Force (1)

17th/21st Lancers

1st Bn. 1st U.S. Armored Regiment

'B' Squadron, 1st Derbyshire Yeomanry

'B' Company, 10th Bn. The Rifle Brigade

'C' Battery, 12th Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery

Battery, 72nd Anti-Tank Regiment, Royal Artillery

'G' Troop, 51st Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery

Squadron, 5th Field Squadron, Royal Engineers

NOTES:

1. Constraints with the lack of Allied shipping meant that only a task force from the 6th Armoured Division could be landed initially in Tunisia. The second-in-command of the 26th Armoured Brigade, Colonel R. A. HULL, formed this battle group, which because it was to be operating under the command of the 78th Infantry Division, was to be known as 'Blade Force'. This was due to the divisional sign of the 78th Infantry Division being a battleaxe. The force landed on 22 November and advanced along the central road into Tunisia. The 11th Infantry Brigade was on the right flank and the 36th Infantry Brigade on the left flank. Elements of Blade Force reached within sight of Tunis, but against strengthening German opposition, the force over-extended itself and eventually fell back. It was reincorporated back into the 6th Armoured Division with effect from 6 December 1942.

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