

Headquarters, Western Desert Force ⁽¹⁾

Mersa Matruh Garrison ⁽²⁾

Headquarters, Mersa Matruh Garrison & Signal Section

2nd Bn. The Highland Light Infantry (City of Glasgow Regiment)

1st Bn. The Welch Regiment

107th Regiment (South Nottinghamshire Hussars Yeomanry),

Royal Horse Artillery

12th Field Company, Royal Engineers

42nd Field Company, Royal Engineers

NOTES:

1. The Headquarters Western Desert Force was formed on 17 June 1940 by the redesignation of Headquarters 6th Infantry Division. The General Officer Commanding was Lieutenant General Richard O'CONNOR, C.B., D.S.O.*, M.C., who was promoted from command of the 6th Infantry Division. Italy had declared war on the United Kingdom on 10 June 1940, and skirmishes broke out between British and Italian Forces immediately.
2. The garrison was also designated as Lines of Communication Sub Area West.

Mersa Matruh Garrison (1)

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12th Field Company, Royal Engineers

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Selby Force (2)

3rd Bn. Coldstream Guards

Detachment, 7th Hussars

'W' Company, 1st Bn. The Royal Northumberland Fusiliers 0.303 Vickers Medium Machine Guns

Detachment, 'A' Company, 1st Bn. The South Staffordshire Regiment Trucks and drivers

Detachment, 1st Bn. The Durham Light Infantry trucks and drivers

Detachment, The Royal Welch Fusiliers trucks and drivers

Detachment, 8th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery 2 x 25 pdrs

Detachment, 107th Regiment (South Nottinghamshire Hussars Yeomanry),
Royal Horse Artillery 2 x 2 pdr anti-tank

Light Anti-Aircraft Battery, Royal Artillery 3 x bofors 40mm guns

Light Aid Detachment, Royal Army Ordnance Corps

NOTES:

1. This is the order of battle for the Mersa Matruh garrison in December 1940 following the first skirmishes on the border between Egypt and Libya.
2. Selby Force, named after its commanding officer, was formed to act an offensive formation to patrol the Libyan border and conduct raids on Italian positions.

British Troops in Egypt

14th Infantry Brigade (1)

2nd Bn. The King's Own Royal Regiment (Lancaster)

1st Bn. The South Staffordshire Regiment

2nd Bn. The York and Lancaster Regiment

23rd Infantry Brigade (2)

1st Bn. The Royal Sussex Regiment (3)

1st Bn. The Durham Light Infantry

2nd Bn. The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) (4)

1st Bn. The Hampshire Regiment (4)

Alexandria Sub Area

3rd Bn. Coldstream Guards (5)

1st Bn. The Royal Northumberland Fusiliers (6)

9th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery

25th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery, Royal Artillery

26th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery, Royal Artillery

Cairo Sub Area

2nd Bn. Scots Guards

NOTES:

1. At the outbreak of war, this was a Regular Army brigade based in Palestine. The Brigade left Palestine and arrived in Egypt on 1 June 1940. It came under command of the 4th Indian Infantry Division on the same date. It transferred to the command of British Troops Egypt on 20 July 1940. The Brigade was disbanded on 26 July 1940. It was reformed on 30 October 1940 in Egypt and on 4 November, it sailed from Egypt for Crete, where it arrived on 6 November. It then formed part of the garrison of Crete until evacuated on 30 May 1941 as a result of the German invasion of the island. This is the order of battle for June 1940, i.e., when the Italians declared war on the U.K. and France.
2. This Brigade was also designated as The Suez Canal Area.
3. The 1st Bn. Royal Sussex Regiment left the Brigade on 22 November 1940, transferring to the 7th Indian Infantry Brigade, 4th Indian Division.
4. The 2nd Black Watch and 1st Hampshires had both recently arrived from Palestine.
5. This battalion formed the basis of Selby Force (see previous page)
6. This unit was a machine gun battalion. It was attached to the 4th Indian Infantry Division for the forthcoming Operation Compass.

SOURCES:

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