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Author: Robert PALMER



A CONCISE HISTORY OF:

14 ARMY

(HISTORY & PERSONNEL)

A concise history of the 14th Army, a higher formation in the British Army from 1943 until 1945. It saw operational service in Burma. In addition, details of known appointments are included.
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14th Army

By 1945, the Fourteenth Army (14th Army) became the largest volunteer Army in the history of the United Kingdom and its Commonwealth. It was also probably the most racially and religiously diverse army in the twentieth century. The 14th Army comprised men and women from the following modern nationalities,

- British (United Kingdom);
- Poland (serving in the West African divisions);
- Indian;
- Pakistani;
- Bangladeshi;
- Nepalese (Gurkhas and in Nepalese Army units);
- Burmese (including Karens, Shans, Kachins and Chins);
- Nigerian;
- Gold Coast (now Ghana);
- Sierra Leone;
- Gambian;
- Kenyan;
- Ugandan;
- Tanganyikan (now Tanzania);
- Nyasaland (now Malawi);
- Northern Rhodesian (now Zambia);
- Southern Rhodesian (now Zimbabwe);
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The 14th Army was formed on the 22nd October 1943 by the redesignation of the Eastern Army. The General Officer Commanding XV Indian Corps, Lieutenant General SLIM, was designated the new Army commander on the 16th October 1943. The Headquarters came together between the 16th and 22nd October. It took command of IV Corps, which was deployed in Assam, and XV Indian Corps which was deployed in the Arakan.

On the 7th March 1944, General GIFFARD approved the withdrawal of IV Corps units from Tamu and Tiddim and sent instructions to Lieutenant General SLIM at 14th Army stating:

1. The impending Japanese offensive would probably be on a larger scale than anything they had yet attempted in Burma;
2. The Allied lines of communication were parallel to the front and were a source of weakness;
3. The Imphal plain was of immense strategic importance and its loss would be disastrous – Its security was therefore the primary task of IV Corps;

On the 11th November 1944, with the creation of Allied Land Forces South East Asia instead of the 11th Army Group, the 14th Army took control of the XV Indian Corps, retaining IV Corps and the XXXIII Indian Corps. It was tasked with all operations in Central Burma.

For Operation Capital, the reconquest of central Burma, the 14th Army had under command:

- IV Corps (SCOOONES);
 - 7th Indian Infantry Division (MESSERVY);
 - 19th Indian Infantry Division (REES);
 - 23rd Indian Infantry Division (ROBERTS)
- XXXIII Indian Corps (STOPFORD);
 - 2nd Infantry Division (NICHOLSON);
 - 5th Indian Infantry Division (WARREN);
 - 20th Indian Infantry Division (GRACEY)
 - 11th (East Africa) Infantry Division (FOWKES);
 - The Lushai Brigade (MARINDIN);
 - 268th Indian (Lorried) Brigade (DYER);
 - 254th Indian Tank Brigade.
- 255th Indian Tank Brigade.

By the end of December 1944, the Chindwin River had been crossed in three places by three different divisions and the first part of Operation Capital had been completed.

The Japanese 15th Army had little respite, and withdrew back over the Irrawaddy River, so Lieutenant General SLIM decided to push on and fight the Japanese around Mandalay. Thus Operation Extended Capital was born and the plan to bring the Japanese 15th Army to battle and defeat it.

In order to achieve his aims, Lieutenant General SLIM reorganised and regrouped the forces under his command. The IV Corps was switched from the left to the right flank and was ordered to advance quickly down the Gangaw valley and to cross the Irrawaddy River near Pakokku.

On the 6th May 1945, SLIM assumed command of all the Allied forces in Burma. XV Indian Corps was withdrawn to India to prepare for Operation 'Zipper', and a decision made to run down the forces in Burma in order to prepare for the invasion of Malaya. At this time, 14th Army still had IV Corps and XXXIII Indian Corps under command. XXXIII Indian Corps was deployed in the Irrawaddy valley, with under command the:

- 7th Indian Infantry Division;
- 20th Indian Infantry Division;
- 268th Indian Infantry Brigade.

IV Corps comprised the more mobile formations in 14th Army, which had advanced down the road to Prome and Rangoon. Under command was the:

- 5th Indian Infantry Division;
- 17th Indian Infantry Division;
- 19th Indian Infantry Division;
- 255th Indian Tank Brigade.

On the 10th May, IV Corps commenced operations in the Sittang Bend area, with some fierce exchanges with Japanese forces. On the 18th May, headquarters of 14th Army moved from Meiktila to Rangoon. With the defeat of the Japanese forces in Burma, thoughts moved to the reconquest of Malaya. Lieutenant General LEESE decided to withdraw Headquarters 14th Army back to India to commence the planning for Operation 'Zipper'. A duplicate 14th Army planning staff was formed in Delhi on the 7th May under Lieutenant General CHRISTISON, with the 14th Army planners arriving in Delhi by the 24th May.

For the reoccupation of Malaya, the 14th Army had under command:

- XV Indian Corps (Lieutenant General CHRISTISON);
- XXIV Indian Corps (Lieutenant General ROBERTS).

The 23rd Indian Infantry Division and 25th Indian Infantry Division landed on the beaches at Morib in Malaya on the 9th September 1945.

It became Malaya Command on the 1st November 1945.

General Officer Commanding-in-Chief

16th October 1943 – 10th August 1945

Lieutenant General William Joseph SLIM, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., *i.d.c.*, *p.s.c.*¹

10th August 1945 – 1st November 1945

Lieutenant General Sir Miles Christopher DEMPSEY, K.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.

Brigadier General Staff – (B.G.S.)

22nd October 1943 – 16th August 1944

Brigadier Steven Fenemore IRWIN, C.B.E.

17th August 1944 – 17th June 1945

Brigadier (Temporary) John Sydney LETHBRIDGE, C.B.E, M.C., *p.s.c.*

Chief Administration Officer

12th October 1943 – 9th March 1945

Major General (Acting) Arthur Hugh Jay SNELLING, O.B.E., R.I.A.S.C., *p.s.c.*

Deputy Adjutant and Quarter-Master-General – (D.A. & Q.M.G.)

9th March 1945 – 31st October 1945

Brigadier Francis James WALSH, C.B.E.

Brigadier Royal Artillery – (B.R.A.)

1943 – 1944

Brigadier Godfrey De Vere WELCHMAN,

August 1945 – 31st October 1945

Brigadier (Temporary) Hetman Jack PARHAM, C.B.E., D.S.O.*

Chief Engineer – (C.Eng.)

22nd October 1943 – 13th March 1944

Brigadier Herbert Eric HORSFIELD, M.C.**

14th March 1944 – 1945

Brigadier William Freke HASTED, C.I.E., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.

June 1945 – 1st November 1945

Brigadier (Temporary) Alexander Douglas CAMPBELL, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.

¹ Created K.C.B. by the Viceroy on the 15th December 1944.

Chief Signal Officer – (C.S.O.)

16th October 1943 – 1st November 1945

Brigadier (Temporary) William Oswald BOWEN, O.B.E., M.I.E.E.²

Deputy Director of Supplies and Transport – (D.D.S.T.)

6th November 1943 – 14th October 1945

Brigadier (Temporary) John Stephen Osborne ELLISON, Indian Army³

Deputy Director of Medical Services – (D.D.M.S.)

April 1944 – 1st November 1945

Brigadier (Temporary) Gerald Esmond MacALEVEY, D.S.O., M.C., R.A.M.C.

Deputy Director of Ordnance Services – (D.D.O.S.)

January 1944 – April 1945

Brigadier (Temporary) Brian PENNEFATHER-EVANS, C.I.E., O.B.E., M.C.

Brigadier, Indian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers – (Brig I.E.M.E.)

4th November 1943 – October 1945

Brigadier (Acting) Paul Theodore JAMES, M.C., I.E.M.E.⁴

² Awarded the C.B.E. on the 8th February 1945.

³ Awarded the C.B.E. on the 13th September 1945.

⁴ Awarded the C.B.E. on 8th February 1945.

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