

Sierra Leone Area ⁽¹⁾

Headquarters, Sierra Leone Area

161st Infantry Brigade ⁽²⁾

Headquarters, 161st Infantry Brigade & Signal Section

1st/4th Bn. The Essex Regiment

1st/5th Bn. *The Essex Regiment* ⁽³⁾

2nd/5th Bn. The Essex Regiment

6th (West Africa) Infantry Brigade ⁽⁴⁾

Headquarters, 6th (West Africa) Infantry Brigade & Signal Section

4th Bn. The Nigeria Regiment

1st Bn. The Sierra Leone Regiment

2nd Bn. The Sierra Leone Regiment

6th (West Africa) Infantry Brigade Company ⁽⁵⁾

6th (West Africa) Light Battery, West African Artillery, R.W.A.F.F.

6th (West Africa) Field Company, West African Engineers, R.W.A.F.F.

6th (West Africa) Field Ambulance

4th (West Africa) Auxiliary Group, Sierra Leone Regiment

6th (West Africa) Infantry Brigade Provost Section

Unbrigaded Unit

3rd Bn. The Sierra Leone Regiment ⁽⁶⁾

Freetown Fortress

11th Bn. The Nigeria Regiment (7)

2 x Coast Defence Batteries

3 x Heavy Anti-Aircraft Batteries

1 x Light Anti-Aircraft Battery

NOTES:

1. This area was formed on 19 July 1940 by the commanding officer of the formative Sierra Leone Brigade. On 30 November 1940, a new General Officer Commanding Sierra Leone was appointed on arrival from the United Kingdom. The existing Area Commander became a brigade commander for the Sierra Leone Brigade until the formation of the 6th (West Africa) Infantry Brigade. On 3 March 1943, the Area Commander travelled to Nigeria with the 6th (West Africa) Infantry Brigade to assume responsibility as the G.O.C. of the newly formed 82nd (West Africa) Infantry Division, which was then concentrating in Nigeria.
2. The 161st Infantry Brigade was a first line Territorial Army infantry brigade, which was part of the 54th (East Anglian) Infantry Division, and it was based in the United Kingdom. Sierra Leone borders French West Africa (now Senegal), and after the fall of France, the colony came under Vichy French control. On 5 August 1940, the 1st/4th Bn. The Essex Regiment was detached from the 161st Infantry Brigade and sailed from Liverpool bound an unknown destination in company with a Royal Engineers field company and a general hospital. Whilst at sea, the destination was disclosed as Freetown in Sierra Leone. On arrival, the battalion disembarked on 14 August 1940 and took up residence in Wilberforce Barracks, Freetown. In September 1940, an abortive operation was mounted to capture Dakar and force the surrender of the French colony, now under Vichy French control. Two battalions of the 101 Royal Marine Brigade landed in Freetown but were not used. After this operation failed, tension naturally increased. The Royal Marine battalions remained for three months before leaving. The Headquarters 161st Infantry Brigade and the 2nd/5th Bn. The Essex Regiment arrived on 4 January 1941 (moving into Benguema Camp), with the 1st/4th Bn. The Essex Regiment returning to the command of the Brigade on 11 January 1941. In June 1941, the 161st Infantry Brigade was replaced by the 6th (West Africa) Infantry Brigade and therefore sailed for Egypt on 19 June 1941.
3. This battalion did not sail for Freetown and remained in the United Kingdom until rejoining the brigade in Egypt in July 1941.
4. This brigade was formed on 3 April 1941 in Sierra Leone, the deputy area commander became the commanding officer of the newly raised brigade. It was under command of the Sierra Leone Area from formation on 3 April 1941 until 20 February 1943, when it travelled by sea to Nigeria to become part of the 81st (West Africa) Infantry Division when it was formed on 31 March 1943. The brigade gained the 1st Bn. The Gambia Regiment in place of the 2nd Bn. The Sierra Leone Regiment (which had remained in Sierra Leone) on 4 April 1943. The brigade then saw active service in Burma in 1944 and 1945.
5. This company was formed on 18 August 1941 as the reconnaissance unit for the brigade group. It was redesignated as a squadron on 1 July 1942, and it was merged into the 82nd (West Africa) Reconnaissance Regiment on 30 March 1943.
6. This battalion was formed for deployment on coastal defence duties in Freetown. After training, it relieved the 11th Bn. The Nigeria Regiment which returned to its home.
7. This battalion was a war raised unit which was sent to Freetown for coastal defence until a local unit was raised and took over responsibility. This allowed this battalion to return to Nigeria in early 1943.

SOURCES:

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