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A CONCISE HISTORY OF:

XV INDIAN CORPS (HISTORY & PERSONNEL)

A short history of XV Indian Corps, an operational higher level formation of the British Indian Army in existence from 1942 until 1945. In addition, known details of the key appointments held between 1939 and 1950 are included.

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XV Indian Corps

With the invasion of Burma, and the threat to India from the Japanese forces in Burma, the Headquarters XV Indian Corps was formed in May 1942 from the Headquarters Presidency & Assam District. Originally located at Calcutta Fortress, it moved to Barrackpore and then Ranchi in August 1942. The two divisions under command (both incomplete) were the:

- 14th Indian Infantry Division;
- 26th Indian Infantry Division.

In January 1943, the corps units were assessed as being short of vehicles and training of units was incomplete. At this time, the corps had under command the 70th Infantry Division (based at Ranchi), and the 50th Indian Tank Brigade (also based at Ranchi). Both formations were lacking equipment and training was incomplete.

14th April 1943 XV Indian Corps assumed command of the Arakan area from Eastern Army taking back under command the 14th Indian Division and 26th Indian Division.

In August 1943, the Corps was in reserve at Ranchi with only the 20th Indian Infantry Division under command. General GIFFARD, G.O.C.-in-C. of the 11th Army Group approved a plan for XV Indian Corps to assume responsibilities for operations in the Arakan. The 7th Indian Infantry Division was deployed to relieve the 26th Indian Infantry Division which was then holding the monsoon line in the Arakan. The 5th Indian Infantry Division was also sent to the Arakan to join XV Indian Corps, and orders were given for the 81st (West Africa) Infantry Division to be sent to the Arakan on arrival in India to cover the left flank of XV Indian Corps and the proposed advance into the Arakan.

In September 1943, the corps had under command the:

- 5th Indian Infantry Division;
- 7th Indian Infantry Division;
- 26th Indian Infantry Division.

Then, as XV Indian Corps launched a limited offensive in the Arakan, on the 4th February 1944 the Japanese struck in the Arakan. The 28th Army launched their offensive designed to draw in British reserves. On the 10th February, a counter attack by 26th Indian Division retook Taung Bazaar, but then the 7th Indian Infantry Division was surrounded. Previously, the British forces would have withdrawn, but this time they stayed out and fought it out. This was aided by the British now having air superiority. It was not until the 24th February that the 5th Indian Division relieved 7th Indian Division.

The 7th Indian Division left on the 15th May 1944 to transfer to XXXIII Corps at Dimapur. Four days later, the 5th Indian Division was transferred by air to join IV Corps at Imphal.

On the 1st November 1944, with the creation of Allied Land Forces South East Asia (A.L.F.S.E.A.), XV Indian Corps passed from the command of 14th Army to the direct command of A.L.F.S.E.A.. The corps was tasked with the retaking of the Arakan by land and sea, leading to the capture of Rangoon. For the forthcoming operations, the corps had under command the:

- 25th Indian Infantry Division;
- 26th Indian Infantry Division;
- 81st (West Africa) Infantry Division;
- 82nd (West Africa) Infantry Division;
- 50th Indian Tank Brigade;
- 3rd Commando Brigade.

The Corps was given two tasks, firstly to dispel the remaining Japanese threat in the Arakan, and secondly to secure a base from which to launch Operation Dracula (the recapture of Rangoon).

Operation Dracula was launched on the 1st May 1945. On the 6th May, units from the 26th Indian Division met up with troops from IV Corps to the north of Rangoon, completing the defeat of the Japanese Burma Army.

The Japanese ceased fighting on the 15th August 1945, although the official surrender did not take place until September.

On the 10th October 1945, the Corps Headquarters moved to Batavia in the Netherlands East Indies (N.E.I.), and it was redesignated as the H.Q. Allied Forces N.E.I. on the 16th October 1945, with the corps commander becoming the new Commander-in-Chief.

Corps Commander

9th April 1942 – 9th June 1942

Lieutenant General Sir Noel Monson de la Poer BERESFORD-PEIRSE, K.B.E., D.S.O.

30th May 1942 – 15th October 1943

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

15th October 1943 – 16th October 1945

Lieutenant General Alexander Frank Philip CHRISTISON, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.

Brigadier General Staff – (B.G.S.)

8th April 1942 – 1st June 1943

Brigadier (Acting) Anthony Gerald O'Carroll SCOTT, R.A., *p.s.c.*

14th February 1944 – 25th October 1944

Brigadier (Temporary) Martin Borthwick JENNINGS, O.B.E., *p.s.c.*

27th October 1944 – 15th March 1945

Brigadier (Temporary) Douglas Cyril HAWTHORN, 1st Punjab R., *p.s.c.*

24th May 1945 – 1945

Brigadier (Temporary) Norman Douglas WINGROVE, 10 G.R., *p.s.c.*

1945 – 16th October 1945

Brigadier (Temporary) Wilfrid Algernon EBSWORTH, C.B.E., *p.s.c.*

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

18th April 1942 – 26th August 1944

Brigadier (Acting) Richard Freeman COLWILL, M.B.E., R.I.A.S.C., *p.s.c.*

8th December 1944 – 23rd May 1945

Brigadier (Acting) Norman Douglas WINGROVE, 10 G.R., *p.s.c.*

24th May 1945 – 1945

Brigadier Alastair Gillean Lorne McLEAN

Corps Commander, Royal Artillery – (C.C.R.A.)

1944 – 1945

Brigadier Lawrence Anstie HARRIS, D.S.O., M.C.¹ (1)

¹ Awarded the C.B.E. in 1945.

Chief Engineer – (C.Eng.)

September 1943 – 9th April 1945

Brigadier (Temporary) Leslie Innes JACQUES, M.C., R.E.

9th April 1945 – 1945

Brigadier Dennis Charles Tarrant SWAN

Chief Signal Officer – (C.S.O.)

1943 – 1944

Colonel F. J. ALLEN, C.B.E.

3rd October 1944 – 10th October 1945

Brigadier (Acting) Donald William BURRIDGE, R.Signals²

Corps Commander Armoured Fighting Vehicles – (C.C.A.F.V.)

21st April 1943 – 14th July 1945

Colonel (Temporary) Sydney Henry PERSSE, I.A.C.³

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

1944 – 1945

Brigadier

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

1944 – 1945

Brigadier Ambrose Neponucene Trelawny MENECEs, C.B.E., D.S.O.

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

1944 – 1945

Colonel Michael Marriott DODINGTON,

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

1944 – 1945

Brigadier

² Awarded the C.B.E. on

³ Promoted to the rank of Acting Brigadier on the 4th February 1944. Recommended for a periodic D.S.O. on 20th May 1944, D.S.O. gazetted 8th February 1945. Died on Active Service on 14th July 1945.

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