

The United States Army in the Second World War

The United States Army had three components in the Second World War, namely:

- The Regular Army,
- The National Guard,
- The National Army.

The Regular Army was the permanent peace-time army and the main component on the United States Army. In September 1939, the strength of the Regular Army was 190,000 men and by July 1940, it had risen to 243,095, of which 14,000 were officers. This was the core of the U.S. Army throughout the Second World War, as the majority of the senior officers were pre-war professional soldiers. Some had served in the First World War, but generally had less operational experience than their British counterparts, as few had left the U.S.A. between the wars.

The second element was the National Guard, which comprised 226,837 men in September 1939, all of whom were volunteers. The National Guard was a reserve component of the Army, and it was organised on a state by state basis. It was financed by and under the control of the State Governor. The National Guard formed eighteen divisions upon mobilization. The National Army comprised personnel and units organised and maintained to provide military training in peacetime and a pool of trained reservists. It numbered 104,288 personnel.

Of course, the U.S.A. was not at war in September 1939, but as a comparison, the British Army had a strength of 892,697 officers and men on 3 September 1939, out of population just short of 48 million. As the Territorial Army was mobilized on 1 September and Reservists had been called up, distinctions within the Army had been removed, however, the Regular Army formed about 224,000 men, 173,700 were Reservists (although many had been out of the Army for several years), and the Territorial Army number about 428,000. The United Kingdom had introduced conscription in May 1939, which added an additional 34,500 men to the strength of the Army.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, the British Army had two armoured divisions, one of which was stationed in Egypt, whereas the German Army had seven. In addition, the German Army had about one-hundred infantry divisions, compared to about ninety in the French Army, thirty in the Polish Army, and twenty-three in the British Army.

By the end of 1939, the Army had expanded to 1,100,000 men (although not all were trained or fully equipped), by June 1940 it was 1,650,000, and it reached a peak in June 1945 at 2,900,000. On 11 July 1940, President ROOSEVELT asked Congress to agree a budget of £4.5 billion to raise and equip an army of 1,200,000 men. On 16 September, Congress approved the Selective Service Act that required about 16,000,000 men to be registered. Military service was for one year and restricted to the United States, and by early 1941, about 900,000 men had been enlisted. The President proclaimed a National Emergency on 27 May 1941, but the country only began to gear up for war following the events of 7 December 1941, and the declaration of war by Germany against the U.S.A..

The U.S. Army grew rapidly from early 1942 onwards, and U.S. industry expanded to meet the demands of the Armed Services. On 30 April 1945, the U.S. Armed Forces numbered 12,000,000 personnel, of whom 8,290,993 were in the U.S. Army. The Army now had eighty-nine divisions in the field, dwarfing the contribution of the United Kingdom and the British Commonwealth. In comparison, the strength of the British Army was about 2,900,000, the Canadian Army was about 700,000, and the British Army in India (including the British Indian Army (all volunteers) and British Army units stationed in India, numbered 2,664,000 on 1 October 1945, of which 240,000 were British troops in British units.

The U.S. Army infantry division from 1943 onwards was composed of 15,514 men, organised as three infantry Regiments, each comprised three infantry battalions. Each division had supporting artillery of three field artillery battalions with 105 mm guns, and one with 155 mm guns, an Engineer Combat Battalion, Signals Company, a Medical Battalion, Reconnaissance Troop, Ordnance Company, Quartermaster Company, a Military Police Platoon and a Divisional Band.

Strength of Key Participants in September 1939

Country	Regular Army	Reservists	Part-Time Reserve	Armoured Divisions	Infantry Divisions	
United Kingdom						
47,760,000	224,000	173,000	428,000	2	5 + 18	
British Empire (Commonwealth)						
503,000,000				-	4 (India)	
France (excluding colonies)						
42,000,000					90	
Poland						
34,849,000	250,000		750,000	-	30 + 9	
Germany						
86,775,000	1,500,000			7 + 2	98	
Italy						
43,400,000				3 + 2	59	
U.S.A.						
147,000,000	190,000	104,288	226,837	Nil	18	
Japan						
71,900,000	1,700,000				51 (1941)	
China						
267,568,000	3,800,000				246 (1941)	
Soviet Union						
168,500,000	5,500,000				303 (1941)	

Please Note: *The above table is illustrative, and it should not be treated as a definitive list. There are issues of definition of what constitutes a 'Division', with the strength of a division varying from 10,000 personnel to 30,000. Likewise, not all the formations shown in the above table could be considered fit for service, with many lacking training and weapons. Lastly, the deployment of divisions across wide areas meant that not all were available for action in the respective campaign theatres at the relevant times and dates.*