

Free French Brigade of the Orient ⁽¹⁾

1st Free French Group *1^{ère} groupement française libre* (2)

1^{er} Bataillon de Légion Étrangère

3^{ème} Compagnie, 1^{er} Bataillon d' Infanterie de Marine

2nd Free French Group *2^{ème} groupement française libre* (3)

3^{ème} Bataillon de Marche (Senegalese)

Brigade Troops

1^e Escadron de Spahis Marocains (4)

1^e Group d'Artillerie (5)

1^e Section de Sapeurs-Mineurs (6)

1^e Compagnie de Transmissions (7)

1^e Compagnie du Train (8)

1^e Section d'Intendance (9)

1^e Group d'Exploitation (10)

Service Santé (11)

Ambulance Chirurgicale (11)

NOTES

1. The Fall of France was both a shock and surprise to many people, none more so than the majority of French people themselves. Although the German armed forces invaded and occupied France, the territories comprising France's large empire were not. Several territories within the French empire, sided with the Vichy government as it was established in southern France. Some scattered elements of the French armed forces across the empire decided to fight on, pledging themselves to General De GAULLE and the embryonic Free French forces. In late 1940, these elements began to congregate in the Middle East, with the title of the Free French Expeditionary Corps. The largest coherent part of this force was the 13^e Demi-Brigade de la Legion Étrangère, otherwise known as the 13th Half Brigade of the French Foreign Legion. Comprising about 900 men, with many German, Italian, Spanish and British soldiers, who were loyal to France, and had fought at Narvik with distinction. In early 1941, General De GAULLE decided to deploy his force in the East African campaign, as the Free French Brigade of the Orient (Brigade française libre d'Orient). Colonel Rouel Charles MAGRIN-VERNERAY (known as Rouel MONCLAR), an career officer of the French Foreign Legion, commanded the brigade. The brigade left Durban by sea, and it disembarked at Souakim to participate in the campaign in Eritrea. The brigade numbered about 1,200 men, with the Sengalese battalion travelling by train to join the formation in The Sudan. The brigade advanced on 18 February 1941, with the 3rd Battalion occupying Kub Kub on 20 February. The brigade participated in the Battle for Keren, from 23 February, until it was taken on 27 March. On 1 April, the brigade moved through Asmara to Massawa, the port on the Red Sea. At the end of the campaign, the brigade moved to Palestine to join the 1^{ere} Free French Light Division in May 1941.
2. Cdt AMILAKVARY commanded the Foreign Legion battalion. Cpt SAVEY commanded the company of the Marine Battalion. This unit was a unit of the Free French Navy, which served with the Allies during the Second World War.
3. Cdt GARBAY commanded the 3rd Battalion, which comprised Senegalese troops, with white French officers.
4. The Spahis Marocains were a reconnaissance unit, mounted on horses and ponies, recruited from Morocco, which was used to mountainous terrain. It was therefore very mobile across the difficult terrain experienced in southern Syria. Cpt JOURDIER commanded this unit.
5. This was a colonial artillery unit, commanded by Cpt Laurent CHAMPROSAY.
6. Lt. DESMAISONS commanded the engineer's section.
7. This was the signals company, which was commanded by Cpt RENARD.
8. Lt. DULAU commanded the transport company in the division.
9. This was the logistics unit of the division, being commanded by Int BOUTON.
10. The Group d'Exploitation, was an operating group, similar to a supply company. Lt. de GUILLON commanded this unit during this campaign.
11. The medical services of the division comprised a hygiene medical unit, commanded by Med Cpt DELAVENNE, a field ambulance under Med Cdt VERNIER, and a field hospital, commanded by Med Cdt FRUCHAUD.
12. Groupement COLLET, under command of its namesake, Colonel COLLET, comprised 453 men from Morocco, who joined the Free French cause on 21 May 1941. His group comprised one squadron of Circassian horsed cavalry, and a second squadron carried in lorries. There were two artillery guns, one anti-tank gun and five armoured cars in the unit.

SOURCES:

Axis History Forum

See: <https://forum.axishistory.com/viewtopic.php?f=112&t=62934>