



British Army Of the Rhine 1950's to 1960's

There have been two formations named British Army on the Rhine (BAOR). Both were originally occupation forces in Germany, one after World War I, and the other after WWII.

Unknown to many, the British Army of the Rhine was first established as an occupational force after the Great War of 1914 – 1918. It then went on to be disbanded in 1929. Little did people know that only 15 years later it would be back firmly in position.



The second coming came about with the creation of Twenty-first Army Group, assigned with the invasion of Europe. Formed in September 1943 in England and commanded by General (later Field Marshal) Sir Bernard Montgomery, it initially controlled all ground forces in Operation Overlord. When sufficient American forces had landed, their own 12th Army Group was activated, under General Omar Bradley and 21st Army Group was left with British Second Army and First Canadian Army.

After the successful Normandy landings, the units of 21st Army Group crossed the river Rhine near the Germany city of Wesel on 23 March 1945. After an advance which was thoroughly resisted, the British formations, along with the Canadians and Americans advanced into the German counties of Nordrhein-Westfalen, Niedersachsen and Schleswig-Holstein. This established the British Army occupying the north of the country.

At the February 1945 Yalta Conference (and confirmed at the July 1945 Potsdam Conference) it was agreed that it should be divided into four with the addition of a small French Zone (adjacent to the Franco-German border). Similar arrangements were agreed for Austria and the City of Berlin which was otherwise deep in East Germany (Russian Zone of Occupation). The earlier arrangement for the transfer of East Prussia and the move of the eastern border to the Oder Neisse Line remained unaltered.



Image courtesy of Smon Hamon

Photographer: (APwire photo via radio from Frankfurt)

Description: A British armoured car, mounting a gun pointed toward the Soviet zone of Germany, is parked on a highway near Helmstedt. In the background is a Russian check point manned by Soviet guards. The Russians have halted all highway traffic between their zone and the American-, British-, and French-occupied parts of the country.



Date: June 21 1948.

Three months after the war had ended, 21st Army Group was redesignated "British Army of the Rhine". This occupational force, which gained its new title on 25 August 1945 consisted of 80,000 men and consisted of the following:

I Corps Area
VII Corps Area
XXX Corps Area
British Troops Berlin

Belonging to the British Army of the Rhine on that date were:

Guards Division
49th Division
52nd Division
53rd Division
159th Brigade
9th Artillery Group, Royal Artillery

In 1947-48 it was reduced to three divisions/districts, with Bad Oeynhausen becoming home to HQ BAOR in 1948:

2nd Infantry Division
7th Armoured Division
16th Parachute Brigade
Berlin Brigade
Hamburg District
Hanover District

The formation of NATO in 1949 had the BAOR as the British land force contribution. In September 1950 saw 11th Armoured Division reformed on German soil. I Corps was also reformed a year later, after its disbandment in 1947. 1951 saw the recreation of 6th Armoured Division in Great Britain, with it being moved to Germany in 1952. At this point the BAOR consisted of the following:

1st Corps (Bad Oeynhausen)

6th Armoured Division
7th Armoured Division
11th Armoured Division
2nd Infantry Division

British Troops Berlin
Rhine Army Troops

Hamburg District
Hanover District
Rhine District

5 Army Group Royal Artillery (Anti-Aircraft)
School of Artillery, BAOR
Engineer Training Establishment, BAOR
RAC Training Establishment, BAOR
Rhine Army All Arms Training Centre
Aquatic Training School, BAOR



On 29 November 1952, the Headquarters of Northern Army Group (NORTHAG) formed. This NATO creation saw the BAOR being placed under its command. The ceased to be an occupation force and became responsible for the northern front from Hamburg to Kassel in the event of a Soviet invasion. To view a summary of the British Army in 1952 please [click here](#).

During October 1954 HQ BAOR reallocated from Bünde to Rheindalen. Only a month earlier had seen the first large scale NORTHAG exercise, appropriately named, Battle Royal. The BAOR at this point still consisted of 80,000 troops.

1956 saw more major changes to the BAOR. Brigade groups took over from divisions as the smallest operative units. This was the first major step towards the army of today, with a brigade group comprising of armour, infantry, an engineer squadron and armoured reconnaissance regiment, opposed to divisions comprising of solely infantry of armour (the first case of mixed brigades being used effectively was near Soltau, April 1945, by 4th Armoured Brigade, led by Brigadier Carver). Also during this year on 1 April, 11th Armoured Division was reorganised into 4th Infantry Division. This consisted of:

10th Infantry Brigade Group
11th Infantry Brigade Group
12th Infantry Brigade Group

It was decided in 1957 that the British Army defending Europe from the Soviet threat should reduce down to 64,000 (still over three times of what remains today). The following year 7th Armoured Division was given the prefix of 5th and 6th Armoured Division amalgamated with 2 Inf Div who moved from Hilden to Lubbecke where the HQ was located in TAX House.

Between 1958 and 1960 National Service came to an end and further reductions in manpower took place. With 55,000 men, the restructuring of the BAOR took shape in the form of three divisions of two armoured brigade groups and five infantry brigade groups.

In June 1960 came the creation of the 1st Armoured Division, formally 5th Armoured Division. Under its command came 7th and 20th Armoured Brigade Groups.



The shoulder flash of 1 (BR) Corps

Major reorganisation was not far away, as seven brigade groups were reorganised into three central divisions, during 1963. 5th Brigade group returned to Great Britain as strategic reserve, with 1 (BR) Corps (redesignated to distinguish it from other NATO corps) consisting of:

4th Guards Brigade Group
6th Infantry Brigade Group
11th Infantry Brigade Group
12th Infantry Brigade Group



7th Armoured Brigade Group
20th Armoured Brigade Group

In 1965 the organisation of BAOR went full circle again with brigade groups redesignated to brigades. The following year the organisation was as follows:

HQ BAOR (Rheindalen)
1 (BR) Corps (Bielefeld)
1st Division (Verden)
2nd Division (Lübbecke)
4th Division (Herford)

The subordinate brigades were:

4th Guards Infantry Brigade (Uelzen)
6th Infantry Brigade (Münster)
7th Armoured Brigade (Soltau)
11th Infantry Brigade (Minden)
12th Infantry Brigade (Osnabrück)
20th Armoured Brigade (Detmold)
Berlin Brigade (Berlin)

In 1968 6th Infantry Brigade was relocated back to Great Britain, only to return in the Autumn of 1970. Its new location was in the towns of Iserlohn and Soest, as the previous occupants (The Canadian Brigade) had moved to southern Germany

By 1973, 1 (BR) Corps consisted of:

1st Division (Verden)
7th Armoured Brigade (Soltau)
11th Infantry Brigade (Minden)

2nd Division (Lübbecke)
4th Guards Infantry Brigade (Münster)
12th Mechanised Brigade (Osnabrück)

4th Division (Herford)
6th Armoured Brigade (Körbecke)
20th Armoured Brigade (Detmold)
1st Artillery Brigade (Hildesheim)
HQ/Signals Battery (Hildesheim)
2 x Heavy Field Artillery Regiments (Hildesheim)
2 x Missile Artillery Regiments (Hildesheim)
7th Air Defence Brigade (Dortmund)
11th Engineer Brigade (Hameln)

With September in 1976 came the creation of the Artillery Division. Headed from Bielefeld and more reorganisation was implemented in January 1978 with the creation of 3rd and 4th Armoured Brigades. The divisions were created from 6th (Soest) and 20th (Detmold) Armoured Brigades and the divisional troops of 4th Division. A very armour orientated BAOR were as follows:

Each of the above regiments were also bolstered by an Army Air Corps Regiment. Each regiment shared the same prefix as the armoured divisions, with the exception of 9th Regiment, Army Air Corps which served at corps level.

Eventually all good things must come to an end and so it did with 1 British Corps being disbanded and replaced by Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC), which is part of the North Atlantic



Treaty Organisation. This development in 1992 and the “Options for Change” redundancy package were a sign of things to come now that the “Russian hordes” were no longer seen to be the main threat.



Image courtesy of the IWM Photo Reference VIE 1022



Berlin Photographer: William Vandivert of Time Life magazine

Line of British armoured fighting vehicles passing Russian soldiers who are using horse drawn carts to carry supplies garnered from a foraging mission following the Allied capture of Berlin during a parade in 1962. It is camouflaged in bronze-green and mid-brown.



www.daimler-fighting-vehicles.co.uk
The Daimler Fighting Vehicles Project – Part By
On Active Service – Post WW2- BAOR



Image courtesy of Mr Pat Howlet
Photographer: unknown
5 Troop, Royal Horse Guards, Dingo F323379 in Berlin 1950



Image courtesy of Gary & Bee
Photographer: unknown
Description: From a magazine called 'World War 2 - Eyewitness Experience', issue 50, produced by The Daily Telegraph. The caption to this pic reads: "British Daimler Armoured Cars of the 11th Hussars stand guard in the British zone near the Brandenburg Gate, Berlin Date January 1948."



Pat Howlet at the age of 18 having just completed training.



Dingo Road test Wolfenbuttel 1951



Image courtesy of Mr Pat Howlet
Photographer: unknown

Description: Dingo Repair job, by Squadron Electrician in "A" Squadron ,Royal Horse Guards
Wolfenbuttel 1951



Image courtesy of Mr Pat Howlet

Photographer: unknown

Description: Troopers Harris and Cain in turret, Corporal of Horse Biles at side of the Car which served with the Royal Horse Guards. Circa 1950's



Bailey bridge between Hanover and Brunswick



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-19000-3359
Foto: o. Ang. | Mai 1950

Image courtesy of British Pathe & Bundesarchiv
Photographer: unknown

Description: Daimler armoured cars and Dingo's stationed below the Brandenburg Gate, Berlin 1945