

# TAC NEWS

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## UPDATES TO THE MODERN FRENCH ARMY TO&Es

The purpose of this article is to update the order of battle for the French units where they have changed, amalgamate the various formations that were scattered across two different listings (French Army and United Nations forces) and to provide an example of how they functioned during a crisis. There have been some changes to the structure of French Army units and these have been noted below. If it was not possible to determine if a change occurred or if the data was questionable the list reflects the work of John and Bev Fernandes in the original army lists available under “Free Stuff” on the GHQ website.

The main changes reflected in this are the replacement of the AMX-30 with the LeClerc main battle tank, the replacement of the AMX-10P with the VBCI, and the removal of the intermediate battalion command in armoured regiments. Otherwise the units appear to remain largely the same. The French infantry now reflects TL4 status based on the implementation of the FÉLIN system throughout the army. Missing from the organizations below are the reserve companies that are assigned to each regiment. These are units that are called up in the event of an emergency similar to the U.S. Army reserve. There are one or two such companies in each regiment.

The French Army consists of two divisions (1st and 3rd Armoured) each with three brigades. The 1st Armoured Division has the 7th Armoured Brigade, the 9th Marine Infantry Brigade, and the 27th Mountain Brigade. It also controls the Franco-german Brigade. The 3rd Armoured Division has the 2nd Armoured Brigade, the 6th Light Armoured Brigade, and the 11th Parachute Brigade. In addition there is a Special Forces Command with three Special Forces (1st Marine Parachute Infantry, 13th Parachute Dragoons, and the 4th Special Forces helicopter regiment). Finally, there is the 4th Air Combat Brigade with three regiments of helicopters of various types.

In the list below the nomenclature of the French Army using “regiment” instead of “battalion” is used. Note that in the French Army the term “squadron” equals “company,” and “regiment” equals “battalion.” Not reflected in this list are the various overseas garrisons maintained by the French Army. Those units tend to follow the same structure and are unchanged from the original source.

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Infantry Company:	3 x TL4 Infantry(A)/VAB, 1 x TL4 Infantry Support/VAB 1 x 81mm “Brandt” Mortar(1)/VAB	Armoured Engineer Co.:	2 x TL4 Engineer/VAB, 2 x AMX-30 AVLB, 1 x AMX-30 (Dozer)
Mechanized Infantry Co.:	3 x TL4 Infantry(A)/VBCI	Engineer Support Co.:	1 x PFM Bridge, 2 x Bulldozer
Parachute or P/Ma Co.:	3 x TL4 Infantry(A)/P4, 1 x 81mm Mortar(1)/VAB	Mortar Battery:	1 x RTF1 120mm Mortar(3)/VAB
Support Company:	1 x 120mm “Brandt” Mortar(3)/VAB, 2 x VBL/HMG[R], 1 x VBL/Milan-2[2]	RAPAS Company:	9 x TL4 Infantry(S)/P4
Anti-Tank Company:	4 x VAB/HOT or 4 x VBL/Milan-2	LRRS Company:	4 x TL4 Infantry[R]/P4
Tank Squadron:	3 x LeClerc, 1 x TL4 Infantry(A)/VAB	Motorized Infantry Regt.:	1 x TL4 Infantry(A)(HQ)/VAB, 4–5 Infantry Co., 1 x Support Co.
Light Armour Sqdn.:	4 x AMX-10 RC or 4 x ERC-90, 2 x VBL/HMG, 1 x VBL/Eryx	Mechanized Regiment:	1 x TL4 Infantry(A)(HQ)/VBCI, 4 x Mechanized Infantry Company, 1 x Support Company
Engineer Company:	3 x TL4 Engineer/VAB		

Parachute Infantry Regt.: 1 x TL4 Infantry(A)(HQ)/P4,  
4–5 x Infantry Co., 1 x Support Co.

Armoured Regiment: 4 x Tank Co., 1 x Support Co.

Light Armoured Regt.: 4 x Light Armoured Company,  
1 x Support Company

Armoured Artillery Regt.: 4 x GCT 155mm SP Howitzer(4),  
2 x RTF1 120mm Mortar(3)/VAB

Artillery Regiment: 2 x RTF1 120mm Mortar(3)/VAB,  
2 x CAESAR 155mm Howitzer(4)

Engineer Regiment: 4 x Engineer Company,  
1 x Engineer Support Company

1st Helicopter Regiment: 10 x SA314 Gazelle,  
4 x AS332 Puma, 3 x AS 532 Cougar

3rd Helicopter Regiment: 9 x SA314 Gazelle, 4 x AS332 Puma

5th Helicopter Regiment: 13 x SA314 Gazelle

1st Marine Parachute Regiment: 4 x RAPAS Company

13th Para. Dragoons Regiment: 3 x LRRS Company

4th SF Helicopter Regiment: 3 x SA314 Gazelle,  
3 x AS 532 Cougar,  
2 x AS332 Puma, 2 x Tigre

Armoured Brigade: 2 x Armoured Regiment,  
3 x Mechanized Infantry Regiment,  
1 x Armoured Artillery Regiment,  
1 x Engineer Regiment

Light Armoured Brigade: 2 x Armoured Regt.,  
1 x Mechanized Infantry Regt.,  
2 x Motorized Infantry Regt.,  
1 x Artillery Regt., 1 x Engineer Regt.

Mountain Brigade: 1 x Mountain Light Armoured Regt.,  
3 x Mountain Infantry Battalion,  
1 x Artillery Regt., 1 x Engineer Regt.

Parachute Brigade: 1 x Light Armoured Regt.,  
4 x Parachute Infantry Regt.,  
1 x Artillery Regt., 1 x Engineer Regt.

**Note:** Each infantry platoon has an Eryx AT (MP) attached.

The French Army is designed to allow units to be immediately activated in the event of an emergency. Each regiment has companies that are on standby to be deployed, some that are returning and refitting from assignment, and others that are preparing for deployment. Task forces called *groupement tactique Inter-Armes* or GTIA are formed from these companies as the need arises. In the U.S. Army these would be called Combined Arms Task Forces or CATF. Both terms are used interchangeably in the reports on French Army activities. As a general rule each GTIA has one armoured company, 3 infantry companies, an artillery battery, and an engineer platoon company assigned to it. A headquarters is pulled from one of the donating regiments to take control of the formation. This activation system is known as “Guépard” or “Cheetah” to reflect the rapid response.

In practice this system appeared to work very well. When the French government decided to intervene in Mali immediately following the Jihadi invasion of the south and attacks on Diabaly and Konna the army was able to get units on the ground within days. Units were pulled from the French forces in CHad and the Ivory Coast. The units of GTIA 2 were loaded on the amphibious assault ship Dixmude, transported to Senegal, then drove overland to the frontline. Other units were airlifted en masse from France, Chad, and other locations. The single largest obstacle to carrying this out was the availability of transport aircraft. This was solved by the use of aircraft from nearly all other NATO nations. Due to this their forces were deployed and fully supported throughout the campaign. The units of the Serval Brigade are shown here.

**Serval Brigade from France:**

3rd Mechanized  
Brigade Headquarters: 1 x TL4 Infantry(A)(GHQ)

Company of 3rd RIMA: 3 x TL4 Infantry(A)/VAB,  
1 x 81mm Mortar(3)/VAB,  
1 x Infantry Support/VAB

**AMG from France:**

Elements,  
1st & 5th Combat  
Helicopter Regiment: 2 x SA314 Gazelle,  
1 x SA330a Puma

**GTIA 1 = GTIA 21 from Chad:**

Command/Support  
21st Marine  
Infantry Regiment: 1 x TL4 Infantry(A)(HQ)/VAB

Sqdn of 1st Foreign  
Legion Cavalry: 2 x ERC-90

1st Company,  
2nd Marine  
Infantry Regt.: 3 x TL4 Infantry(A)/VAB,  
1 x 81mm Mortar(3)/VAB,  
1 x TL4 Infantry Support/VAB

3rd Co., 2nd RIMA: 3 x TL4 Infantry(A)/VAB,  
1 x 81mm Mortar(3)/VAB,  
1 x TL4 Infantry Support/VAB

2 x Companies,  
21st Marine Infantry  
Regiment: @3 x TL4 Infantry(A)/VAB,  
@1 x 81mm Mortar(3)/VAB,  
@1 x TL4 Infantry Support/VAB

1st Section, 3rd Marine  
Artillery Regiment: 1 x RTF1 120mm Martar(4)/VAB

SGTIA from Ivory Coast:  
4th Squadron, 1st Para.  
Hussar Regt.: 3 x ERC90, 3 x VBL

Company, 3rd Marine  
Parachute Inf. Regt.: 3 x TL4 Infantry(A)/VAB,  
1 x 81mm Mortar(3)/VAB,  
1 x TL4 Infantry Support/VAB

Elements,  
17th Parachute  
Engineer Regiment: 1 x TL4 Engineer, 1 x Bulldozer

#### **GTIA 2 = GTIA 92 from France:**

Regimental Command  
68th African Artillery: 1 x TL4 Infantry(A)(HQ)/VAB

SGTIA - 1st Marine  
Infantry Regiment: 2 x AMX-10RC, 1 x VBL/HMG[R],  
1 x VBL/Milan/[R], 1 x VBL/MMG,  
1 x VAB/20mm

SGTIA - 92nd Infantry Regiment:  
4th Company: 3 x TL4 Infantry (A)/VBCI  
  
Company(+): 4 x TL4 Infantry(A)/VBCI

Company,  
126th Infantry Regt.: 3 x TL4 Infantry (A)/VAB,  
1 x 81mm Mortar(3)/VAB,  
1 x TL4 Infantry Support/VAB

Battery, 68th African  
Artillery Regt.: 1 x Battery CAESAR 155mm  
SP Howitzer(4)

#### **GTIA 3 from France:**

Command & Support  
(unknown unit): 1 x TL4 infantry(A)(HQ)/VAB

1st RICM: 3 x AMX-10RC, 3 x VBL/HMG[R]

1st Marine Infantry Regiment:  
Recon/Support Sqdn.: 1 x 120mm Mortar(3)/Truck,  
3 x VBL/LMG[R]

Armoured Squadron: 4 x AMX-10RC,  
4 x VBL/HMG

2nd Marine Infantry Regiment:  
Company, 2nd RIMa: 3 x TL4 Infantry(A)/VBCI

3rd Marine Infantry Regiment:  
Company, 3rd RIMa: 3 x TL4 Infantry(A)/VAB,  
1 x 81mm Mortar(3)/VAB,  
1 x TL4 Infantry Support/VAB

11th Marine Infantry Regiment:  
Battery, TRF1  
& 120mm: 1 x TRF1 155mm How.(1)/Truck,  
1 x 120mm Mortar(2)/Truck

6th Engineer Regiment:  
Company: 2 x TL4 Engineer/VAB,  
2 x AMX-30 AVLB,  
1 x AMX-30 Dozer

#### **GTIA 4 = GAM from Ivory Coast & France:**

CCS 2nd Foreign Legion  
Parachute Regt.: 1 x TL4 Infantry(A)(HQ)/VBL

1st GCP, 2nd Maine  
Infantry Regiment: 3 x TL4 Infantry(S)

2nd Co., Foreign Legion  
Parachute Regt.: 3 x TL4 Infantry(A),  
1 x TL4 Support,  
1 x 81mm "Brandt" Mortar(1)

Company, 3rd Marine  
Infantry Para. Regt.: 3 x TL4 Infantry(A)/VAB,  
1 x 81mm Mortar(3)/VAB,  
1 x TL4 Infantry Support/VAB

1st Company RCP: 3 x TL4 Infantry(A)

#### **Group of Special Forces from France:**

2nd Squadron,  
4th Special Forces  
Helicopter Regt.: 1 x SA330ba Puma,  
1 x SA314 Gazelle/HOT

Elements, 13th  
Parachute Dragoons: 2 x TL4 Infantry(R)

3rd Company,  
1st Marine Parachute  
Infantry Regt.: 9 x TL4 Infantry(S)/P4 *or* VRLA

Elements,  
Marine Commandos: 3 x TL4 Infantry(S)

#### **Air Forces available:**

2/33 Savoie Recon Sqdn.: 1 x Mirage F1 CR[R]  
Operation Epervier: 3 x Mirage 2000D (Chad)  
1/7th Provence Sqdn.: 2 x Rafale (N'djamena)  
1/33 Belfort Squadron: 1 x Harfang UAV (Niamey)D

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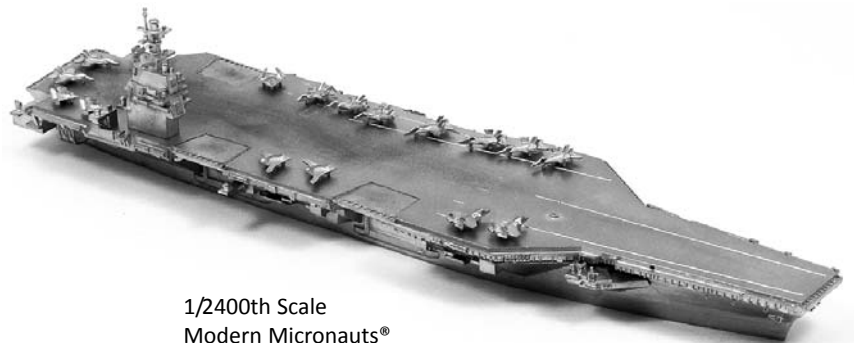
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