

Indian 8th Division: An Outline History

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<http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/LAND-FORCES/Army/Badges-Divisional.html>

1914

A Kitchner division. Remained in India during the Great War.

- Lucknow (22nd) Brigade
- Allahabad Brigade
- Presidency Brigade
- Fyzabad Brigade

1939

1942

Persia and Iraq Force (PAIFORCE). In late 1942 the division was headquartered at Kirkuk-Mosul.

- 19th Infantry Brigade

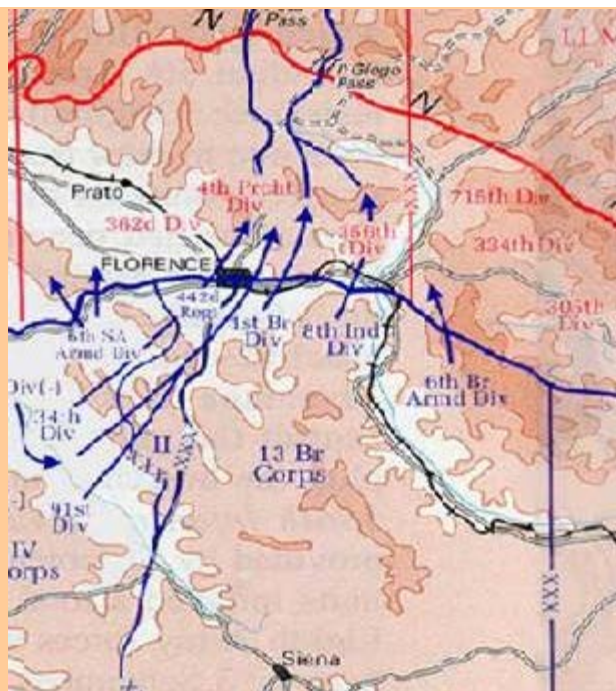
The division was supposed to go under HQ XXI Indian Corps in the spring of 1943 as part of the PAIFORCE expansion, but returned to North Africa.

1944

Cassino offensive starts May 11.

Approach to the Gothic Line: Operation Olive, August 25th.

- 19th Infantry Brigade
- 21st Infantry Brigade
- ? Infantry Brigade



<http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/nap/map1.JPG>

13 British Corps holds the right flank of US General Mark Clark's 5th Army. US II and IV Corps are to the left (west). To the east is British 8th Army, with the other two Indian divisions, 4th and 10th.

Indian 8th Division is facing the German 356th Division with the task of breaking through, linking up with British 1st Division, and advancing on the Giogo Pass and the German Gothic Line. The line itself is marked in red. Eventually a US division captures the pass.

German divisions are, by this stage of the war, usually the strength of brigades. 356th Division is a new formation, formed in June 1943 and sees its first battle in the above operation.

Nonetheless, Germany has been at war for 5 years, and its divisions are still formed of hardened veterans led by superb officers and NCOs. The German mountain positions are well-positioned and fortified, and require extraordinary measures to breach.

A major reason 8th Division is able to break through was that by this time, Allied airpower is overwhelming, and seriously cripples the German ability to move reserves to where they are most needed. This restricts a capability the Germans excels at above all armies, and which is why they are so hard to defeat even though the Allies have every advantage of manpower, equipment, supplies, vehicles, armor, and airpower.



AN EXAMPLE OF A BEAUTIFULLY CONSTRUCTED GERMAN CAMOFLAGED BUNKER

<http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/nap/72-34.htm>

1945

Divisional Order of Battle April 8, 1945

[Courtesy Pat Skelly

<http://www.milhist.net/ordbat/8indinfdiv.html>]

- 17th Indian Infantry Brigade
 - 1st Battalion, The Royal Fusiliers
 - 1/12th Frontier Force
 - 1st Battalion, 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles
- 19th Indian Infantry Brigade
 - 1st Battalion, The Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders
 - 3rd Battalion, 8th Punjab Regiment
 - 6/13th Frontier Force Rifles
- 21st Infantry Brigade
 - 5th Battalion, West Kent Regiment
 - 1st Battalion, 5th Mahrattas
 - 3rd Battalion, 15th Punjab Regiment
- 21st Tank Brigade
 - 1st North Irish Horse
 - 12th Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment
 - 48th Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment
- 5th Royal Mahrattas Machine Gun Battalion
- 6th DCO Lancers (Watson's Horse)
- 1st Jaipur Battalion (State Forces)

1946

Disbanded

1962

Reraised as 8th Mountain Division, to replace 23rd Infantry Division on CI duty for the Northeast.

1971

In action in Eastern Sector (east of River Megha) during Bangladesh Campaign under HQ IV Corps. GOC Major-General

Krishna Rao, latter Chief of Army Staff.

- 59th Mountain Brigade (3 battalions)
- 81st Mountain brigade (3 battalions)
- 1st East Bengal Brigade (two battalions)
- 5 BSF battalions

1972-1990

Northeast Counterinsurgency.

This division has the greatest number of counterinsurgency battalion/years of any army in the world.

In 1972, it controlled 36 battalions – a reinforced corps worth of infantry – for CI operations in the Northeast.

1986

- 56th Mountain Brigade (6 battalions)
- 59th Mountain Brigade
- 81st Mountain Brigade

1987

59th Brigade is detached to Sri Lanka, leaving the division with just two integral brigades. Of course, it has additional brigades attached for CI operations; these rotate from several Eastern Command divisions.

1991-99

Kashmir Counterinsurgency, HQ Sharifabad.

On leaving for Kashmir, the division gains 192th Mountain Brigade from 2nd Mountain Division. Once again, it is at full strength.

At some unknown point, 81st Brigade leaves the division to become a reserve for XV Corps.

1999

The division shifts June 1 to Dras for the Kargil War. Brigades we've identified with the division include:

- 50TH (INDEPENDENT) PARACHUTE BRIGADE – Gumri (released from AHQ reserve, arrives June 12)
- 56TH MOUNTAIN BRIGADE – Matayan (Dras-Mushkoh sector), arrives May 16; brigade is normally part of the division)
- 70TH INFANTRY BRIGADE – Dras (ex-3rd Infantry Division, arrives May 3 from Ganderbal, where it was on temporary assignment for the CI campaign)
- 79TH MOUNTAIN BRIGADE – Mushkoh Sector (ex 28th Division, May 24 arrives, frees 56th Brigade for offensive operations)

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121 INDEPENDENT INFANTRY BRIGADE (ex-3 Infantry Division). Commanded by Brigadier Surinder Singh.

- o 192ND MOUNTAIN BRIGADE – on CI operations in Valley; arrives June 26th.

While 79th Brigade had been under 28th Division for CI operations, the brigade was actually independent as an XV Corps reserve. After the war, it reverts to its original role.

Well over 30 infantry battalions were assigned to the division at one point or another during the Kargil War. The division also had the heaviest concentration of artillery ever given to an Indian Army formation, with over 10 regiments. Total division strength exceeded 30,000.



http://news.bbc.co.uk/olmedia/350000/images/_353729_guns150.jpg

Two firing batteries at Dras. The guns are situated very close together, but level terrain was at a premium, and perhaps they were out of Pakistan counter-battery range or observation.

1999-Present

Assigned to XIV Corps. Brigades at Drass, Kargil, and Batalik. At Kargil is 121st (I) Brigade which remains independent. The other two brigades are 56th and 192nd.