

## A Note on Indian Army Tank Regiments 1947-86

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- Researchers should be aware that the authors have compiled this list from a few scratched notes and memory. While the lists are adequate for general interest, they should not be assumed definitive by proper research standards.

### 1. Regiments by Year

Year	Regiments
1947	10
1953	11
1956	14
1965	16
1970	25
1971	27
1974	29
1975	31
1977	32
1978	34
1980	40
1983	44
1984	55
1986	60

### 2. Equipment

- 61<sup>st</sup> Cavalry was raised as a ceremonial horsed regiment in 1953 and retains the role to this day. In wartime, the regiment provided two wheeled reconnaissance squadrons to the Army. It is not included in the totals below
- The Stuart regiments also had armored cars in 1947.

Year	Churchill	Stuart	Sherman	Centurion	AMX-13	T-54/55	PT-76	Vijayanta	T-72
1947	1	3	6						
1953		3	7						
1956		3	7	4					
1965			7	4	2	1 <sup>1</sup>	2		
1970				4		13	2	6	
1975				4		13	2	12	
1978				1		16 <sup>1</sup>	1	16	
1982						16	1	16	6
1987						15 <sup>2</sup>	1	28	16

<sup>1</sup> This regiment was still under raising with Shermans and preparing to convert to the T-54, which began arriving after the 1965 War.

<sup>1</sup>7 upgunned to 105mm

<sup>2</sup>All T-55

### 3. Naming regiments

At the end of World War II regiments had their traditional names. For example:

- 1 Horse (Skinner's)
- 2 Lancers (Gardner's)
- 3 Cavalry
- 4 Horse (Hodson's)

The Wilcox Committee set up to reorganize the British Indian Army after 1945 suggested that the armored nature of the Indian Cavalry be reinforced by changing all regiments to "Armored Regiments" followed by the traditional name, thus

- 4 Armored Regiment (Hodson's Horse)

With Independence in 1947 the Wilcox recommendations were forgotten till 1966, when Lt.-Gen. Habibullah persuaded the COAS General J. Chaudhri to name the regiment being raised as 65 Cavalry as 65<sup>th</sup> Armored Regiment. Subsequently, all regiments are numbered in that fashion.

Seven regiments went to Pakistan in 1947: 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, and 19. Because the regimental histories and memorabilia went with the regiments, the Indian Army did not fill in the gaps with new raisings. Pakistan had no such inhibition; it merely substituted different appellations. For example, instead of 4 Horse that stayed with India, Pakistan raised a 4 Cavalry.

For reasons unknown to us, when India raised the ceremonial regiment in 1953 and two new regiments in 1956, it chose numbers in the 60s sequence: 61, 62, and 63 Cavalry. When the sequence became full, India turned to the 70s, but instead of completing this sequence, jumped to the 80s.

The sole exceptions were the traditional 45 Cavalry, a PT-76 regiment, and 90 Armored Regiment, formed circa 1986 amalgamating three independent reconnaissance squadrons.

In 1984 the Army decided to fill gaps in the original sequence, but called them armored regiments, in accordance with now standard practice, not by their traditional names. The reason given was the same for not re-raising the missing regiments from the 1947 sequence, that those regiments had gone to Pakistan and the new ones with the same numbers. Three of these regiments appear to have carried the appellation of "Lancers" when raised, but this was subsequently changed to the plain vanilla "Armored Regiment".

Because Pakistan had raised regiments in the 20s and 30s sequences, when India needed new numbers, it began to use the 50s sequence. As very few regiments were raised in the 1990s and subsequently, the 50s sequence still has ample room. Pakistan for its part had no inhibitions of raising new regiments in the 50s sequences despite India using those numbers.

One of us (Rikhye) suggested a quarter-century ago that the Indian Army make groups of the Imperial Regiments. Thus, instead of just 1 Horse, the Army would have 1/1 Horse, 2/1 Horse, 3/1 Horse and so on. The object was to

- Give new raisings the history of the old regiments, as happens with the infantry;
- Provide larger pools of officers who would support the regiment. Currently, infantry regiments typically have 18 battalions, so that a large number of officers serving and retired support their regiments, but the Indian Cavalry has just one “battalion” per regiment. The “Armored Regiments” do not belong to a regimental group like the Royal Tank Regiment, but solely are single “battalion” units;
- Preserve the histories of the new raisings should they be deactivated in the future, say with Army downsizing.

This idea was brushed for two reasons, both without merit.

- It was said that the infantry regiments had their own regimental centers, whereas the Armored Corps has just one, and the Army could not set up separate regimental centers. But it is perfectly possible to have all the regimental groups located at the Armored Corps Center and continue training/raising regiments at one location.
- The other reason was that the Indian Army is – correctly – wedded to tradition, and the notion of a 1/1, 2/1, 3/1 Horse (Skinner’s) was sacrilege. But tradition has not stopped the Army from raiding infantry regiments for battalions for newly created regiments. For example, the Regiment of Guards and the Grenadiers began with three battalions each from storied existing battalions with other regiments, and the battalion histories went with them. The most egregious case was COAS General K. Sundarji stealing the most famous battalions from several regiments, costing regiments their storied battalions, when he formed the Mechanized Infantry Regiment.

#### 4. A late 1960s TO for an Armored Regiment

Regimental HQ Troop x 3 tanks

3 squadrons x 14 tanks

    HQ Troop x 2 tanks

    4 Troops x 3 tanks

Regimental vehicles

    38 x 3-ton

    14 x 1-ton

    28 x jeep

    8 x motorcycle

    9 x reconnaissance jeeps (unclear if included in the jeep total above)

Squadron vehicles

F Echelon = 14 tanks

A Echelon (24 hours supplies)

A1 = 4 ammunition 3-ton trucks

1 POL 3-ton truck

A2 = 2 ammunition 3-ton trucks

1 POL 3-ton truck

B Echelon

1 Mess truck 3-ton truck

1 heavy baggage 3-ton truck

## 5. Regiments in the 1947-48, 1962, and 1965 Wars<sup>2</sup>

- 1947-48

7 Light Cavalry (Stuarts and armored cars) Lt. Col. Rajinder Singh (“Sparrow”)<sup>3</sup>

9 Deccan Horse (Shermans) Lt. Col. Inder Jit Rikhye<sup>4</sup> (initially with 7 Cavalry)

21 Central India Horse Lt. Col. Zorawar Singh, MC

- 1962

20 Lancers (AMX-13) HQ C Squadron and two troops (8 tanks) supported 114 Infantry Brigade at the Battle of Chusul against the PLA at the Ladakh-Tibet border.

- 1965

Regiment	Tanks	Parent Formation
1 Horse	Sherman	15 Infantry Division
2 Lancers	Sherman	1 Armored Division
3 Cavalry	Centurion	1 Armored Division
4 Horse	Centurion	1 Armored Division
7 Cavalry (Light)	PT-76	2 Independent Armored Brigade

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<sup>2</sup> Singh, Bupinder (1982) 1965 War BC Publishers: Patiala, India.

<sup>3</sup> Lt. Col. Rajinder Singh “Sparrow” made armor history at the Battle of Zojila November 1, 1947 when he led 7 Stuarts to support an attack by 77 Parachute Brigade. His Stuarts were brought from Srinager using deception across bridges that were too light to support the tanks. The last part of the journey was over a mule track that was hastily improved. The Zojila Pass lies at an altitude of 3900-meters.

<sup>4</sup> Lt. Col. Rikhye fought the last tank action of the war. His was engaged against Pakistani forces attempting to infiltrate behind Indian positions in the Jammu sector. As his Link Tank had broken down, he did not receive word of the cease-fire. A light observation aircraft was sent to tell him to cease-fire immediately and report to the GOC 26 Infantry Division, the senior officer for the Jammu sector. On arriving he was given a “rocket” by the GOC for being in violation of the cease-fire. Rikhye recounted that his GOC’s harsh words were considerably mitigated by the twinkle in his eyes and the smile and pat on the shoulder he received.

8 Cavalry (Light)	AMX-13	2 Independent Armored Brigade
9 Horse	Sherman IV	4 Mountain Division
14 Horse	Sherman	15 Infantry Division
16 Cavalry	Centurion	1 Armored Division
17 Horse	Centurion	1 Armored Division
18 Cavalry	Sherman V	26 Infantry Division
20 Lancers (Light)	AMX-13	10 and 3 Infantry Divisions
21 Horse	Sherman	7 Infantry Division
62 Cavalry	Sherman	Not known
63 Cavalry (Light)	PT-76	Eastern Command
64 Cavalry	Sherman	Raising, did not see action

Centurion and Sherman regiments had 45 tanks each. The light regiments were intended for reconnaissance and were differently organized with 35 tanks each (HQ troop 2, three squadrons with 11 tanks each; each squadron also had two rifle troops).

In addition, India had five independent light armored squadrons, intended to provide reconnaissance support to its parent formation. These were organized in the same way as the squadrons of the light regiments. Four independent squadrons had light tanks, type unknown; the fifth had armored cars.

The TO of the sole armored division was a divisional tank regiment 4 tank regiments in one brigade, and 3 motor infantry battalions in a second brigade. The sole independent armored brigade, the 2<sup>nd</sup>, had 3 tank regiments and one motor infantry battalion.

The sole modern MBTs with the Indian Cavalry were 180 Centurions in four regiments. Pakistan, by contrast, had nine M-47/M-48 regiments. Seven had 44 Pattons each; two had 30 Pattons each and 14 Shermans or M-36 Tank Destroyers each for a total of 366 Pattons, twice as many as India's Centurions. Partially mitigating India's major inferiority, at least two Pakistani regiments were hastily raised in 1964 from reserve stocks, whereas all 14 Indian regiments in action had:

- 25 years of service with armored cars or tanks – 10 regiments
- 12 years service – 2 regiments
- 9 years service – 2 regiments