# CHURCHILLS IN ITAL

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING FOR BRITISH TANK SQUADRONS IN ITALY 1944



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THE WORLD WAR II MINIATURES GAME

# CHURCHILLS IN THE ITALIAN CAMPAIGN

"Through mud and blood to the green fields beyond."

#### THE CHURCHILLS IN NORTH AFRICA

As a result of the relative success of the six Churchill IIIs that saw action during the Second Battle of Alamein, under the title 'Kingforce', the decision was made to dispatch two Army Tank Brigades to Tunisia to support the First Army there.

The 25<sup>th</sup> Army Tank Brigade (consisting of the North Irish Horse, 51<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment, and 142<sup>nd</sup> (Suffolk) Regiment, Royal Armoured Corps) was the first unit to arrive in theatre. They arrived just as the Battle for Kasserine Pass was taking place.

From 21 February 1943, the Churchills were in action against Rommel's forces. They developed a reputation for hardiness and an excellent cross-country capability. Indeed one German commander claimed he had been forced to withdraw after being attacked by a 'mad tank battalion which had scaled impossible heights'. It was in subsequent actions that the North Irish Horse was able to claim the honour of being the first British armoured regiment to knock out a Tiger with direct tank-gun fire.

In April 1943, 21<sup>st</sup> Tank Brigade (consisting of 12<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> Battalions, Royal Tank Regiment and 145<sup>th</sup> (Duke of Wellington's) Regiment, Royal Armoured Corps) joined the fight as part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division. For the first time massed Churchill units were used in operations supporting infantry on the offensive. Actions at Cactus Farm and Sidi Abdallah, against dug in *Fallschirmjäger* and Tigers saw the loss of 36 Churchill tanks from 12<sup>th</sup> RTR. On 6 May 1943, both tank brigades fought their last battles in North Africa, and it was just over a year until they next saw action, this time on the European mainland, in Italy.

#### IN ITALY

In April 1944, Churchill tanks joined the Eighth Army on the European mainland when the 25<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade and 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division were tasked with smashing a hole through the Hitler Line, one of the strongest defensive positions in Italy. The German defenders had carefully used the natural features of the land to help make the line near tankproof. In addition to the well-sited anti-tank guns, mines, anti-tank ditches, bunkers and waiting counterattack forces, a deadly and not previously seen threat was waiting for the Allied attackers. Panther tank turrets, emplaced at ground level on a concrete casemate with excellent fields of fire, could knock-out any Allied tank at distance, and were only visible once they fired.

On 23 May 1944, after a lengthy bombardment, the Canadians attacked, supported by the whole brigade with North Irish Horse on the right flank, 51<sup>st</sup> RTR in the centre and 142<sup>nd</sup> RAC on the left flank. Heavy German artillery, mortar and machine-gun fire soon forced the infantry into cover and the Churchill squadrons were sent forward alone to engage the German defenders in a lethal close range firefight.

As the day progressed, the defenders' fire was suppressed and the Canadians were again able to advance. By nightfall the Hitler Line had been breached and the road to Rome was open. However, the cost in men and tanks had been high, the North Irish Horse alone losing 24 Churchills.

The tank brigades then took part in the pursuit of the retreating Germans, playing an important role in that advance. The Eighth Army was then transferred back to the Adriatic coast at the beginning of August in preparation for operations that aimed to smash through the Gothic Line on to the Lombardy Plain, considered excellent tank country, where the armoured divisions could hopefully exploit the situation and end the war in Italy by the end of 1944.

From 28 August to 17 October both Churchill brigades fought in support of I Canadian and V British Corps in the battles for the Gothic Line, the next major defensive line of fortifications prepared by the Germans, which they had planned to hold on to until at least the end of winter in early 1945. The Gothic Line was similar to the Hitler Line, but was of much greater depth, consisting of what appeared to be a never ending series of well fortified and defended steep ridges that entirely suited defence. Each time the Allies took one ridge, all they would see was another equally well defended German position on the next ridge.

Throughout the campaign the Churchill tanks continually provided close support to the infantry over extremely difficult terrain, which no other tank, Allied or Axis, could have traversed. However, by the time they had fought their way through the Gothic Line, sunny Italy had become rain sodden, and the thick mud stopped the offensive better than any German counterattack. The battle for Italy would continue into 1945.

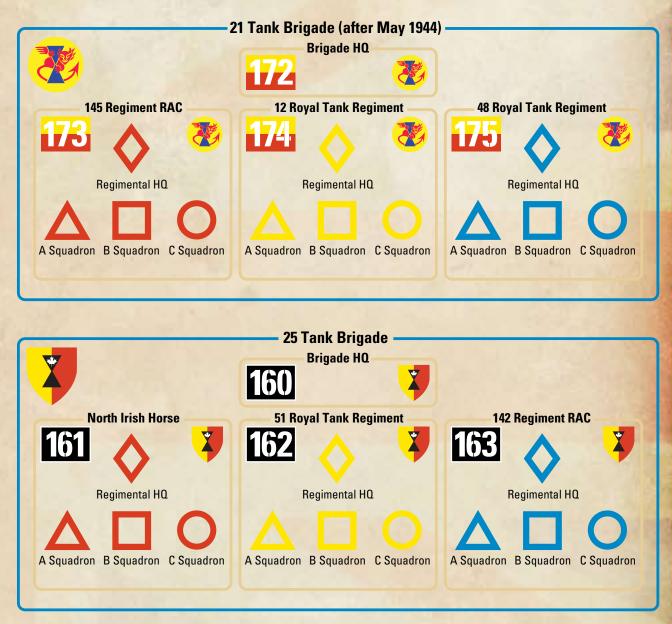


# **ITALY TANK SQUADRON**

The heart and soul of your tank squadron is the Britishdesigned and built Churchill tank. Like the great man himself, the Churchill tank has had its fair share of problems, but these have been overcome and the tank is now a reliable fighting machine. In fact, the latest versions are the most heavily-armoured vehicles available to the Allies.

As infantry tankers, however, you are there to support the 'Poor Bloody Infantry'. They look to you when they come up against dug-in Jerries, machine-guns and even the Panzers. You look to them to keep Jerry's Panzerfausts and other tank hunters at a safe distance and to help you seize and hold the objectives.

You are part of a unique, highly professional, integrated team, who having rehearsed this combined style of warfare safely in Britain, and are now putting the lessons you've learned into practice against the Hun.



# NORTH IRISH HORSE

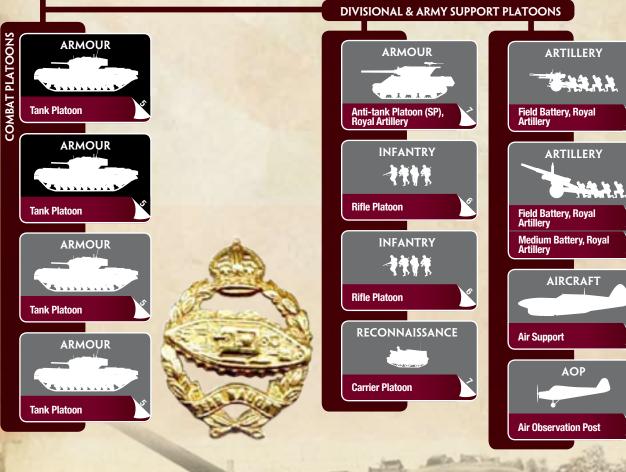
The North Irish Horse found themselves supporting most everyone at one time or another while trudging up the boot of Italy. For their ample support to the Canadians in the Liri Valley they were allowed to paint the Canadian Maple Leaf on the side of their turrets. Both Indian divisions also felt their friendly presence in the Liri valley and breaking through the Gothic Line. Operation Olive saw them once again up by the Canadians before finally given a rest in the winter of '44. Their mix of Churchill heavy tanks and Sherman V tanks allowed them a very flexible level of support to deliver to the infantry. In December 1944 the 25<sup>th</sup> Army Tank Brigade was disbanded and the North Irish Horse replaced the 145<sup>th</sup> (Duke of Wellington's) Regiment, Royal Armoured Corps (which had been disbanded) in the 21<sup>st</sup> Army Tank Brigade.

# TANK SQUADRON (TANK COMPANY)



You must field one platoon from each box shaded black and may field one platoon from each box shaded grey.

All your support platoons must be Indian (marked 💽), Canadian (marked 🔜) or Eighth Army (marked 👎). If your choice symbol is not available you may field options with an Eighth Army (marked 👎) symbol or no symbol.



#### **MOTIVATION AND SKILL**

By the time the tanks crews of the 21<sup>st</sup> Army Tank Brigade and 25<sup>th</sup> Army Tank Brigade entered combat in Italy the had gained much experience fighting in North Africa. A Tank Squadron is rated **Confident Veteran**.



Tank Squadron are British and follow the British National special rules in the rulebook.

# HEADQUARTERS

#### TANK SQUADRON HQ

#### **HEADQUARTERS**

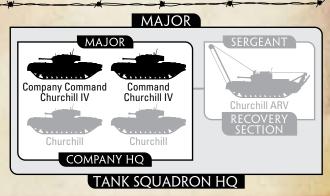
2 Churchill IV

190 points

#### **OPTIONS**

- Replace either or both Command Churchill tanks with a Churchill IV (NA 75) tanks for +20 points per tank.
- Add up to two Churchill IV tanks for +95 points per tank, Churchill I CS tanks for +80 points per tank, or Churchill V CS tanks for +90 points per tank.
- Add a Churchill ARV recovery vehicle for +15 points.

Having proven the concept of Tank Brigades equipped with the reliable and heavily armoured Churchill 'I' tanks supporting the infantry in North Africa, you are now about to take part in the battles that will liberate Italy and deal a decisive blow to the dictatorships of Europe.



Your Squadron HQ can contain up to four Churchill tanks, with two of those being able to provide your platoons with heavy, high explosive close support. To help your tanks in the rough Italian terrain, an armoured recovery vehicle is also available.

## **COMBAT PLATOONS**

TANK PLATOON

Platoon	
3 Churchill IV	280 points
3 Churchill IV (NA75)	345 points
2 Churchill IV and 1 Sherman V	275 points
1 Churchill IV and 2 Sherman V	265 points
3 Sherman V	260 points

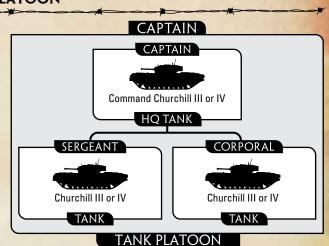
#### **OPTION**

• Arm any or all Sherman V tanks with a .50 call AA MG for +5 points per tank.

You may not have more Tank Platoons equipped with Sherman V tanks than you have equipped with Churchill tanks.

The troops of the tank regiments are equipped with Churchill Infantry tanks. The heavily-armoured 'I' tanks work closely with the infantry, escorting them forward and providing direct fire support in order to get them onto the objective. Capable of crossing trenches and streams, speed is not a factor, as they only need to keep pace with the PBI, the 'Poor Bloody Infantry'.

Once on the objective, the Churchills continue to protect the infantry from enemy armoured counterattacks until the antitank guns can be brought forward to relieve them.



# EIGHTH ARMY SUPPORT

The Eighth Army is a veteran formation, having fought from North Africa to Cassino. They know how to fight and are confident that their hard work will yield an Allied victory. All Eighth Army Support platoons are rated **Confident Veterans.** 

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EIGH1	TH ARMY		I <sup>st</sup> CA ANTR
RELUCTANT	CONSCRIPT	RELUCTAN	гс
CONFIDENT	TRAINED	CONFIDEN	Т
FEARLESS	VETERAN	FEARLESS	

The 25<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade supported the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division, who were had served with distinction in Sicily and Italy in 1943. Canadian platoons are rated **Confident Veterans.** 

 $4^{th}$  &  $8^{th}$  Indian Divisions were also supported by the Infantry Tanks in the Liri valley and breaking through the Gothic Line. Indian platoons are rated **Fearless Veterans**.

British Eighth Army platoons use the normal British special rules found on pages 246 to 248 of the rulebook. Additional Canadian and Indian rules are found on page 10.

 RELUCTANT
 CONSCRIPT

 CONFIDENT
 TRAINED

 FEARLESS
 VETERAN

 INFANTRY DIVISIONS

 RELUCTANT
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 TRAINED

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 VETERAN

adian Division

## RIFLE PLATOON



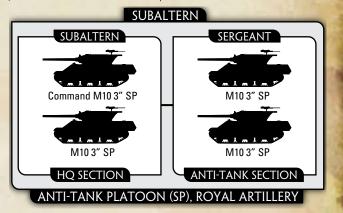
#### **CARRIER PLATOON**

PLATOON			<b>V</b>
4 Carrier Patrols	390 points	385 points	345 points
3 Carrier Patrols	295 points	290 points	260 points
2 Carrier Patrols	195 points	195 points	175 points
1 Carrier Patrol	100 points	100 points	90 points
Options	CA	PTAIN	
<ul> <li>Arm any or all Universal Carriers with an extra hull- mounted MG for +5 points per carrier, or .50 cal MG for +10 points per carrier.</li> </ul>		APTAIN	
<ul> <li>Replace up to one extra hull-mounted MG per</li> </ul>	Command		
Carrier Patrol with a PIAT anti-tank projector at no	Command Universal Carrier	Universal Carrier	Universal Carrier
cost.	CARR	ER PATROL	
Replace all Universal Carriers with Indian Pattern	SE	RGEANT	
Carrier Patrols operate as separate platoons, each with their	Command	Universal	Universal
own command team.	Universal Carrier	Carrier ER PATROL	Carrier
Carrier Patrols are Reconnaissance Platoons.		RGEANT	
		-	-
rrain drives the success of the Universal Carrier. When open			
d dry it can turn a flank before the enemy can counter. Use speed as an advantage to locate enemy concentrations for	Command Universal Carrier	Universal Carrier	Universal Carrier
geting by aircraft or artillery.	CARR	ER PATROL	
eir appearance on the battlefield together with air support	SE	RGEANT	
ing the 'Dixie' procedures can soften the defence before mmitting your infantry to assault.			
	Command	Universal	Universal
	Universal Carrier	Carrier	Carrier
		er patrol	

## ANTI-TANK PLATOON (SP), ROYAL ARTILLERY

Platoon	
4 M10 3" SP	320 points 310 points
2 M10 3" SP	165 points 155 points

Tank Squadrons often supported infantry alongside M10 tank-destroyers of the Royal Artillery on the Gothic line.



#### FIELD BATTERY, ROYAL ARTILLERY

#### PLATOON

HQ Troop with:

Two Gun Troops with a total of:

8 OQF 25 pdr 325 points 325 points

#### One Gun Troop with a total of:

4 OQF 25 pdr	185 points	185 points
2 OQF 25 pdr	105 points	105 points

#### **OPTIONS**

- Add Jeep, 15 cwt trucks and Quad tractors for +5 points per Gun Troop.
- Replace the HQ Troop jeep and any or all 15 cwt trucks with White scout cars, Indian Pattern Troop Carriers, or OP Carriers, for +5 points for the battery.

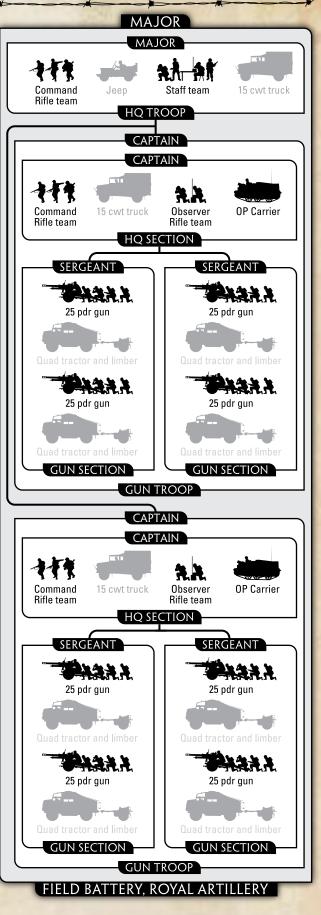
Although a Field Battery, Royal Artillery is a single Support choice, each Gun Troop operates as a separate platoon with its own Command team. The Command team and Staff team of the HQ Troop must be attached to a Gun Troop from its battery at the start of the game before deployment, see the British Artillery special rules on page 248 of the rulebook.

In the mud and mire of the Italian battlefield infantry and artillery became the supreme weapons of war. The artillery was frequently used in massive artillery bombardments to help prepare the way for an infantry assault.

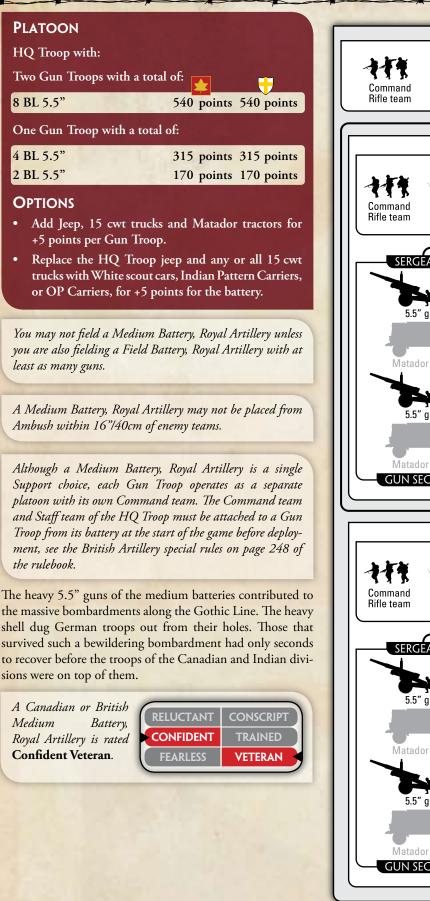
The 25 pdr guns offered excellent service through the North African and Italian campaign. Lighter than the American and German equivalents, the 25 pdr adapted well to the battlefield conditions of Italy.

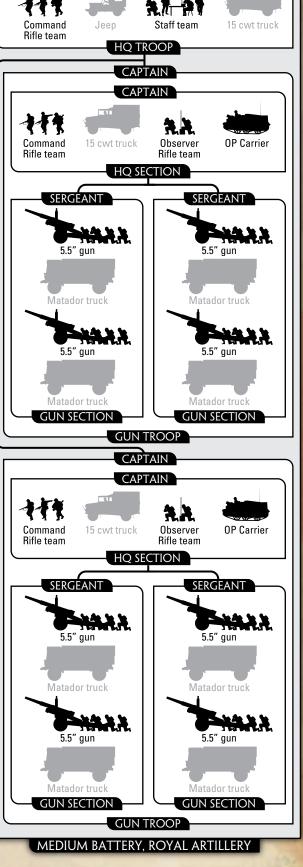
A Canadian or British Field Battery, Royal Artillery is rated Confident Veteran.





#### MEDIUM BATTERY, ROYAL ARTILLERY





MAJOR

MAJOR

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#### AIR OBSERVATION POST

35 points

#### PLATOON

Auster AOP

Air Observation Posts follow the rules for Air Observation Posts found on page 139 of the rulebook as well as the Dixie Air Support special rule below.

#### **DIXIE AIR SUPPORT**

The German habit of fighting rear-guard actions by day and withdrawing to a new line of defence each night meant that the Allied troops were frequently unable to make contact until late afternoon because of the extensive German demolitions. On those occasions when contact could be made early in the day, the Germans were usually forced to withdraw before dark and then targets became available for the fighter-bombers.

A new system, called *Dixie*, was introduced to make the best use of the few hours of daylight left. When enemy targets appeared, a call was made by Corps for *Dixie*, which would normally be available from 7-8:30 p.m. During this period a tactical reconnaissance aircraft, in radio contact with the air controller Rover David, and the fighter-bombers in the cab rank, was to be over the forward area for the entire time.

The tactical reconnaissance aircraft's task was to find suitable targets for the fighter-bombers and report them to Rover David. Throughout the *Dixie* period fighter-bomber aircraft were to be kept in the cab rank in successive formations of



six. This allowed the fighter-bombers to engage targets as they tried to disengage from Allied ground units.

At the start of your turn, you may elect to either use your Auster AOP as normal (using the Air Observation Post rule) or to coordinate Dixie Air Support. The Auster AOP cannot do both in the same turn.

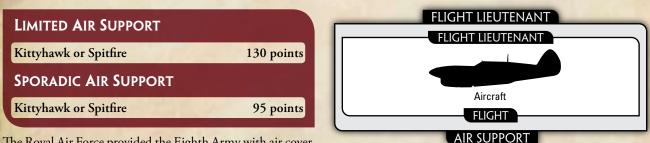
If you chose to use the AOP to coordinate Dixie Air Support, all air attacks against targets within Line of Sight of the Auster AOP are under its control.

Aircraft under the control of an Auster AOP may re-roll a failed attempt to Range In.

Unlike normal air attacks that cannot be within 16"/40cm from any friendly teams (see Safety Distance rule on page 184 of the rulebook), aircraft under the control of an Auster AOP will only abort if friendly teams are within 12"/30cm from the aircraft model.







The Royal Air Force provided the Eighth Army with air cover, hitting enemy targets whenever they could, although perhaps not as often as the soldiers on the ground would have hoped for!

## **CANADIAN SPECIAL RULES**

Canadian platoons uses all of the British special rules, except for British Bulldog. They also use the following special rules listed below.

#### **ASSAULT TROOPS**

The Canadians have maintained their enviable reputation as aggressive assault troops, unwilling to be stopped by enemy fire, no matter how heavy.

Canadian platoons do not use the British Bulldog special rule. Instead any Canadian platoon that is Pinned Down may re-roll failed Motivation tests to rally from being Pinned Down or remount vehicles after being Bailed Out.

#### WOODSMEN

Although Canada has been settled for centuries, it was not until the Nineteenth Century that its population underwent significant growth and it remains a largely rural country. Canadian soldiers are typically a little more independent (and unruly) than British soldiers.

A Canadian Platoon uses the German Mission Tactics special rule (see page 242 of the rulebook).

#### **INDIAN SPECIAL RULES**

Indian platoons use all of the British special rules in the *Flames Of War* rulebook except the *British Bulldog* special rule. In addition they have their own *War Cry* and *North-west Frontier* special rules.

#### WAR CRY

Indians always charge shouting war cries to gain the blessings of the gods and intimidate their enemies. Weak-hearted foes hearing this fearsome cry will flee without a fight.

Indian and Gurkha platoons do not use the British Bulldog special rule. Instead, enemy platoons must reroll their first successful Motivation Test to Counterattack an Indian platoon that Launched an Assault against them.

#### NORTH-WEST FRONTIER

The Indian Army trained and fought against tribal rebels in the mountainous frontiers on India's borders. These campaigns made them particularly adept at fighting in the high terrain under its inclement weather. As a result they were specialists at mountain warfare.

All Indian Infantry and Man-packed Gun teams are Mountaineers.

## **GURKHA SPECIAL RULES**

The Gurkhas of Nepal have a superb reputation as first-class fighting men. They are recruited from hardy hill tribes in the Himalayan mountains. Their ferociousness when using their heavy-bladed khukuri knives in close combat is legendary. So too is their determination not to abandon their weapon while still alive.

You may field an Indian Rifle Platoon as a Gurkha Rifle Platoon (marked ). Gurkha Rifle Platoons use the Khukuri special rule in addition to the Indian and British special rules. In all other ways a Gurkha company remains an Indian company.

#### KHUKURI

Every Gurkha carries a heavy-bladed recurved knife called a khukuri. They use this for everything from cutting food and wood to chopping off the heads of their foes.

If there are no enemy Tank teams or Bunkers within 2"/5cm or a Gurkha team, the Gurkha team hits on a roll of 2+ in Assaults.

# **BRITISH ARSENAL**

# TANK TEAMS

			Armour		
Name	Mobility	Front	Side	Тор	Equipment and Notes
Weapon	Range	ROF	Anti-tank	Firepower	
TANKS					
Sherman V	Standard Tank	6	4	1	Co-ax MG, Hull MG, Tow hook.
M3 75mm gun	32"/80cm	2	10	3+	Semi-indirect fire, Smoke.
INFANTRY TANKS					
Churchill III or IV	Slow Tank	8	7	2	Co-ax MG, Hull MG, Protected ammo, Tow hook, Wide tracks.
OQF 6 pdr gun	24"/60cm	3	10	4+	
Churchill IV (NA75)	Slow Tank	8	7	2	Co-ax MG, Hull MG, Protected ammo, Tow hook, Wide tracks.
M3 75mm gun	32"/80cm	2	10	3+	Semi-indirect fire, Smoke.
Churchill I CS	Slow Tank	8	7	2	Co-ax MG, Protected ammo, Tow hook, Wide tracks.
OQF 3" howitzer	24"/60cm 40"/100cm	2	5 3	3+ 6	Smoke. Smoke bombardment.
firing bombardments OQF 3" howitzer	40 /100cm 24"/60cm	2	5	0 3+	Hull-mounted, Smoke.
firing bombardments	40"/100cm	-	3	6	Smoke bombardment.
Churchill V (CS)	Slow Tank	8	7	2	Co-ax MG, Hull MG, Protected ammo, Tow hook, Wide tracks.
OQF 95mm CS howitzer	24"/60cm	2	7	3+	Smoke.
firing bombardments	48"/120cm	-	4	5+	Smoke bombardment
SELF-PROPELLED AN	TI-TANK GU	JNS			
M10 3" SP	Standard Tank	4	2	0	.50 call AA MG.
M7 3" gun	32"/80cm	2	12	3+	Slow traverse.
RECONNAISSANCE					
Universal Carrier	Half-tracked	0	0	0	Hull MG.
With PIAT anti-tank projector	8"/20cm	1	10	5+	Hull-mounted.
With .5" MG	16"/40cm	3	4	5+	Hull-mounted.
Indian Pattern Carrier	Jeep	0	0	0	Hull MG.
With PIAT anti-tank projector	8"/20cm	1	10	5+	Hull-mounted.
With .5" MG	16"/40cm	3	4	5+	Hull-mounted.
VEHICLE MACHINE-C	GUNS				
Vehicle MG	16"/40cm	3	2	6	ROF 1 if other weapons fire.
.50 cal Vehicle MG	16"/40cm	3	4	5+	ROF 1 if other weapons fire.

# **INFANTRY TEAMS**

Team	Range	ROF	Anti-tank	Firepower	Notes
Rifle team	16"/40cm	1	2	6	
Rifle/MG team	16"/40cm	2	2	6	
Light Mortar team	16"/40cm	1	1	4+	Smoke, Can fire over friendly teams.
PIAT team	8"/20cm	1	10	5+	Tank Assault 4.
Staff team	16"/40cm	1	2	6	Moves as a Heavy Gun team.

#### ADDITIONAL TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT

Sticky Bombs are rated as Improvised Tank Assault 3.

# TRANSPORT TEAMS

			Armour		
Vehicle	Mobility	Front	Side	Тор	Equipment and Notes
Jeep	Jeep	-	-	-	
CMP, Bedford or Morris 15-cwt truck	Wheeled	-	-	-	
Quad or Matador tractor	Wheeled	-	-	-	
White scout car	Jeep	1	0	0	
OP Carrier	Half-tracked	0	0	0	
Churchill ARV	Slow Tank	8	7	2	Recovery Vehicle, Wide tracks.

AIRCRAFT							
Aircraft	Weapon	To Hit	Anti-tank	Firepower	Notes		
Kittyhawk	MG	3+	6	5+			
	Bombs	4+	5	1+			
Spitfire	MG	3+	7	5+			
	Bombs	4+	5	2+			

# GUN TEAMS

Weapon	Mobility	Range	ROF	Anti-tank	Firepower	Notes
OQF 25 pdr gun Firing bombardments	Heavy	24"/60cm 80"/200cm	2	9 4	3+ 5+	Gun shield, Smoke, Turntable. Smoke bombardment.
BL 5.5" gun Firing bombardments	Immobile	32"/80cm 88"/220cm	1 -	13 5	1+ 2+	Bunker buster.

