

# Organization of the Red Army Rifle Battalion 1941 to 1945

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## Introduction

This is my attempt at analysing the evolving organization, equipment and weapons of the Red Army Rifle Battalion during the Second World War.

This is a subject I have long wanted to cover but for years there were absolutely no primary documents available to the amateur researcher. It was only in 2015 that an actual штат, or *Shtat* (State), appeared online, which detailed in full the organization and equipment of a Red Army Rifle Regiment (Reduced Strength) of July 1941.

I made an appeal on an internet forum for help as to where other such documents could be found and to my surprise received a response. It was from a gentleman named Evgenii Ignatev, who had a similar passion and interest in the subject, and had amassed his own collection of *Shtat* tables of various units. I bought a large portion of his files with the intention of using them to add a new section to my old [www.bayonetstrength.150m.com](http://www.bayonetstrength.150m.com) site. Unfortunately, real life matters meant I simply never got around to it, not before my then webhost disappeared without a trace.

Then there was an extraordinary development. A Russian archive began to post huge numbers of documents online, among which were multiple *Shtat* tables. I recall that I bust my old bandwidth allowance downloading as much as I could find.

<https://pamyat-naroda.ru/>

This piece then offers a general outline of the development of the Red Army Rifle Battalion with complete descriptions of the units discussed available in PDF files that are accessible from the below linked area of the site.

### [Red Army organization during the Second World War](#)

I know full well that I am not the best person to undertake this study. My reading of Russian is limited to say the least, and while it turns out I can 'speak *Shtat*' I cannot pretend to be able to understand those complementary documents, such as combat reports and training literature, that would put the organizational developments into much better context. Also in preparing this piece I have been reminded just how little decent information is available on basic items of Red Army weaponry and equipment meaning this entry in the series is much shorter than those for other nations.

These shortcomings aside, I hope this study proves to be of use to those interested in the subject.

Gary Kennedy

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## Red Army Ranks

When the Red Army entered the war it was using an alphanumeric rank system, which effectively paralleled the traditional terminology while studiously avoiding using it. Within the confines of the Rifle Regiment the April 1941 rank system was;

### *Command Ranks (Officers)*

K-V	Regimental commander
K-IV	Battalion commander
K-III	Company (or Battery) commander
K-II	Deputy Company commander*
K-I	Platoon commander

\*There was no actual post of Deputy Company commander in the April 1941 Rifle Regiment but this is where K-II would fit.

### *Political ranks*

П-IV	Deputy Regimental commander (Political)
П-II	Political leader, Company

### *Specialist ranks*

Technical	T-I to T-III
Administrative	A-I to A-III
Medical	M-I to M-IV
Veterinary	B-I to B-IV

Warrant Officer is perhaps the closest Western equivalent to this series of ranks. They were held by those in specialist posts, such as armourers, clerks, and personnel on supply staffs.

### *Junior Specialists Ranks*

Technical	MT-1 to MT-2
Administrative	Ma-1 to Ma-3
Medical	MM-3
Veterinary	MB-3

### *Junior Command Ranks (Non-commissioned officers)*

MK-3	Senior NCO
MK-2	Deputy Platoon commander
MK-1	Squad commander

### *Private ranks*

p-c	Private
p-h	Private* (normally associated with some form of trade, such as cook)

By the end of 1941 this system was discontinued in favour of a return to more familiar forms of address. Within the confines of the Rifle Regiment ranks were;

*Command Ranks (Officers)*

полковник	Colonel
подполковник	Lieutenant-Colonel
майор	Major
капитан	Captain
лейтенант	Lieutenant
младший лейтенант	Junior Lieutenant

*Political ranks*

All the below ranks include по политической части (Political Detail) as the suffix;

зам. Командира полка	Deputy Regimental commander
зам. Командира батальон	Deputy Battalion commander
зам. Командира батаре	Deputy Battery commander
зам. Командира рота	Deputy Company commander
зам. Командира взвода	Deputy Platoon commander

*Specialist ranks\**

Технический служб	Technical Service
Административный служб	Administrative Service
Медицинский служб	Medical Service
Ветеринарный служб	Veterinary Service

\*There were multiple titles for specialist personnel within the above four Services. Key ones were военврач 1 до 3 ранга (Medical Officer 1 to 3 Grade) and военветврач (Veterinary officer). Non-commissioned officers used the same ranks detailed below appended by the relevant Service.

*Junior Command Ranks (Non-commissioned officers)*

старшина	Senior NCO (Sergeant Major)
старший сержант	Senior Sergeant
сержант	Sergeant
младший сержант	Junior Sergeant

*Privates*

Ефрейтор	Lance-corporal
рядовой	Soldier (replaced during 1942 by)
Красноармеец	Red Army Man

## **Red Army Rifle Battalion structure and terminology**

While the terminology used by the Red Army to identify its units and subunits is familiar enough, the way in which certain terms could be applied is perhaps less so. For the purposes of this study, the following equivalents have been used.

<b>Russian</b>	<b>British (Br) or US nearest equivalent</b>
отделение (Otdeleniye)	Section (Br), Squad (US)
Взвод (Vzvod)	Platoon (Br and US)
Рота (Pota)	Company (Br and US)
Батальоне (Batalone)	Battalion (Br and US)
Полк (Polk)	Regiment (US) - (British Infantry Brigade)

There is some temptation for me to equate отделение with Section, but I will go with the now practically universally accepted Squad.

Certain subunits could be very small in terms of manpower but be known by a title that would suggest a larger strength. This was particularly true of the designation Platoon (Взвод), which in Red Army usage could refer to a subunit such as a Rifle Platoon of from 40 to 50 men, or a Mortar or Machine Gun Platoon, which may be anywhere from 30 men to as few as just seven. Other armies would likely term any subunit of 20 men or fewer as a Section or a Group, but in Red Army practice two or three support weapons would normally be under the command of a commissioned officer rather than an NCO, and so considered as a Platoon.

### ***Unit and Subunit designations***

This is a subject I have not seen a contemporary explanation of so I have asked the question on a couple of forums. It would appear that Companies within the Rifle Battalions were numbered, while the Regimental level Companies (of which there was an ever changing array) were not. On that basis Battalion designations were;

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Battalion</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion</b>
1 Rifle Company	4 Rifle Company	7 Rifle Company
2 Rifle Company	5 Rifle Company	8 Rifle Company
3 Rifle Company	6 Rifle Company	9 Rifle Company
1 MG Company	2 MG Company	3 MG Company
1 Mortar Company	2 Mortar Company	3 Mortar Company

Where Anti-tank Rifle Companies were present they would presumably follow suit, being listed between the Machine Gun Company and the Mortar Company.

## Organization of the Red Army Rifle Battalion

### 1941 to 1945

Ideally, this study should start in 1939 but the earliest Rifle Regiment *Shtat* that I have been able to acquire is from April 1941, so that is where it will have to begin.

Within the space of less than two years the Red Army published six different *Shtat* tables governing the organization of the Rifle Regiment and its three Rifle Battalions;

April 1941; this introduced a new Regimental organization that was adopted only weeks before the German invasion of June 1941.

July 1941; this was a Reduced Strength version of the April 1941 model, seemingly intended for newly raised Divisions only.

December 1941; this removed mortars from the Rifle Battalions, concentrating them into a Regimental Mortar Battalion, and introduced anti-tank rifles.

March 1942; this made good some of the cutbacks to personnel and support weapons, while keeping the Mortar Battalion.

July 1942; this returned mortars to the Rifle Battalions and reduced the strength of the Rifle Squad and Platoon.

December 1942; largely as for July 1942 with increased automatic firepower. There was also a modified version for use by those Regiments designated as Guards.

December 1944; a much revised Regiment and Battalion organization, titled specifically for Guards units. There is some debate as to whether this organization was actually employed before the end of the war in Europe.

Added to this, from at least 1943 onwards, were a slew of 'reduced strength' organizations introduced by various Red Army Fronts (equivalent to a Western Army or Army Group). While it was common for all armies to make adaptations to unit organization to compensate for casualties and replacement shortfalls, the Red Army introduced detailed directives as to how these were to be implemented. These usually followed a system whereby, as the personnel strength of a Rifle Division fell below a particular number, certain units and subunits would be deactivated or reduced in size. In some instances the resulting Rifle Battalions looked more akin to a heavily reinforced Rifle Company.

### Overview

The Rifle Battalion as detailed herein was that found in the Rifle Regiment of the Rifle Division. The Red Army fielded various types of Rifle Brigade, which had their own Battalion variations that are not included here.

### ***Outline development - 1941 to 1945***

By the beginning of 1941 the Red Army had been involved in several campaigns, beginning with the invasion of eastern Poland in mid-September 1939, which was quickly followed by the invasion of Finland on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1939.

In April 1941 a new series of *Shtat* were introduced for the component parts of the Rifle Division, with each Division built around three Rifle Regiments. The Rifle Regiment contained three Rifle Battalions, supported by numerous specialist Companies and Batteries (including Sapper, Anti-aircraft, Anti-tank, Heavy Mortar and Infantry Gun) and two Reconnaissance Platoons, one on horse and one on foot.

The Rifle Battalion had a small Headquarters, three Rifle Companies, a Machine Gun Company, a Mortar Company and a 45-mm Gun Platoon, the latter with two guns. There were also Signal, Supply and Medical Platoons. The Machine Gun Company had three Platoons, each of four guns, while the Mortar Company had three Platoons, each of just a pair of 82-mm mortars. Each Rifle Company had three Platoons, each with four Rifle Squads and a 50-mm Mortar Squad, plus a Machine Gun Platoon of two weapons. The Battalion had no motor vehicles, all its transport being horse-drawn, as too were its 45-mm guns.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1941 the Soviet Union was subject to the full onslaught of a Nazi invasion. This resulted in a massive expansion of the Red Army, which introduced a new *Shtat* for a Reduced Strength Rifle Regiment to facilitate mobilisation. In the Rifle Battalion the 82-mm Mortar Company was pared back to a single Platoon of two weapons and the 45-mm guns were eliminated. The cuts went deeper still in the Rifle Companies, which lost their Machine Gun Platoon, while each Rifle Platoon dropped from four light machine guns (one per Squad) to just two; the third Rifle Platoon also deleted its 50-mm Mortar Squad.

In December came the third revision of the Rifle Regiment seen in 1941, and the second since war had come to Soviet territory. With this was a further dilution of the Rifle Battalion as both its 50-mm and 82-mm mortars were removed entirely to form a new Regimental Mortar Battalion. The Battalion now had three Rifle Companies, each of three Platoons of four Squads, and a Machine Gun Company of three Platoons, each of four guns. As some recompense, each Rifle Platoon was now authorised three light machine guns, still not enough for one per Rifle Squad.

The next change came in March 1942, and for the first time added some capability to the Rifle Battalion, with a return to each Rifle Squad having a single light machine gun. There was also a new subunit in the form of an Anti-tank Rifle Company, armed with 16 weapons in two Platoons, each with four Squads of two guns.

The rapidity of reorganization continued as yet another new *Shtat* was issued in July 1942. This reduced the Machine Gun Company from twelve guns to nine, with each Platoon deleting one weapon. Mortars were returned to Battalion control, meaning

the addition of an 82-mm Mortar Company, with three Platoons of three weapons each. There was also a solitary Anti-tank Rifle Platoon with nine guns in three Squads. The Rifle Companies remained as three Rifle Platoons, each of four Squads, with a single light machine gun per Squad, and a 50-mm Mortar Platoon with three such weapons was added.

In December 1942 came what was effectively the last official Rifle Regiment *Shtat* for the standard Rifle Division. This largely kept the structure of the July 1942 model, with some changes to weapons. The Battalion received a 45-mm Gun Platoon, still horse-drawn. Each Rifle Company lost one 50-mm mortar team, but did add a Heavy Machine Gun Squad with a single weapon. In the Rifle Platoons two of the four Squads received a second light machine gun, for six per Platoon and 18 in the Company. During mid-1943 one Rifle Platoon in each Rifle Company became a Submachine Gun Platoon, though keeping its light machine guns and sniper rifles.

Also in December 1942, a separate *Shtat* was produced for a Guards Rifle Regiment. This was largely as the standard version detailed above, though with a number of modifications. Firstly, each Platoon in the Machine Gun Company had four guns, while in each Rifle Company there was a Machine Gun Platoon of two weapons rather than a single Squad. There was also an Anti-tank Rifle Company, with 16 weapons as found under the earlier March 1942 model.

In December 1944 a new *Shtat* was published for a Guards Rifle Regiment. It remains unclear as to whether any units had an opportunity to reorganize under it before the end of the war in Europe, though there are some suggestions it might have seen service against the Imperial Japanese in August 1945.

This *Shtat* was largely in line with the December 1942 Guards Rifle Battalion described above. The Anti-tank Rifle Company was scaled back to a Platoon of nine weapons, while a second 45-mm Gun Platoon was added to form a Battery of four guns. The Mortar and Machine Gun Companies remained at nine and twelve weapons respectively. In the Rifle Companies, the 50-mm Mortar Platoon was deleted, but the Machine Gun Platoon remained. Each Rifle Platoon still had four Squads, each with a single light machine gun, and one Platoon was equipped with submachine guns.

Including Guards variations, there were eight separate *Shtat* issued for the Rifle Regiment in a little under four years. Overleaf is a chart showing the evolution of the Rifle Battalion within these Regiments during the course of the war.

### **Evolution of the Red Army Rifle Battalion, 1941 to 1945**

Detail	Apr-41	Jul-41 (a)	Dec-41	Mar-42	Jul-42	Dec-42	1944 (b)	Guards		
								Dec-42	1944(b)	Dec-44
<b>i). Personnel</b>										
Command ranks	30	23	27	31	35	36	31	42	36	34
Political ranks	5	4	4	6	6	6	3	7	3	2
Junior command ranks	105	85	124	142	157	181	182	204	205	176
Other ranks	638	543	452	530	411	396	396	425	425	343
<b>Total, all ranks</b>	<b>778</b>	<b>655</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>709</b>	<b>609</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>612</b>	<b>678</b>	<b>669</b>	<b>555</b>
<b>ii). Transport</b>										
Riding horses	5	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Draught horses	74	41	36	28	42	39	39	47	47	46
Artillery horses	8	0	0	0	0	8	8	8	8	16
Carts (one-horse)	14	7	2	2	14	17	17	11	11	12
Wagons (two-horse)	26	15	13	9	11	8	8	15	15	14
Field kitchens	4	2	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
Bicycles	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
<b>iii). Weapons</b>										
Pistols	113	47	31	37	41	42	34	49	39	50
Rifles	538	501	465	530	425	426	312	453	375	266
Sniper rifles	24	24	24	33	18	18	18	24	24	24
Submachine guns	86	18	27	27	36	38	165	44	172	164
Light machine guns	36	18	27	36	36	54	54	54	54	36
Heavy machine guns	18	12	12	12	9	12	12	18	18	18
50-mm mortars	9	6	0	0	9	6	6	6	6	0
82-mm mortars	6	2	0	0	9	9	9	9	9	9
Anti-tank rifles	0	0	0	16	9	9	9	16	16	9
45-mm guns	2	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	4

a). Reduced Strength Rifle Battalion

b). Incorporating known amendments to early 1944

## **The elements of the Battalion, 1941 to 1945**

Below follows a more detailed examination of each subunit (defined herein as Companies, Platoons and Squads) within the Battalion. As some of these changed relatively little over the course of time a single description will suffice while for others their evolution requires greater depth.

For the other studies in this series I have been able to pull together some associated information on weapons and ammunition and communication equipment, enough to justify a separate Annex for each. Unfortunately I do not have the same resources available for Red Army units, so comments on these subjects will be included in the relevant subunit description.

### **Battalion Headquarters (Штаб) (1941 to 1945)**

The composition of Battalion Headquarters offers an illustration of the utilitarian nature of Red Army organization. In April 1941 it consisted of the Battalion commander, two Adjutants, an NCO responsible for instruction in chemical warfare defence, and a groom for the commander's riding horse. Under the later rank system, the Battalion commander was a Major, the senior Adjutant a Captain and the other a Lieutenant.

The first in a series of changes came in December 1941, with the posts of Chemical Warfare NCO and groom (along with the commander's horse) being removed. At the same time a Deputy Battalion commander was added, who could be either a Major or a Captain. In July 1942 the junior of the two Adjutants was deleted.

Alongside the usual military positions Red Army units included a number of Communist party political officers. In March 1942 a Military Commissioner was put on the Battalion staff; by late 1942 he was retitled the Deputy Battalion commander for political affairs.

These various changes reduced Battalion Headquarters to just four officers by December 1942. Then came several additions, though when these were made is uncertain. First was the return of a Chemical Warfare NCO, seemingly during 1943. This was followed by an increased political presence with the inclusion of a Communist party organiser and a representative from the Youth party branch, Komsomol, both seemingly in place by the start of 1944.

### **Medical Platoon (взвон санитарный) (1941 to 1945)**

This is a prime example of what the Red Army termed a Platoon compared to its contemporaries. The Battalion's Medical Platoon was initially eight strong, with a Medic and a Senior Sergeant both from the Medical Service. In April 1941 it was completed by four medical orderlies and two drivers, each with a horse-drawn wagon. One wagon was deleted by July 1941 and two orderlies by July 1942.

### **Supply Platoon (взвод снабжения) (1941 to 1945)**

In April 1941 the Supply Platoon was divided into two Sections, which most closely translate into Western military terminology as an Ammunition Section and an Administrative or Mess Section.

The Ammunition Section began with eight wagons, each drawn by a pair of draught horses and included four ammunition handlers. Seven wagons carried ammunition and one anti-gas supplies. The Administrative Section had seven wagons for equipment and four field kitchens, along with the Battalion's cooks.

Both Sections were gradually whittled down as the Battalion underwent its numerous reorganizations, with just four ammunition wagons and three field kitchens remaining by July 1942.

### **Communication Platoon (взвод связи) (1941 to 1945)**

This is definitely one of the most challenging subunits to describe. In its original format the Communication Platoon was quite well resourced, on paper at least. As of April 1941 it had one officer and 32 men, with transport provided by three horse-drawn carts, and consisted of a Telephone Exchange, a Radio Squad and a Telephone Squad. By December 1942 it was down to one officer and nine men, with a single horse and cart, and was equipped only for line communication.

#### *Methods of communication*

As with other armies of the day, communication was divided into line (telephone), radio and visual means.

The largest part of the Battalion Communication Platoon was responsible for telephone equipment. It consisted of an Exchange, initially staffed by a Senior Sergeant and three telephonists manning a single switchboard, and two Telephone Squads, with a combined strength of two Sergeants and 15 men. The earliest list of equipment for the Platoon that I have seen is from the July 1941 Reduced Strength Regiment and shows the following;

#### *July 1941 Battalion Communication Platoon telephone equipment*

1 switchboard No.238

9 Field telephones No.235B

12-km telephone cable

There was no reduction in the telephone personnel between the April 1941 and July 1941 Battalion Communication Platoons, so the above figures may well have been unchanged between the two also.

The December 1941 *Shtat* brought greater reductions, with the Exchange trimmed back to a Senior Sergeant and two men, and the two Telephone Squads each to a Sergeant and four men. This was the same Communication Platoon used by the March 1942 Battalion, which is the next point at which equipment can be seen;

*March 1942 Battalion Communication Platoon telephone equipment*

1 switchboard No.238

8 Field telephones No.235B

8-km telephone cable

These figures perhaps mirror the preceding December 1941 scales.

In July 1942 the line capability was slashed again. The Exchange remained as in March but there was now a single Telephone Squad with a Sergeant and five men. This is the last date for which an equipment table appears to be available and it matches that shown above for March 1942. By December 1942 the Telephone Squad was reduced by one man. A post-war document outlining a suggested reorganization of Rifle Regiment signals shows the Platoon with 10-km of cable.

Radio equipment can be disposed of in a few paragraphs.

In April 1941 the Battalion was authorised one 6-PK radio set, which was to maintain communication with Regimental Headquarters. This was unchanged until July 1942, when the Battalion set was withdrawn and its two operator posts deleted. The 6-PK is described as a fairly standard set of its time, capable of both voice and telegraph (Morse) operation. Range is quoted as approximately 6-km using voice from a stationary position, halved to perhaps 3-km when moving.

Most translated descriptions seem to match the below wording;

<https://translate.google.co.uk/translate?hl=en&sl=ru&u=https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/6-%25D0%259F%25D0%259A&prev=search>

In April 1941 the Platoon was shown as having four 'Company radio sets', each with an operator, presumably for allocation out to the Rifle Companies as required. I must admit I have no idea what these sets were, or if they were even produced. Certainly they did not feature on any further *Shtat* tables for the Rifle Regiment from the introduction of the July 1941 Reduced Strength model.

Platoon Headquarters was throughout nothing more than a Lieutenant, with the Senior Sergeant of the Exchange acting as his deputy. Transport was provided by an ever decreasing number of horse-drawn wagons, starting with three and reduced to one by March 1942.

Flag sets were also issued for visual signalling.

### **45-mm Gun Platoon (взвод 45-мм пушек) (1941 to 1945)**

The story of the anti-tank gun in the Red Army Rifle Battalion is surprisingly short. In April 1941 the Battalion was authorised a Platoon of just two guns, these being the 45-mm Model 1937. The M1937 was derived, somewhat ironically as would later become apparent, from the German 3.7-cm *Pak 35/36*, which was produced under licence in the Soviet Union during the 1930s.

During this period the Red Army introduced a new range of tanks, a number of which were armed with a 45-mm gun. The 37-mm M1937 was modified to accept the larger calibre round, resulting in the 45-mm M1937.

The 45-mm Gun Platoon of 1941 had a Headquarters of an officer (with riding horse) and a scout, overseeing two Squads. Each of these was commanded by a Sergeant, with a gun crew of five men and two drivers for the four 'artillery' horses used to pull the gun and its ammunition caisson. Under the Reduced Strength *Shtat* of July 1941 the 45-mm Gun Platoon was deleted from the Rifle Battalion, and remained absent for the following year plus.

It was not until the December 1942 organization that guns were returned to the Battalion and in the interim German armour had undergone many changes. Even so, when the Gun Platoon was reformed it still used the 45-mm gun of 1941, though with some improvements.

The M1942 was essentially the M1937 with the barrel extended by approximately one metre. This was in part to fire a new 'sub-calibre' high velocity round with better performance against German tanks. Production of the M1942 is said to have started in 1943, which means that it would have taken some while for it to replace the existing M1937 guns with units.

The 1942 Gun Platoon looked largely like the 1941 version, though the post of scout had been removed and the officer had lost his riding horse. The only other changes were promotions, the Squad commander now being a Senior Sergeant, while the gunner and assistant gunner became Sergeant and Junior Sergeant respectively. During mid-1943 the gun crews were rearmed with submachine guns.

The below gun performance data is taken from the *Red Army Handbook (1998)*.

<b>Gun</b>	<b>Range (m)</b>	<b>Penetration (mm) at 90 degrees for armour-piercing round</b>	<b>Penetration (mm) at 90 degrees for sub-calibre round</b>
M1937	500	43	n/a
	1000	35	n/a
M1942	500	61	81
	1000	51	n/a

As these figures indicate the usefulness of the 45-mm gun was in serious question before the end of 1942; despite this it would remain in frontline service until the end of the war in Europe. Certainly by 1943 it was incapable of defeating the frontal armour of the majority of German tanks, but was still a threat when able to deliver fire into the lesser protected sides.

The 45-mm gun did benefit from a low silhouette that aided concealment, and while not exactly light at 560kg (625kg for the M1942) it could be manhandled by its crew over short distances and wedged into restricted firing positions.

Alongside the armour-piercing ammunition the 45-mm gun was provided with both high explosive and canister rounds. The ammunition scales available for 1941 and 1942 show the majority of rounds issued to the Rifle Regiment's Anti-tank Gun Battery (which also had the 45-mm gun) were for use in the infantry support role.

High explosive fragmentation	154 rounds per gun
Armour-piercing tracer	40 rounds per gun
Canister shell	6 rounds per gun

Amended figures for December 1943 show the total of 40 armour-piercing tracer rounds reduced to 30 with 10 sub-calibre rounds added (see Annex C for details).

### **Anti-tank Rifle Company and Platoon (Взвод ПТР) (1942 to 1945)**

Serving alongside the 45-mm gun was the 14.5-mm anti-tank rifle, which was originally issued to the Regimental Anti-tank Rifle Company. This was extended to the Rifle Battalions beginning with the March 1942 *Shtat*, in the form of an Anti-tank Rifle Company.

The Company consisted of two Platoons, each of four Squads. Each Squad was made up of a Sergeant, two gunners, two assistants and two weapons, for a total of eight anti-tank rifles per Platoon and 16 in the Company.

From July 1942 the Anti-tank Rifle Company was reduced to a single Platoon, though now with nine weapons. Platoon Headquarters was an officer with a driver for a two-horse wagon to carry guns and equipment. There were now three Squads, each of a Sergeant and three teams, each of a gunner and assistant. It retained this organization with the introduction of the December 1942 *Shtat*.

The original anti-tank rifle was the PTRD and appeared in late 1941. This was a single shot, bolt action weapon with no internal magazine, so each round had to be loaded into the chamber by hand. It fired a 14.5-mm calibre round with an incendiary tip, intended to cause an explosion of combustible material within the target vehicle, principally fuel or ammunition, in order to destroy it. Armour penetration was in the order of 25-mm at 500m range.

Latterly a second type of anti-tank rifle was introduced, the PTRS. This used the same 14.5mm ammunition but had a five-round integral magazine and was semiautomatic, so reloaded after each shot. The earlier PTRD weighed in at a hefty 17.3kg while the PTRS was 20.8kg.

There were two types of ammunition issued, B-32 with a steel-core and BZ-41 with tungsten carbide, which had improved penetration of 35-mm at shorter ranges.

The perseverance of the Red Army with the anti-tank rifle beyond 1943 is at odds with the development of infantry anti-tank weapons in the other major combatant states, which all adopted some form of hollow charge warhead. Directions for both the 45-mm gun and anti-tank rifle stressed the importance of targeting known weak points, such as vision or machine gun ports, or the exposed running gear, putting the emphasis on disabling an enemy tank rather than destroying it outright.

### **Machine Gun Company (пулеметная рота) (1941 to 1945)**

One near constant within the Rifle Battalion was the Machine Gun Company.

Its organization remained largely unchanged from April 1941 to mid-1942, consisting of a small Company Headquarters and three Platoons. Headquarters initially included a detachment of three telephonists for communication but this was deleted with the July 1941 reductions and not restored. Each Machine Gun Platoon was authorised four Squads, each serving a single weapon. This was trimmed back to three gun Squads with the introduction of the July 1942 *Shtat* tables.

The Soviet Union entered the Second World War with the same heavy machine gun that was used by Imperial Russia during the First World War. This was the M1910, which had been derived from the original Maxim gun, and fired the same 7.62-mm round as the Red Army's rifles. It was a heavy machine gun in every sense, the gun alone weighing some 24kg, and was capable of long periods of sustained fire, with a water jacket fitted around the barrel to combat overheating. Unlike other heavy machine guns of the time, the M1910 was not mounted on a tripod but a two wheeled carriage, affixed to which was a gun shield. The carriage alone was some 45kg and with the gun and water jacket the overall weight was at least 73kg.

In April 1941 the Machine Gun Squad had an NCO, a gunner and five men. Four such Squads formed a Platoon under a commander. Transport for the guns and ammunition was provided by two horse-drawn wagons, each pulled by a pair of horses; two men from the Squads doubled as drivers for these. The wagons could each accommodate two M1910 machine guns on their mounts, which would then be hauled into firing position by the gun crews.

By 1943 the M1910 was being supplemented, but not replaced, by a new weapon, the SG43. This was a modern design, intended in large part to speed production, though keeping the general appearance of the M1910. The gun was lighter at some

13.5kg, but the overall weight was still around 40kg as a two-wheel carriage was retained. The water jacket was deleted in favour of a heavy, air cooled barrel.

By July 1942 the Machine Gun Squad had been pared back to five men, consisting of a Sergeant, gunner (Junior Sergeant) and assistant (Lance-corporal) and two gun numbers. There were two more gun numbers in the Platoon acting as drivers for the pair of horse-drawn wagons. Under the 1942 *Shtat* the Platoon was reduced to three Gun Squads, while the superseding December 1942 *Shtat* replaced the second wagon with a one-horse cart.

### **The Mortar Company (минометаная рота) (1941 to 1945)**

By contrast to machine guns, the deployment of mortars in the Red Army Rifle Battalion underwent numerous revisions during the course of just over a year. In April 1941 the Battalion included what was termed a Mortar Company. This had a minimal Headquarters, a small telephone detachment and three Platoons, each with two mortars, for a total of just six weapons in the Company.

The Mortar Platoon was initially equipped with the PM-37, which fired an 82-mm calibre bomb to an approximate maximum range of 3100m. It was a standard medium mortar, broken down into baseplate, bipod and barrel, with an overall weight of some 56kg when assembled. A lightened version, the PM-41, began production during 1941, which came in at around 45kg complete.

The April 1941 Mortar Platoon was typically austere, with an officer commanding two Squads, each of an NCO, a gunner, four mortar numbers and a driver for a horse and cart that transported the mortar and ammunition. Under the July 1941 reduced strength organization the mortar strength of the Rifle Regiment was significantly decreased, leaving the Rifle Battalion with a single Platoon of just two weapons.

Then in December 1941 mortars of all calibres were removed entirely from Rifle Battalions and formed into a Mortar Battalion within the Rifle Regiment. This Mortar Battalion had three Companies, each with eight 82-mm and eight 50-mm weapons (formerly found with the Rifle Companies). The same arrangement was retained under the March 1942 *Shtat* and it was not until July 1942 that mortars returned to the Rifle Battalions.

The reformed 82-mm Mortar Company had three Platoons each with three weapons, for a total of nine in the Rifle Battalion, with each Squad reduced to six men. This same format was kept with the December 1942 reorganization.

The absence of radio or line communications was a major drawback for the Mortar Company in terms of co-ordinating its fire with the Rifle Companies. Some units appear to have created a Company level telephone detachment by taking personnel from elsewhere in the Regiment, presumably with extemporised equipment.

## **The Rifle Company (стерлковая рота) (1941 to 1945)**

The various reorganizations described above for the supporting elements of the Battalion are as nothing compared to the many changes visited upon its core element, the Rifle Company.

The outline structure of the Rifle Company as of April 1941 was a Headquarters, a Medical Squad, a Machine Gun Platoon and three Rifle Platoons. The Machine Gun Platoon had an officer overseeing two Squads, each with a standard M1910 weapon served by five men. Under the June 1941 Reduced Strength *Shtat* the Machine Gun Platoon was deleted and not reformed in subsequent reorganizations.

The Rifle Platoon of April 1941 was made up of a Headquarters, four Rifle Squads and a 50-mm Mortar Squad. Headquarters consisted of an officer, an NCO and a messenger, which three posts would remain unaltered until late 1942. Each Rifle Squad was eleven strong, with an NCO, a two-man light machine gun team and eight riflemen. The 50-mm Mortar Squad had an NCO and three mortar numbers and in the first Platoon only was augmented by a driver for a one-horse cart which transported all three 50-mm mortars allocated to the Company.

On paper, the firepower of the Rifle Platoon was quite impressive. The Soviet Union was one of a number of nations seeking to replace its Great War era bolt-action rifles with a self-loading weapon. Its first attempt was the AVS, which promised a major advance on the normal service rifle. The AVS fired the standard 7.62-mm round used by the rifles and machine guns of the Red Army. It was a semi-automatic weapon, reloading after each shot without the firer needing to manually work a bolt, but importantly was also capable of fully automatic fire as well. Given the AVS was fed from a 15-round capacity box magazine the utility of fully automatic fire was perhaps somewhat limited. More importantly, once the weapon reached troops in the late 1930s it was found to be less than reliable in real world conditions.

A rival to the AVS existed in the form of the SVT-38. This used the same 7.62-mm round but had a 10-round magazine and no facility for automatic fire. Similarly to the AVS, the SVT experienced mechanical problems that required a rework, resulting in the SVT-40, which improved reliability while keeping the same overall design.

Paired with the SVT was the DP light machine gun, which had been introduced during the 1920s. It was one of numerous weapons supplied by the Soviet Union to Communist forces in the Spanish Civil War and as a result of this experience underwent a series of improvements. It was a straightforward gun, air-cooled and capable of a cyclic rate of fire of approximately 500 rounds per minute.

As part of its update in the 1930s the DP was modified to include a barrel change, however this did not include a quick release option and the retaining nut had to be undone with a spanner before the barrel could be removed. The most striking visual feature of the DP was the large, circular magazine, which lay flat across the top of

the weapon. This had a 49-round capacity but loading was purposely restricted to 47 rounds due to misfeeds when fully loaded.

The other major weapon of the Rifle Squad was the PPD submachine gun. This had been introduced in the mid 1930s and in appearance was similar to weapons such as the German Bergman or Finnish Suomi m/1931. The PPD fired the small calibre 7.62-mm pistol round common to Red Army pistols (see below), from a large drum with a 71-round capacity that was attached beneath the body of the weapon. The PPD had a very high cyclic rate of fire of some 800 rounds per minute.

In theory, the April 1941 Rifle Squad was to be equipped with eight SVT-40 rifles, two PPD submachine guns and one DP light machine gun, the gunner for which was also authorised a pistol. Two SVT-40 rifles across the four Squads of the Rifle Platoon were to be replaced by bolt-action sniper rifles with optical sights.

In reality a bolt-action weapon with a lineage that went back to Imperial Russia remained the predominant Red Army rifle into 1941. This was the Mosin-Nagant M1891/30, which fired the 7.62-mm round common to the M1910 and later DP machine guns. It had an integral magazine that held five rounds and was loaded using a stripper clip or charger. The Mosin-Nagant proved to be a very reliable weapon even in the hands of conscript soldiers who may have received only the most perfunctory training. A shortened 'carbine' version, the M1938, was introduced pre-war, followed by the M1944, both using the same basic design as the M1891/30.

The question is how common was the SVT-40 in comparison to the M1891/30 in Rifle Squads and Platoons, and the answer is there is really no way of knowing. Modern works have a tendency to suggest that the SVT was 'typically' issued to NCOs at such level. Certainly the *Shtat* tables I have seen continue to show the SVT as the standard weapon for riflemen in Rifle Squads throughout the war.

Completing the Rifle Platoon was the Mortar Squad, with an NCO and three men serving a 50-mm PM-40 mortar. This had a maximum range of 800m, giving it a longer reach than its British and German equivalents. The gunner was authorised a pistol and the other three men carbine versions of the bolt-action rifle. One Platoon added a driver for a horse and cart combination that served all three such Squads.

The final weapons found in the Rifle Platoon were pistols. Two models were in use, the first being the older M1895 revolver, which unusually held seven rounds in its cylinder. Appearing during the 1930s was the modern TT-33 semi-automatic pistol, modelled on designs such as the Colt or Browning. It had an eight round capacity magazine and like the M1895 fired the 7.62-mm pistol round.

Under the unique rank system adopted by the Red Army in the pre-war period the Platoon commander was classed as "K-1" and the Platoon NCO as "MK-2", the Squad commanders being "MK-1". In Platoon Headquarters the commander was to be armed with a submachine gun and the NCO and messenger both rifles.

This essentially pre-war organization really represented the high watermark for the Red Army Rifle Platoon. With a strength of one officer and 50 or 51 men, nine submachine guns, four light machine guns, two sniper rifles and a light mortar, and a theoretical 32 semi-automatic rifles it was one of the strongest Rifle Platoon organizations in use during the early years of the war.

In July, as the Red Army reeled from the Axis assault of 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1941, a Reduced Strength version of the Rifle Regiment *Shtat* was issued, which had major implications for the Rifle Company and Rifle Platoon. As noted earlier, the Machine Gun Platoon with its two M1910s was deleted entirely from the Rifle Company. In the Rifle Platoons the second and fourth Squads each lost their DP light machine gun and the third Platoon its Mortar Squad. Each Rifle Platoon was now allowed only two submachine guns (the officer switching to a pistol) but still had two sniper rifles. At a stroke Company firepower dropped from two heavy and 12 light machine guns and three light mortars to just six light machine guns and two mortars.

In December 1941 came a new *Shtat* which reorganized the Rifle Companies and Battalions. The remaining 50-mm mortars were removed from the Rifle Platoons to the Regimental Mortar Battalion. Rifle Platoons were now authorised three light machine guns and three submachine guns, still not sufficient for one of each per Squad, with two rifles in the Platoon continuing to be sniper variants.

Also introduced with this table was a revised rank system that returned to more familiar titles. Under this the Platoon commander could be a full or a Junior Lieutenant, the Platoon NCO became a Senior Sergeant and Squad commanders Sergeants. A Deputy Squad commander was included, a Junior Sergeant, who was also the gunner of the DP light machine gun. Throughout the 1941 revisions the size of the Rifle Squad remained officially as 11 men.

Company Headquarters remained remarkably stable during this period. The commander was initially ranked as "K-III", which latterly transitioned to Captain. His Deputy was a Political officer, ranked as "P-II". It was not until December 1941 that a second military officer, a Senior Lieutenant, was added, becoming the new Deputy commander, though the post of Political officer or leader was retained.

The senior non-commissioned officer of the Company was the *Starshina*, and featured on the Company staff throughout the war. Another constant was the 'captainarmus', a Sergeant from the Administrative Service responsible for Company records. Completing Headquarters were two more snipers and a messenger.

The remaining element of the Rifle Company was the small Medical Squad. This consisted of an NCO from the Medical Service (initially graded as MM-3, which went on to be a Senior Sergeant) and four nursing orderlies.

### **1942; a new year and new changes**

During the course of 1942 three more *Shtat* were issued for the Rifle Regiment. The first of these, from March 1942, made largely detail changes to the December 1941 table for the majority of Regimental units. For the Rifle Battalion there were two important developments, the inclusion of an Anti-tank Rifle Company, as detailed earlier and an increase in the strength and firepower of the Rifle Platoon.

The Rifle Squad was increased from 11 men to 12, and each of the four Squads was finally authorised a light machine gun. There remained though only three submachine guns for the whole Platoon. Another change concerned snipers.

Previously the Platoon had been authorised two sniper rifles, the users for which would come from the strength of the Squads. Under the March 1942 tables Platoon Headquarters added three dedicated snipers. Along with the two at Headquarters there were now 11 snipers in the Rifle Company as a whole.

The effect of these various changes was to take the Rifle Company up to 175 all ranks, almost equalling the 178 men of April 1941, though while its firepower was improved it still lacked light mortars and heavy machineguns. Within a few months however the Rifle Battalion was stripped back in terms of manpower as the Rifle Company and Platoon were both reduced to the lowest levels yet seen.

The July 1942 reorganization took the Rifle Squad from a short-lived high of 12 men down to nine, with a Sergeant, a Junior Sergeant/light machine gunner, an assistant gunner and six riflemen. One rifleman was armed with a submachine gun, and other than the Junior Sergeant with the DP the others each carried a rifle. Headquarters lost one sniper, making for a Platoon of one officer and 40 men.

Company Headquarters deleted its two snipers bringing it down to three officers and three men, while the Medical Squad remained five strong. Firepower received something of a boost, with the return of the 50-mm mortar to the Rifle Company. The Mortar Platoon was merely an officer and ten men, split into three teams each of a Sergeant, gunner and assistant, with the extra man being the driver for the horse and cart used to transport the three 50-mm weapons.

December 1942 brought with it the last official *Shtat* issued for the standard Rifle Regiment, and almost all parts of the Rifle Company underwent some amendment as a result. Company Headquarters lost its single messenger and the Mortar Platoon one Squad. A new Machine Gun Squad with a single M1910 was added, the horse and cart previously provided for the mortars being used to transport it.

The messenger in each Rifle Platoon was also deleted, bringing its strength down to 40 all ranks. Two of the four Rifle Squads each received a second light machine gun, with the gunner becoming a Junior Sergeant accordingly.

While there was no superseding *Shtat* for the standard Rifle Regiment, the December 1942 tables underwent a number of revisions. In May 1943 the posts of both Deputy Company commander and the Deputy Company commander for Political Affairs were deleted in each Company within the Rifle Regiment. This reduced the Company staff to just a Captain, *Starshina* and the Sergeant clerk. The other change affected armament.

As noted earlier the Red Army used the PPD submachine gun at the time of the Axis invasion in June 1941. A replacement was already being tested but its introduction was delayed until 1942 due to the massive disruption caused to Soviet industry. When it arrived it would have a major impact on Red Army infantry tactics.

The PPSH41 fired the same 7.62-mm pistol round as the PPD and was fed from either a large 71-round drum (not though interchangeable with that of the PPD) or a gently curving 35-round box magazine. The cyclic rate of fire for the PPSH41 was slightly higher at 900 rounds per minute but other than that it was not far removed from the earlier PPD in terms of capability. Where it did eclipse its predecessor was in its production potential.

The Rifle Regiment had included a Submachine Gun Company since the December 1941 *Shtat* that was intended to provide a shock unit for close assault. It was built around three Platoons, each of an officer and three Squads, each of ten men. Along with a small Headquarters the Company was 100 all ranks, every one of whom was armed with a submachine gun.

In the late summer of 1943 this scale of issue was extended to the Rifle Companies proper. One Platoon in each Rifle Company swapped its rifles for a submachine gun, while retaining its six light machine guns and both sniper rifles. In the other two Rifle Platoons each Squad commander and the Platoon commander were likewise rearmed, as were the Rifle Company commanders and even Battalion commander.

This was made possible in part by the introduction of the PPSH41, which was designed with an eye to mass production; in the order of five million are estimated to have been manufactured. Even so, another even simpler submachine gun also appeared, the PPS-42, born out of a desperate need during the siege of Leningrad.

The PPS-42 was improved, resulting in the PPS-43. Both weapons used the same 35-round magazine but not the large capacity drum.

Overleaf is a brief summary of the changes in Rifle Platoon organization.

**Rifle Platoon, under *Shtat* reference 04/401 - April 1941**

Personnel	No.	Pistol	Rifle	SMG	LMG	50-mm mortar
<b>Platoon Headquarters</b>						
Commander (K-I)	1	-	-	1	-	-
Deputy commander (MK-2)	1	-	1	-	-	-
Messenger	1	-	1	-	-	-
<b>Total, Headquarters</b>	3	0	2	1	0	0
<b>Mortar Squad</b>						
Squad commander (MK-1)	1	-	1	-	-	-
Mortar gunner	1	1	-	-	-	1
Mortar number	2	-	2	-	-	-
Wagon driver*	1*	-	1*	-	-	-
Horse and cart*	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total, Squad</b>	5*	1	4*	0	0	1
<b>Four Rifle Squads, each</b>						
Squad commander (MK-1)	1	-	1	-	-	-
Machine gunner	1	1	-	-	1	-
Machine gunner	1	-	1	-	-	-
Rifleman	8	-	6	2	-	-
<b>Total, Squad</b>	11	1	8	2	1	0
<b>Total, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon only</b>	52	5	38	9	4	1
<b>Total, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoons</b>	51	5	37	9	4	1

**Notes**

1. Wagon driver and vehicle only in 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon of the three in the Rifle Company.
2. Two riflemen in the Platoon are equipped with sniper rifles.

### Rifle Platoon, under *Shtat* reference 04/601 - July 1941

Personnel	No.	Pistol	Rifle	SMG	LMG	50-mm mortar
<b>Platoon Headquarters</b>						
Commander (K-I)	1	1	-	-	-	-
Deputy commander (MK-2)	1	-	1	-	-	-
Messenger	1	-	1	-	-	-
<b>Total, Headquarters</b>	3	1	2	0	0	0
<b>Mortar Squad**</b>						
Squad commander (MK-1)	1	-	1	-	-	-
Mortar gunner	1	1	-	-	-	1
Mortar number	2	-	2	-	-	-
Wagon driver*	1*	-	1*	-	-	-
Horse and cart	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total, Squad</b>	5*	1	4*	0	0	1
<b>Two Rifle Squads, each</b>						
Squad commander (MK-1)	1	-	1	-	-	-
Machine gunner	1	-	-	-	1	-
Machine gunner	1	-	1	-	-	-
Rifleman	8	-	8	-	-	-
<b>Total, Squad</b>	11	0	10	0	1	0
<b>Two Rifle Squads, each</b>						
Squad commander (MK-1)	1	-	1	-	-	-
Machine gunner	1	-	-	1	-	-
Machine gunner	1	-	-	-	-	-
Rifleman	8	-	8	-	-	-
<b>Total, Squad</b>	11	0	9	1	0	0
<b>Total, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon only</b>	52	2	44	2	2	1
<b>Total, 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon only</b>	51	2	43	2	2	1
<b>Total, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon only</b>	47	1	40	2	2	0

#### Notes

1. Wagon driver and vehicle only in 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon of the three in the Rifle Company.
2. No Mortar Squad in the third Platoon of the Rifle Company.
3. Two riflemen in the Platoon are equipped with sniper rifles.
4. Users of the total two submachine guns not stated in table, shown in the two Squads without submachine guns in the above summary.
5. The total number of rifles for the Battalion does indicate that nine men in each Rifle Company had no individual weapon. Allowing for the three men in the Medical Squad confirmed as unarmed that would leave two men per Rifle Platoon with no individual weapon. They are shown in the above as the assistant to the light machine gunner in the two Squads per Rifle Platoon with no light machine gun.

**Rifle Platoon, under *Shtat* reference 04/751 - December 1941**

Personnel	No.	Pistol	Rifle	SMG	LMG
<b>Platoon Headquarters</b>					
Commander (Lieutenant)	1	1	-	-	-
Deputy (Senior Sergeant)	1	-	1	-	-
Messenger	1	-	1	-	-
<b>Total, Headquarters</b>	3	1	2	0	0
<b>Three Rifle Squads, each</b>					
Squad commander (Sergeant)	1	-	1	-	-
Machine gunner (Junior Sergeant)	1	-	-	-	1
Machine gunner	1	-	1	-	-
Rifleman	8	-	8	-	-
<b>Total, Squad</b>	11	0	10	0	1
<b>One Rifle Squad</b>					
Squad commander (Sergeant)	1	-	1	-	-
Machine gunner (Junior Sergeant)	1	-	1	-	-
Machine gunner	1	-	1	-	-
Rifleman	8	-	5	3	-
<b>Total, Squad</b>	11	0	8	3	0
<b>Total, Platoon</b>	47	1	40	3	3

**Notes**

1. Two riflemen in the Platoon are equipped with sniper rifles
2. Users of the total three submachine guns not stated in table, all shown in fourth Squad in the above summary.

**Rifle Platoon, under *Shtat* reference 04/201 - March 1942**

Personnel	No.	Pistol	Rifle	SMG	LMG
<b>Platoon Headquarters</b>					
Commander (Lieutenant)	1	1	-	-	-
Deputy (Senior Sergeant)	1	-	1	-	-
Messenger	1	-	1	-	-
Sniper	3	-	3	-	-
<b>Total, Headquarters</b>	6	1	5	0	0
<b>Four Rifle Squads, each</b>					
Squad commander (Sergeant)	1	-	1	-	-
Machine gunner (Junior Sergeant)	1	-	-	-	1
Machine gunner	1	-	1	-	-
Rifleman	9	-	8	1	-
<b>Total, Squad</b>	12	0	10	1	1
<b>Total, Platoon</b>	54	1	46*	3*	4

\*only three submachine guns in the Platoon, replaced in one Squad by a rifle

### Rifle Platoon, under *Shtat* reference 04/301 - July 1942

Personnel	No.	Pistol	Rifle	SMG	LMG
<b>Platoon Headquarters</b>					
Commander (Lieutenant)	1	1	-	-	-
Deputy (Senior Sergeant)	1	-	1	-	-
Messenger	1	-	1	-	-
Sniper	2	-	2	-	-
<b>Total, Headquarters</b>	5	1	4	0	0
<b>Four Rifle Squads, each</b>					
Squad commander (Sergeant)	1	-	1	-	-
Machine gunner (Junior Sergeant)	1	-	-	-	1
Machine gunner	1	-	1	-	-
Rifleman	6	-	5	1	-
<b>Total, Squad</b>	9	0	7	1	1
<b>Total, Platoon</b>	41	1	32	4	4

### Rifle Platoon, under *Shtat* reference 04/551 - December 1942

Personnel	No.	Pistol	Rifle	SMG	LMG
<b>Platoon Headquarters</b>					
Commander (Lieutenant)	1	1	-	-	-
Deputy (Senior Sergeant)	1	-	1	-	-
Sniper	2	-	2	-	-
<b>Total, Headquarters</b>	4	1	3	0	0
<b>Two Rifle Squads, each</b>					
Squad commander (Sergeant)	1	-	1	-	-
Machine gunner (Junior Sergeant)	1	-	-	-	1
Machine gunner	1	-	1	-	-
Rifleman	6	-	5	1	-
<b>Total, Squad</b>	9	0	7	1	1
<b>Two Rifle Squads, each</b>					
Squad commander (Sergeant)	1	-	1	-	-
Machine gunner (Junior Sergeant)	2	-	-	-	2
Machine gunner	2	-	2	-	-
Rifleman	4	-	3	1	-
<b>Total, Squad</b>	9	0	6	1	2
<b>Total, Platoon</b>	40	1	29	4	6

**Rifle Platoon, under *Shtat* reference 04/551 - amended to May 1943**

Personnel	No.	Pistol	Rifle	SMG	LMG
<b>Platoon Headquarters</b>					
Commander (Lieutenant)	1	1*	-	1	-
Deputy (Senior Sergeant)	1	-	1	-	-
Sniper	2	-	2	-	-
<b>Total, Headquarters</b>	4	1	3	1	0
<b>Two Rifle Squads, each</b>					
Squad commander (Sergeant)	1	-	-	1	-
Machine gunner (Junior Sergeant)	1	-	-	-	1
Machine gunner	1	-	1	-	-
Rifleman	6	-	5	1	-
<b>Total, Squad</b>	9	0	6	2	1
<b>Two Rifle Squads, each</b>					
Squad commander (Sergeant)	1	-	-	1	-
Machine gunner (Junior Sergeant)	2	-	-	-	2
Machine gunner	2	-	2	-	-
Rifleman	4	-	3	1	-
<b>Total, Squad</b>	9	0	5	2	2
<b>Total, Platoon</b>	40	1	25	9	6

**SMG Platoon, under *Shtat* reference 04/551 - amended to May 1943**

Personnel	No.	Pistol	Rifle	SMG	LMG
<b>Platoon Headquarters</b>					
Commander (Lieutenant)	1	1*	-	1	-
Deputy (Senior Sergeant)	1	-	-	1	-
Sniper	2	-	2	-	-
<b>Total, Headquarters</b>	4	1	2	2	0
<b>Two Rifle Squads, each</b>					
Squad commander (Sergeant)	1	-	-	1	-
Machine gunner (Junior Sergeant)	1	-	-	-	1
Machine gunner	1	-	-	1	-
Rifleman	6	-	-	6	-
<b>Total, Squad</b>	9	0	-	8	1
<b>Two Rifle Squads, each</b>					
Squad commander (Sergeant)	1	-	-	1	-
Machine gunner (Junior Sergeant)	2	-	-	-	2
Machine gunner	2	-	-	2	-
Rifleman	4	-	-	4	-
<b>Total, Squad</b>	9	0	-	7	2
<b>Total, Platoon</b>	40	1	2	32	6

\*Unclear if the Officer retained pistol or swapped it for SMG as documents show both

### Annex A - Ammunition allowances

The early issues of Red Army *Shtat* tables included the ammunition allowance for each unit weapon. In terms of rifles this was not very illuminating as there were four or five separate ammunition 'sets' depending on whether the weapon was being carried by a man in a Rifle Company or elsewhere in the Rifle Regiment.

In December 1943 a document was issued under the title "Deputy People's Commissar of Defence - Order No.448". This listed the new scales of ammunition seemingly for all types of weapons. A few pages can be seen here but only for the sections relevant to small arms;

<https://www.vif2ne.org/forum/0/arhprint/2325177>

A search through the online Russian archives turned up a few similar documents, seemingly abridged versions of the full order and particular to Rifle Divisions. The below table is based on these various finds (with some corrections made by me).

<b>Weapon; calibre and ammunition type</b>	<b>Number of rounds (total)</b>	<b>On man or with gun</b>	<b>Of which is emergency reserve</b>	<b>Carried on Company or Battalion transport</b>	<b>Carried on Regimental transport</b>
<b>Rifle; (1)</b> 7.62-mm (full load)	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(70)</b>	<b>(10)</b>	<b>(15)</b>	<b>(15)</b>
Ball	90	65	5	15	10
AP	10	5	5	-	5
<b>Rifle; (2)</b> 7.62-mm (small load)	<b>(40)</b>	<b>(40)</b>	-	-	-
Ball	35	35	-	-	-
AP	5	5	-	-	-
<b>Pistol;</b> 7.62-mm					
Revolver	<b>(24)</b>	16	-	-	8
Automatic	<b>(21)</b>	14	-	-	7
<b>SMG;</b> 7.62-mm	<b>(300)</b>	<b>(210)</b>	<b>(30)</b>	<b>(45)</b>	<b>(45)</b>
Ball (3)	270	200	20	30	40
AP, incendiary	30	10	10	15	5
<b>Anti-tank rifle;</b> 14.5-mm	<b>(120)</b>	<b>(50)</b>	<b>(10)</b>	<b>(35)</b>	<b>(35)</b>
B-32	102	41	10	35	26
BC-41	18	9	-	-	9
<b>LMG (DP);</b> 7.62-mm (4)	<b>(800)</b>	<b>(98)</b>	<b>(98)</b>	<b>(490)</b>	<b>(212)</b>
Ball	680	49	49	440	191
AP, incendiary	120	49	49	50	21

<b>Weapon; calibre and ammunition type</b>	<b>Number of rounds (total)</b>	<b>On man or with gun</b>	<b>Of which is emergency reserve</b>	<b>Carried on Company or Battalion transport</b>	<b>Carried on Regimental transport</b>
<b>MG (Maxim); 7.62-mm</b>	<b>(2500)</b>	<b>(1500)</b>	<b>(500)</b>	<b>(500)</b>	<b>(500)</b>
Ball	2175	1300	400	425	450
AP, incendiary	325	200	100	75	50
<b>Maxim Quad; 7.62-mm</b>	<b>(6000)</b>	<b>(4000)</b>	<b>(300)</b>	-	<b>(2000)</b>
Ball	4800	3200	240	-	1600
AP, incendiary	1200	800	60	-	400
<b>DShK; 12.7-mm (5)</b>	<b>(2000)</b>	<b>(1000)</b>	<b>(170)</b>	-	<b>(1000)</b>
AP, tracer	1980	990	170	170	990
AP, incendiary	20	10	-	-	10
<b>Hand grenades</b>					
Rifleman	2	2	-	-	-
Regiment	500	250	50	125	125
<b>Mortars;</b>					
50-mm	<b>(120)</b>	56	14	28	36
82-mm	<b>(120)</b>	40	10	40	40
120-mm	<b>(80)</b>	20	5	30	30
<b>Anti-tank; 45-mm gun</b>	<b>(200)</b>	<b>(50)</b>	<b>(50)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(50)</b>
HE	154	35	35	80	39
AP, tracer	30	5	5	17	8
AP (sub-calibre)	10	5	5	3	2
Canister	6	5	5	-	1
<b>Infantry gun; 76-mm</b>	<b>(140)</b>	<b>(16)</b>	<b>(16)</b>	<b>(56)</b>	<b>(68)</b>
HE	125	12	12	50	63
Anti-tank	10	2	2	3	5
Canister	5	2	2	3	-

### Comments

- 1). Full load assumed to be for riflemen in Rifle Companies
- 2). Small or 'abbreviated' assumed to be for troops outside Rifle Companies.
- 3). Original documents show reserve holdings each as 40 ball and 5 incendiary, however this does not add up to the total of 270+30. Above entry is my suggested correction of 30+15 (with subunit) and 40+5 (with Regiment).
- 4). 'On man' figure is the same as the 'emergency' reserve figure.
- 5). Originals show Company reserve of 170 but I think this is a typographical error.
- 6). I have not been able to find a definition of what constitutes 'emergency reserve'.

## Annex B - Guards Rifle Regiment variations

In September 1941 a new title was introduced to the Red Army, that of Guards. Many armies over the centuries have employed the term Guards, as had the Russian Czars before the revolution and the establishment of the Soviet state.

Initially the term Guards was a largely honorific title, intended to raise morale and recognise the performance of certain units and formations. The first organizational difference between a Rifle Regiment and a Guards Rifle Regiment came with the March 1942 *Shtat*, under which the Guards Regiment was authorised a second Submachine Gun Company, though oddly there was no similar recognition in the July 1942 *Shtat*.

In December 1942 when Rifle Regiments converted to *Shtat* 04/551, Guards Rifle Regiments received their own organizational table, 04/501. Under this, the Guards Rifle Regiment was again authorised two Submachine Gun Companies and an extra 120-mm mortar detachment by comparison to the standard Rifle Regiment. It was in the Guards Rifle Battalions that the biggest changes came though.

- 1). The Anti-tank Rifle subunit was a Company, with 16 weapons, divided into two Platoons, each of four Squads, with two gun teams per Squad.
- 2). The Machine Gun Company added a fourth gun to each Platoon for a total of 12 in the Company.
- 3). Each Rifle Company had a Machine Gun Platoon with two M1910s, and Rifle Company Headquarters had two snipers.

The Guards Rifle Battalion was subject to the same general amendments in 1943, deleting the posts of Deputy Company commander and Political officer and converting one Rifle Platoon in each Rifle Company to a Submachine Gun Platoon.

In December 1944 a new *Shtat* was issued for the Guards Rifle Regiment, which incorporated some marked differences. This was the last official table for the Rifle Regiment to be published during the war and continued the trend of personnel reduction while increasing firepower in a number of areas. Though the *Shtat* was dated December 1944 there appears to be no certainty that it was actually used before the end of the war in Europe.

The new Rifle Battalion was to be 555 men all ranks. It retained the Mortar Company (with nine 82-mm weapons) and Machine Gun Company (with a dozen M1910s) found under 04/551, along with the Anti-tank Rifle Platoon of nine guns. The first alteration was the inclusion of a 45-mm Gun Battery, with two Platoons each of two M1942 guns under a small Headquarters. The greatest changes though came for the Rifle Company.

Overall the December 1944 Guards organization resembled that of December 1942, with a Company Headquarters, a Machine Gun Platoon (two M1910s) and three Rifle Platoons, while the 50-mm Mortar Platoon was finally deleted.

Company Headquarters retained the same three posts of commander, *Starshina* and clerk, plus two snipers. The small Medical Squad was reduced to an NCO and three orderlies while the Machine Gun Platoon was as before.

The Rifle Platoons were greatly reduced in size under the December 1944 *Shtat*. Platoon Headquarters was to consist of a commander, Senior Sergeant, and two snipers, while the post of messenger was restored, though seemingly only by taking a man from a Rifle Squad. There were still four Rifle Squads, but each was only authorised six men, excepting the fourth which was down to five, presumably to provide the messenger for Headquarters.

The new Rifle Squad was nothing more than a Sergeant, a Junior Sergeant gunner for the LMG, an assistant gunner and three riflemen (or just two in the fourth Squad). The Sergeant and one man were to be armed with submachine guns, as was the Platoon commander. The remainder, aside from the four light machine gunners, were to have rifles.

In keeping with the developments of 1943, one of the three Platoons was the Submachine Gun Platoon. It had the same structure as the Rifle Platoon detailed above, including its four light machine guns and two sniper rifles, but all other personnel were armed with submachine guns.

Overleaf is a brief summary of the December 1944 Platoon organization

**Guards Rifle Platoon, under *Shtat* reference 05/41 - December 1944**

Personnel	No.	Pistol	Rifle	SMG	LMG
<b>Platoon Headquarters</b>					
Commander (Lieutenant)	1	1	-	1	-
Deputy (Senior Sergeant)	1	-	1	-	-
Messenger	1	-	1	-	-
Sniper	2	-	2	-	-
<b>Total, Headquarters</b>	5	1	4	1	0
<b>Three Rifle Squads, each</b>					
Squad commander (Sergeant)	1	-	-	1	-
Machine gunner (Junior Sergeant)	1	-	-	-	1
Machine gunner	1	-	1	-	-
Rifleman	3	-	2	1	-
<b>Total, Squad</b>	6	0	3	2	1
<b>One Rifle Squad</b>					
Squad commander (Sergeant)	1	-	-	1	-
Machine gunner (Junior Sergeant)	1	-	-	-	1
Machine gunner	1	-	1	-	-
Rifleman	2	-	1	1	-
<b>Total, Squad</b>	5	0	2	2	1
<b>Total, Platoon</b>	28	1	15	9	4

**Guards SMG Platoon, under *Shtat* reference 05/41 - December 1944**

Personnel	No.	Pistol	Rifle	SMG	LMG
<b>Platoon Headquarters</b>					
Commander (Lieutenant)	1	1	-	1	-
Deputy (Senior Sergeant)	1	-	-	1	-
Messenger	1	-	-	1	-
Sniper	2	-	2	-	-
<b>Total, Headquarters</b>	5	1	2	3	0
<b>Three Rifle Squads, each</b>					
Squad commander (Sergeant)	1	-	-	1	-
Machine gunner (Junior Sergeant)	1	-	-	-	1
Machine gunner	1	-	-	1	-
Rifleman	3	-	-	3	-
<b>Total, Squad</b>	6	0	-	5	1
<b>One Rifle Squad</b>					
Squad commander (Sergeant)	1	-	-	1	-
Machine gunner (Junior Sergeant)	1	-	-	-	1
Machine gunner	1	-	-	1	-
Rifleman	2	-	-	2	-
<b>Total, Squad</b>	5	0	-	4	1
<b>Total, Platoon</b>	28	1	2	22	4

### Annex C - Reduced Strength variations

It was a common experience for all armies during the war to have to field combat units that were well below their authorised strength. While this was largely viewed as a temporary situation in Western nations, to be rectified at the earliest opportunity with fresh drafts, the Red Army adopted a different approach.

Reduced Strength organizations begin to appear in earnest during 1943. Unusually for the Soviet system they were not approved on a central basis, leading to multiple variations. As a result this annex can only give a few examples, as what was practised by Divisions in one Front was not necessarily reflected in others.

Reduced Strength savings were normally triggered when a Rifle Division fell below a certain level. The December 1942 Rifle Division had an authorised strength of some 9435 all ranks (excluding later amendments). One example of Reduced Strengths saw the first 'trigger point' set at around 6000 all ranks, the next 5000 and the last 4000. When overall Divisional strength fell to these various points, each unit and subunit of the Division underwent some contraction.

Under this example the Rifle Battalion dropped from 619 (the original strength under *Shtat* 04/551) to 322, then 279 and eventually 273; under the third reduction the parent Rifle Regiment also moved from three Rifle Battalions to just two.

Another model allowed for a higher starting point, with a Rifle Division making its first savings once strength fell to some 8000 men, while the Rifle Battalion was reduced to 525 men.

There was no standardised system for the changes made to Rifle Battalions under these numerous approaches; some tried to keep the supporting weapons at near enough their full complement, while others spread the reductions across the various subunits. The only commonality was the shrinking strength of the Rifle Companies.

One of the more detailed descriptions from mid-1943 gives the progression of a Rifle Company extracted from *Shtat* 04/551 of December 1942 (incorporating the amendments of 1943). From a starting figure of 141 men the Company drops to 111 all ranks; this was accomplished by deleting the M1910 Machine Gun Squad, and reducing each Rifle and Submachine Gun Squad from nine men to seven, each Squad now having a single light machine gun. The next total of 90 men was found by deleting the fourth Squad from each of the three Platoons.

In one of the more extreme models, detailed in June 1945, a Rifle Division of 3800 men had Rifle Battalions of just 250 men, which were effectively reinforced Rifle Companies in normal circumstances.

Overleaf are examples of two Reduced Strength systems used by Rifle Divisions during 1943 and 1944.

<b>Detail</b>	<b>6000 men</b>	<b>5000 men</b>	<b>4000 men</b>
Battalion Headquarters	6	6	6
Communication Platoon	8	8	8
Medical Platoon	4	3	3
Supply Platoon	9	9	9
Anti-tank Rifle Platoon	22	15	15
<i>(Anti-tank rifles)</i>	<i>(9)</i>	<i>(6)</i>	<i>(6)</i>
45-mm Gun Platoon	14	14	14
<i>(45-mm guns)</i>	<i>(2)</i>	<i>(2)</i>	<i>(2)</i>
<b>Two Companies, each</b>	<b>(93)</b>	<b>(79)</b>	<b>(76)</b>
Company Headquarters	2	2	2
Medical Squad	3	3	3
Mortar Platoon	5	-	-
<i>(50-mm mortars)</i>	<i>(2)</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>-</i>
Machine Gun Squad	5	5	5
<i>(M1910 machine gun)</i>	<i>(1)</i>	<i>(1)</i>	<i>(1)</i>
Three Platoons, each;	<b>(26)</b>	<b>(23)</b>	<b>(22)</b>
Platoon Headquarters	2	2	1
Three Squads, each	8	7	7
<i>(Light machine gun)</i>	<i>(1)</i>	<i>(1)</i>	<i>(1)</i>
<b>Machine Gun Company</b>	<b>(32)</b>	<b>(32)</b>	<b>(32)</b>
Company Headquarters	2	2	2
Two Platoons, each	15	15	15
<i>(M1910 machine guns)</i>	<i>(3)</i>	<i>(3)</i>	<i>(3)</i>
<b>Mortar Company</b>	<b>(41)</b>	<b>(34)</b>	<b>(34)</b>
Company Headquarters	2	2	2
Communication Squad*	5	-	-
Two Platoons, each	<b>(17)</b>	<b>(16)</b>	<b>(16)</b>
<i>(82-mm mortars)</i>	<i>(3)</i>	<i>(3)</i>	<i>(3)</i>
<b>Total, Battalion</b>			
Personnel;	322	279	273
<i>Weapons</i>			
Light machine guns	18	18	18
M1910 machine guns	8	8	8
50-mm mortars	4	-	-
82-mm mortars	6	6	6
Anti-tank rifles	9	6	6
45-mm guns	2	2	2

\*local variation

<b>Detail</b>	<b>6000 men</b>	<b>5500 men</b>	<b>5000 men</b>	<b>Horses</b>
Battalion Headquarters	4	4	4	-
Communication Platoon	9	9	9	1
Medical Platoon	5	5	5	1
Supply Platoon	9	9	9	10
Anti-tank Rifle Platoon	16	16	16	2
<i>(Anti-tank rifles)</i>	<i>(6)</i>	<i>(6)</i>	<i>(6)</i>	
<b>Three Companies, each</b>	<b>(80)</b>	<b>(103)</b>	<b>(76)</b>	<b>-</b>
Company Headquarters	3	6	3	
Medical Squad	4	4	4	
Three Platoons, each;**		(31)		
Platoon Headquarters		1		
Three Squads, each		10		
<i>(Light machine gun)</i>		<i>(1)</i>		
Three Platoons, each;**	(25)		(23)	-
Platoon Headquarters	1		1	
Two Squads, each	12 (11)*		10	
<i>(Light machine gun)</i>	<i>(1)</i>		<i>(1)</i>	
<b>Machine Gun Company</b>	<b>(47)</b>	<b>(47)</b>	<b>(47)</b>	<b>9</b>
Company Headquarters	2	2	2	
Three Platoons, each;**	15	15	15	
<i>(M1910 machine guns)</i>	<i>(9)</i>	<i>(9)</i>	<i>(9)</i>	
<b>Mortar Company</b>	<b>(62)</b>	<b>(62)</b>	<b>(62)</b>	<b>18</b>
Company Headquarters	2	2	2	
Three Platoons, each;**	20	20	20	
<i>(82-mm mortars)</i>	<i>(9)</i>	<i>(9)</i>	<i>(9)</i>	
<b>Total, Battalion</b>				
Personnel;	392	461	380	
Draught horses	41	41	41	41
<i>Weapons</i>				
Light machine guns	18	27	18	
M1910 machine guns	9	9	9	
50-mm mortars	-	-	-	
82-mm mortars	9	9	9	
Anti-tank rifles	6	6	6	
45-mm guns	-	-	-	

\*Third Platoon (with SMGs) smaller overall by two men.

\*\*No details on Rifle Squad strengths or MG and Mortar Platoons is given in the summaries, the above details are then estimated based on available information.

## Sources used and Acknowledgements

I do feel there should be a longer list of sources here at least. Primary documents effectively come from two sources, either Evgenii Ignatev or [www.pamyat-naroda.ru](http://www.pamyat-naroda.ru).

### **Shtat Tables**

Rifle Regiment, Rifle Division (War Strength), reference and issues dates of;

04/401 dated 5<sup>th</sup> April 1941\*

04/601 dated 29<sup>th</sup> July 1941\*\*

04/751 dated 21<sup>st</sup> December 1941\*

04/201 dated 18<sup>th</sup> March 1942\*/\*\*

04/301 dated 28<sup>th</sup> July 1942\*/\*\*

04/551 dated 10<sup>th</sup> December 1942\*\*

04/501 dated 10<sup>th</sup> December 1942 (Guards Rifle Regiment)\*

05/41 dated 18<sup>th</sup> December 1944 (Guards Rifle Regiment)\*\*

\*denotes supplied by Evgenii Ignatev

\*\* denotes downloaded from [www.pamyat-naroda.ru](http://www.pamyat-naroda.ru)

*Red Army Handbook* (by Zaloga and Ness), since reissued as the *Red Army Companion*

*Soviet Infantry Tactics in WWII* (by Charles Sharp) published as part of the Nafziger Collection

Also a very helpful internet site when I was trying to understand the *Shtat* documents was [www.rkka.ru](http://www.rkka.ru) and includes a number of *Shtat* in spreadsheet form.

### **Still searching for...**

I'm just going to leave an open ended request here for anyone who can assist me in acquiring additional *Shtat* tables. I think that I have mined all I can from pamyat-naroda and there do not seem to have been any additions to that site for some time.

To clarify I would very much like to obtain photocopies or good quality scans of actual *Shtat* tables rather than secondary sources. Priorities for me at present are Tank Brigade and Mechanised Brigade tables with issue dates from 1943 onwards.

Any hints, tips or directions on where to approach would be welcomed.