

Publication Number: T94

Publication Title: Guides to Records of the Italian Armed Forces

Date Published: 1969

GUIDES TO RECORDS OF THE ITALIAN ARMED FORCES

Introduction

This finding aid has been prepared by the National Archives as part of its program of facilitating the use of records in its custody.

The microfilm described in this guide may be consulted at the National Archives, where it is identified as Microcopy No. T-821.

Some of the papers reproduced on the microfilm referred to in this and other guides of the same series may have been of private origin. The fact of their seizure is not believed to divest their original owners of any literary property rights in them. Anyone, therefore, who publishes them in whole or in part without permission of their authors, may be held liable for infringement of such literary property rights.

This is Part I of a three-part Guide prepared by members of the staff of the National Archives to describe seized World War II records of the Italian Armed Forces presently in the care of the National Archives. The records cover the years of World War II through 1943 and include some prewar material.

The main part of the seized records of the Italian Armed Forces was taken by German military forces from several depositories in various parts of Italy after the surrender of the Italian Government to Allied Forces in September 1943. These records were administered by the Aktensammelstelle Süd, a records center originally located at Ingolstadt and later at Munich, which was under the jurisdiction of the Heeresarchiv Potsdam. In 1945 the records were captured by U.S. Forces. The remaining documents consist of Italian Air Force and Army manuals, records of Italian combat units captured by U.S. Forces during campaigns in North Africa and Sicily in 1942 and 1943, and Italian Navy records.

All folders containing Italian records held by the Aktensammelstelle Süd were assigned consecutive numbers preceded by the symbol IT (for Italy). These numbers extend from IT 1 through IT 5463. Folders numbered IT 5464 through 6060 were also in the custody of the Aktensammelstelle but had not been assigned numbers at the time of the capitulation of Germany in May 1945. Later they were given IT numbers by personnel in Germany under U.S. Army supervision. All other folders containing Italian records were assigned IT numbers in the National Archives as an extension of the Aktensammelstelle Süd system. Thus items IT 6061 through 6533 are Italian Air Force manuals, items IT 6534 through 6653 are Italian Army manuals, items IT 6654 through 6680 are miscellaneous folders of Italian origin culled from seized German records, items 6700 through 6823 are records of Italian combat units captured by U.S. Forces, and items IT 6824 through 6833 are Italian Navy records (numbers 6681 through 6699 were left open). The entire collection amounts to 502 cubic feet of records.

The greater part of the records that were held by the Aktensammelstelle Süd are those of the Italian Army, although included are many items whose provenance is the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces (Army, Navy, and Air Force) and other high-level records relating to the Military Establishment as a whole or to the Italian Air Force or Navy. Because the Aktensammelstelle records make up the entire contents of Parts I and II and most of Part III, the majority of the records described throughout the Guide are Italian Army records. The division of the Guide into parts is done solely for convenience of size. Part

I contains the descriptions of items IT 1 to 1331, Part II describes items IT 1332 to 4248, and Part III describes items IT 4249 to 6680 and 6700 to 6833.

In microfilming the records the National Archives followed the numerical arrangement established by the Aktensammelstelle Süd. Provenance varies from folder to folder. An index by provenance is at the end of each part of the Guide. Descriptions of the documents contained in the folders were prepared on cards and each card was filmed before the pertinent folder. In addition, the cards for all records on each roll are reproduced at the beginning of the roll.

Only about 60 percent of the Italian records in this collection were microfilmed. When the entire contents of a folder were not filmed, the notation "Filmed selectively" appears at the end of the "Item" description. Some folders or parts of folders were not filmed because the documents are duplicates or they describe low-level, routine, or obsolete material such as road building instructions, engineer studies, or routine plans for constructing fortifications. Numbers omitted in the "Item No." column indicate those items that were not filmed.

The entries in the Guide are based on the card descriptions. The first column gives the provenance. If the provenance is not discernible, the originating office, if this can be determined, is given as the provenance. In the second column, under "Item," the title of the folder is given first, followed by a description of the item, including dates. The "Item No." is the IT identification number that appears on the original folder. The "Roll" refers to the microfilm roll number, and "1st Frame" indicates the frame number of the first page of the item.

A small quantity of records of the Italian Ministry of War, Chief of Staff of the Italian Navy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Air Ministry, and Air Attachés in Tokyo and Berlin are described in Guide No.6 in the series of Guides to German Records Microfilmed at Alexandria, Va. (T82, rolls 158 and 159). Other related records in the same series of Guides are those of the German General with the Italian 8th Army and the Deputy General of the German Armed Forces in Italy, which are described in Guide No. 38 (T-501, rolls 323-345) and of the Army of Liguria described in Guide No. 48 (T-312, Rolls 111 and 1652). Additional information regarding the Aktensammelstelle Süd is in the records of the Chef der Heeresarchiv in the German Army High Command, described in Guide No. 12 (T-78, Roll 8).

Organization of the Italian Armed Forces

The following information is based largely on material in the War Department's *Handbook on the Italian Military Forces and Order of Battle of the Italian Army* (Washington, DC, 1943). For additional information see Howard McGaw Smyth, "The Command of the Italian Armed Forces in World War II," in *Military Affairs*, Vol. XV, No. 1.

Italian High Command

The Armed Forces (Forze Armate) of Italy were regarded as a single service and comprised the following branches: the Royal Army (Regio Esercito), the Royal Navy (Regia Marina), the Royal Air Force (Regia Aeronautica), the Royal Customs Guards (Regio Guardia di Finanza), and the Fascist Militia (Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale—MVSN) or Black Shirts (Camicie Nere—CCNN).

The King was the Supreme Commander of all Armed Forces (Commandante Supremo delle Forze Armate dello Stato). In time of peace he delegated his powers to the Ministers of War, Navy, and Air; in time of war a Supremo commander was appointed by Royal decree with the approval of the Council of Ministers. Mussolini, as Head of the State and Minister of War, Navy, and Air, could determine the selection of the Supreme Commander and exercise direct control over the Armed Forces both in peace

and in war. In addition, Mussolini was Chairman of the Supreme Commission of Defense (Commissione Suprema di Difesa), an interministerial and Armed Forces council responsible for the coordination of all policies and practices of total war. Its membership comprised the highest officials of the State and the ranking members of the Armed Forces.

The Supreme Commander carried the title of Chief of the Supreme General Staff (Capo di Stato Maggiore Generale) and was selected from the ranking officers of any branch of the Armed Forces. In the exercise of his functions he worked in conjunction with the Chiefs of Staff of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. To facilitate this coordination, his own staff (Stato Maggiore Generale), functioned as liaison between him and the various services through their ministries and general staffs.

Army High Command

The Commander in Chief of the Army was the Chief of the Army General Staff. Selected from the general officers of the Army, he was appointed by Royal Decree on approval of the Council of Ministers. He served under the Chief of the Supreme General Staff and functioned as technical adviser to the Minister of War in time of peace. In time of war he exercised his appointed functions at the headquarters of the armies in the field. He communicated directly with army and field commanders, commanders of corps areas, and inspectors of the various arms and services. He was assisted by the Deputy Chief of Staff (Scottocapo di Stato Maggiore).

The Army General Staff consisted of three sections, each administered by an Assistant Chief of Staff appointed by Royal Decree: (1) Operations (Sottocapo di Stato Maggiore per le Operazioni), which supervised territorial and colonial operations, training, recordkeeping, and intelligence; (2) Administration (Scottocapo di Stato Maggiore Intendente), which supervised organization, mobilization, transportation, and services; and (3) Territorial Defense (Scottocapo di Stato Maggiore per la Difesa Territoriale), which was responsible for all defense including coastal defense as far as it concerned the Army but excluding frontier defense.

Each branch of the Armed Forces had its own General Staff. The Army General Staff (Stato Maggiore dell' Esercito) was composed of the General Staff Corps (Corpo di Stato Maggiore) and the General Staff Service (Servizio di Stato Maggiore). The head of the General Staff Corps was the Chief of the Army General Staff. All heads of staff departments of army groups, armies, and corps were members of the General Staff Corps. Since these officers collaborated closely with General Staff Corps, the Chief of the Army General Staff (and through him the Chief of the Supreme General Staff) was kept in close touch with the daily conduct of the war.

Rear Echelon

The functions of a rear echelon in time of peace and war were executed by the Central Administration of the Army, directed by the Under Secretary of State for War. This office comprised the Cabinet and Secretariat, including Office of Generals, Office of Military Publications, Foreign Liaison Section, and Autonomous Company of Carabinieri Reali; General Directorates, including Officer Personnel, Civilian Personnel and General Affairs, Artillery, Engineers, Logistic Services, Medical Services, Chemical Services, and Administrative Services; Superior Directorate for Studying and Testing Engineer Equipment; the General Accounting Office; and the Inspectorate General of Recruiting.

The general supervision of administration, training, organization, armament, and equipment affecting the various arms and services was the responsibility of offices known as inspectorates. Inspectors corresponded in general to the former U.S. chiefs of arms and services. There were Inspectorates of Artillery, Infantry, Engineers, Motorization, Animal and Veterinary Services, Commissary Services,

Alpine Troops, and Cavalry Troops. These inspectorates were consulting offices for the Under Secretary of War and the Chief of the Army Staff.

Field and Territorial Commands

For practical reasons—in order to facilitate mobilization, prepare the nation for total war, and especially to free field unit commanders from territorial and administrative responsibilities--the Italian Army was divided into field units (unita di campagna) and territorial units (enti territoriali). The Field Army was under the direct control of the Chief of the Army Staff and his staff at field headquarters, who devoted themselves primarily to military operations. All other matters were entrusted to the Under Secretary of War (usually a high-ranking army officer) and the Assistant Chief of Staff for Territorial Defense. A permanent home structure was set up in peacetime and carried over, with accelerated and more extensive functions, in time of war.

Regional Organization

Army Commands were represented in peacetime by the army generals designated to command armies in time of war (Generali designate d'Armata). These commanders were responsible under the Minister of War and the Chief of the Army Staff for all military administration and preparations for war in the areas allotted to them. In time of war, they could be given effective command of an army. The rank of Army General Designate continued to exist in time of war.

Army corps areas were responsible in peacetime for all troops, services, headquarters, and other military establishments within the corps area. The headquarters of the corps were stationed within definite areas, which were also designated Territorial Defense Commands (Commando di Difesa Territoriale). There were 16 of them at the outbreak of war, as follows: I Turin, II Alessandria, III Milan, IV Bolzano, V Trieste, VI Bologna, VII Florence, VIII Rome, IX Bari, X Naples, XI Udine, XII Palermo, XIII Cagliari, XIV Treviso, XV Genoa, and XVI Messina. They were numbered concurrently with the corps whose headquarters and components they contained in peacetime. There were in addition corps headquarters for four independent--Armored at Mantua, Alpine at Trento, Cavalry (Celere) at Padua, and Semimotorized at Cremona--which were in effect staffs to control the training and organization of the specialized units. They did not have a corresponding territorial defense command.

A number of additional corps were added after the outbreak of World War II, among them the following for which we have records: XVIII, with headquarters in Split, Yugoslavia; XIX, with headquarters in Santa Maria Capua Vetere; XX and XXI, which operated in Tripolitania, until forced back into Tunisia, and destroyed in May 1943; XXIII, with headquarters in Trieste, XXIV, with headquarters in Udine; XXX, with headquarters in Sousse, Tunisia, and destroyed in Tunisia in May 1943; and the XXXV, with headquarters in Bolzano.

The Corps areas were originally divided into varying numbers of military zones, of which there were 28 in all, corresponding to the number of divisions of the conscript army. These were in turn subdivided into military districts (Distretti Militari).

Italy was divided into 106 military districts, plus one at Rhodes, four in Libya, six in Italian East Africa, and detached sections at Livorno, Zara, and Tolmezzo.

Organization of units

Organization of units in the Italian Army was remarkably fluid and elastic. Tables of organization were rarely followed in practice and were often frankly abandoned in favor of substitute formations loosely

called raggruppamenti, a term applied to collections of homogenous units as well as to combat teams or task forces of a more self-contained nature with components of the various arms and services.

Army Groups (Gruppi d'Armata) and Armies (Armata)

In time of peace, army groups and armies, with the exception of the Army of the Po, were represented only by the headquarters of the army generals designated to command them in war. In time of war, the composition of an army group and of an army varied, though the number of corps in an army did not normally exceed four.

The composition of an Army Headquarters (Comando d'Armata) was as follows:

- General Staff (Stato Maggiore)
- Office of the Chief of Staff:
 - Operations
 - Intelligence
 - Discipline
 - Personnel and Administration
- Intendance:
 - Intendant's Department
 - Army Medical Directorate
 - Army Commissariat Directorate
 - Army Artillery Directorate
 - Army Engineer Directorate
 - Army Veterinary Directorate
 - Army Rail Transport Directorate
 - Army Transport Directorate
 - Army Postal Directorate
 - Army Roads and Civil Engineering Directorate
 - Army Timber Department
- Army Artillery Headquarters
- Army Engineer Headquarters
- Army Aircraft Headquarters
- Headquarters Personnel (Quartiere Generale)
 - Headquarters infantry unit
 - Aircraft signaling station
 - Topographical detachment
 - Photography section
 - Post office
 - Staff car unit (Autodrappello)
 - Eleven mixed Carabinieri sections
 - Mounted Carabinieri section

Army Corps (Corpo d'Armata)

The composition of an army corps was elastic. Divisions were frequently transferred from one corps to another, and an army corps abroad usually comprised divisions different from those which it normally contained in Italy.

Corps headquarters (Comando di Corpo d'Armata) were organized as follows:

- General Staff (Stato Maggiore)
- Office of the Chief of Staff:

- Operations
- Intelligence
- Discipline and Personnel
- Corps Artillery Headquarters
- Corps Engineer Headquarters
- Intendance:
 - Corps Transport Directorate
 - Corps Medical Directorate
 - Corps Commissariat Directorate
 - Corps Veterinary Directorate
- Military Tribunal
- Headquarters Personnel (Quartiere Generale)
 - Headquarters infantry unit
 - Photography section
 - Staff car unit
 - Mounted Carabinieri section
 - Aircraft signaling station
 - Survey section
 - Post Office
 - Two topographical sections
 - Two mixed Carabinieri sections

In addition to its headquarters components, each corps theoretically comprised the following units, although in practice this was rarely the case:

- Two, three, or four infantry divisions
- One motorized machine-gun battalion
- One artillery regiment
- One engineer regiment
- One chemical company
- One flamethrower company
- One mortar battery
- One medical company
- One supply company
- A motor transport center

Divisions (Divisioni)

The infantry Division was called binary (divisione binaria) because of the incorporation of two infantry regiments instead of the old three-regiment (ternaria) organization. As of March 1, 1940, a Fascist Militia legion of two battalions was attached to infantry divisions, partly, it is believed, to increase the amount of infantry in the division and partly to include Black Shirt troops with regular army formations. The legion was, however, described as an independent mobile unit to be used as shock (assalto) troops.

The following was the normal organization of the typical infantry division:

- Headquarters
- Two infantry regiments
- Artillery regiment
- Antitank company
- Mortar battalion (81 mm.)
- Pioneer company
- Telegraph and radio company
- Medical company

Supply and motor transport company
Militia legion

The strength of a normal division was about 12,500 including 1,350 Black Shirts. Other Italian divisions included the assault and landing division (divisione da sbarco e d'assalto), semimotorized infantry division (divisione fanteria autotrasportabile), motorized infantry division (Trento type) divisione fanteria motorizzata), mountain infantry division (divisione fanteria da montagna), alpine division (divisione alpine), cavalry division (divisione celere), and armored division (divisione corazzata).

Regiments

The standard Italian infantry regiment (reggimento fanteria) consisted of three rifle battalions and 81-mm. mortar and 47-mm. antitank gun companies. Other regiments included the cavalry (cavalleria), artillery (artiglieria), tank infantry (fanteria carrista), and engineer (genio) regiments.

Fascist Militia (Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale--MVSN)

The Militia, popularly known as Black Shirts (Camicie Nere--CCNN), was a Fascist party organization whose primary function was the defense and support of the Fascist regime. In 1923 the Militia was declared an integral part of the Armed Forces while retaining its identity as an independent force.

Black Shirts were organized under a general headquarters at Rome under Mussolini, with a Chief of Staff as the executive commander. The latter came under the direct orders of the Chief of the General Staff in time of war.

Territorially, the Militia was organized into 14 zone commands in Italy, corresponding roughly to an army corps area in peacetime. No militia zone commands existed overseas.

Frontier Guards (Guardia alla Frontiera--GaF)

Organized into a special corps in 1939, the Frontier Guards were responsible for the defense of frontier districts. Formerly only fortress artillery, under the new organization they were given supporting arms, independence of action, and the primary task of acting as a covering force.

Royal Carabinieri (Carabinieri Reali--CCRR)

The Carabinieri was the senior arm of the regular army. Although trained and occasionally used as fighting troops, their normal function was that of a military police force. The recruiting, discipline, equipment, and armament of the Carabinieri were the responsibility of the Ministry of War, but their police duties were under the Ministry of the Interior.

Royal Customs Guard (Regia Guardia di Finanza)

The customs Guard was an integral part of the Armed Forces, its members being recruited largely from mountaineers with an intimate knowledge of the frontier districts of Italy. The force was under the Minister of Finance except for mobilization, which was under the Minister of War. In the colonies it was under the local governor.

Royal Navy (Regia Marina)

The Ministry of the Navy, through an Under Secretary of the Navy and a Chief of Staff, controlled the Royal Navy. In addition to its usual naval functions, the Navy had jurisdiction over coastal defense in the area of navy yards and important naval bases, naval defense zones and naval coastal sectors, the Italian Aegean Islands, the Tuscan Archipelago, and the islands of Saseno and Lasosta Cazza. The Coast Defense Artillery Militia (Milizia Artiglieria Marittima), which was under naval command, was responsible for coastal defense. Administratively it was under a combined Militia comprising the Coast Defense Artillery Militia and the Antiaircraft Artillery Militia (Milizia Artiglieria Controaeri). For technical matters and those connected with training and employment it was responsible to the Navy General Staff. Territorial distribution was established by the combined militia headquarters in agreement with the Ministry of the Navy.

At each naval zone, sector, or command, the Navy employed a group of artillery units for defense against ships and aircraft. These tactical commands came directly under their respective Navy headquarters. The Navy also supplied specially trained officers to the Air Force as observers in Air Force units assigned to give air support to the Navy.

San Marco Marine Regiment (Il Reggimento di San Marco)

A link between the Army and the Navy similar to the U.S. Marine Corps was provided by the San Marco Marine Regiment. This independent command was organized in battalions that served as assault units or, on the coast, as anti-invasion detachments. Ranks in the San Marco Regiment corresponded to those in the Army, although the commanding officer was a navy captain. A naval officer commanded each battalion, but an army liaison officer was attached to each for the purpose of coordinating the training of the companies with that of similar departments of the Army.

Royal Air Force (Regia Aeronautica)

The ministry of Air, through the Under Secretary of State for Air, controlled both the Royal Air Force and civil aviation. For unity of direction, the offices of the Under Secretary of State and the Chief of the Air General Staff were consolidated. The operational arm of the Air Force, known as the Aeronautical Arm, consisted of the Navigation Branch, the Ground Service Branch, and the Specialist Branch. The Aeronautical Arm was divided into the Aerial Army, which consisted of all air forces designed to carry out aerial warfare, including air defense of the kingdom or any territorial under the sovereignty of the State; the Air Force for the Army and the Air Force for the Navy, consisting of air units assigned to the Army and the Navy to furnish air observation, communications, and fire support; and the Air Forces for Colonial Garrisons, consisting of air units stationed in the colonies to carry out garrison duties exclusively. Other components of the Air Force were the Aeronautical Engineering Corps, the Aeronautical Commissariat Corps, the Aeronautical Medical Corps, and the Militia School of the Royal Air Force.

The Aerial Army consisted of several air fleets, each of which was organized into air divisions (fighter and bomber), air brigades, air wings, air groups, and bomber and fighter squadrons.

CONTENTS

<u>Roll</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	Parts I – III, 1935–1943