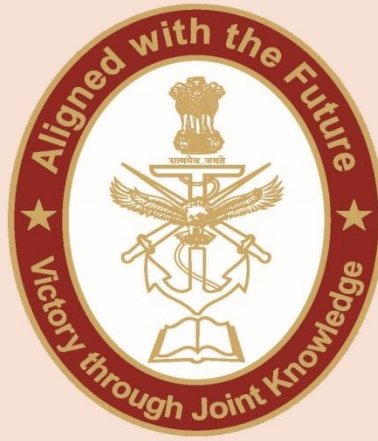


CENTRE FOR JOINT WARFARE STUDIES



CENJOWS

HERALDRY OF THE LINE OF COMMUNICATIONS, COMMAND OR DISTRICT, AREA OF WORLD WAR II UNDER THE SOUTH EAST ASIA COMMAND OF THE ALLIED FORCES



Mr Neelotpal Mishra, DIS is an alumnus of the Royal Military College of Science and University of Oxford U.K. His expertises are Information and Cyber, Warfare and Technologies.

Introduction

The system by which Formation Signs (FS)/ coats of arms and other armorial bearings were devised, described and regulated is known as Heraldry.

The heraldry of Line of Communications/ Command (LoC) or District/ Area of World War II (WWII) under the South East Asia Command (SEAC) of the Allied Forces is very interesting and is relevant today as well. This is due to the fact that this legacy of the FS is being carried forward in India today with the allocation to new raisings for the Three Services, Central Armed Police Forces and the State Police as well. This serves as a rallying point and the orientation towards a common purpose/ goal for each personnel of that formation. In WWII as is the case today, the FS were in most cases chosen to relate to either the location or operational area of a formation. Many formations that are currently in the force structure of the Army wear the same or a variation of the original World War I (WWI) as a legacy of their service.

The information about FS is sourced from the Burma Star Association, 4 Lower Belgrave Street, London. The Burma Star Association was officially founded on the 26 February 1951 with 2000 founder members. The rules of the Association were drawn up by Lord Louis Mountbatten and Field Marshal Lord Slim. The full members of the Association, should be an ex-Serviceman, ex-Servicewoman or Nurse been awarded the Burma Campaign Star for service in Burma during World War II for the necessary qualifying period or the Pacific Star with Burma Clasp.

The scope of the paper is to cover only the LoC that were part of the current geographical expanse of India.

Usage of Formation Signs

In the British Indian Army the use of badges to identify the wearer's formation/ department began in the late 1800's. It can be seen on many paintings/ sketches from that era. Shoulder belt plates, head gear crests for Railway, Police, Army and the civil establishments were authorised for use.

The FS were first used by the British Army in WWI in order to provide an easy method of visual identification of the various units. The Formation signs were worn on the upper sleeve in pairs, on epaulets, on head gear, painted on unit vehicles, and used on road signs. It was also quickly found that the signs created a morale boosting esprit de corps as each unit became proud of its own symbol. After WWI the use of formation signs was discontinued, they were reintroduced at the outbreak of WWII.

Divisional Signs were reintroduced early in 1940, but instructions were given in 1941 for all formation signs to be referred to as Formation Badges, the official American designation is Shoulder Sleeve Insignia. ⁱ

Formation badges were worn on the sleeves of uniforms except on greatcoats; in battledress, one inch below the regimental or corps shoulder title, and immediately above the arm of service strip. These were narrow two inch strips, introduced in the autumn of 1940, which gave the soldier's arm of service when wearing a steel helmet, or no cap or other distinguishing badges. Infantry battalions wore one, two, or three red strips one below the other, as in the above illustration to indicate the brigade to which they belonged.

In tropical kit areas, such as the Middle East and Far East, the formation badges were often worn affixed to the sleeves of Kahki Drill (K.D) jackets by means of press studs to facilitate laundering or even worn stitched onto slip-on epaulettes for wearing on the shoulders of K.D, shirts. This was also the

method used in the hot summer months in Italy. On all vehicles, formation badges were stencilled in colour on the forward and rear mudguards, or on the tailboard of trucks, on jeeps the badge appeared on the body below the windscreen on the driver's side. ⁱⁱ

In the United States the Shoulder Sleeve Insignia (SSI), popularly known as the shoulder patch is worn on the left shoulder of the wearer's uniform. It indicates the soldier's current unit of assignment. The SSI first made its appearance in World War I as units designed and fabricated insignia for wear on the uniform. Before the end of the war, the SSI was authorized for wear on the uniform and divisions, corps and other headquarters soon had them. The requirements and designs were formalized in the early 1920s. The use of devices to identify the wearer's unit began during the Civil War. Worn on the headgear, such as the crown of the kepi, the corps and division badges were originally instituted as a means of controlling stragglers and apprehending deserters, but soldiers soon took pride in being identified with their units. The practice was used again during the War with Spain. The SSI has become a permanent part of the Army uniform since World War I. The U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force are the only Services to wear SSIs and shoulder patches. ⁱⁱⁱ

A Tactical Recognition Flash (TRF) indicates the wearer's regiment (in combat dress etc.), Formation Sign/ badge (if authorized) identifies their higher formation and is worn on the left upper arm. TRF identifies the regiment or corps of an individual and are frequently based on the stable belt striping. They are worn on the right upper arm of combat dress below any Para/ SAS qualification badge with the centre of the badge placed 12cm from the shoulder seam. Overall dimensions are not to exceed 6x6 cms. ^{iv}

The FS in WWII were either 'Round' or 'Square' in shape. With the exception of the 14th Army that had the 'Shield' as used by the Indian Army today for its formation signs.

The background colours for the formations, i.e. the Supreme Headquarters, Army Group, Army, Corps and Divisions never followed any set pattern. In all possibilities only the 12th & 14th Allied Army, Malta & Ceylon Overseas Commands and Scottish & Southern Home Commands - United Kingdom had the command/ army colours of Red, Black and Red stripes in equal proportions. Other Army or Commands had varying background colours. The Corps and Division FS had varying colour backgrounds.

About S.E.A.C & LoC's

In August 1943, Mountbatten was appointed Supreme Allied Commander South East Asia (SACSEA), he had arrived in India to take up his post in the following October. The newly created South East Asia Command (SEAC) included Burma, Ceylon, Siam, the Malay peninsula and Sumatra. Mountbatten was in overall charge of all allied forces within this area, on land, sea and in the air, and he was consequently responsible to the governments of each country contributing forces. SEAC came formally into being in Delhi at midnight on 15/ 16 November 1943. Its headquarters moved in April 1944 to Kandy in Ceylon. India continued to be important as a source of supplies and manpower and as SEAC's channel of communications, and Mountbatten retained a smaller staff in New Delhi in what was termed 'Rear HQ SEAC'. SEAC was also represented in London at the offices of the War Cabinet by a staff known as the 'Rear Link'.^v

The words Line of Communication/ Command were used interchangeably during WWII. The change of area of responsibility (AoR) from a British governed district to multiple districts led to the suffix of Area replacing the word District. The static Brigade Area's were sometimes re-designated to Sub Area's during WWII in area's other than that of the Burma Front.

The Area's at that time were under the command of a 'Command' e.g. Eastern Command, Sothern Command, Central Command etc. as the designation 'Command' was used for a formation with rear-area responsibilities for designated geographies. The term 'Army' was used to for operational commands e.g. 14th Army, 12th Army etc.

There were around sixteen LoC/ Area under the SEAC with two sub area's in the current geographical expanse of India (A total of around twenty nine in the whole of SEAC). These were frequently reorganised to cater to the War effort in WWII.^{vi}

The Area and Sub-Area had similar formation signs during WWII, with a different background. Two examples are shown below.



Bombay Area



and Bombay Sub Area as of 28 Feb 1948.^{vii}



109th LoC Area (Bangalore) &



164th LoC Sub-Area (Madras Fortress Area)

In contract today we have eight Area's with 3-4 Sub Area's each under them. There are also two independent sub areas. All the Area's have a Red background on their FS. The independent Sub Area's used to have their own FS; however the current trend is of the use of the immediate superior formation i.e. Corps or Command. Most Sub Area's have been upgraded to a two star command, with Area's being commanded by a three star officer. In addition to the Army Area's all costal sates in India have Flag Officer Commanding Naval Area, a two star officer.

A striking similarity with the SEAC FS is the use of Round pattern for the Andaman and Nicobar Command. The Round pattern is being used on the flag and official twitter handle; however the Shield version is also used on Army Uniforms. The FS of SEAC was as depicted below.



Formation Signs of LoC's of WWII

101st Bihar & Orissa Area, a Rampant Unicorn in Red on a Yellow Circular background, was the Badge of this Formation, who's HQ was at Jhansi, then Patna and finally Ranchi.



Post 1947, 101 Communication Zone was established in 1963, replacing Headquarters 101 Region and later being renamed as 101 Area.

107th LoC. Area was responsible for the whole of the Bombay Province. Its badge was the "Gateway of India" on a red background.



108th LoC Area, The First Badge of this Area was a White Swan set on a Blue Circular background, (jokingly referred to as the Bombay Duck) which had been the Badge of the Bombay Province, Port and Fortress Area (later designated "Bombay Defended Port Area") When the 107th LoC was

disbanded the 108th LoC. Area adopted the "Gateway of India Badge" as their own.



110th LoC Area covering Poona and the Deccan region was raised in May 1944 and remained in existence till the end of WWII.



Currently the Maharashtra Goa Gujrat & Goa Area uses a similar FS. Goa state was placed under the jurisdiction of Maharashtra and Gujarat Area with effect from 09 February 2004.

United Province Area LoC formerly the Lucknow District. The FS was two Blue-Gray Fish (The Fishes of Oudh) set on a Red Circular background. Their HQ was at Lucknow.



Currently the same FS with the fishes in yellow with a yellow circle around them is the FS for the Uttar Bharat Area.

Nagpur District LoC. The Badge of this unit was a Black & Yellow Cobra on a Red Square edged in Black. This District was renamed in 1946 & became the "Deccan Area LoC" the Badge undergoing a slight change the Cobras Tail was in Yellow



Currently Madhya Bharat Area, with its H.Q in Jabalpur uses a similar F.S.

303rd (Bengal) LoC Area. A Round of 303 Ammunition, the Case in Yellow the Bullet in White set diagonally on a Red Square.



Currently the Bengal Area, with its HQ in Kolkatta has a different Formation Sign.

Delhi and East Punjab Area (replaced the Delhi District). A Leopard in Black & Yellow on Red Background



The Delhi & Rajasthan Area, with its H.Q in Delhi Cantt has a different formation sign now.

505th LoC District, two Strong Arms holding a circle below the Roman Figures "XIV" the design was in Black set on a Red Shield of similar pattern to that of the HQ Fourteenth Army. The Two Arms & the Circle together formed "VOV" or 505.



202nd (Assam) LoC Area, a Black Arrow representing a Naga Spear pointing upwards through a Blue Wavy Band representing the River Bramaputra on a White Circle within a Black Border & set on a Khaki Square. H.Q. Dimapur.



253rd LoC Sub-Area, the Rear View of an Elephant in White on a Khaki background. 253rd LoC Sub-Area was the Base of "IV Corps" whose Badge was a Charging Elephant hence the Rear of the Elephant was the Base.



254th LoC Sub-Area. A Buffalo's Head in White with Red Horns on a Square Blue background. This LoC Sub-Area operated in the "Fourteenth Army" within the Kohima Area on the Dimurpore-Imphal Road. This Badge was also worn by the 268th Indian Infantry Brigade.



Currently the Red Horn Division has a similar FS.

106th LoC Area, the Area covered the Whole of the Hyderabad State & the Northern part of Madras Province including Vishakhapatnam. HQ was at Bolarum.



105th Madras Area, Originally designated Madras District it was in November 1942 renamed (for Security reasons) the 105th L. o. C. Area on April 1st 1946, it reassumed the name of Madras Area later. A Golden

Phoenix with outspread Wings & a Red Eye rising from Red Flames surmounted by a Red Seven Pointed Corona set on a Square Black background was the Badge of this formation. This Badge was intended to represent the new warlike spirit of Madras rising from the ashes of the old Madras Army that was disbanded after the 1914-18 war.



109th LoC Area, HQ - Bangalore, a Yellow Palm Tree on a Red background.



Headquarter Dakshin Bharat Area, uses a similar FS at present. The name was given on 13 January 2015. It comprises the states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and the territories of Pondicherry, Lakshadweep & Minicoy Islands.

164th LoC Sub-Area, (Madras Fortress Area), HQ Madras, the Badge of this unit was A Yellow Coconut Palm Tree on a Square Black background.



CERTIFICATE

The paper is author's individual scholastic articulation. The author certifies that the article is original in content, unpublished and it has not been submitted for publication/ web upload elsewhere and that the facts and figures quoted are duly referenced, as needed and are believed to be correct.

Disclaimer: Views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of CENJOWS.

ⁱ British Formation Badges 1939-1945, <http://petergh.f2s.com/flashes.html>

ⁱⁱ British Formation Badges 1939-1945, <http://petergh.f2s.com/flashes.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Army Center of Military History, 5 August 2021, Throwback Thursday - U.S. Army Shoulder Sleeve Insignia, <https://www.facebook.com/armyhistory/photos/a.410473127852/10159769955472853/>

^{iv} Army dress regulations all ranks, Ministry of Defence, United Kingdom, PS12(A) , January 2011

^v Mountbatten Papers, South East Asia Command, 1943-6

^{vi} Burma Star Association, 4 Lower Belgrave Street, London in Sep 2015

^{vii} 'Farewell to British Troops, Bombay', programme, 28 February 1948. The last unit to leave India was the 1st Battalion, Somerset Light Infantry (Prince Albert's) which embarked at Bombay on 28 February 1948.