

Coast Artillery Corps Regiments and Battalions 1924-1943

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[Two studies by Lt. Col. Edward M. Harris, prepared in August 1949, summarize the organization and deployment of seacoast artillery units from World War I through World War II. The original version of this history was a typescript copy filed in the Office of the Center for Military History. It has been digitized for publication here.]

Harbor Defense Regiments and Battalions

1. The harbor defense artillery was regrouped into regiments in 1924, having been organized in separate companies since the reorganization of 1901. The method of designation of these companies had varied several times during the intervening twenty-three years, but at the time of reorganization these units were numbered serially throughout the Corps. The reorganization into regiments brought about in effect, the reconstitution of the seven artillery regiments disbanded in 1901 and created nine others in the Regular Army designated 1st—16th Coast Artillery (Harbor Defense). Two other regiments were organized from Philippine Scout companies manning harbor defenses and designated the 91st and 92nd Coast Artillery (Harbor Defense). Later one other regiment was established as a requirement by the Panama Canal Defense Project and was constituted as the 17th Coast Artillery (Harbor Defense) (1926). There were thus nineteen regiments provided for in the Regular Army.
2. Parallel with this regroupment in the Regular Army, the separate companies of harbor defense artillery in the National Guard were also formed into regiments commencing with the 240th Coast Artillery (Harbor Defense) in Maine, the 241st in Mass., 242d, Conn., 243, R. I., 244th, and 245th, N. Y., 246th Va., 248th, Washington State, 249th, Ore., 250th and 251st, Calif., 252d, N. C., 260th, Washington, D. C., 261st, Del., 263d, S.C., 264th Ga., and 265th, Fla. Later, however, the 244th, 250th, 251st, 252d and 260th were converted to other types, leaving twelve harbor defense regiments and battalions in the National Guard.
3. At the time the above reorganizations took place, the harbor defense units of the Organized Reserves were similarly grouped into regiments and battalions, commencing with the 613th Coast artillery (Harbor Defense) the 615th, 618th, 619th, 620th, and 621st in the II Corps Area, the 614th and 616th in the I Corps Area, the 622d, Washington, D. C., 623d, Fla., 624th, Okla., the 626th, 627th, and 628th in California, the 629th in Ore., and the 630th in Washington State. Sixteen regiments were thus organized in the Reserve.
4. From the above it can be seen that the total allocation for the manning of the fixed seacoast defenses, including the necessary mine batteries, was forty-seven regiments and battalions by 1938, of which all were required for the continental United States except three in Panama (1st, 4th, and 12th), three in Hawaii (15th, 16th and 17th), and two in the Philippines (91st and 92d). The 2d which had been in Panama, was transferred to Fort Monroe in 1932 and the 12th concurrently inactivated and assigned to Panama. The 17th was reassigned to Hawaii but was never activated even after the entry into World War II. The 92d, while classified as a harbor defense regiment, actually exchanged armament with the 59th, a continental tractor-drawn regiment, during the balance

of the period before the war. There were thus thirty-eight regiments and one battalion planned for use in the harbor defenses of the continental United States, of which there were eighteen active (Portland, Me.; Portsmouth, N.H.; Boston; Narragansett Bay; Long Island Sound; Southern New York; Sandy Hook; The Delaware; Chesapeake Bay; Charleston, S. C.; Key West; Pensacola; Galveston; San Diego; Los Angeles; San Francisco; the Columbia; and Puget Sound). These regiments were organized in a varying number of batteries dependent upon their assignment, thus a harbor defense might have had assigned to it one regiment each from the Regular Army, National Guard and Organized Reserves, the sum of whose batteries was sufficient to man all the batteries and lay the minefields of that installation. Eventually, the organizations became fixed in four types (A, B, C and D) of four, three, two and one battalion, respectively.

5. Harbor defenses overseas were those of Balboa and Cristobal in Panama, Honolulu and Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, and Manila and Subic Bays in the Philippines. Others were in process of development such as those of Kaneohe and North Shore (Hawaii) Dutch Harbor (Alaska) and San Juan (Puerto Rico).
6. Several changes occurred during the period 1924-1938 other than those mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, mostly too numerous to mention. One of these included the transfer to the Regular Army (inactive) of the 614th, 616th, 621st, 622d, 626th, 627th, and 630th Regiments from the Organized Reserves. In addition, the 618th, 623d and 624th were reduced to battalion size (Type D).
7. With the induction of the National Guard in 1940, which included all units except the 264th (Ga.) (Converted to elements [of] 214th C.A. (AA)) and saw the 261st reduced to a battalion, ten regiments and one battalion were added to the harbor defenses. While for many years the Regular Army regiments had been maintained on an extremely reduced basis, each having only a few batteries active (except the 12th and 17th inactive), in the years immediately preceding 1940 small increments had been added to each and the seventeen active regiments were largely complete at this time.
8. It was deemed necessary to build up the harbor defenses at a rapid rate following the passage of the Selective Service Act in 1940 and hence a readjustment of harbor defense requirements was accomplished which resulted in the creation of five additional regiments designated 18th to 22d Coast Artillery (Harbor Defense) and one battalion (23d), mainly by redesignation of Organized Reserve Units. This result came from concentrating regiments which had previously been assigned to garrison more than one harbor defense in one, or at most two, stations, those vacated being garrisoned by the new regiments. In addition an extra lettered battery to man seacoast searchlights was added to each regiment. Thus the completion of this expansion and the induction of the National Guard found the Regular Army harbor defense regiments in the continental United States organized as follows:

2d CA (HD) 2 Bns and Btry "G"
3d CA (HD) 2 Bns and Btry "G"
5th CA (HD) 3 Bns and Btry "K"
6th CA (HD) 4 Bns and Btry "N"

7th CA (HD) 2 Bns and Btry "G"
8th CA (HD) 2 Bns and Btry "G"
9th CA (HD) 3 Bns and Btry "K"
10th CA (HD) 2 Bns and Btry "G"
11th CA (HD) 2 Bns and Btry "G"
13th CA (HD) 3 Bns and Btrys "I" and "K"
14th CA (HD) 3 Bns and Btry "K"
18th CA (HD) 2 Bns and Btry "G"
19th CA (HD) 4 Bns and Btry "N"
20th CA Bn (HD) 1 Bn
21st CA (HD) 2 Bns and Btry "G"
22d CA (HD) 2 Bns and Btry "G"
23d CA Bn (HD) 1 Bn and Btry "E"

9. During this same period the 1st and 4th Coast Artillery in Panama which had been reorganized in 1932 as anti-aircraft regiments, except for the 2d Bn of each which had continued to man harbor defenses, were reorganized as complete harbor defense regiments concurrently with the activation of two new antiaircraft regiments (the 72d and 73d) in that department.
10. At the beginning of the war there were thus Thirty-one regiments and three battalions of the Regular Army and the National Guard in active service. During the war additional harbor defense battalions and batteries (AUS) were organized and sent overseas with a variety of designations. What the origin of these units was is not known. Neither is it known what use was made, if any, of the remaining harbor defense regiments and battalions of the Organized Reserve (613th, 615th, 618th Bn, 619th, 620th, 623d Bn, 624th Bn, 628th and 629th.)
11. In 1943 the general reorganization of the Army initiated at that time effected the coast artillery by eliminating the regimental echelon which had prevailed since 1924. While the reorganization throughout the harbor defenses was not immediately accomplished, the reorganization was undertaken gradually and resulted in the substitution of group headquarters for the regimental headquarters and of separate serially-numbered battalions for the former battalions of the regiments. However, at the time that this reorganization was put into effect the reduced need for manning harbor defenses, coupled with the increased need for manpower for field units, resulted in a simultaneous reduction in the number of batteries, battalions and superior headquarters retained in the harbor defenses of the United States. Thus it cannot be said that the regiments were in all cases converted to group headquarters and battalions paralleling the organization existing in 1941. In fact, very few groups were actually organized and before the end of the war many cases will be found in which harbor defenses were manned by but a few lettered batteries pertaining to a particular harbor defense. In the case of overseas garrisons this procedure was not always uniform and cases will be found in which batteries were numerically designated and assigned to a numerically designated battalion headquarters. This reduction in harbor defense artillery was accomplished by disbandment, inactivation, or conversion of units, and the end of World War II found the harbor defense in most instances manned only by token garrisons for care-taking purposes.

12. In peacetime the harbor defense artillery was grouped in numbered Coast Artillery Districts, one for each Corps Area, and department having a coast line (I, II, III, IV and IX in the continental United States) (Galveston was under the 4th Coast Artillery District). This administrative organization was to terminate in the event of war, the district commander and staff to be absorbed in one of the higher echelons discussed below. Overseas, all C.A. in Hawaii was organized in a brigade (Hawaiian separate Coast Artillery Brigade) and in Panama in a similarly designated brigade, while there being only one harbor defense in the Philippines, no district was organized.
13. The higher organization for harbor defense developed before the war provided next above the regiment for a harbor defense commander. In those harbor defenses manned by one regiment or battalion, the regimental or battalion commander occupied a dual capacity in this respect. However, by 1941 a headquarters and headquarters battery, harbor defense, usually providing a general officer as the harbor defense commander, had been activated for most of the harbor defenses in the continental United States as well as overseas. Such a command was, therefore, comparable to a brigade. In accordance with the general principles enunciated in Joint Action of the Army and Navy concerning coastal defense, a number of other echelons were provided based upon a geographical division of the coast line to be defended. These included next above the harbor defense various "sectors" for each of which a headquarters and headquarters company was provided. These "sectors" were designated by name as New England Sector, Southern California Sector, [etc.,] [and] were commanded usually by the senior line officer on duty therein and included not only the harbor defenses within their boundaries, but also mobile units, frequently a division as well as mobile types of coast artillery. Later, in some instances these sectors were broken into sub-sectors for which a headquarters and headquarters detachment was provided. Sectors were to have been grouped together in "coastal frontiers" for each of which a headquarters and headquarters company, geographically designated, was provided. These commands, however, became the defense commands that were established just prior to the war.

Mobile Seacoast Artillery Regiments and Battalions

1. With the development of the General Organization Project for the American Expeditionary Forces in France in 1917, it became necessary to make provision for the use of artillery in large calibers with the field armies in the manner then employed by the armies of the nations at war in Europe. This project provided for considerable artillery with each corps, army, and for a GHQ reserve to include artillery on railway mounts. As the U.S. Army had not previously had experience with material of this size, except as used in seacoast defense, it was determined that units to man the artillery above the corps level would be organized from the considerable amount of harbor defense artillery then available in the United States, both in the Regular Army and the National Guard, then in Federal service. As it developed subsequently, all artillery above the 6-inch (155-mm) howitzer, all trench mortar artillery, and antiaircraft artillery during World War I were manned by personnel of the Coast Artillery Corps. Organization of the necessary units began in 1919 with the assembly of various companies of the CAC in provisional regiments. The final organization of these regiments during World War I found a number in France and several more in training in the United States, designated in block 41st to 75th Artillery, CAC, and [were] equipped with material ranging from the 6-inch gun to railway pieces of 400-mm. These regiments were grouped in brigades of which the headquarters were also to be furnished by the CAC, which were designated in block commencing with 30.

2. In the initial organization of the Army following the passage of the National Defense Act of 1920, it was planned that the Coast Artillery Corps would provide all heavy mobile artillery for the field army as during World War I (155 mm guns and up) as well as mobile artillery for seacoast defense. This plan was, however, soon modified as the manning of all mobile heavy artillery for the field army was assigned to the Field Artillery in 1921, leaving the CAC with the mobile artillery for seacoast defense and all railway artillery regardless of employment. This assignment has continued in effect up to the present [1949].
3. During the period between the wars the organization of the Regular Army provided for a number of regiments of the Coast Artillery armed with 155 mm guns (tractor-drawn) and with various types of railway artillery, all for use in seacoast defense. Each regiment consisted of 3 battalions of 2 batteries each. These regiments perpetuated those employed in World War I insofar as possible, and were designated in the same manner, —Artillery, CAC. In 1924 the designation was changed to Coast Artillery. In the Regular Army there were five tractor-drawn regiments, one in Hawaii (55th), one in the Philippines (59th), which manned harbor defenses in the place of the 92nd, and three in the United States (44th, 51st and 57th) [from] which it was intended [to] form one brigade (32nd). Of these regiments, the 44th and 57th were wholly inactive, the remainder having one battalion, or more, only active. Of the railway artillery there were originally four regiments in the Regular Army which formed one brigade (30th): 42nd (12-inch mortar), 52nd (8-inch guns), 43rd (armament unknown), [and the 53rd]. The 52nd was the only unit with active elements before 1938. The Hawaiian Railway Battalion was formed in 1921 and later expanded and redesignated as the 41st Coast Artillery (Railway). It is believed that the 53rd was later disbanded leaving a total of five tractor-drawn and four railway artillery regiments in the Regular Army.
4. In the National Guard, two regiments of 155 mm guns were initially formed as a corps artillery (192nd and 193rd) under the plan noted in paragraph 2, above, but almost immediately redesignated as field artillery. Subsequently three other tractor-drawn regiments for seacoast defense were organized in New York, California, and North Carolina (244th, 250th, and 252nd), respectively). No railway artillery was allotted to the National Guard.
5. In the Organized Reserves three regiments of tractor-drawn artillery were formed, the 606th (Mass.), 607th (N.Y.), and 608th (Calif.), all as part of one brigade (239th). In addition, four regiments and one battalion of railway artillery were organized: 601st (8-inch gun) [Conn.]; 602nd (8-inch gun) (N.Y.); 603rd (12-inch gun) (Penn.); 604th (12-inch mortar) (Utah); 605th Bn (14-inch gun) (Calif.). The 605th Bn was, however, disbanded prior to 1938.
6. Of mobile seacoast artillery there were thus provided a total of 19 regiments: eight railway and eleven tractor-drawn, of which one railway and two tractor-drawn were part of overseas garrisons in 1938, leaving 16 regiments planned for the support of harbor defenses in the United States.
7. With the induction of the National Guard, the three tractor-drawn regiments and one battalion (1st Bn, 253rd CA (TD), just organized in Puerto Rico) of that component were brought into active duty. At the same time the inactive Regular Army regiments were brought to strength and one additional (56th) formed by transfer of the 608th from the Organized Reserves. At the same time the 1st Bn 51st CA (TD) was transferred to Puerto Rico and the 44th redesignated as the

54th CA (TD) and activated with colored personnel. There were then ten tractor drawn and two railway artillery units active in whole or in part at the time of [the attack on] Pearl Harbor, of which parts of four tractor-drawn and one railway were overseas. It should be noted in the case of harbor defense regiments, an additional battery to man searchlights was added to each regiment and designated Battery "G."

8. During the war additional regiments and battalions were activated, of which some appear to have been newly constituted. It is not known what the origin of these units were, nor what use was made, if any, of the two reserve tractor-drawn regiments (606th and 607th) and the four railway reserve regiments (601st, 602nd, 603rd, and 604th).
9. The general reorganization of the Army in 1943 brought about the breaking up of all mobile Coast Artillery regiments into separate battalions and group headquarters. Their gradual disappearance from the Army came about in substantially the same manner and for the same causes as explained for the harbor defense artillery [regiments].
10. Insofar as pertains to the higher organization of the mobile seacoast artillery, the regiments were intended to be grouped into brigades in large part, these brigades or separate regiments of both types [were] to be assigned to harbor defenses to augment the fixed artillery, or to sectors, or coastal frontiers for use on exposed coastal areas.
11. Because of its greater mobility and lesser tonnage, a considerable amount of tractor-drawn artillery was sent overseas, particularly for the defense of small island bases. However, for some reason, except for the regiment in Hawaii and for a separate battery here and there, as in Newfoundland [and Bermuda], no railway units were sent overseas during the war in spite of later need in Europe for artillery of the larger calibers. As an indication of the initial deployment of mobile Coast Artillery units after Pearl Harbor, there is shown on enclosure 2 [not included here] those units overseas as of 30 April 1942.
12. In addition to the above units, it was noted in paragraph 1. that CAC also manned during World War I battalions of trench mortars which were provided at the rate of one for each corps. These units were equipped with 240 mm trench mortars which were then much in vogue. Following the war, the Army mobilization plan during the 1920s called for one regiment of these mortars equipped with 36 weapons. This regiment, which is believed was designated the 701st, was probably later transferred to the Field Artillery and subsequently disbanded; at any rate the requirement for such a unit ceased to exist.