



THE MILITARY BALANCE 1940

FRANCE

Maginot Line

The French have an exceptionally strong defensive line, stretching 140 kilometres from Basle on the Swiss border, to Longwy on the Luxembourg border. This is the most modern of defensive systems, and is widely considered to be invulnerable to conventional attack. The system of interlocking forts and casements would make attack very difficult.

Army

In France:

- 20 Active Divisions
- 24 'A' Divisions
- 20 'B' Divisions
- 3 Armoured Divisions
- 2 Polish Divisions
- 1 Czech Division

In North Africa:

- 10 Infantry Divisions

Air Force

Approx numbers in France:

7 Fighters, 4 Bombers, 1 Dive Bomber, 5 Recce Wings

Navy

Battleships & Battle cruisers	5
Aircraft Carriers	2
Cruisers	15
Destroyers	76
Submarines	56

Naval Air: 1 Fighter wing, 1 Bomber wing, 1 Recce wing

GREAT BRITAIN

Royal Navy

Battleships	18
Battle Cruisers	3
Aircraft Carriers	12
Heavy Cruisers	34

Light Cruisers	42
AA Cruisers	6
Destroyers	185
Submarines	69
Escort Vessels	49
Patrol Vessels	6
Minesweepers	42

Army

5-6 Divisions of Regulars

Up to 26 Divisions of Territorials

1 Armoured Brigade, with an Armoured Division forming.

A total of around 10 of these divisions might form a British Expeditionary Force in Northern France.

Royal Air Force

FIGHTER COMMAND: 5 fighter wings

BOMBER COMMAND: 4 Bomber wings

COASTAL COMMAND : 2 Wings

BELGIUM

Army

12 Regular Infantry Divisions

2 Divisions of Chasseurs Ardennais

6 Reserve Infantry Divisions

2 Cavalry Divisions

1 Motorised Brigade

Fortresses around Liege and Namur, and modern defence forts at Eban Emael, Neufchateau, Battice and Pepinster.

Air Force

1 Fighter Wing

1 Bomber Wing

Navy

The Belgian Navy was disbanded during the inter-war years but has just been re-established (since 15 September 1939). It has just over 600 men (all ranks) and is formed into 4 squadrons.

THE NETHERLANDS

Army

4 Corps with Headquarters at Amersfoort, Amsterdam, Arnhem and Breda
Each Corps comprising 2 Infantry Divisions and supporting arms.

Army Air Force

1 Fighter wing
1 bomber wing

Defence Works

There are three defence fronts all designed to cover the traditional strongholds of the Dutch:

a. The "Grebbe" line running from the IJsselmeer in the Amersfoort area roughly south south eastwards down to the Nijmegen area. This is the most substantial of the three. It consists of pillboxes covering minefields and anti-tank ditches with trench systems connecting the pillboxes and it has enough depth to absorb any attack and not be easily penetrated.

b. An extension of the above known as the "Peel" line which continues southwards from the Nijmegen area through an area known as the Peel marshes roughly to the Belgium border in the area of Weert (Holland).

c. The third line is called "Vesting Holland". It runs from the Hilversum area on the IJsselmeer south to the Waal and then westwards along the river and covered Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague.

Navy

Cruisers	4
Destroyers	8
Submarines	23
Escort and Patrol Vessels	7
Motor Torpedo Boats	5
Minesweepers	28

SWITZERLAND

Army

3 Field Corps, each of 3 Infantry Divisions
1 Mountain Corps, of 3 Mountain Infantry Divisions
Some independent infantry and fortress brigades.

Aviation Brigade:

3 Fighter wings
1 Bomber wing
1 Recce wing

10 x Lake Patrol Boats.

ITALY

Army

In Italy:
8 Field Armies: containing
24 Army Corps of
68 Divisions including:
1-2 Tank Divisions (with another forming)

2 Alpine Divisions
2 Cavalry Divisions
1 Parachute Division

Air Force

In Italy:

7 Fighter wings
4 Bomber wings
1 Transport Wing

Overseas: approx 5 wings all types

Navy

Battleships	4
Heavy Cruisers	7
Light Cruisers	12
Armoured Cruiser	1
Large Destroyers	12
Destroyers	30
Mine laying Destroyers	2
Torpedo Boats	51

GERMANY

Army

120 Infantry Divisions
8-10 Motorised Infantry Divisions
9-10 Panzer Divisions
3 Mountain Infantry Divisions
1 Cavalry Division

and the Luftwaffe:-
1 parachute division

Some 90-95 Divisions are thought to be in the 3 Army Groups on the French and Belgian borders, including all the Panzer Divisions, the Cavalry Division, all the Motorised formations and the parachute division.

Siegfried Line

The Germans have recently built a strong defensive line along the Franco-German frontier. From recent publications it is clear that whilst not as extensive as the French Maginot Line, this is still a formidable defensive system.

Air Force

14 Fighter wings
4 Dive Bomber wings
14 Bomber wings
5 Transport wings

Navy

Battle cruisers	2
Obsolete WW1 Battleships	2
Pocket Battleship	1
Heavy Cruiser	1
Cruisers	3
Destroyers/Torpedo boats	10
Escorts	34
Submarines	30
Motor Torpedo boats	20