



(c) crown copyright

THIS DOCUMENT IS THE PROPERTY OF  
HIS BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

SECRET.

COPY No. 20

W.P. (40) 196.  
8th June, 1940.

TO BE KEPT UNDER LOCK AND KEY

It is requested that special care may be taken  
to ensure the secrecy of this document.

WAR CABINET

RE-ORGANISATION AND RE-EQUIPMENT OF THE BRITISH  
EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War.

1. We have now in England, returned from France, the elements of twelve divisions, of the corps troops of three corps, and of three corps headquarters (51st Division is still in France).

It is necessary to decide at once on the policy for re-organization and re-equipment. If an attempt is made to re-equip the full twelve divisions, it will inevitably mean that each division can only be given the minimum of equipment on which to train and that it will be a long time before we can get complete formations re-equipped. From the point of view of the equipment problem it is very advantageous to reduce the number of divisions.

2. The proposals are as follows :-

- (a) To re-form the five regular divisions and organize them into two corps, each with corps headquarters, as a prospective British Expeditionary Force. The remaining corps headquarters is being re-constituted for early despatch to France.
- (b) To amalgamate the territorial divisions with their duplicate divisions, the resulting division taking the number of the original division. This means amalgamation as follows :-

- (i) 12th Division and 44th Division to become 44th Division.  
 (ii) 23rd Division and 50th Division to become 50th Division.  
 All four of these divisions have been in France, so that it will be some time before the amalgamated divisions will be fit to take the field.  
 (iii) 66th Division and 42nd Division to become 42nd Division.  
 (iv) 61st Division and 48th Division to become 48th Division.  
 (v) 46th Division and 49th Division to become 49th Division.

Of these six divisions, only one division in each pair (42nd, 46th and 48th Divisions) has been in France.



- 2 -

3. This amalgamation will in effect mean that there is only one divisional headquarters for the two divisions, and that artillery and ancillary services will be on a similar basis. But it is proposed to retain the infantry brigades of both divisions in the amalgamation. In addition to the five Territorial Army divisions, we shall then have the equivalent of 14 independent brigades. Of these, five will be used to raise the motorised divisions in the Army, of two brigades each, to the normal figure of three, making all divisions homogeneous. The remaining 9 brigades will be retained as independent groups for home defence, without prejudice to their rejoining their divisions if bifurcation is authorised, at a later date, for operations outside Great Britain.

4. This solution not only enables the amalgamated divisions to be equipped at a faster rate than would be the case if there were 10 instead of five divisions, but also provides a number of independent brigades, eminently suitable for use in the defence of the country, and equipped with personal equipment, but on a lower scale otherwise, than the divisional brigades.

5. It is proposed to use the 16 regular battalions which are being withdrawn from India to "stiffen" certain selected Territorial Army divisions, on a basis of posting one regular battalion to an infantry brigade.

6. These proposals are without prejudice to a future split of the joint divisions referred to in paragraph 2. When this takes place it will be a great advantage to be able to make use of any regular battalions which it may be decided to withdraw from the Middle East to "stiffen" brigades on the lines proposed in paragraph 5.

7. I ask my colleagues to approve these proposals.

THE WAR OFFICE  
8th June, 1940.

A.E.





