

Chapter IV-4: The Order of Battle (OOB) of Soviet Land Combat Units on 22nd June 1941

The Orders of Battle (OOB) of the Red Army, NKVD, PVO ground units and naval ground combat units, existing on 22nd June 1941 in all military districts, are shown in the table **Soviet Deployment Matrix**.

All combat units in the 'Deployment Matrix' are classified as in a Deployed (D) state in the Soviet FILARM model.

For the purposes of this book and the Deployment Matrix, the military districts, reserves and fronts on 22nd June 1941 (just prior to Operation Barbarossa) are defined as,

- **The Western Military Districts:** includes the Leningrad Military District, the Baltic Special Military District, the Western Special Military District, the Kiev Special Military District, and the Odessa Military District (including the 9th Separate Army).
- **The Reserves of the STAVKA GK:** includes the 16th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd and 24th Armies, and Separate Stavka Reserves.
- **Internal Military Districts and Non-Active Fronts:** includes the Moscow Military District, the Orel Military District, the Kharkov Military District, the Volga Military District, the North Caucasus Military District, the Transcaucasus Military District, the Archangel'sk Military District, the Urals Military District, the Central Asia Military District, the Siberia Military District and the Transbaikal Military District.
- **The Far Eastern Front.**

All the relevant combat units that existed on 22nd June 1941 and that are identified in Part IV 3 (The Tables of Organisation and Equipment (TOE) for Soviet Land Combat Units) are listed in the left hand column of the Deployment Matrix pages.

The table **Soviet Deployment Matrix** lists each military district, Stavka reserve or front in the USSR on 22nd June 1941. Within each military district, Stavka reserve or front, the subordinate armies are shown as columns (if armies were present). Rifle, mechanised, cavalry and airborne corps HQs which were subordinate to each army HQ are listed within each army column along with all attached divisions and support units. Relevant notes at the bottom of each column indicate divisional and brigade corps attachments, the names of fortified sectors, the names of PVO regional brigades, garrisons, information on when units transferred from internal military districts and the Far Eastern Front to the 'west' (refer Part IV 5) and some important details on the status of individual combat units.

Table **Soviet Deployment Matrix** indicates that on 22nd June 1941 there were 304 ground divisions in the Soviet armed forces (excluding NKVD rail security and PVO divisions). These were made up of 179 rifle divisions, 19 mountain rifle divisions, 61 tank divisions, 31 mechanised divisions, nine cavalry divisions, four mountain cavalry divisions and one NKVD motorised rifle division. In addition there were five rifle brigades, 16 airborne brigades, one naval infantry brigade, 10 anti tank brigades, and 168 large corps and RVGK artillery regiments deployed (excluding 15 RVGK high power artillery battalions).

Of the 304 available ground divisions, 171 divisions were in the Western Military Districts while a further 57 divisions were in the Stavka reserves. In total 228 divisions (75% of the total number) were either already committed in the west or would be quickly available to meet any Axis invasion force from the west. These 228 divisions were made up of 138 rifle divisions, seven mountain rifle divisions, 50 tank divisions, 25 mechanised divisions, seven cavalry divisions and one NKVD motorised rifle division. In addition two rifle brigades, 12 airborne brigades, one naval

infantry brigade, 10 anti tank brigades, and 111 large corps and RVGK artillery regiments were also in the Western Military Districts or in Stavka reserves.

When examining the forces deployed in the Western Military Districts on 22nd June 1941, defence of the area known as Bessarabia was the responsibility of the 9th Separate Army. Bessarabia was the area south of the Kiev Special Military District, north of the Black Sea, east of the Rumanian border and west of the Dneestr River. In June 1940 Stalin took advantage of the German preoccupation in the west to consolidate his position in Eastern Europe. He demanded that Rumania cede the provinces of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the USSR. Not wanting a rift with the Soviets at this stage, the Germans advised Rumania to 'hand over' these territories. Having no real choice in the matter and coupled with the fact that French and British forces could no longer offer support, the Rumanians allowed the Soviet troops to occupy the above territories unopposed from the 28-30th June 1940. The 9th Army was then tasked with occupying the newly gained territory and preparing it for any possible invasion. Sometime between September 1940 and June 1941 the 9th Army was removed from direct assignment to the Odessa Military District and placed directly under the command of the Stavka. It was then designated the 9th Separate Army although it appears the command positions still came from the headquarters of the Odessa Military District.

As a result the 9th Separate Army grew into a powerful army with three rifle corps, one cavalry corps and two mechanised corps at its disposal by June 1941. Immediately behind the 9th Army, the Odessa Military District remained responsible for the defences east of the Dneestr River and for Odessa itself. Although the 9th Army was considered 'separate' it was closely aligned with and largely controlled by the Odessa Military District. In time of war the 9th Army would draw its directions, supply and reinforcements from the Odessa Military District. After Operation Barbarossa started the forces in the 9th Army, the Odessa Military District and the hastily deployed 18th Army HQ from the Kharkov Military District, became the Southern Front on 25th June 1941. Most sources list the Odessa Military District as an Internal Military District as it was not directly on the border with the west and 'buffered' by the 9th Separate Army. However forces deployed in the Odessa Military District in June 1941 were much closer to Axis forces than many units in the so called Western Military or 'Frontier' Districts, and were drawn into the campaign almost immediately. Therefore for all intents and purposes the Odessa Military District was one of the Western Military Districts in June 1941 and will be considered as such in this analysis.

There are many reasons why the German invasion came close to success and was not literally stopped in its tracks by the massive Soviet force in the Western Military Districts. These reasons will be analysed in various parts of this work, but arguably the four main reasons were:

- The state of the majority of existing Soviet divisions and their equipment in June 1941. Most divisions were well below their TOE strength, especially in critical areas such as transport.
- The overall condition the Red Army's leadership at all levels of command. This was principally the result of Stalin's purge of the military which had been on going since 1937.
- The poor tactical and operational deployment of the Red Army ground forces and the VVS air forces in the Western Military Districts in June 1941.
- The very high degree of tactical and operational combat proficiency exhibited by the invading German Army and Luftwaffe forces. Note the stress here is tactical and operational level proficiency because at the strategic level the German proficiency left much to be desired, as can be seen from the figures in the German FILARM model.

The total personnel and equipment in the Soviet armed forces on 22nd June 1941 amounted to over: 5 447 000 men (with over 4 553 000 in the ground forces and PVO), 23 200 tanks, 20 400 combat aircraft, 14 900 AT guns, 8 600 AA guns, 56 100 mortars and 33 200 artillery pieces. The

Soviet armed forces easily represented the largest armed force in the world in June 1941. When the staggering number of tanks, guns and aircraft is included, the Soviet armed forces that existed in June 1941 were probably the largest armed forces ever maintained in peacetime by any single country. This was even before the massive mobilisation effort that occurred after 22nd June 1941.¹

¹ Although the Soviets had started to mobilise. In the spring of 1941 around 500 000 reservists were called up, primarily to increase the strength of rifle divisions in the Western Military Districts.