

# A-H Field Artillery Organisation 1917/18

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At the beginning of WW 1 the Austrian doctrine was to provide a sizeable quantity of artillery to the army corps, which could use it to concentrate fire before their front.

The course of the war made evident that this doctrine was wrong. It seemed to be more useful to provide numerous howitzers and field-guns down to divisional level. Different kinds of howitzers, field guns, anti-aircraft-guns and mortars would make a useful mix in the hand of the divisional commander to meet all the demands for fighting modern materiel battle.

Industrial efforts on the one side and the victory after the 12<sup>th</sup> battle of Isonzo on the other released enough material for doing so. In the middle of 1918 the re-organisation of the whole artillery branch was nearly finished including the organisation plan for the post war period.

A very important experience was that the lack of high-trajectory guns increased as trench warfare developed. Consequently the change from field guns and cannons to field howitzers, mortars and mine-throwers was one of the most obvious developments of WW 1. If we compare the total of howitzer-batteries in the A-H field artillery from 1914 to 1918 we recognize an almost 6 fold increase from 120 to 679 while the number of field-gun-batteries increased from just 365 to 584 which is less then double.

## 1. Divisional artillery:

### 1.1. Infantry divisions:

In common every infantry division should have a field arty brigade (FAB = Feldartillieriebrigade) with the same number.  
The brigade was built from:

2 field arty regiments (FAR = Feldartillerieregimenter)  
1 heavy field arty regiment (sFAR = schweres Feldartilliereregiment)  
1 mountain arty bataillon (GebAA= Gebirgsartillierie-Abteilung).

The first FAR was numbered like the division/FAB, the second one with a number increased by 100. For example the 58<sup>th</sup> infantry division had the 58. FAB consisting of the FAR 58 and FAR 158, the sFAR 58 and the GebAA 58.

The two FARs were organised differently. Both had 3 field-howitzer and 2 field-gun batteries each. The first regiment had in addition one anti-aircraft battery (Flak) with 4 guns as number six battery and the second regiment had in addition a mine-thrower battery with 4 light and 4 medium mine-throwers as number six battery.

The sFAR had 5 batteries with 15 cm field-howitzers and one battery with 10.4 cm cannons.

The GebAA had 2 batteries of mountain-guns and one battery with mountain-howitzers which were used to accompany the infantry battalions on the battlefield and which could be utilised as anti-tank-guns.

All in all the infantry division had 100 guns of different types and in addition four medium and four light mine-throwers:

36 field-howitzers  
24 field-guns  
20 heavy field-howitzers  
8 mountain-guns  
4 mountain-howitzers  
4 10.5 cannons  
4 anti-aircraft-guns

When we take a look into the tactical organisation of the troops in Italy on June 15<sup>th</sup> 1918 we will recognize that reality was often different. Most of the assault divisions throughout the front were reinforced by one, two or three FABs from other divisions, which were stripped of arty in consequence. The FABs were used as a tactical reserve by the corps and army commands to build points of main effort. For example: The 6<sup>th</sup> FAB form the 6<sup>th</sup> ID was attached to the 18<sup>th</sup> ID while 2<sup>nd</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> FAB were taken away from their parent organisation to reinforce the 6<sup>th</sup> ID.

### 1.2. Cavalry divisions:

During the years from 1914 to 1917 the cavalry divisions had just one mounted arty battalion (= "reitende Artilleriedivision") with 3 field-gun-batteries each. Because of the inreasing lack of horses in 1916/17 the cavalry divisions were reorganized as infantry divisions in 1917. Therefore it seemed appropriate to give them more artillery. Consequently the "reitende Artilleriedivisionen" received 3

more batteries each and were renamed as “K”-Feldartillerieregimenter. In the middle of 1918 a heavy arty regiment with 2 batteries was added and a “K-Feldartilleriebrigade” (“K”-field-arty-brigade) built out of these two types of regiments. This had been implemented in 9 of the 12 divisions by the autumn of 1918.

Therefore the cavalry division should have a “K” field arty brigade (KFAB = “K”-Feldartilleriebrigade), which was built from:

- 1 “K” field arty regiment (KFAR = “K”-Feldartillerieregiment)
  - with 2 field-gun-batteries and 3 (later 4) field-howitzer-batteries
- 1 “K” heavy field arty regiment (sKFAR = schweres “K”-Feldartillerieregiment)
  - with one 10.4 cm canon-battery and one 15 cm howitzer-battery

Table: Development of A-H Field Artillery from 1914 - 1918															
	VIII/1914			V/1916			VI/1917			VII/1918			post war organisation		
	Quantity	Batteries	Guns	Quantity	Batteries	Guns	Quantity	Batteries	Guns	Quantity	Batteries	Guns	Quantity	Batteries	Guns
Total of all Regiments/Divisions/Batterys		485	2610		804	4018		1050	5362		1351	6916		1578	7908
Field Artillery Regiments	77	393	2178	189	724	3594	214	856	4442	224	1162	6160	236	1380	7116
Field Artillery Divisions und Battalions	41	92	432	11	38	152	10	194	920	66	189	756	66	198	792
Feldkanonenregimenter	50	253	1518	57	261	1642	65	258	1530	disbanded and reorganized as the new "Feldartillierregiment" between autumn 1917 and spring 1918					
k.u.k. Feldkanonenregimenter	42	222	1332	40	194		42	168	1008						
k.k. Feldkanonendivisionen/regimenter	8	16	96	8	31		12	48	288						
k.u. Honvéd-Feldkanonenregimenter	8	31	186	9	36		11	42	234						
k.u.k. reitende Artilleriedivisionen	9	27	108	9	32	128	9								
k.u. Honvéd- reitende Artillieriedivision	1	3	12	2	6	24	2								
Feldkanonenbatterien der Polenlegion				4	24		disbanded								
Feldhaubitregimenter	14	54	324	56	209	1182	64								
k.u.k. Feldhaubitregimenter	14	54	324	39	146		41								
k.k. Feldhaubitdivisionen/regimenter	8	16	96	8	31		12								
k.u. Honvéd-Feldhaubitregimenter				9	32		11								
Feldhaubitzbatterien der Polenlegion				2	8		disbanded								
k.(u.)k. Gebirgsartillerieregimenter	10	74	296	28	142	568	32			14	123	492	14	126	504
k.u. Honvéd-Gebirgsartilleriedivisionen								mountain-gun-batteries:		86	344		84	336	
								mountain-howitzer-batteries:		37	148		42	168	
							10	194	920	reorganized/renamed together with 18 disbanded regiments					
Dalmatiner Gebirgskanonendivision	1	2	8	disbanded						reorganized/renamed together with 18 disbanded regiments					
schwere Feldartillerieregimenter				48	112	386	53	174	566	66	234	882	66	456	1824
k.u.k. schwere Feldartillierieregimenter								10.4 cm cannon-batteries:		76	272		76	304	
								15 cm howitzer-batteries:		158	610		380	1520	
							32	86		32			reorganized and renamed as "schwere Artilliereregimenter"		
k.k. schwere Feldartillierieregimenter				8	14		11			reorganized and renamed as "schwere Artilliereregimenter"					
k.u. Honvéd- schwere Feldartillierieregimenter				8	12		10			reorganized and renamed as "schwere Artilliereregimenter"					
k.u.k. schwere Haubitzddivisionen	14	28	112	reorganized in regiments above											
improvised Formations	3	12	48		36	240	disbanded								
Landsturm-Feldkanonenregimenter	3	12	48	disbanded											
Positions-, Flak- usw. Batterien					36	240									
Feldartilliereregimenter (from 1918)	reorganized out of disbanded units and renamed end of 1917									132	779	4702	132	792	4884
								field-gun-batteries:		264	1584		264	1584	
								field-howitzer-batteries:		396	2376		396	2376	
								anti-aircraft-batteries:		53	214		66	396	
								mine-thrower-batteries:		66	528		66	528	
"K"-Feldartillierieregimenter (from 1918)	reorganized out of "reitende Artilleriedivisionen" end of 1917									12	57	342	12	73	432
								field-gun-batteries:		24	144		24	144	
								field-howitzer-batteries:		33	198		48	288	
schwere "K"-Feldartillierieregimenter (End 1918)													12	26	244
											10.4 cm cannon-batteries:			12	48
											15 cm howitzer-batteries:			14	196
Gebirgsartillierieabteilungen (battalions) from 1918	reorganized out of disbanded "Gebirgsartillierregimenter" end of 1917									66	189	756	66	198	792
								mountain-gun-batteries:		134	536		132	528	
								mountain-howitzer-batteries:		55	220		66	264	

b) Heavy artillery

The heavy artillery remained as a reserve of the higher commands and was organized in 11 mobile and 3 coastal heavy arty regiments (schwere Artillerieregimenter). The mobile regiments were built from 44 bataillons and 176 batteries as follows:

- 48 batteries with 2 30.5 cm mortars (motorized)
- 48 batteries with 4 15 cm howitzers (horse-drawn)
- 24 batteries with 4 15 cm guns (motorized)
- 24 batteries with 4 15 cm howitzers (motorized)
- 16 batteries with 4 10.4 cm guns (horse-drawn)
- 8 batteries with 2 38 cm howitzers (motorized)
- 8 batteries with 2 24 cm guns (motorized)

During wartime the regiments had in addition 154 anti-aircraft-batteries and 50 mine-thrower batteries attached. The remaining batteries of 35 cm guns and 42 cm howitzers were detached for coastal defense purposes.

Table: Austro-Hungarian Mobile Heavy Artillery from 1914 to 1918										
	VIII/1914		VI/1916		VI/1917		VI/1918		post war org	
Mobile batteries of heavy artillery	batteries	guns	batteries	guns	batteries	guns	batteries	guns	batteries	guns
42 cm Haubitzbatterien (howitzers)	-	-	-	-	6	6	8	8	-	-
38 cm Haubitzbatterien (howitzers)	-	-	-	-	2	2	7	7	8	16
35 cm Kanonenbatterien (guns)	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	-
34 cm Kanonenbatterien (guns)	-	-	-	-	17	34	-	-	-	-
30.5 cm Mörserbatterien (mortars)	12	24	21	42	29	58	36	72	48	96
24 cm Mörserbatterien (mortars)	12	48	9	36	8	30	3	12	-	-
24 cm Kanonenbatterien (guns)	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	2	8	16
21 cm Mörserbatterien (mortars)	-	-	-	-	11	11	2	2	-	-
15 cm Mörserbatterien (mortars)	-	-	17	68	26	100	-	-	-	-
15 cm Haubitzbatterien (howitzers)	32	128	36	144	36	158	17	68	72	288
15 cm weittragende Haubitzbatterien (howitzers)	-	-	2	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
18 cm Kanonenbatterien (guns)	-	-	3	12	-	-	-	-	-	-
15 cm Kanonenbatterien (guns)	-	-	10	40	-	-	-	-	24	96
15 cm russische Kanonenbatterien (guns)	-	-	4	16	-	-	-	-	-	-
12 bis 15 cm Kanonenbatterien (guns)	-	-	-	-	24	78	20	80	-	-
12 cm Kanonenbatterien (guns)	20	80	8	32	-	-	-	-	-	-
10.4 cm Kanonenbatterien (guns)	-	-	13	26	-	-	5	20	16	64
Flakanonenbatterien (anti-aircraft)	-	-	-	-	8	8	154	299	-	-
Positionsbatterien	-	-	-	-	62	248	48	192	-	-
Minenwerferbatterien (mine-throwers)	-	-	-	-	16		50		-	-
Total:	76	280	123	420	247	735	353	763	176	576

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Mobile batteries of heavy artillery	batteries	guns	batteries	guns	batteries	guns	batteries	guns	batteries	guns
42 cm howitzer-batteries	-	-	-	-	6	6	8	8	-	-
38 cm howitzer-batteries	-	-	-	-	2	2	7	7	8	16
35 cm cannon batteries	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	-
34 cm cannon batteries	-	-	-	-	17	34	-	-	-	-
30.5 cm mortar batteries	12	24	21	42	29	58	36	72	48	96
24 cm mortar batteries	12	48	9	36	8	30	3	12	-	-
24 cm cannon batteries	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	2	8	16
21 cm mortar batteries	-	-	-	-	11	11	2	2	-	-
15 cm mortar batteries	-	-	17	68	26	100	-	-	-	-
15 cm howitzer-batteries	32	128	36	144	36	158	17	68	72	288
15 cm long-range howitzer-batteries	-	-	2	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
18 cm cannon batteries	-	-	3	12	-	-	-	-	-	-
15 cm cannon batteries	-	-	10	40	-	-	-	-	24	96

15 cm Russian cannon batteries	-	-	4	16	-	-	-	-		
12 up to 15 cm cannon batteries	-	-	-	-	24	78	20	80	-	-
12 cm cannon batteries	20	80	8	32	-	-	-	-		
10.4 cm cannon batteries	-	-	13	26	-		5	20	16	64
anti-aircraft batteries	-	-	-	-	8	8	154	299	-	-
position batteries	-	-	-	-	62	248	48	192	-	-
mine-thrower batteries	-	-	-	-	16		50		-	-
Total:	76	280	123	420	247	735	353	763	176	576

c) Arty Reconnaissance

Arty recon was a very important aide to firing. It was executed by artillery observers, balloon and aircraft-spotting. Their results often were too inaccurate and so in the summer of 1917 the sound ranging platoons, which achieved good results, were increased to company strength and multiplied in number so that by spring 1918 every arty brigade had its own sound ranging company, which provided satisfying results.