

EFFECTIVE STRENGTH OF THE COMBINED ARMIES IN THE NETHERLANDS, 1794

translated by Geert van Uythoven

“1. Remarks about the unreliability of the returns of the strength of an army, and about the amount of recruits necessary to keep the army up to strength”

Nothing is more deceiving as the returns of the strength of armies. Usually, their strength is enlarged in the newspapers and even in official reports. One does this as some kind of reassurance, one wants to inspire himself and others with trust and courage.

In general one calculates the strength of an army in battalions and squadrons. These however are so different in the various services, that calculating according to this is very uncertain. An Austrian battalion for example has on full strength 1,020 men, while many Hessian battalions had during the last war only 360 men as a whole, at full strength.

Calculating the strength in numbers of men is much more certain then according to the number of battalions and squadrons. But still uncertain if it is not clear how many men belong to the economic structure of the army, the hospitals, the magazines, and transport of all kinds; how many are sick, and how many are commandeered to the country, to fortresses, etc. The total amount of these men in weakened armies often exceeds those remaining to fight. For this reason, the Austrian army has created the category ‘*Ausrückende Stand*’ [‘effective strength’] ¹⁾. One understands this as those men which during an action really will advance against the enemy. Every return of the strength of an army should consist of its ‘*Ausrückende Stand*’; every other return always remains uncertain.

For example in December 1794, the Hanoverian army had an original strength of 13,140 men. Present in fact were, beside the prisoners, only 7,453 men; for service remain 3,854; against the army however, only 1,824 marched out in the battalions! The Hessian cavalry had an original strength of 1,820 men; 1,570 men were in fact present; only 849 men however marched against the enemy. The above makes clear that it can easily be the case that of an army of 40,000 men, against the enemy only 20,000 can be deployed.

Of the full strength of the battalions the following has to be deducted:

1. The men killed in battle, the deceased, the deserters and the men that have been discharged;
2. The wounded and sick;
3. The prisoners and missing persons;
4. The commandeered men and those arrested. The commandeered men are those serving in or guarding the hospitals, magazines, baggage, with the headquarters, the artillery-reserve, the money wagon, etc.;
5. The artillerymen or ‘*handlanger*’, or those manhandling the cannon ²⁾;
6. Those escorting the ‘*fouriers*’ and carpenters, and those that are with the bread wagons and the baggage of the officers;
7. Those commandeered within the regiment, for guard duties and orderlies.

When one counts for the men killed in battle, the deceased, the deserters and the men that have been discharged, half way the campaign, a tenth of the original strength; for the wounded and sick a third: then a six hundred men strong battalion is left with only 360 men, of which still has to be deducted those mentioned above under no. 4, 5, 6 and 7, and those that are away from the regiment for outpost and picket duty etc., if one wants to know the effective strength of a battalion.

Taking this all into account, it is to explain that of the Hanoverian army with an original strength of 13,140 men, effective strength is only 1,824 men in December:

- 1,501 men were not present;

- 2,835 men were sick;
- 4,301 men had been taken prisoner and were missing;
- 634 men had been commandeered elsewhere;
- 314 men were serving the regimental guns;
- 328 men escorted the *'fouriers'*;
- 1,430 men were not with their colours because of guard duty, acting as orderly, etc.

When one does not deduct the 4,301 prisoners, which mostly fell into the hands of the enemy inside fortresses, effective strength would still only be 6,125 men ³⁾.

All this proves that armies, which do not have a depot of exercised recruits of a third of their strength, will half way and at the end of the campaign only be able to bring only half the amount of arms to bear against the enemy, then at the beginning of the campaign. Such extraordinary amount of replacements will however not be necessary during the second campaign, while the number of sick which is deducted during the initial campaign, numbering at least a fourth of the total, will die about half, while the other half will return to their colours.

So when one sends a battalion of 600 men into the field; during the first campaign one will have to send about 300 men in replacements, and during the second, third, etc. campaign about 150 to 200 men. Only then its total *Etat* will be about 900 men, and its effective strength about 60 men, if it will not suffer especially hard. Have no preparations been made for these replacements, the army will cost a lot of money, and it still has no combatants when it has to do battle – one has a lot of bread wagons, baggage,, officers, etc., and no muskets when the enemy advances.

2. Strength of the combined armies

Strength of the combined armies in the Netherlands in the year 1794 was:

In March:		
Commanding officer	Location	Strength
Prince von Coburg	Valenciennes	30,000
General Clerfayt	Courtrai	25,000
Prince von Hohenlohe	near Maubeuge	25,000
General la Tour	Namur	15,000
General Beaulieu	Luxembourg	15,000
English, Hanoverians & Hessians		53,000
Dutch		15,000
Total:		178,000
In April:		
Commanding officer	Location	Strength
Prince of Orange	near Landrecies	30,000
Duke of York	Cateau	30,000
The Emperor	between Guise & Landrecies	60,000
General von Wurmb	Denain	12,000
Count Kaunitz	on the Sambre	15,000
General Clerfayt	in Flanders	40,000
Total:		187,000

In both lists, the regiments have been counted at full strength, while with the English and Hanoverians the reinforcements which will arrive later have already been included. According to a more accurate

calculation, the serviceable amount of troops in the armies in the Netherlands, in June 1794, counted 123,796 combatants, as follows:

Army	Strength
Austrian army	83,400
English army	28,396
Dutch army	12,000
Total:	123,796

If the amount of sick, wounded, and non-combatants are added, total amount is about 150,000 men.

The army on the Mosel and the Rhine had, according to a note by the prince von Coburg to Field Marshall Mollendorf, the following strength:

Army	Strength
Austrian troops on the Upper Rhine, including the Corps of Condé	40,000
Pfalz-Bavarian troops, including the garrison of Mannheim	20,000
Hessen-Cassel & Hessen-Darmstadt	4,000
<i>Schwäbische Kreis</i>	6,000
Prussians	60,000
Saxons	10,000
Austrian troops around Trier, etc.	16,000
Total:	166,000

Most probably these together fielded together about 120,000 healthy combatants. The in the answer of Mollendorf to the note by the prince of Coburg mentioned above, the Prussian army is calculated at only 40,000 healthy combatants on 5 March, and the correctness of the remaining returns is doubted. The whole might of the Coalition therefore, between Basel and the sea, was therefore about 250,000 men.

3. Strength of the English army, in April, June, and December of the campaign of 1794

In April:	Full strength		Present		Serviceable	
	Infantry	Cavalry	Infantry	Cavalry	Infantry	Cavalry
English	7,700	4,000	5,500	3,200	5,000	2,400
Hanoverians	15,059	2,311	12,795	2,257	10,164	1,816
Hessen-Cassel	8,665	2,151	8,371	2,062	6,028	1,603
Hessen-Darmstadt	2,373	568	2,271	501	2,000	390
Baden	729	-	650	-	500	-
Summa:	34,526	9,030	29,587	8,020	23,692	6,209
Total:	43,556		37,007		29,901	

In June:	Full strength		Present		Serviceable	
	Infantry	Cavalry	Infantry	Cavalry	Infantry	Cavalry
English	11,000	5,000	9,878	4,062	5,977	2,956
Hanoverians	15,059	2,620	11,452	2,493	7,688	2,193
Hessen-Cassel	8,665	2,151	7,611	1,857	5,790	1,720
Hessen-Darmstadt	2,373	568	2,151	469	1,458	314
Baden	729	-	500	-	300	-
Summa:	37,826	10,339	31,592	8,881	21,213	7,183
Total:	48,165		40,473		28,396	

In December:	Full strength		Present		Serviceable	
	Infantry	Cavalry	Infantry	Cavalry	Infantry	Cavalry
English	21,600	8,100	15,220	5,612	8,000	3,200
Hanoverians	15,059	2,620	8,609	2,421	4,651	2,030
Hessen-Cassel	8,665	2,151	5,089	1,756	4,329	1,669
Hessen-Darmstadt	2,373	568	1,200	400	800	350
Baden	729	-	450	-	300	-
Summa:	48,426	13,439	30,568	10,189	18,080	7,249
Total:	61,865		40,757		25,329	

The category 'present' also includes the sick, wounded, etc.; or rather all men present, including officers, 'fourier' escorts, etc. The category 'serviceable' is not the effective strength, but includes all healthy officers, NCO's, musicians and others. This number is therefore higher than the number of real combatants. For example, the Hanoverian infantry lists for June 7,688 men serviceable, but had an effective strength of only 5,331 men."

Footnotes:

- 1) [GvU]: 'Ausrückende Stand' is not the same as 'combatants', as the latter includes often the commandeered men and detachments, etc. 'Effective strength' is maybe the best comparable phrase, and I will use it as such.
- 2) [GvU]: Especially the regimental and battalions guns were usually served by men of the regiment or battalion itself.
- 3) [Gvu]: There is a 27 men difference in this calculation, which I cannot explain...

Source: Anonymous, "Stärke, innerer Zustand, und Kriegestheater der verbundenen Armeen, in den Niederlanden, im Jahr 1794", in 'Neues Militairisches Journal', 8. Band (Hannover 1797), pp. 274-286. © Geert van Uythoven