



<https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8674-2025-24-2-148-160>
EDN: GSYRMR

Research article / Научная статья

857th Artillery Regiment of the 316th Rifle Division in the Battle of Moscow during the Great Patriotic War

Laila S. Akhmetova^{ID}✉, Sergey S. Akhmetov^{ID}

Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan

✉ laila_akhmetova@mail.ru

Abstract: The study is devoted to the identification of the personnel of the 857th Artillery Regiment of the first formation of the 316th Rifle Division. Despite numerous macro-statistical studies and active databases dedicated to the Great Patriotic War, there are still a lot about homeland defenders of 1941–1945 which remains unknown. In order to fill these gaps, the authors place emphasis of their research on the unit of the 316th Rifle Division formed in Alma-Ata, with people enlisted from the Central Asian Military District. The methodological approach included the cross-textual and discourse analysis of the regimental and divisional documents from the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation and a comparison of the obtained materials with the scientific literature conclusions on the military actions during the Battle of Moscow in 1941. The research result is the comprehensive reconstruction of the organization, equipment, and duties of the personnel of the 857th Artillery Regiment. The data were divided into those set by the Red Army's table of organization and the actual figures on the ground, data which allowed the authors to observe dynamic changes during military actions. The research yielded important clarifications in the make of the 857th Artillery Regiment's personnel and battle routes and it sets the groundwork for further study of the action of larger military units.

Keywords: Kazakhstani servicemen of the Red Army, defense of Moscow, military losses of the Kazakh SSR, military anthropological research, ethnic formations of the Red Army units, killed and missing Kazakhstanis

Conflicts of interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Acknowledgements: The authors express their gratitude to Prokhorova N.M. (Stavropol Krai, Russian Federation) for assistance with information resources studies.

Authors' contributions: All authors contributed equally to the research and writing the article, reviewed the final text and bear equal responsibility.

For citation: Akhmetova, L.S., and Akhmetov, S.S. "857th Artillery Regiment of the 316th Rifle Division in the Battle of Moscow during the Great Patriotic War." *RUDN Journal of Russian History* 24, no. 2 (May 2025): 148–160. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8674-2025-24-2-148-160>

857-й артиллерийский полк 316-й стрелковой дивизии в битве за Москву в годы Великой Отечественной войны

Лайла Сейсембековна Ахметова^{ID}✉, Сергей Сергеевич Ахметов^{ID}

Казахский национальный университет имени аль-Фараби, Алматы, Казахстан

✉ laila_akhmetova@mail.ru

Аннотация: Идентифицируется личный состав 857-го артиллерийского полка первого формирования 316-й стрелковой дивизии. Несмотря на многочисленные макростатистические исследования и активные базы данных, посвященные Великой Отечественной войне, все еще много защитников Родины 1941–1945 гг. остаются неназванными и неизвестными. Чтобы заполнить эти пробелы в знаниях, авторы сосредотачиваются на исследовании 316-й стрелковой

© Akhmetova L.S., Akhmetov S.S., 2025



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode>

дивизии, сформированной в Алма-Ате, с призванными из Средне-Азиатского военного округа. Методологический подход включал перекрестный текстовый и дискурсивный анализ полковых и дивизионных документов из Центрального архива Министерства обороны Российской Федерации и сопоставление полученных материалов с выводами из научной литературы о боевых действиях в ходе обороны Москвы в 1941 г. Результатом исследования стала комплексная реконструкция организации, оснащения, должностных обязанностей личного состава 857-го артиллерийского полка. Разделение данных на установленные штатным расписанием Красной армии и фактические цифры на местах позволило проследить изменения в динамике в ходе боевых действий. Результатом исследования стало уточнение личного состава и боевого пути 857-го артиллерийского полка, что имеет важное значение для дальнейшего изучения действий более крупных воинских соединений.

Ключевые слова: казахстанские военнослужащие РККА, оборона Москвы, военные потери Казахской ССР, военно-антропологическое исследование, этнические формирования частей Красной армии, погибшие и пропавшие без вести казахстанцы

Вклад авторов: Все авторы внесли равный вклад в исследование и написание статьи, ознакомились с окончательным текстом и несут равную ответственность.

Заявление о конфликте интересов: Авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Благодарности: Благодарности: Авторы выражают благодарность Н.М. Прохоровой (Ставропольский край, РФ) за помощь в работе с информационными порталами.

Для цитирования: Ахметова Л.С., Ахметов С.С. 857-й артиллерийский полк 316-й стрелковой дивизии в битве за Москву в годы Великой Отечественной войны // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: История России. 2025. Т. 24. № 2. С. 148–160. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8674-2025-24-2-148-160>

Introduction

Relevance. Formed in July 1941, the 316th Rifle Division is the most studied unit of the Red Army from Kazakhstan and, at the same time, also the most mythologized one. There are still significant gaps in knowledge concerning the number of units in the division and its subdivisions, their structure, and their battle route, which contributes to a biased perception of history in society, and sometimes to falsifications¹. Modern research shows that the history of the war is “much more complex, confusing, and personal than anything published in Soviet times,”² and a new look requires a critical study of archival sources.

The relevance of studying the history of the 857th Artillery Regiment of the 316th Rifle Division is necessary in order to fill in the gaps in the history of the Red Army's military operations in the Battle of Moscow, as well as to identify the regiment's personnel as part of the processes of perpetuating the memory of the defenders of the Fatherland³.

Elaboration of the problem. The Battle of Moscow (1941) occupies an important place in modern Russian historiography. The researchers have introduced into scientific use a considerable number of archival documents, including those covering the actions of individual units of the Red Army and reconstructing the staff and actual figures of its personnel, national composition, weapons⁴. Such studies make a significant contribution to the

¹ A.V. Melnichuk, “Bitva za Moskvu – nekotorye voprosy falsifikatsii istorii [The Battle for Moscow – Some Issues of Falsification of History],” *Vlast* 31, no. 6 (2023): 236–241, <https://doi.org/10.31171/vlast.v31i6.9908>

² I. Glisic, and M. Edele, “The Memory Revolution Meets the Digital Age: Red Army Soldiers Remember World War II,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 45, no. 1 (2019): 320–380, <https://doi.org/10.13109/gege.2019.45.1.95>

³ *Sudba soldata: teoriia i praktika arkhivnykh issledovaniy: V Mezhdunarodnaia konferentsiia (g. Moskva, 25-28 noiabria 2021 g.)* [The Fate of a Soldier: Theory and Practice of Archival Research: V International Conference (Moscow, November, 25–28, 2021)] (Moscow: KnigIzdat Publ., 2022).

⁴ V.D. Baranovskij, *Pobeda v bitve za Moskvu. 1941–1942* [Victory in the Battle of Moscow. 1941–1942] (Moscow: Golden-Bi Publ., 2009); M.Yu. Myagkov, “The Battle of Moscow,” *MGIMO Review of International Relations* 11, no. 2 (2010): 39–50, <https://doi.org/10.24833/2071-8160-2010-2-11-39-50>; *Narody*

interpretation of tactical decisions during the defense of Moscow, the course of the Wehrmacht's Operation Typhoon and the Soviet counteroffensive. There appear works devoted to the analysis of the military structures of the Wehrmacht⁵.

The ethnic and territorial factors in the formation of the Red Army units were considered in the work of A.Yu. Bezugolny⁶. During the period under consideration (1941–1942), in the Central Asian Military District, the Red Army formed 24 rifle divisions⁷. The Book of Memory of Kazakhstan indicated a figure of 601,011 killed and missing Kazakhstani⁸. This number includes both pre-war conscripts who were on the western border in the early period of the war⁹, and reservists enlisted during the war.

At the beginning of our research into the first composition of the 316th Rifle Division, we found only 211 names¹⁰ out of approximately 11,347 who were sent to the front on August 18–19, 1941.

The unexplored facts in the records of the units of the 316th Rifle Division in 1941 can be considered an objective factor, since the rifle units suffered the heaviest combat losses¹¹, especially in the Battle of Moscow. By that time, there the Wehrmacht had lost three times more people than in Western Europe and Poland¹². It testifies to the intensity of the warfare of the period, which complicated the keeping and preserving of daily records, reports and staff documentation in general. The scarcity of archival funds related to the 1073rd, 1075th, and 1077th rifle regiments of the 316th Rifle Division determined the choice of the subject of research.

A similar methodology for studying an artillery unit (the 131st Light Artillery Regiment of the 6th Oryol Rifle Division), by focusing on its weaponry, deployment, and personnel was previously tested by one of the authors of this study¹³. Given the nature of warfare and difference in the tasks facing artillerymen compared to infantry, this unit preserved of more documents, although still far from the total amount that had existed during the period.

SSSR na frontakh Velikoi Otechestvennoi voyny: statisticheskoe i voenno-antropologicheskoe issledovanie [The Peoples of the USSR on the Fronts of the Great Patriotic War: Statistical and Military-Anthropological Research] (Rostov-on-Don: YUNTS RAN Publ., 2022).

⁵ B. Muller-Gillebrand, *Sukhoputnaia armia Germanii 1933–1945 gg.* [German Land Army 1933–1945] (Moscow: Izographus Publ., 2002).

⁶ A.Y. Bezugolny, “Negative Selection: Prohibitions and Restrictions in Red Army Recruitment on Ethnic Grounds during the Great Patriotic War,” *RUDN Journal of Russian History* 19, no. 4 (2020): 869–888, <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8674-2020-19-4-869-888>

⁷ A.Y. Bezugolny, “The Ethnic Aspect in Red Army Recruitment During the Great Patriotic War: A Historical and Statistical Review,” *RUDN Journal of Russian History* 19, no. 2 (2020): 298–319, <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8674-2020-19-2-298-319>

⁸ Bozdaktar. *Kniga pamiati Kazakhstana. Svodnyi tom* [Bozdaktar. Book of memory of Kazakhstan. Consolidated volume] (Almaty: Kazakhstan Publ., 1995).

⁹ L. Akhmetova, “The defense of Brest fortress: The history of Kazakhstanis from the 125th regiment,” *Analele Universitatii din Craiova – Seria Istorie* 23, no. 1 (2018): 107–120.

¹⁰ G. Abishev, *Pod znamenem Rodiny* [Under the banner of the motherland] (Moscow: Voenizdat Publ., 1967); A. Akhmetov, *Oni – panfilovtsy* [They are Panfilov's men] (Frunze: [N.s.], 1967); M. Gabdullin, *Moi frontovye druzia* [My frontline friends] (Alma-Ata: [N.s.], 1947); I. Legostaev, *Vo imia zhizni* [In the name of life] (Tallinn: Jejesti Ambat Publ., 1967); B. Momyshev, *Za nami Moskva. Zapiski ofitsera* [Moscow is behind us. Officer's notes] (Alma-Ata: Zhazushy Publ., 1978); A. Trefilov, *U vorot Moskvyy (zapiski ofitsera)* [At the gates of Moscow (officer notes)] (Alma-Ata: Kazakhstan Publ., 1982).

¹¹ A.Y. Bezugolny, “The Ethnic Aspect in Red Army,” 308.

¹² M.J. Sean, *‘Who Has the Puck?’: Strategic Initiative in Modern, Conventional War* (London: Air University Press, 2009), 11–54.

¹³ L. Akhmetova, “The participation of Kazakhs of the 131st Light Artillery Regiment in the defense of the Brest Fortress in 1941,” *Annales-Anali za Istrske in Mediteranske Studije – Series Historia et Sociologia* 28, no. 2 (2018): 245–254, <https://doi.org/10.19233/ASHS.2018.16>

The purpose of the study is to fill in the gaps in the records of the 857th Artillery Regiment of the 316th Rifle Division, and to identify reliable and more complete information regarding the personnel of the regiment, its structure, and its battle route in 1941.

Source base and methodology of the research. The study was conducted on the basis of the funds of the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, namely regiment and battalion documentation – Guards Artillery Regiment: an outline of the battle route and battalion record books¹⁴, history of the organizational development of the unit, etc. (F. 27), and Guards Rifle Division (F. 1063-8). There was carried out a comparative analysis of the regiment documents. The analyzed material was verified with battalion reports on the number and combat strength of the division, stored in the archival funds of the “Guards Rifle Division and financial and economic battalion documentation,” (F. 8) and “Guards Artillery Regiment of the 8th Guards Rifle Division: receipt and expenditure documents” (F. 10597-27).

As a result, the information was verified using the regiment's documents, recorded by lieutenants S. Stuge and P. Zotnin, regarding: coherence, dates, style, as well as morphological and semantic content.

The need to conduct a comparative analysis and verification using different documents was caused by errors in the record books and reports on combat operations, and the incompleteness of the files containing orders for the 857th Artillery Regiment.

Scientific literature, including English-language studies¹⁵ and works by Soviet commanders¹⁶, was used as an auxiliary tool for introducing additional context. In addition, the authors used specialized literature on the history of Soviet artillery during the Great Patriotic War¹⁷.

Personnel of the 857th Artillery Regiment

The successes of the Wehrmacht in the first months of the war were surprising to the Soviet leadership, which raised the issue of replenishing the Red Army¹⁸. On July 12, 1941, the Central Asian Military District troops received an order to form the 316th Rifle Division in Alma-Ata¹⁹, which left for the combat army on August 18-19. The new division had a little more than a month in the rear to train its personnel, although during that period the training period for reservists was at least three months²⁰. American historian A. Hill claims as follows: “Rifle divisions and even brigades were formed throughout the Soviet Union;

¹⁴ The Red Army term for a regimental artillery unit was “division”, which, when written in the Latin alphabet, is written exactly the same as “division” – meaning a large tactical unit of the armed forces (for example, the 316th Rifle Division). To avoid confusion, we will replace the artillery unit term “division” with “battalion” in the English text. This clarification does not affect the Russian text.

¹⁵ A. Hill, *The Red Army and the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); D. Stahel, *The Battle for Moscow* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316103937>; M.H. Folly, *The Defence of Moscow. The Palgrave Consise Historical Atlas of the Second World War. Palgrave Consise Historic Atlases* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230502390_14; S.G. Fritz, *The First Soldier. Hitler as Military Leader* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018).

¹⁶ B.M. Shaposhnikov, *Bitva za Moskvu. Reshaiushchee srazhenie Velikoi Otechestvennoi* [Battle for Moscow. Decisive battle of the Great Patriotic War] (Moscow: EKSMO Publ., 2011); G. Zhukov, *Marshal of Victory. The autobiography of general Georgy Zhukov* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Books Ltd., 2013).

¹⁷ V.I. Feskov, K.A. Kalashnikov, and V.I. Golikov, *Krasnia Armia v pobedakh i porazheniiakh 1941–1945 gg.* [The Red Army in victories and defeats of 1941–1945] (Tomsk: Tomsk University Publ., 2003); *Artilleriiskoe snabzhenie v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine* [Artillery Supply in the Great Patriotic War], bk. 1 (Moscow; Tula: GRAU Publ., 1977); A. Ivanov, *Artilleriia SSSR vo Vtoroi mirovoi voine* [Artillery of the USSR in World War II] (St. Petersburg: Neva Publ., 2003).

¹⁸ A.Y. Bezugolny, “The Ethnic Aspect in Red Army,” 301.

¹⁹ *Tsentralnyi arkhiv ministerstva oborony Rossiiskoi Federatsii* [Central Archives of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation] (thereafter – TSAMO RF), f. 1063, op. 1, d. 4, l. 1–3.

²⁰ A.Y. Bezugolny, “Negative Selection,” 884.

having no proper training they were thrown into battle.”²¹ However, the 316th Rifle Division joined battle a little more than three months after the date of the formation order – around October 16.

Training was especially important for artillery regiments; it required basic education, knowledge of the Russian language, and technical skills. Given the short stay in the rear, the regimental headquarters were forced to train the personnel during transportation and later, in reserve at the front. In addition, the regiment's personnel were called up from the reserve²², and therefore they already had basic qualifications. These factors, as well as the subsequent results of combat operations show that the regiment was sufficiently prepared to carry out combat missions and confront hardened German units.

Table 1

Personnel and units of the 857th Artillery Regiment of the 316th Rifle Division prior to leaving for the combat army (before August 18-19, 1941)

Division unit	Number	Temporary division unit	Number
1st battery	100	7 th battery	103
2 nd battery	216	8 th battery	95
3 rd battery	72	9 th battery	91
Command of the 1 st battalion	109	Command of the 3 rd battalion	105
Total for the 1st battalion	497	Total for the 3rd battalion	394
4 th battery	116	Departed to other units of the Rifle Division	9
5 th battery	81	Total number of those who departed	403
6 th battery	104		
Command of Battalion 2	138		
Total for the 2nd battalion	439		
Veterinary hospital	9		
Workshops for clothing and equipment supply	10		
Headquarters battery	100		
Transport platoon (company)	18		
Ammunition workshops	15		
Infirmery	13		
Regimental headquarters	17		
Total for additional units of the regiment	182		
Total for the regiment as of Aug. 1, 1941	1503		
Total for the regiment as of August 18-19, 1941	1109		
Total for the regiment, including the headquarters battery, according to the Order of the Central Asian Military District	1107		

Source: The table was compiled by L.S. Akhmetova, and S.S. Akhmetov based on the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. F. 27. Op. 2. D. 1. L. 1–51.

Note: According to the authors’ estimates, the error is less than 20%, taking into account the lack of 21 sheets in the file, including the backsides of each page.

Table 1 is based on the analysis of the Orders on enrollment in the lists of the regiment units and the assignment of commanders and reserve Red Army soldiers who arrived from 14.07 (Order № 1) to 31.07 (Order № 37). The material allows for the identification of 1,503 soldiers, of which 394 people subsequently left the regiment²³.

²¹ A. Hill, *The Red Army and the Second World War*, 255–257.

²² TSAMO RF, f. 27, op. 1, d. 4, l. 2.

²³ From 21.07. orders appeared on the enrollment of newly arrived Red Army soldiers and commanders in the management of the 3rd division and the 7th, 8th, 9th batteries of this division. For some time, the 3rd division was listed in the 857th regiment.

According to Appendix 4 of the Order to the Central Asian Military District Troops № 0044 on the formation of the 316th Rifle Division²⁴, there were 1,038 junior commanders and privates of the 857th Artillery Regiment and 69 personnel in the headquarters battery (total of 1,107 people). This number is comparable with the data we received. The conducted comparative analysis shows that the 857th Artillery Regiment (together with the headquarters, which was listed separately in the order) went to the front fully staffed.

The headquarters were forming the units until August 18²⁵, i.e. the day of the departure to the front. The analysis of the regiment documents, record books and reports on the combat actions of the battalions (namely the 1st and 2nd battalions, without the 3rd battalion) showed that by the time the regiment departed in two echelons on August 18 and 19, the 3rd battalion was not part of the regiment. In addition, we repeatedly come across references to the interaction of the battalions not only with the rifle regiments of the division during combat operations, but also with each other. Within the material, there are descriptions of the battles fought by: the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th batteries and the activities of the 1st and 2nd battalions as a whole. However, the actions of the 3rd battalion and the 7th, 8th, and 9th batteries are not described at all.

In the report on the number and combat strength of the 316th Rifle Division as of September 20²⁶ we see the number of the 857th Artillery Regiment, comparable to our estimates (minus the 3rd battalion): 86 commanders, 930 junior commanders, and 1016 privates. However, after we analyzed the composition of the division's materiel, we saw somewhat different numbers. The division was recorded to have had sixteen 76 mm guns and eight 122 mm howitzers; that is, the materiel corresponds to the crews of only 6 batteries (4 guns each) or 2 full battalions. At the same time, 76 mm guns (4 units each) are available to each of the rifle regiments - just enough for 3 crews for 3 batteries; furthermore, the 3rd battalion left the artillery regiment in the interim period from the end of July to August 18.

The results and data obtained are related to the initial composition of both the 316th Rifle Division as a whole and the 857th Artillery Regiment. Further research showed that the first reinforcements joined the regiment on October 20, 1941; that is, at least from this moment we can no longer speak about the initial composition. In general, the personnel of the artillery regiment lost people, and was continually replenished over time. The reports after September on the state of the division show fluctuations within 10%, but the identification of the personnel is complicated by the lack of: a) complete lists of reinforcements and b) an exact understanding of the number of reinforcements.

Regarding the short history of the 3rd battalion, before the start of hostilities, the initial composition could change as people left and joined other units. The regiment's receipt and expenditure documents²⁷ as well as expenditure records include the names of all soldiers and commanders listed in the regiment in July, August, and September 1941. This explains the maximum number of available names; 1,531 people made up the initial composition of the 857th Artillery Regiment. Part of the personnel left Alma-Ata, and even fewer people most likely entered battle on October 16 (1,016 people).

However, all shifts took place within the division, and each figure indicates the names and surnames of specific soldiers and commanders who defended Moscow from October to December.

Furthermore, we conducted the verification of the names with the data of the information systems "The Feat of the People in the Great Patriotic War. 1941–1945" and "Memory of the People." In those resources, there were matches for the names of 691

²⁴ TSAMO RF, f. 1063, op. 1, d. 4, l. 1–3.

²⁵ Ibid., f. 27, op. 1, d. 3, l. 1.

²⁶ Ibid., f. 8, op. 1, d. 84, l. 12–12 ob.

²⁷ Ibid., f. 10597, op. 2, d. 47, l. 1–156.

soldiers and commanders who were already listed in the databases with supporting documents. These are not necessarily people from the first composition of the regiment – perhaps among them are those who arrived as part of reinforcements. Thus, there were at least 418 off the record and unpublished names of the defenders of the Fatherland in 1941. The maximum number of possible names in the regiment, if we take into account the entire division, amounts to 840 people (i.e. the difference between the total number of people who were listed in the regiment in July, August and September [1531] and the number of the names published in the databases [691]).

Table 2

Number of confirmed names of the personnel of the 857th Artillery Regiment

Identified names and surnames	Number of people
In the regiment as of July – early August 1941	1503
Composition of the regiment as of August 18-19	1109
According to the financial statements for July, August and September*	1531
Composition of the regiment according to the order to form a division (including the headquarters of the artillery commander)	1107
Composition of the regiment as of September 20, 1941 (including headquarters)	1016
Available in the databases “Memory of the People” as of January 2024 and “The Feat of the People in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945” as of April 2020	691
Number of off the record soldiers and commanders of the artillery regiment of the first composition	at least 418

Source: The table was compiled by L.S. Akhmetova, and S.S. Akhmetov based on the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. F. 27. Op. 2. D. 1. L. 1–51; F. 1063. Op. 1. D. 4. L. 1–3; F. 10597. Op. 2. D. 47. L. 1–156.

Note: * It includes the 3rd battalion, as well as the error of the first table, which has a clear tendency to increase the total number of personnel.

It is quite possible that 422 soldiers (the difference between the identified artillerymen [840] and those who left the regiment before entering battle [418]) were listed in the documents of rifle regiments, which were unfortunately lost during the fighting. However, these people, the beginning of their battle route in Alma-Ata were recorded in the course of the study. Our group will enter data on the Red Army soldiers and commanders of the 316th Rifle Division into authoritative platforms.

Structure and armament of the 857th Artillery Regiment

The authorized strength of the Red Army rifle division before the war (April 1941) and its artillery equipment amounted to 14,483 people, and 144 guns (including howitzers), apart from mortars²⁸. Already in July, during the hasty recruitment of new divisions, the authorized strength was 10,859 people; it had 64 guns (including twenty-seven 76 mm guns, eight 122 mm howitzers)²⁹. We singled out guns and howitzers from the total number of guns because these were the guns that were provided to the artillery regiments of the division. The remaining guns were distributed between anti-aircraft artillery, anti-tank battalions, and rifle regiments. The timing of the formation of the 316th Rifle Division coincided with the introduction of a new table of organization.

²⁸ Nesokrushimaia i legendarnaia. K 100-letiiu sozdaniia Krasnoi armii [Invincible and legendary. On the 100th anniversary of the creation of the Red Army] (Moscow: NII (VI) VAGSH VS RF Publ., 2018).

²⁹ V.I. Feskov, K.A. Kalashnikov, and V.I. Golikov, *Krasnaia Armiia v pobedakh i porazheniakh 1941–1945 gg.*, 113.

This composition is comparable to and even exceeds the number of German divisions in the autumn months of the war, taking into account the shortages of some of them³⁰, formed as a result of losses in the first months of the war.

Diagram 1 shows that the material of the artillery regiment is also comparable to a regular one. However, instead of the required 2 batteries of 122 mm howitzers with 1 battery of 76 mm guns³¹ in each mixed battalion, there is the opposite proportion. This is probably due to a shortage: at the beginning of 1941, the army's provision with howitzers of this type was 51-73%, while 76 mm guns were even in reserve, i.e. the provision reached more than 100%³².

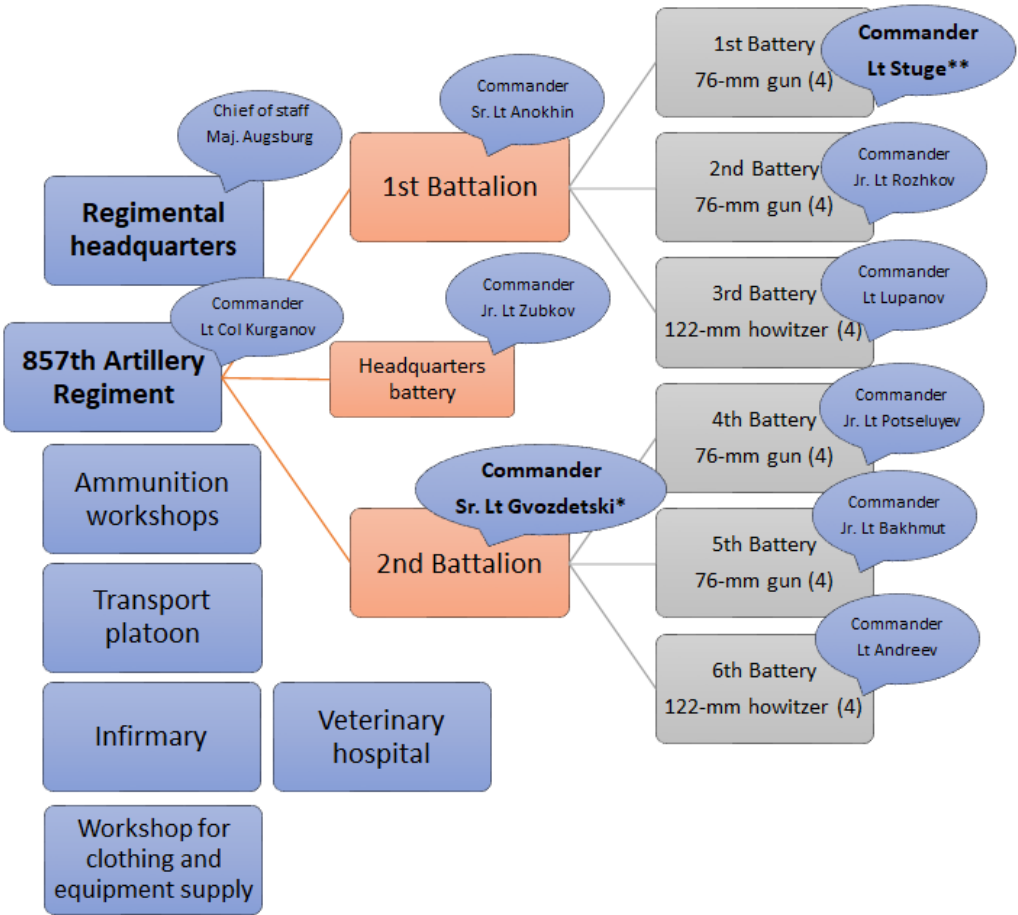


Fig. 1. Structure and equipment of the 857th artillery regiment as of August 18-19, 1941

Source: The block diagram was compiled by L.S. Akhmetova and S.S. Akhmetov based on: TsAMO RF, f. 27, op. 1, d. 7, l. 2-12; d. 1, l. 2; d. 8, l. 4; op. 2, d. 1, l. 2-45; f. 8, op. 2, d. 14, l. 72.

Notes: * He was killed before entering battle.

** Initially, S. Stuge was the commander of Battery 1. He is one of the authors of the regiment's records.

³⁰ B. Muller-Gillebrand, *Sukhoputnaia armia Germanii 1933–1945 gg.*, 253, 374.

³¹ A. Ivanov, *Artilleriia SSSR vo Vtoroi Mirovoi voine*, 4.

³² *Artilleriiskoie snabzheniie v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine*.

There were other units in the 857th Artillery Regiment, for example: the accounts department, reconnaissance platoons, the regiment's communications department, the food detachment, and political units³³.

There were two fully staffed battalions. In each of them there were: three batteries with 4 guns. On July 25 and/or 28, the regiment received new materiel: sixteen 76 mm guns of the 1902/30 model are specifically mentioned³⁴ (just enough to staff 4 batteries). Also in July, the headquarters battery was fully staffed with personnel.

Diagram 1 demonstrates the presence of a full set of materiel for four artillery batteries, while the presence of a set of two howitzer batteries (one in each battalion) is confirmed by minor mentions in record books and reports on combat operations. On August 18, the 3rd and 6th batteries (howitzer batteries) in the first echelon “in full strength under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Kurganov left for the combat army.”³⁵ In addition, the presence of eight 122 mm howitzers in the regiment (for the 3rd and 6th batteries) by September 20 and October 10 is confirmed by the reports on the number and combat strength of the division³⁶.

Thus, the 857th Artillery Regiment was almost completely staffed with materiel, if not by the time of departing to the front, then in any case by September 20, i.e. before entering battle.

Further, when analyzing operational situations, it is evident that the regiment (and even battalions) almost never acted as a single cohesive unit. In October and November during the battle of Moscow, the batteries acted both separately and in combination with rifle regiments, depending on the situation on the ground, rather than based on their affiliation with the battalion.

Records of the 857th Artillery Regiment in 1941

The regiment's documents processed by Lieutenants S. Stuge and P. Zotnin made adjustments to the well-known material on the 857th Artillery Regiment. All other sources contained no information about the air raid on the first echelon, in which the 1st battalion was moving to Borovich station. It was then that the regiment suffered its first losses.

In October–December 1941, the Soviet defense was focused on preparing the Mozhaishk defensive line, which was supposed to block the main approaches to Moscow: Volokolamsk, Mozhaishk, Maloyaroslavets, and Kaluga³⁷. On October 2, the order was given for a major Wehrmacht offensive on Moscow. The Army Group Center began Operation Schneesturm (Snowstorm). This factor forced the General Headquarters to transfer the 316th Rifle Division to the Volokolamsk area of the Mozhaishk line under control of the 16th Army. It was the 857th Artillery Regiment which, a few days after arriving at its deployment position, was the first to fight with the enemy and suffer losses.

On October 16–18, there was the Wehrmacht troops' first attempt to break through. Then, in the period between the October battles, the first information of reinforcements of 57 personnel to the 1st battalion was recorded, which had suffered heavy losses on October 16–18 near the village of Knyazhevo of the Dmitrovsky district. Then, the 2nd battery which knocked out up to 17 tanks was taken out of action³⁸. During this short period, the regiment knocked out 32 tanks (out of 116³⁹, destroyed by the regiment from 1941 to 1945)⁴⁰, and eliminated up to 50 vehicles, about 1,000 infantry, 3 mortar batteries, etc.⁴¹

³³ TSAMO RF, f. 27, op. 2, d. 1, l. 2–45.

³⁴ Ibid., f. 27, op. 1, d. 7, l. 2.

³⁵ Ibid., l. 3 ob.

³⁶ Ibid., f. 8, op. 1, d. 84, l. 12–12 ob., 19–19 ob.

³⁷ D. Stahel, *The Battle for Moscow*, 21.

³⁸ The division's numerical and combat strength report from October 20 records the presence of 13 76 mm guns out of the 16 required by the table of organization and available on October 10. This confirms the destruction of the materiel of almost an entire battery (3 out of 4 guns were destroyed). The loss of 3 122 mm howitzers is also recorded: TSAMO RF, f. 8, op. 8, d. 84, l. 23–23 ob.

³⁹ TSAMO RF, f. 27, op. 1, d. 2, l. 9–10; d. 1, l. 5 ob.; d. 7, l. 3 ob., 12 ob.

⁴⁰ Ibid., f. 27, op. 1, d. 3, l. 4.

⁴¹ Ibid., f. 27, op. 1, d. 7, l. 3 ob., 13–13 ob., 14.



Fig. 2. The key dates in the chronology of the 857th Artillery Regiment, July 14 – December 15, 1941

Source: The block diagram was compiled by L.S. Akhmetova and S.S. Akhmetov based on: TsAMO RF, f. 27, op. 1, d. 7, l. 1-62; d. 8, l. 2-11; d. 2, l. 9-13; d. 4, l. 2-4; d. 1, l. 1-5; d. 3, l. 1-4; f. 8, op. 8, d. 84, l. 23.

Notes: * All dates refer to 1941.

** The regiment suffers its first losses before arriving at its deployment position. An air raid, resulted in the deaths of Junior Lieutenant Solovey, Privates Petrov and Sergeykin, and wounding of 7 other personnel⁴².

*** The regiment's record books indicate different dates for the transfer to the Volokolamsk area and training at Kresttsy station, but they are within the general period. The discrepancy does not affect the subsequent events.

⁴² TSAMO RF, f. 27, op. 1, d. 7, l. 4.

On October 20-27, there were battles, as a result of which the artillerymen as part of the division repelled the attacks of three infantry divisions and one tank division. Later, for these battles, the 857th Artillery Regiment as part of the division was given the title of a “Guards division.”⁴³

In the period from October 29 to November 16, there was a tactical pause caused by the regrouping of enemy troops and further deterioration of weather conditions⁴⁴.

The Wehrmacht’s new offensive began on November 16. F. Halder understood that the best conditions for a decisive assault had been missed in October, but he hoped to use the short period before the onset of frost to begin another assault⁴⁵. From November 16 to 29, the 16th Army was opposed by the most powerful grouping of the enemy in the Volokolamsk area⁴⁶. The 316th Rifle Division again was in one of the most important areas of combat operations⁴⁷.

In the period from November 29 to December 8, the Wehrmacht offensive almost fizzled out. This stage of the Battle of Moscow ended with a counteroffensive by the Red Army and the expulsion of the Army Group Center from the key positions to the west of the front. After capturing the village of Kryukovo⁴⁸, the 316th Rifle Division stayed put⁴⁹ and was placed in reserve of the General Headquarters.

Conclusion

In the course of the research the authors managed to reveal the most complete information to this date on the soldiers and commanders of the first composition of the 857th Artillery Regiment (and partly its first reinforcements) for further identification of any of them by relatives, descendants, researchers of military operations in 1941 in the Volokolamsk area. As a result of the data analysis with the involvement of new sources from the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense, it was possible to identify the names of 1,531 soldiers and the regiment commander; among them there were at least 418 people whose names have not been named and published so far⁵⁰. According to the archival documents introduced into scientific use for the first time, there is provided information on the number of personnel of the regiment during its formation, its departure to the front and before entering battle in September 1941, and it’s the general structure including weaponry.

The limited number or complete absence of primary sources concerning the rifle regiments leaves many gaps in the history of the division. The 857th Artillery Regiment operated in close contact with the rifle regiments, and was in the same or neighboring locations. This material allows us to utilize the data obtained because of a result of the analysis of the artillerymen's documents in order to expand the general information on the course of fighting in October-December 1941 during the Battle of Moscow.

Submitted / Поступила в редакцию: 09.11.2024

Approved after reviewing / Одобрена после рецензирования: 05.03.2025

Accepted for publication / Принята к публикации: 11.03.2025

⁴³ Order of the People's Commissariat of Defense of the USSR No. 339 of 11/18/1941: TSAMO RF, f. 27, op. 1, d. 3, l. 1.

⁴⁴ M.H. Folly, *The Defence of Moscow*, 38.

⁴⁵ S.G. Fritz, *The First Soldier. Hitler as Military Leader*, 208.

⁴⁶ B.M. Shaposhnikov, *Bitva za Moskvu. Reshaiushchee srazhenie Velikoi Otechestvennoi*, 63.

⁴⁷ G. Zhukov, *Marshal of Victory. The autobiography of general Georgy Zhukov*, 730.

⁴⁸ TSAMO RF, f. 27, op. 1, l. 8, 10 ob.

⁴⁹ Ibid., l. 2, 12.

⁵⁰ For a complete list of the regiment's soldiers and commanders, see: TSAMO RF, f. 10597, op. 2, d. 47, l. 1–156; f. 27, op. 2, d. 1, l. 1–51.

References

- Abishev, G. *Pod znamenem Rodiny* [Under the Banner of the Motherland]. Moscow: Voenizdat Publ., 1967 (in Russian).
- Ahmetov, A. *Oni – panfilovtsy* [They are Panfilov's Men]. Frunze: [N.s.], 1967 (in Russian).
- Akhmetova, L. "The defense of Brest fortress: The history of Kazakhstan from the 125th regiment." *Analele Universitatii din Craiova – Seria Istorie* 23, no. 1 (2018): 107–120.
- Akhmetova, L. "The participation of Kazakhs of the 131st Light Artillery Regiment in the defense of the Brest Fortress in 1941." *Annales-Anali za Istrske in Mediteranske Studije – Series Historia et Sociologia* 28, no. 2 (2018): 245–254, <https://doi.org/10.19233/ASHS.2018.16>
- Baranovskij, V.D. *Pobeda v bitve za Moskvu. 1941–1942* [Victory in the Battle of Moscow. 1941–1942]. Moscow: Golden-Bi Publ., 2009 (in Russian).
- Bezugolny, A.Y. "The Ethnic Aspect in Red Army Recruitment During the Great Patriotic War: A Historical and Statistical Review." *RUDN Journal of Russian History* 19, no. 2 (2020): 298–319 (in Russian), <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8674-2020-19-2-298-319>
- Bezugolny, A.Y. "Negative Selection: Prohibitions and Restrictions in Red Army Recruitment on Ethnic Grounds during the Great Patriotic War." *RUDN Journal of Russian History* 19, no. 4 (2020): 869–888 (in Russian), <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8674-2020-19-4-869-888>
- Feskov, V.I., Kalashnikov, K.A., and Golikov, V.I. *Krasnia Armia v pobedakh i porazheniiakh 1941–1945 gg.* [The Red Army in victories and defeats of 1941–1945]. Tomsk: Tomsk University Publ., 2003 (in Russian).
- Folly, M.H. *The Defence of Moscow. The Palgrave Consise Historical Atlas of the Second World War. Palgrave Consise Historic Atlases*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230502390_14
- Fritz, S.G. *The First Soldier. Hitler as Military Leader*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018.
- Gabdullin, M. *Moi frontovye druzia* [My Frontline Friends]. Alma-Ata: [N.s.], 1947 (in Russian).
- Glisic, I., and Edele, M. "The Memory Revolution Meets the Digital Age: Red Army Soldiers Remember World War II." *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 45, no. 1 (2019): 320–380, <https://doi.org/10.13109/gege.2019.45.1.95>
- Hill, A. *The Red Army and the Second World War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- Ivanov, A. *Artilleriia SSSR vo Vtoroi Mirovoi voine* [Artillery of the USSR in World War II]. St. Petersburg: Neva Publ., 2003 (in Russian).
- Kurganov, G.F. *Panfilovtsy-uzbekistantsy* [Uzbek Panfilov's Men]. Tashkent: [N.s.], 1961 (in Russian).
- Legostaev, I. *Vo imia zhizni* [In the Name of Life]. Tallinn: Jejesti Ambat Publ., 1967 (in Russian).
- Melnichuk, A.V. "Bitva za Moskvu – nekotorye voprosy falsifikatsii istorii [The Battle for Moscow – Some Issues of Falsification of History]." *Vlast* 31, no. 6 (2023): 236–241 (in Russian), <https://doi.org/10.31171/vlast.v31i6.9908>
- Momysh-uly, B. *Za nami Moskva. Zapiski ofitsera* [Moscow is behind us. Officer's notes]. Alma-Ata: Zhazushy Publ., 1978 (in Russian).
- Muller-Gillebrand, B. *Sukhoputnaia armia Germanii 1933–1945 gg.* [German Land Army 1933–1945]. Moscow: Izographus Publ., 2002 (in Russian).
- Myagkov, M.Yu. "The Battle of Moscow." *MGIMO Review of International Relations* 11, no. 2 (2010): 39–50 (in Russian), <https://doi.org/10.24833/2071-8160-2010-2-11-39-50>
- Sean, M.J. *'Who Has the Puck?': Strategic Initiative in Modern, Conventional War*. Air University Press, 2009.
- Shaposhnikov, B.M. *Bitva za Moskvu. Reshaiushchee srazhenie Velikoi Otechestvennoi* [Battle for Moscow. Decisive battle of the Great Patriotic War]. Moscow: EKSMO Publ., 2011 (in Russian).
- Stahel, D. *The Battle for Moscow*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316103937>
- Trefilov, A. *U vorot Moskvyy (zapiski ofitsera)* [At the Gates of Moscow (officer notes)]. Alma-Ata: Kazakhstan Publ., 1982 (in Russian).
- Zhukov, G. *Marshal of Victory. The autobiography of general Georgy Zhukov*. Barnsley: Pen and Sword Books Ltd., 2013.

Информация об авторах / Information about the authors

Лайла Сейсембековна Ахметова, доктор исторических наук, профессор кафедры ЮНЕСКО по журналистике и коммуникации, ведущий исследователь, Казахский национальный университет имени аль-Фараби; Республика Казахстан, 050040, Алматы, проспект аль-Фараби, 71; laila_akhmetova@mail.ru; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3607-3688>

Laila Seisembekovna Akhmetova, Dr. Habil. Hist., Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor of the UNESCO Chair in Journalism and Communication, Leading Researcher, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University; 71, Al-Farabi Av., Almaty, 050040, Republic of Kazakhstan; laila_akhmetova@mail.ru; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3607-3688>

Сергей Сергеевич Ахметов, докторант кафедры печати и электронных СМИ, исследователь, Казахский Национальный Университет имени аль-Фараби; Республика Казахстан, 050040, Алматы, проспект аль-Фараби, 71; akhmetov1985@mail.ru; <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8506-5417>

Sergey Sergeevich Akhmetov, Doctoral student of the Printing and Electronic Media Department, Researcher, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University; 71, Al-Farabi Ave., Almaty, 050040, Republic of Kazakhstan; akhmetov1985@mail.ru; <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8506-5417>