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National Defence of Hungary – Military Units and Military Facilities of Debrecen (Part 1)

Military Units and Facilities of the Imperial and Royal Army in Debrecen

Abstract

The army has always played a major role in the performance of defence tasks in Hungary. This article presents the development of Hungary's national defence until the collapse of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy and describes its forces operating in the city of Debrecen. It presents in detail the units of the Imperial and Royal Army stationed at Debrecen, including: the Imperial and Royal 39th Infantry Regiment, which is the "in-house regiment" of Debrecen, the Imperial and Royal 16th and 7th hussar regiments and the 2nd Honvéd Hussar Regiment and the 3rd Honvéd Infantry Regiment of the Royal Hungarian Honvéd, and finally, the Royal Hungarian 3rd Landsturm Infantry Regiment. The article presents the history, activities and barracks of the units and the monuments erected in honour of them in Debrecen.

Keywords: national defence, Imperial and Royal Army, hussar regiment, infantry regiment

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1. Introduction

The army was the supreme player in national defence in many earlier periods of history in Hungary, too. The city of Debrecen also played a significant role in the performance of defence tasks, its military history dates back many centuries. It is no coincidence that Debrecen is called a famous military city. The possibilities of accommodating soldiers in the city changed in the 19th century. In the past, soldiers were quartered at the populace through the creation of so-called soldiers' rooms, which also affected the architectural design of the civic houses of Debrecen.³ In 1867, the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy was established. After the Compromise of 1867, the military was modernised based on Act XL of 1868 on the Defence Forces. Subsequently, the state believed that the solution to accommodate large numbers of soldiers was the construction of barracks. This essay presents the development of Hungary's national defence until the collapse of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy in 1918, and describes its forces operating in the city of Debrecen. It presents in detail the units of the Imperial and Royal Army stationed at Debrecen, including: the Imperial and Royal 39th Infantry Regiment, which is the "in-house regiment" of Debrecen, the Imperial and Royal 16th and 7th hussar regiments and the 2nd Honvéd Hussar Regiment and the 3rd Honvéd Infantry Regiment of the Royal Hungarian Honvéd, and finally, the Royal Hungarian 3rd Landsturm Infantry Regiment. The article describes the history, activities and barracks of the units and the monuments erected in honour of them in Debrecen.

2. The development of Hungary's national defence

The First Book of Laws of King St. Stephen (the first King of Hungary) refers to the national defence institutions protecting the nation, and the Second Book of Laws contains provisions ensuring the organisation of the armed forces.⁴ After enacting Act VII of 1222 on the King's warfare outside the country, the support of the king in a war became a written law; therefore, it became mandatory. At that time, the backbone of the army was formed by the armed freemen (in Latin: miles).⁵ In the castle system already formed in the 12th century, the armies of the castles were small banderiums, which later became the basis of the landlord's army who owned the castle. There was no well-established army organisation during the Anjou era. According to the law of Sigismund I passed by the Diet in 1435, nobles were obliged to raise their army in support of the king's army. Due to the increasing Turkish pressure, Sigismund of Luxembourg regulated the defence system of the country in several royal decrees. He began to build a border fortress system which was based not on the counties but on serf lots. The reformed military force became a permanent army, which was trained irregularly and inadequately.

In the time of the Hunyadis, creating a permanent army became necessary. Due to the lack of financial resources, János Hunyadi relied on his own banderium and

³ Lajos Sági: *Debrecen település- és építéstörténete*. Debrecen, Déri Múzeum Baráti Köre, 1972.

⁴ Ilosvai Codex, 1544.

⁵ Gyula Kristó: *Az Árpád-kor háborúi*. Budapest, Zrínyi Kiadó, 1986. 189.

peasant volunteers. Hungarian King Matthias Corvinus created a large, well-trained, high-quality mercenary army (Black Army of Hungary), which has grown into one of the best, largest armies in Europe.⁶ The royal armies did not have a reserve staff, as there was no time for training in peacetime at that age. After the death of Matthias, Vladislaus II could not finance the maintenance of this force.⁷ The organisation of the armed forces did not have a separate system, only a few legal regulations applied to it, mainly in connection with the numerical strength.

The rise of the Habsburg dynasty began in the late 13th century. Fifteen years after the disaster at the battle of Mohács in 1526, Hungary was divided into three parts: the Kingdom of Hungary under Habsburg rule (with the reign of Ferdinand I), the Principality of Transylvania and the Ottoman Empire. After liberated from Ottoman rule, Rákóczi's War of Independence, which began in 1703, was the first significant war of independence of Hungary against the Habsburg Monarchy, in which a broad section of the society (noblemen, hajdus, commoners) had participated, despite the low pay. The army of the war of independence was the first army of modern-day Hungary.⁸ In the time of Charles III, Act VIII of 1715 on the Insurrection and Taxation provided for the establishment of a permanent Hungarian army, in which the parliament committed to maintain a permanent armed force. The following have been regulated: the Landsturm, the economic background of the maintenance of the army and the procedure for convening state dignitaries with decision-making powers in issues of state of war.⁹ This article of act can be considered the beginning for the creation of the permanent Hungarian army. Unfortunately, this did not mean the establishment of an independent Hungarian army, as the units consisting of Hungarian soldiers and maintained by Hungarian money did not directly serve the Hungarian national interest.

In the 18th century, the state system and public administration of the Habsburg Empire had been established. The introduction of the census laid the foundations for determining the standard numerical strength of the army, for which conscription was introduced. Due to the French, Bavarian and Prussian threat, Maria Theresa decided on a general noble insurrection in Act LXIII of 1741 on the General Noble Insurrection as defined below, which regulated the system of augmentation and military administration, included the numerical strength to be raised, the process of raising the troops, the method of compensating for losses, the sanctions for non-compliance, the assurance for supplying the militias and the territorial breakdown by setting up four encampment district high commands.¹⁰ It became possible to establish independent Hungarian regiments, but the insurrection was occasional and it lasted only for a specified period of time, so it did not mean a permanent military force. From 1771, the register of conscripts was based on county censuses. Ten years later, from 1781,

⁶ László Fenyvesi: *Katonahistóriák Mátyás Király korából*. Budapest, Tankönyvkiadó, 1990. 190–192.

⁷ Ibid. 248–250.

⁸ Ágnes Nagy-Vargáné Juhász: *Az önkéntes haderő tartalék biztosításának szervezési-vezetési kérdései*. PhD Dissertation. Budapest, Zrínyi Miklós Nemzetvédelmi Egyetem, 2010. 12.

⁹ Lajos Urbán: *A tartalékos erők helye, szerepe, működésének aspektusai a magyar nemzeti haderőben*. PhD Dissertation. Budapest, Zrínyi Miklós Nemzetvédelmi Egyetem, 2010.

¹⁰ Pál Kádár: *A katonai központi igazgatás feladatai és szervezeti evolúciója*. In Júlia Hornyacsek (ed.): *A védelmi igazgatás fő területeinek változásai az elmúlt időszakban, és a fejlesztés lehetséges irányai*. Budapest, Nemzeti Közszolgálati Egyetem, 2019. 9–35.

Joseph II finalised these recruiting districts, and a census system was introduced. The trained force was supplemented every year through recruitment. Soldiers recruited in Hungary were an integral part of the infantry and hussar regiments of the Austrian army.¹¹ The Imperial and Royal Army, the permanent armed force of the Habsburg Monarchy,¹² was one of the largest land armies in Europe. After the development of the army in 1798, 15 infantry regiments and 11 hussar regiments had been raised from the territory of Hungary and Transylvania. The domestic component of the imperial and royal army, which was called Hungarian army in the legislation enacted by the Diet of Pozsony (today Bratislava), accounted for one-third of the entire imperial army and had a numerical strength of nearly 120,000.¹³

In our country, the establishment of an independent Hungarian army can be traced back to the period of the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence of 1848–1849, when it started in hiding. The National Guard was established, originally as a law enforcement body, regulated by Article XXII of 1848 on the National Guard, and its central governing body was the National War Council of the National Guard, which was directly supervised by Prime Minister Lajos Batthyány, who was also the national commander of the National Guard. Hiding behind this law could the establishment of an ordinary army begin, as the Hungarian Government had no legal authority to do so.¹⁴ On 11 July 1848, at the request of Lajos Kossuth in Pest, the representatives of the Parliament voted for recruiting 200,000 conscripts and an immediate war loan of 42 million Forints. On 27 November 1848, the National Defence Committee ordered to set up a unified army,¹⁵ thus officially establishing the regular defence force of the nation, called the National Defence Force. At the end of 1848, Hungary had an army of 110,000 individuals. The draft law on the introduction of universal conscription was not approved by the emperor. The formation of a force involving society as a whole was interrupted by the surrender at Világos (13 August 1849). From 1849, the country was under Austrian military occupation for almost two decades, and it had no national army during this period. Until the Compromise of 1867, the "replacement raising" was the feature of augmentation.

In 1866, the Habsburg Monarchy was defeated by Prussia and Italy, then on 17 February 1867, it compromised with Hungary and the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy consisting of two equal empires was established. Act XII of 1868 on the relations of common interest between the countries of the Hungarian Crown and other countries ruled by His Majesty, and on the method of their settlement (which concerned the Compromise) stated that Austria and Hungary owe each other mutual protection. Following the Compromise of 1867, the issue of the army expressing and securing the unity of the monarchy was settled by Act XLI of 1868 on the Hungarian Honvéd, the so-called Defence Forces Act, which was based on the principle of universal conscription.

¹¹ Róbert Hermann: *Magyarország hadtörténete III. Magyarország a Habsburg Monarchiában 1718–1919*. Budapest, Zrínyi Kiadó, 2016. 1–38.

¹² Lajos Szakonyi et al.: *A magyar huszár. A magyar lovaskatona ezer évének története*. (8. fejezet. A huszár megjelenése a cs. és kir. állandó hadseregben.) Edited by Endre Ajtay – László Péczely – László Reé. Budapest, Merkantil nyomda, 1936. 68–72.

¹³ Military History Institute and Museum: *A császári-királyi hadsereg szervezete*. 22 November 2021.

¹⁴ Lajos Szigeti: *A nemzetőrség létrehozásának lehetséges útjai*. Honvédelmi Minisztériumi kiadvány, 2001. 4–31.

¹⁵ Urbán (2010): op. cit. 16.

3. Ground forces of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy

The ground forces of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy was composed of several parts.

First line: The Imperial and Royal Army, also known as the “Common Army”, was the backbone of the Monarchy’s ground forces, approximately 88% of it. In the Common Army, all the peoples of the empire were represented in the following proportions in 1910: 25% Austrian, 23% Hungarian, 13% Czech, 8% Polish, 8% Rusyn, 9% Serbian–Croatian, 7% Romanian, 4% Slovak, 2% Slovene and 1% Italian. Hungary contributed to the maintenance of the Common Army with 68,000 recruits every year. In order to organise the Common Army, the Monarchy was divided into 112 military districts, 47 of which were in Hungary. The formidable cavalry of the Imperial and Royal Army was the strongest throughout Europe, and included 16 hussar regiments.¹⁶

Second line: In addition to the armed forces of the Monarchy outside the Common Army, both states of the Monarchy set up a separate army group in 1869: the Imperial and Royal Landwehr and the Royal Hungarian Honvéd (also called Royal Hungarian Landwehr). The Defence Forces Act also provided for the organisational structure of the Royal Hungarian Honvéd.

Finally, the Austria k.k. Landsturm and the Hungarian k.u. Landsturm belonged to the third line.

The 14 common hussar regiments of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy were conscripted in Hungary¹⁷ and commanded in German.¹⁸ In 1873, two additional Hussar regiments were set up, numbered 15th and 16th. A regiment consisted of 1,133 people and a company of 171 people. The 6 companies made up 2 divisions, with three companies in each.¹⁹ In 1874, crucial changes took place in the organisational structure of the Hungarian Honvéd. According to the decree of Franz Joseph I dated on 18 March, the cavalry of the Hungarian Honvéd was separated from the infantry brigades and merged into regiments consisting of four companies. The Royal Hungarian Honvéd raised 10 hussar regiments, which were numbered between 1 to 10. Nine out of ten cavalry regiments were commanded in Hungarian, the last one was commanded in Croatian. The order of battle was laid down in Act VI of 1889 on the Defence Forces. During the transition to the organisation of cavalry regiments, the staff and the 2nd division of the 2nd hussar regiment were set up. In 1880, the emperor ordered to change the names of the Honvéd cavalry regiments. From then on, the 2nd cavalry regiment officially bore the name of the Royal Hungarian 2nd Hussar Regiment. From the 1890s, the name for the garrison site of the regimental headquarters was also included in the name of the regiments.²⁰ Act XX of 1886 on the Landsturm and Act V of 1890 on the Hungarian Honvéd specified the composition and age of the personnel, the process of the conscription, the areas of application, districts and the mandatory tasks. From 1867 to 1914 the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy experienced

¹⁶ Tibor Balla: A militarista birodalom mítosza. Az osztrák–magyar haderő az első világháború előestéjén. *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, 127, no. 3 (2014). 629.

¹⁷ Szakonyi et al. (1936): op. cit. 69.

¹⁸ Tibor Balla: A haderő vezetésének kérdései az első világháborús osztrák–magyar tábornoki kar példáján. *Hadtudomány*, (2020), 2. 65.

¹⁹ *Huszártörténelem*. 10 April 2021.

²⁰ Tibor Balla: *A magyar királyi honvéd lovasság, 1868–1914*. Budapest, Balassi Kiadó, 2000. 25–40.

its long “period of peace”. During this period, most of the reserve staff of the Royal Hungarian Honvéd came from the older age groups, who were part of the effective strength of the imperial and royal common army. The Imperial and Royal Army ceased to exist when the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy was dissolved in 1918.

3.1. Imperial and Royal Army units of Debrecen

The Imperial and Royal Army had 52 infantry regiments and 40 cavalry regiments. 10 out of 52 infantry regiments were Hungarian infantry regiments, and 10 out of 40 cavalry regiments were Hungarian hussar regiments.²¹

The following regiments were placed in the city of Debrecen:

- Imperial and Royal 39th Infantry Regiment
- Imperial and Royal 16th Hussar Regiment
- Imperial and Royal 7th Debrecen Hussar Regiment

3.1.1. *The 39th Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment*

Not many cities could boast that they had their own “in-house regiment”, but Debrecen was able to say so about itself until the end of 1918, when the Imperial and Royal 39th Infantry Regiment, which was based in the city, was disbanded. The former Imperial and Royal 39th Infantry Regiment was raised in 1756 by Johann Bernhard Stephan, Graf Pálffy de Erdőd for Empress and Queen Maria Theresa. The organising of the unit can be linked to war. The Pragmatic Sanction of 1713 issued by King Charles III was meant to ensure his daughter’s, Maria Theresa’s right to the throne, but the majority of the German Monarchs did not accept it. The young queen had to consolidate her throne by military force. The “wars of succession” lasted throughout the reign of Maria Theresa, in which Hungarian soldiers played a significant role.²² In 1756, Maria Theresa appointed Graf Johann Pálffy de Erdőd as the owner of the regiment, as he had set up the regiment at his own expense. In 1769, the regiment took number 39 as its order of battle number. The unit was later named after its owners, e.g. 1787–1803: Nádasdy Regiment (Count Tamás Nádasdy, Lieutenant General, owner); 1827–1866: Dom Miguel Regiment (Dom Miguel Portuguese infante, Duke of Braganza, owner); finally 1914–1918 Konrád Regiment (Baron Conrad von Hötzendorf, Infantry General, Chief of the General Staff of the military of the Austro–Hungarian Army, last owner).²³ His name appears in the full name of the regiment, which is the Imperial and Royal Baron Conrad 39th Debrecen Infantry Regiment.

After the formation of the 39th Infantry Regiment, wars came one after the other. The Seven Years’ War against Frederick II (Frederick the Great), King of Prussia (1756–1763), the partition of Poland, the Bavarian War of Succession, and the Austro–Turkish

²¹ II. *Fondfőcsoport területi hatóságok, alakulatok*. 22 March 2021.

²² Lajos Lisznyai – László Töll: *A 39. császári és királyi gyalogezred története 1756–1918*. Debrecen, MH 5. Bocskai Lövész-dandár – Petit Real Könyvkiadó, 2006. 8.

²³ Ferenc Kovács: *A császári és királyi Conrad báró debreceni 39. gyalogezred*. 15 October 2021a.

War. Then, from 1792, the French and Napoleonic Wars lasting 23 years with short interruptions, in which some battalions of the 39th Infantry Regiment fought incessantly. The regiment took part in fifteen battles in 1793, twenty-three in 1794, and in the campaign against Russia in 1812.²⁴ The recruitment of the regiment's troops initially covered all the counties of Hungary (Pozsony, Nyitra, Árva, Túróc, Trencsén, Gömör, Zemplén), later they were recruited from Upper Hungary, Croatia and Slavonia, at which time the unit was still stationed at Buda. From January 1809, Debrecen became the recruitment centre of the 39th Infantry Regiment. From 1855, the command of the regiment and the 1st, 3rd and 4th battalions were stationed at Vienna, and the 2nd battalion was stationed at Debrecen together with the army reserve of the regiment, and this was also the case when the First World War broke out.²⁵ At that time, the augmentation area of the regiment was formed by Debrecen, Hajdú County and some settlements of Bihar County. The regiment settled in Debrecen and thus became the "in-house regiment" of Debrecen.

The theatres of war of the Imperial and Royal Baron Conrad 39th Debrecen Infantry Regiment:

- After the declaration of war had been sent to Serbia, the 4 battalions began fighting collectively on the Southern theatre of war.
- Northern theatre of war (battle of Rohatyn).
- After the Italian declaration of war, they carried out defence tasks on the Italian front in the Carinthian Alps to protect the Italian–Austrian border.
- Doberdo (on the area of Italy, east of the lower Isonzo). The regiment was sent to Doberdo in October 1915, and from the Third Battle of the Isonzo, the regiment became the dominant unit of the battles. The name Doberdo meant not only the village, but also the flat plateau of ten to fifteen kilometres reaching to the south around it, where the front stretched. The first 6 battles of the 12 listed battles of the Isonzo of the Italian front took place on the Doberdo Plateau, after which the fighting had moved to the area of the Comeni Plateau.

Together with three other common regiments, the 39th Debrecen Infantry Regiment belonged to the 17th Common Division. (The 20th Honvéd Infantry Division included, among others, the 3rd Debrecen Honvéd Infantry Regiment.) In the battles of the Isonzo, the 39th Infantry Regiment fought heroically against the Russian troops.²⁶ From its formation in 1756 until its disbanding in 1918, the 39th Infantry Regiment took part in all the wars of the era. In recognition of their stand, they received the yellow regimental flag as the greatest military recognition of the Monarchy. The 39th Infantry Regiment was the best unit of the Monarchy.²⁷ The perseverance and heroism of the soldiers of the regiment are exemplary. Their name became a majestic role model in the war.

²⁴ Lisznyai-Töll (2006): op. cit. 14–23.

²⁵ Lisznyai-Töll (2006): op. cit. 32.

²⁶ Győző Lépes – Artúr Mátéfy: *A császári és királyi 39. gyalogezred a világháborúban*. Debrecen, Magyar Nemzeti Könyv- és Lapkiadó Részvénytársaság, 1939. 4–45.

²⁷ Lisznyai-Töll (2006): op. cit. 75.

The barracks of the Imperial and Royal 39th Infantry Regiment

The headquarters of the 39th Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment in Debrecen was the Pavilion Barracks. The barracks used to be called Maria Theresa, the Pavilion and then the Bocskai Barrack. Today, the huge area of the barrack is located between Faraktár and Vágóhíd Streets. Its main building can be reached from Csengő Street. The buildings of the barrack have been impressively renovated. Today, the local directorates of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office of Debrecen and the National Tax and Customs Administration, and on the largest part of the barrack, the Kossuth Lajos Grammar School operate in these imposing buildings.



Figure 1: Building of the Pavilion, the former barrack of the 39th Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment, then and now
Source: a) <http://vcsj.hu/pavillon/>; b) Photo by János Perge

Memorial erected in honour of the 39th Debrecen Infantry Regiment

On the Infantry Regiment Memorial Column, it can be read: "Your silent, but proud stone shall haughtily proclaim forever: through the sacrifice of heroic sons, the homeland is flourishing again." The heroic memorial of the 39th Infantry Regiment was created by

Tivadar Debreczeny and it commemorates the in-house regiment of Debrecen, the 39th Infantry Regiment. The more than 12-metre tall obelisk has been standing on Medgyessy Promenade since 1925, across Simonyi Road, at the entrance to the Great Forest. All of the four standing statues are in different styles of clothing originating from different eras. The crown placed originally on the top, was put back on top of the obelisk in 1990 after a few decades of absence. There are memorial plaques placed on each side of the obelisk.



Figure 2. Memorial for the heroes of the 39th Infantry Regiment
Source: Photo by János Perge

3.1.2. The Imperial and Royal 16th Hussar Regiment

The regiment was established in 1798. From 1873, when the regiment became a Hussar regiment, the troops consisted of young men from the regions of Hajdúság and Bihar. The hussars were recruited in Debrecen.²⁸

Evolution of the regiment's name:

- from 1798: 13th Light Dragoon Regiment
- from 1802: 6th Light Cavalry Regiment, Chevauxlegers Regiment
- from 1851: 10th Uhlán Regiment
- From 1873, they became the Imperial and Royal 16th Hussar Regiment, and its troops were conscripted from Hungary

²⁸ Super User: A 16. közös huszárezred emlékére. Debrecen, MH 5. Bocskai István Lövészdandár Könyvtára. 5 October 2018b.

The garrison site of the hussar regiment was Debrecen between 1872–1882. After that, from 1882: Czernowitz, from 1888: Rzeszów, from 1893: Budapest, from 1908: Vienna, then Marburg became their regimental, Graz and Radkersburg became their divisional headquarters.²⁹ The reserve of the regiment was stationed at Debrecen between 1900–1918. The casualty lists published during the First World War contain 548 soldiers from the Imperial and Royal 16th Hussar Regiment, of whom 150 died, 357 were wounded and 52 were captured.³⁰

Memorial for the dead heroes of the 16th Hussar Regiment

The relief commemorating the dead heroes of the 16th Hussar Regiment was created by Manno Miltiades, an extremely versatile sportsman, graphic artist, painter and sculptor of Greek origin. The memorial can be found on the left wall at the arched entrance of the County Hall at 54 Piac Street in Debrecen. The relief, which is about 100 × 150 cm, depicts a dynamic battle scene from the time of World War I. The creator himself took part in the First World War. The relief was inaugurated on 18 October 1931.



Figure 3: Memorial for the dead heroes of the 16th Hussar Regiment
Source: Photo by János Perge

3.1.3. The Imperial and Royal 7th Hussar Regiment

Evolution of the regiment's name:

- from 1798: Imperial and Royal 7th Wilhelm II German Emperor and King of Prussia Hussar Regiment
- from 1915: Imperial and Royal 7th Hussar Regiment

²⁹ Szakonyi et al. (1936): op. cit. 68–72.

³⁰ Super User (2018b): op. cit.

During the long “period of peace” of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy from 1867 to 1914, the only major war adventure was the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Returning from Bosnia, the Pest County regiment was placed at Marburg in 1880, at Pécs in 1882, at Kecskemét in 1887, at Vienna in 1893, at Nagyvárad in 1897, and then at Debrecen in 1899.³¹ The Imperial and Royal 7th Hussar regiment was disbanded in 1918, under pressure from the victorious Allied Powers.

The barracks of the Imperial and Royal 7th Hussar Regiment

The construction of the barracks of the Imperial and Royal 7th (Wilhelm) Hussar Regiment began in 1898.³² The Hungarian hussar and later artillery barracks were first registered as Vilmos Barracks, then after the Second World War under the name of Gábor Áron Barracks. It is currently a university campus, and located at 26 Kassai Road in Debrecen.



Figure 4: The former barracks of the Imperial and Royal 7th Hussar Regiment at Kassai Road, then and now
 Source: a) <https://gallery.hungaricana.hu/hu/SzerencsKepeslap/1194576/?img=0>; b) Photo by János Perge

³¹ II. Vilmos Német Császár és Porosz Király nevét viselő Cs. és Kir. 7. Huszárezred hadi emlékkönyve. Budapest, Grill Károly Könyvkiadó vállalata, 1923.

³² Zoltán Megyeri-Pálffi: Kaszárnyától a campusig. A Kassai úti laktanya rövid története. s. a.

3.2. Royal Hungarian Honvéd units of Debrecen

After the Compromise, Act XLI of 1868, the so-called Defence Forces Act, provided for the organisational structure of the Royal Hungarian Honvéd. In 1869, the Royal Hungarian Honvéd consisted of 82 infantry battalions and 32 cavalry squadrons. Of these, 28 were Hussar Squadrons and 4 were Croatian uhlan units.³³ At the time of the drafting of the Defence Forces Act, the Royal Hungarian Honvéd had not yet had artillery and engineering units.

Royal Hungarian Honvéd – hussar regiments

In 1874, significant changes took place in the organisational structure of the Hungarian Honvéd. According to the decree of Franz Joseph I dated on 18 March, the cavalry of the Hungarian Honvéd was separated from the infantry brigades and merged into regiments consisting of four companies. The cavalry regiments were numbered between 1 to 10. In 1880, there was a change of name. The Hussar Regiments Nos. 1–9 had been named 10th Uhlán Regiment. From the 1890s, the name for the garrison site of the regimental headquarters was also included in the name of the regiments.³⁴ The Royal Hungarian Honvéd had 10 hussar regiments. The 2nd Debrecen Royal Hungarian Honvéd Hussar Regiment had been operated in the city of Debrecen.

Royal Hungarian Honvéd – infantry regiments

After the Compromise, Act XLI on the Hungarian Honvéd and the Landsturm enacted in 1868 enabled the organisation of the Hungarian Honvéd army. The country was divided into six and then, from 1871, seven military districts, and battalions were organised. The law ordered the organisation of 82 honvéd battalions. A honvéd infantry battalion consisted of one battalion staff and four companies. Initially, only the staffs were formed. By the end of 1872, all infantry regiments of the border guard had been disbanded, and honvéd battalions had been formed from them. By 1873, the number of the honvéd infantry had reached 150,000. In 1886, infantry battalions were organised into half-brigades. The structure of the half-brigades was as follows: a staff, 3 or 4 field battalions, and 1 additional company in war. From 1874, the half-brigades were reorganised into regiments.³⁵ During the years of peace, infantry regiments became an integral part of the settlements that housed their garrisons. The officer corps of the regiments had become key players in local social and public life. From 1867, the regiments had their own orchestras. Each band had 43 members, and they regularly entertained the city's audience and the soldiers.³⁶ After the Compromise, the organisation of the Royal Hungarian Honvéd Infantry Battalions began in Debrecen as well. In 1873, the 46th North Bihar Battalion belonging to the I Landwehr District was stationed at Debrecen, commanded by József Stoffer from Vecseklő in 1874. The 42nd Hajdú-Szabolcs Battalion, also belonging to the I Landwehr

³³ Balla (2000): op. cit. 6–8.

³⁴ Balla (2000): op. cit. 12.

³⁵ Super User: *A debreceni 3. honvéd gyalogezred megalakulása*. 3 February 2018a.

³⁶ Ferenc Kovács: *3-as honvéd és 3-as népfelkelő gyalogezred*. 15 October 2021b.

District, was stationed at Nagykálló, and later was transferred in Debrecen.³⁷ The 3rd half-brigade was formed in Debrecen by merging 4 field battalions (the 46th Debrecen Battalion, the 42nd Battalion transferred in the meantime from Nagykálló to Debrecen, the 47th Nagykunság Battalion stationed at Karcag and the 45th Szilágyság Battalion stationed at Zilah). Lieutenant Colonel Antal Becsey became the commander of the half-brigade, then commander of the 46th Battalion. The half-brigades were reorganised into regiments in Debrecen in 1890, and that was when the 3rd Infantry Regiment of Debrecen was formed.

Royal Hungarian Honvéd units operating in Debrecen:

- 2nd Debreczen Honvéd Hussar Regiment
- 3rd Debreczen Honvéd Infantry Regiment

3.2.1. 2nd Debreczen Honvéd Hussars

The staff and the 2nd division of the 2nd honvéd cavalry regiment were set up during the transition to the organisation of honvéd cavalry regiments in 1874. The regiment was formed by merging four cavalry squadrons (the 16th Debrecen, the 17th Nagyvárad, the 20th Jászberény and the 33rd Karcag) with the centre being in Debrecen. The staff and the 2nd division of the 2nd honvéd cavalry regiment were transferred from Nagyvárad to the existing county/municipal garrison called "Gemeinde" in October, 1877.³⁸

The motto of the 2nd Honvéd Hussar Regiment is:

"No. 2 hussars of Debrecen
For King and Country!"

The barracks of the 2nd Honvéd Hussar Regiment

The barracks of the 2nd Honvéd Hussar Regiment were also called the Cavalry Barracks or the Honvéd Hussar Barracks. The construction of the barracks began by the city of Debrecen in 1887 on the corner of Széchenyi and Nyugati Streets,³⁹ and was handed over to the army on 3 January 1893 for 25 years. Parts of the building complex have already been demolished (the blacksmith's workshop, the prison bathhouse and guard building, the stable for sick horses, the horse bath, the manure storage and other small buildings), the rest are still there. After the war, the old bearing company ("Kis Göcs") operated in it, today many smaller or bigger businesses operate in the old and classic building complex worthy of a better fate.

³⁷ Zoltán Barczy: *A királyért és a hazáért: a magyar királyi honvédség szervezete, egyenruhái és fegyverzete 1868–1918*. Budapest, Corvina Kiadó, 1990. 16–27.

³⁸ István Topor: *A Magyar Királyi Debreceni 2. honvéd huszárezred rövid története I.–II. rész*. Hajdú-Bihar Megye Huszárbandériuma, s. a.

³⁹ *Debreczen–Nagyvárad* Értesítő, 1 (1886). 3.



Figure 5: The barracks of the 2nd Honvéd Hussar Regiment, then and now
Source: a) Topor s. a.; b) Photo by János Perge

Evolution of the regiment's name:

- 1874–1881: Royal Hungarian 2nd Honvéd Cavalry Regiment
- 1880–1892: Royal Hungarian 2nd Honvéd Hussar Regiment
- from 1892: Royal Hungarian 2nd Debreczen Honvéd Hussar Regiment

The 2nd Honvéd Hussar Regiment belonged to the 11th Honvéd Cavalry Division, which was part of the 6th Cavalry Division in 1914. Initially, they should have served on the Serbian front, but the Russian declaration of war and the opening of the Russian front had changed plans. In the barracks on Széchenyi Street, the inspection and maintenance of the armament and the sharpening of the swords began.

Theatres of war of the Royal Hungarian 2nd Honvéd Hussar Regiment during the First World War:

- The first and second battles of Lemberg. Kamionka-Strumilowana near Lemberg. This was the place where the 11th Honvéd Cavalry Division underwent a trial by fire, Cossacks were driven out by them, and the task of the 2nd Hussar Regiment was to scout and destroy cavalry units of the enemy.

- The battle of Limanowa, 28 November – 18 December 1914, Galicia. The Austro–Hungarian troops stopped the Russian troops preparing to break through towards Krakow. In addition to the German, Austrian and Polish soldiers, the hussars and the honvéd soldiers fought with such an exemplary heroism that earned the recognition of the combatants. After the battle, Paul von Hindenburg, the German commander of the Eastern Front said: "The Hungarians are the best".
- The Gorlice–Tarnów offensive, 2–5 May 1915. The aim of the breakthrough operation carried out by the Austro–Hungarian and the Allied German troops was to drive the Russians out of the Carpathians.
- Romanian theatre of war. Due to the Romanian offensive against Transylvania in the summer of 1916, the attacks of the Romanian and later Russian forces had to be held back on the ridge of the Carpathians. From the autumn of 1916, a stand-up fight took place, and the army of the Monarchy struggled with a severe horse shortage, so according to a central decision, the hussars had to get rid of their horses. The hussars of Debrecen felt lucky because they got their horses back later. And that had a good effect on their morale.
- Volhinia, 8 September 1914. This battle was the most glorious but at the same time, the bloodiest action of the regiment. They had to secure the right flank of the Linsingen army group. Opposite them stood the 338th Russian Infantry Regiment, several cavalry divisions, and also a Dragoon division. During the battle, the hussars got off their horses and engaged into a close combat. When the right flank of the army was threatened with encirclement, the hussars managed to get behind the enemy and chased them away.
- Forward movement at Chworostow and Komarow-novoszielk, 20–22 August 1915. The soldiers of the regiment considered it to be their greatest war action, so they chose the date of their victory as the regiment's day.
- Battle of Caporetto, October–November 1917. The army was transformed, and the cavalry units were reorganised into infantry units. After a successful breakthrough, the retreating Italian troops failed to be destroyed as they were unable to chase them fast enough in the absence of the cavalry units.
- Front at Bukovina, 1917.
- Italian front from early April to the middle of May 1918. The combat line is in the area of Cordymano, Orsago, Bavari and Bosco, along the River Piave, opposite Mount Montello. The aim of the Austro–Hungarian high command was to crush the opposing Italian and French–English forces.⁴⁰

In 1917, the 2nd Hussar Regiment was reorganised, divided into two parts and named Half Regiment. The reduction of horses regarding the regiment was carried out modestly, the first half-regiment remained a cavalry regiment, only the second became an infantry half-regiment. The best-known leader of the regiment was István Tisza. First he was the leader of the cavalry half-regiment, then he became the commander

⁴⁰ Péter Strausz: *Tisza István és a 2. honvéd huszárezred. Az idő harcokat újraz.* s. a.

of the whole regiment. In a letter to Archduke Joseph, he described the soldiers of the 2nd Hussar Regiment as follows:

"I've got to truly know the ordinary people now. This is the most extraordinary race of the world that can only be loved and respected. How unfortunate that the political intelligentsia doesn't do anything else, just corrupts this great and God-blessed people."

/István Tisza/

Due to the order he got from the Emperor, István Tisza said goodbye to the regiment on 11 September, and travelled to Croatia. In October–November 1918, it was Lieutenant Colonel István Tóthvárady-Asbóth who led the regiment home from the Italian front collapsing shortly before.⁴¹ On 21 September 1924, a memorial statue in honour of István Tisza, the former commander of the regiment, was inaugurated and is now located in front of the main entrance of the University of Debrecen. After 5 decades of existence, the regiment ceased to exist in 1918.



Figure 6: Memorial of István Tisza
Source: Photo by János Perge

⁴¹ Strausz (s. a.): op. cit.

Memorial erected in honour of the 2nd Debrecen Hussar Regiment

According to the processed data, the memorial column erected in honour of the 2nd Honvéd Hussar Regiment in the Honvéd Cemetery is not the same as the obelisk originally raised as a memorial. The artwork attributed today to be the memorial column of the 2nd Hussar Regiment is not identical to the original. That memorial column stands at the end of the Honvéd Cemetery. The inscription on the simple obelisk is: "Heroes 1914–1918".

István Topor writes about the unveiling of the memorial column in his book *90 év távlatában* [90 Years On]:

"An obelisk of marble appeared in the courtyard of the barracks. There was a sword on top of the column with the inscription Pro patria 1914–18 next to it. Under the sword is the name "Tisza István" in golden letters. This was followed by the names of 13 officers died as heroes. On the other sides of the column were the names of the 450 fallen non-commissioned officers and hussars of the regiment. At the bottom of the statue, there was a bronze sword lying on an oak wreath with a hussar shako on it."⁴²

Bulcsú Éles writes the followings in his study: "On the simple column of artificial stone reads only this: Heroes 1914–1918."⁴³

György Kaplonyi gives the following description in his book *Debreceni ércemberek, márványnévjegyek* [Debrecen Ore Men, Marble Names]:

"The memory of the legendary 2nd Honvéd Hussars is proclaimed on a modest column of artificial stone in the courtyard of the hussar barracks at the beginning of Széchenyi Road. The memorial column is an obelisk-like structure on a tall, stepped pedestal. The names of the fallen officers and troops were engraved on its side. On its pedestal, there is a crossed sword with a shako. On the two sides of the sword stretching towards the sky on the façade of the column is this inscription: Pro patria 1914–1918."⁴⁴

⁴² István Topor: 90 év távlatában. *Hajdú-Bihar Megyei Napló*, 24 September 2014.

⁴³ Topor (s. a.): op. cit.

⁴⁴ György Kaplonyi: *Debreceni ércemberek, márványnévjegyek*. Színes tanulmányosorozat Debrecen összes műemlékeiről. Debrecen, Magyar Nemzeti Könyv- és Lapkiadóvállalat, 1943. 175.



Figure 7: Memorial column erected in memory of the 2nd Honvéd Hussars (Honvéd Cemetery, Debrecen)
Source: Photo by János Perge

3.2.2. 3rd Debreczen Honvéd Infantry Regiment

The 3rd Debreczen Honvéd Infantry Regiment consisted of the regimental headquarters and 4 field battalions. In the meantime, the 47th Nagykunság Battalion also moved to Debrecen, so already 3 battalions of the regiment were stationed at Debrecen. (The fourth field battalion remained in Zilah.) Vazul Petrovics, the Lieutenant Colonel of the 8th Honvéd Infantry Regiment, was appointed as commander of the regiment.⁴⁵ The augmentation area of the 3rd Debreczen Honvéd Infantry Regiment extended to the whole Hajdú County, but the southern areas of Szabolcs and the western areas of Szatmár, Szilágy and Kolozs counties also belonged to them. The 3rd honvéd soldiers belonged to the 20th Honvéd Infantry Division. The outbreak of World War I disrupted the idyllic atmosphere and the division was mobilised on 26 July 1914.

⁴⁵ Super User (2018a): op. cit.

Theatres of war of the 3rd Honvéd Infantry Regiment in the first world war:

- Russian theatre of war, from 6 August 1914. They fought in the district of Halych and Rohatyn in Eastern Galicia, later along the River Dniester.
- Carpathians, from 27 September to mid-December (east of and around the Dukla Pass).
- Mezőlaborc–Homonna region, from February 1915.
- The Gorlice–Tarnów offensive.
- Chasing of Russians northeast of Sanok.
- Italian battlefield. During the first battle of the Isonzo, they fought on the Krn mountain range from 6 June. They fought the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 6th and 8th battles of the Isonzo on and around Monte San Michele and then in the hell of Doberdo.
- Russian theatre of war. From 25 November 1916, they fought north of Brody, in the corner of Styr and Lypa, assigned into the army of German General Linsingen and the corps of General Diffenbach.
- Italian theatre of war. From 14 September 1917, they defended Mount Monte San Gabriele in the 20th Division with enormous casualties. Further advance of the Italian infantry had to be slowed down. The 3rd Debreczen Infantry Regiment had to help the 2nd battalion of the Imperial and Royal 39th Infantry Regiment (also from Debrecen) joining their right flank.
- Piavé. Simultaneously with the operations of the 12th Battle of the Isonzo and the breakthrough at Caporetto, the division went into attack, reached Isonzo on 29 October and then, as a reserve of the Isonzo Army, reached the River Piavé on 8 January 1918, east of Belluno. Until 29 October 1918, they remained in positions at north of Monte Tombat.
- They began their withdrawal on 30 October. From 14 November, the infantry were transported home from Villach by train to their peace stations.⁴⁶

The barracks of the 3rd Infantry Regiment

The construction of the infantry barracks began in 1891 and was handed over on 3 January 1893. The new barracks was taken possession by the 3rd Infantry Regiment.⁴⁷ Today, the barracks is called Nagysándor József Laktanya, located at 58 Péterfia Street in Debrecen. The Hungarian Armed Forces Military Administration and Central Registry Command (KIKNYP) 2nd Military Administration Center and the Debrecen Voluntary Territorial Defence Reserve (ÖTT) System HDF 2nd vitéz Vattay Antal Territorial Defence Regiment, Hungarian Defence Forces 3rd Oláh Sándor Territorial Defence Battalion currently operate in this building.

⁴⁶ Kovács (2021b): op. cit.

⁴⁷ József Papp: Debrecen város birtokkatasztere 1924–1950. *Hajdú Bihar Megyei Levéltár közleményei*, 23 (1997). 103.



Figure 8: The barracks of the 3rd Infantry Regiment (Debrecen, Péterfia Street)
 Source: Photo by János Perge

Figure 9 shows the casualties of the 3rd Honvéd Infantry Regiment in World War I. According to the field death certificates of the 3rd Honvéd Infantry Regiment, a total of 3,275 people died, of whom 470 died on the battlefield, 2,249 died in hospitals, and 556 died in unknown locations.⁴⁸

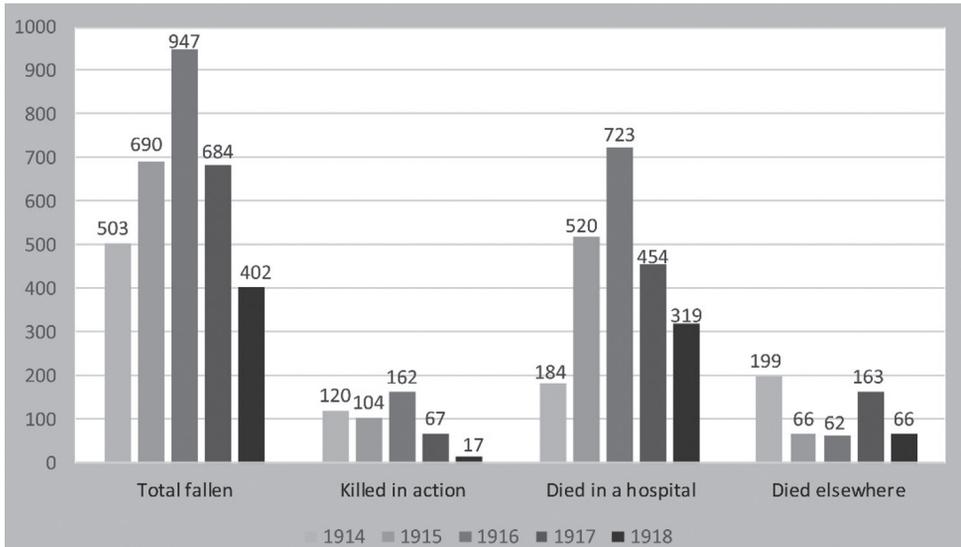


Figure 9: Casualties of the 3rd Honvéd Infantry Regiment in World War I
 Source: Compiled by János Perge based on <http://bocskaikonyvtar.hu/hirek/mirol-mesel-a-harmas-honvedek-tabori-halotti-anyakonyve>

⁴⁸ Katalin Martinkovits: *Miről mesél a hármas honvédek tábori halotti anyakönyve?* Debrecen, MH 5. Bocskai István Lövészdandár Könyvtára. 22 February 2019.

Memorial erected in honour of the 3rd Honvéd Soldiers

The memorial in honour of the heroes of the 3rd honvéd soldiers and the soldiers of the 3rd Landsturm was erected on 29 May 1940 at Nagy Lajos király Square in Debrecen. The statue was created by Ferenc Márton.⁴⁹ The defiant figure cast in ore of the honvéd soldier facing the city was drawn in the sky. The total size of it is approximately 5 m including the pedestal. It was taken from its original place to the Honvéd Cemetery, where it was re-erected next to the “Dying Lion”, and then from here to the park of the Kossuth Barracks on Füredi Road, which is the current location of the monument. It is planned to set it up in the original barracks of the regiment at 58 Péterfia Street or in its immediate vicinity on Bem Square.



Figure 10: The memorial in honour of the heroes of the 3rd honvéd soldiers and the soldiers of the 3rd Landsturm
 Source: Photo by János Perge

3.3. The Royal Hungarian k.u. Landsturm

After the Compromise, Act XLII on the Hungarian Honvéd and the Royal Hungarian k.u. Landsturm had been enacted in 1868, which declared that the Landsturm is the augmentation force of the armed forces. Those people, who did not belong to either the army (navy or reserve) or the Hungarian Honvéd, were conscripted in this

⁴⁹ Kaplonyi (1943): op. cit. 163–167.

force from the year in which they turned 19 to the year in which they turned 42. In addition, every individual, depending on their fitness for military service until they reached the age of 60, who belonged to the retired or "off-duty" staff of the army (navy) and the Hungarian Honvéd, was obliged to serve in the Landsturm, unless they had been recruited by the rest of the armed forces. It had two divisions. The 1st division included those aged 19–37, the 2nd division included those aged 37–42, and those who had already spent 5 years in the 1st division.⁵⁰ The 3rd Landsturm Infantry Regiment was stationed at Debrecen.

3.3.1. The Royal Hungarian 3rd Landsturm Infantry Regiment

The 3rd Landsturm Infantry Regiment does not have a regiment album. In 1914, all conscripts were called up in Debrecen, 3 battalion field companies were set up and moved out. Three additional companies remained in Debrecen. A verse narrative by an unknown author tells about the movement and battles of the regiment in 1914,⁵¹ according to which the additional regiment of the 3rd Landsturm Infantry Regiment, which remained in Debrecen, set out on 28 September and arrived in Pétervárad after Debrecen–Nagyvárad–Szabadka–Újvidék.

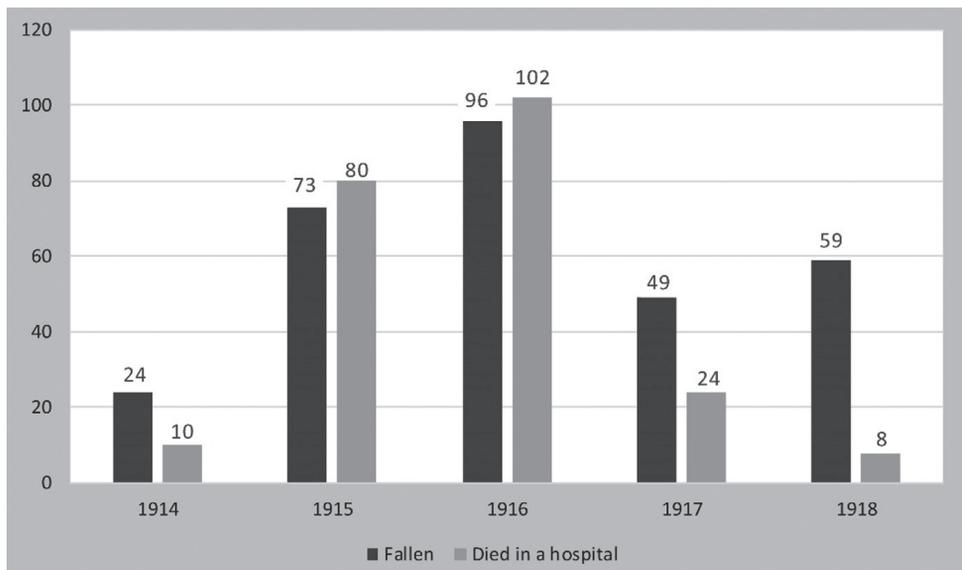


Figure 11. Casualties of the 3rd Landsturm Infantry Regiment in World War I
Source: Compiled by János Perge based on the data of the field death certificates

⁵⁰ Kovács (2021b): op. cit.

⁵¹ Poem by an unknown author.

4. Summary

National defence is one of the sub-systems of the complex defence administration system of Hungary. The Hungarian Army has always played a major role in the performance of defence tasks in the city of Debrecen. Article VII of Act 1715 provided for the establishment of a permanent Hungarian army, unfortunately, this still did not mean the establishment of an independent Hungarian army, as it did not directly serve the Hungarian national interest. In the time of Maria Theresa, Act LXIII of 1741 regulated the system of augmentation and military administration, included the numerical strength to be raised, the process of raising the troops and the method of compensating for losses. It became possible to establish independent Hungarian regiments, but it was only occasional and it lasted for a specified period of time, so it did not mean a permanent military force. The Imperial and Royal Army, the permanent armed force of the Habsburg Monarchy, was one of the largest land armies in Europe. After the development of the army in 1798, infantry regiments and hussar regiments had been raised from the territory of Hungary and Transylvania. The domestic component of the imperial and royal army, which was called Hungarian army in the legislation enacted by the Diet of Pozsony (today Bratislava), accounted for one-third of the entire imperial army. In our country, the establishment of the independent Hungarian army, the National Guard can be traced back to the period of the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence of 1848–1849, which was regulated by Article XXII of 1848. On 11 July 1848, the nation's regular defence force, the National Defence Force had been officially established. The formation of a force involving society as a whole was interrupted by the surrender at Világos (13 August 1849). From 1849, the country was under Austrian military occupation for almost two decades, and it had no national army during this period. Following the Compromise of 1867 and the establishment of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy, Act XLI of 1868, the so-called Defence Forces Act settled the issue of the army. It stated that Austria and Hungary owe each other mutual protection. The main unit of the ground forces of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy was the Imperial and Royal Army, also known as the "Common Army". In addition to the armed forces of the Monarchy outside the Common Army, both states of the Monarchy set up a separate army group. This is how the Royal Hungarian Honvéd was established in 1869.

From the units of the Imperial and Royal Army, the followings were stationed at Debrecen: the Imperial and Royal 39th Infantry Regiment, which was the "in-house regiment" of Debrecen, the Imperial and Royal 16th and 7th hussar regiments, the 2nd Honvéd Hussar Regiment and the 3rd Honvéd Infantry Regiment of the Royal Hungarian Honvéd, and finally, the Royal Hungarian 3rd Landsturm Infantry Regiment. One can clearly see from this list, that it is no coincidence that Debrecen is called a famous military city. The possibilities of accommodating soldiers had changed in the 19th century. Previously soldiers had been quartered at the populace through the creation of so-called soldiers' rooms, later the state believed that the solution was the construction of barracks.

This article describes in detail the military units of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy connected to the city of Debrecen, the history and activities of the units, the barracks established for their accommodation, and the monuments erected in their honour in Debrecen. The soldiers serving in the city of Debrecen have earned respect and recognition for their actions, and their activities give an example to the members of the staff currently serving. Our military heroes have stood up for the defence of their homeland with their heroic deeds, exemplary attitude to their uniforms and oath, strong spirituality and national identity, faith and commitment, so it is not only appropriate but necessary and obligatory to remember them and preserve their memory for future generations.

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