

Zouaves in France, 1940

Reference Guide



Background

Originally raised during the conquest of Algeria in the 1830s, the **Zouaves** of the French army – with their recognizable uniforms and red *chechias* – served with distinction in numerous conflicts through the 19th and early 20th Centuries.

Zouaves were traditionally recruited from European settlers in the French possessions of North Africa and based with *l'Armée d'Afrique*.

On May 10, 1940, elements of the following Zouave regiments were present in France:

- **1^{er} Zouaves** – 82^e *Division d'infanterie d'Afrique* (DIA), 20th Corps, 4th Army
- **8^e Zouaves** – 12^e *Division d'infanterie motorisée* (DIM), 15th Corps, 1st Army
- **9^e Zouaves** – 87^e DIA, 2nd Army Group
- **11^e Zouaves** – 2^e DIA, 3rd Corps, 1st Army
- **14^e Zouaves** – 5^e DIA, 5th Corps, 1st Army
- **12^e Zouaves** – 3^e DIA, 10th Corps, 2nd Army
- **13^e Zouaves** – 4^e DIA, 9th Army

Two additional regiments, the **3^e Zouaves** (85^e DIA) and the **4^e Zouaves** (84^e DIA), arrived in France in late May 1940 and were in action by June. The **15^e Zouaves** were also located in France but functioned as an administrative unit.



Zouave Uniform & Field Gear

- The Zouaves deployed to metropolitan France in 1940 were issued uniforms and field gear typical of regular French army of the period.
- This guide will highlight items distinctive to the Zouaves; for a complete reference guide of uniform components and field gear, please consult [the 1940 French Reservist Guide](#) and [French 1940 Guide and Vendors list](#).
- Primary vendors are: [Hikishop](#), [Heritage Militaire](#), [Nice Collection](#), eBay/eBay.fr



Casque (*Helmet*)



Typical: M26 Adrian Helmet, 1937 circular “RF”/crescent badge.



Alternative: M26 Adrian Helmet, 1915 “RF”/crescent badge.



Alternative: M15 Adrian Helmet, 1915 “RF”/crescent badge. Evidence of this usage exists (*see left*) but appears to have been issued primarily to native units.



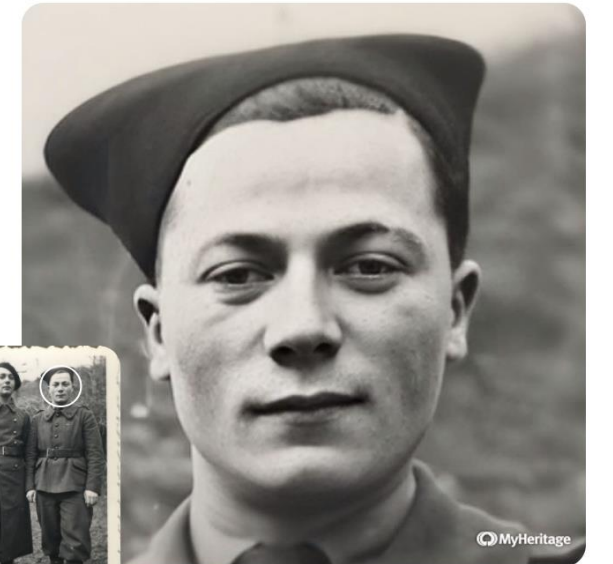
Chechia



Worn instead of the *bonnet de police* as the standard soft cover for Zouaves. The *chechia* worn in 1940 was taller (approx. 25mm) and more rigidly shaped than the *chechia* worn by Zouaves in earlier eras. *Chechias* were worn unadorned or featured the crescent and regimental number.

Vendors: Originals can be found on eBay/eBay.fr but are rare and often expensive. A reasonable alternative is the *fez* of the Italian Bersaglieri, which can be commonly found on eBay and in military surplus stores.

The *chechia* should be red, rather than the maroon seen in commercially sold fezzes.



Capote (overcoat)



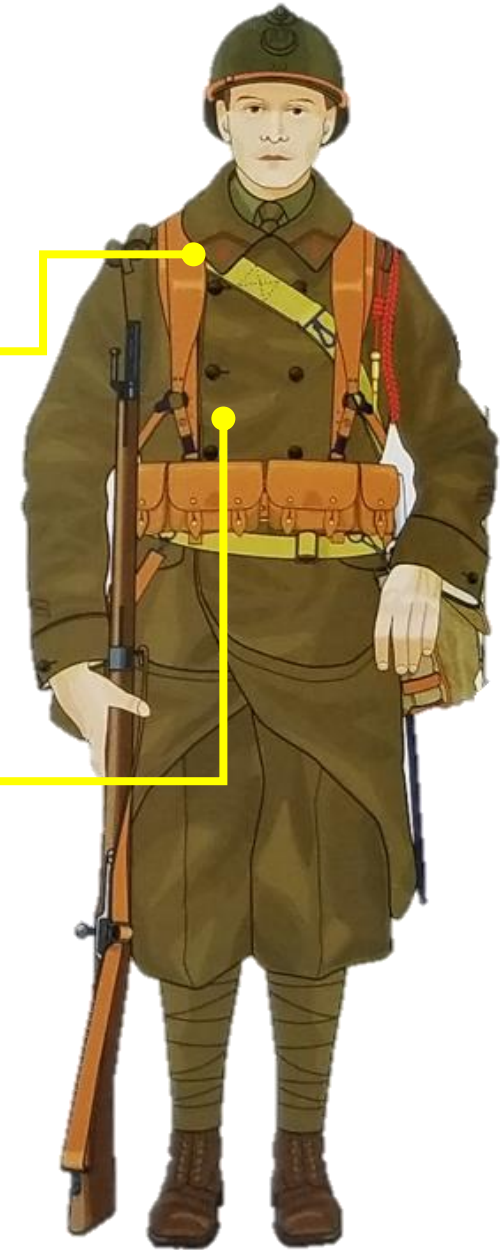
Insignia: Olive-brown tabs, regimental number and two soutaches in garance

Vendors: *Nice Collection*



M1920/35: Olive-brown wool blend, double-breasted, six-button, rounded olive green buttons, buttoned rear skirt pockets w/back belt, flapped hip pockets, narrow collar.

Vendors: *Hikishop, Heritage Militaire*



Culottes (breeches)



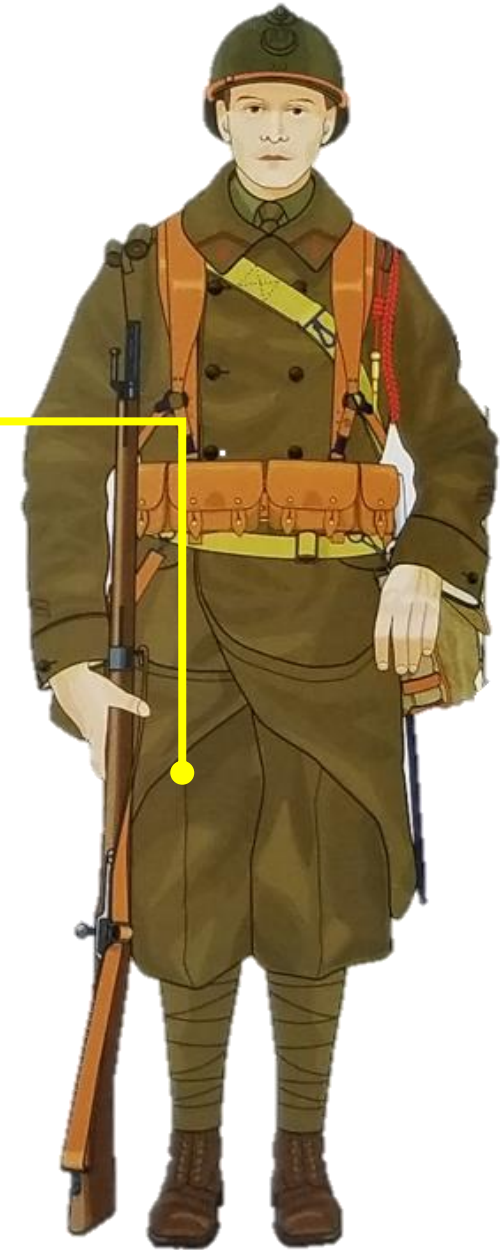
M1915/27 Pour Troupes d'Afrique: Olive-brown wool blend, button fly, belt back, button calves w/suspenders. Baggy than the M1938 culottes.

Vendors: *Not commercially reproduced*



M1938: Breeches-style “golf” trousers, olive brown wool blend, button fly, belt back, laced calves w/adjustment buckled strap, waist belt loops, w/suspenders or leather belt.

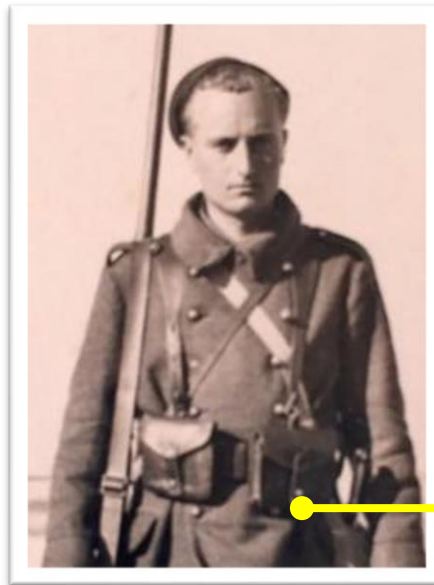
Vendors: *Hikishop, Heritage Militaire*



Cartouchières (*cartridge pouches*)



M1935: Tanned leather, sewn pockets/straps/belt loops, double-pocket (one small, one large), blackened hardware, pair.



M1916 or M1916/34: Tanned leather, sewn pockets, sewn/riveted straps/belt loops, single-pocket, brass hardware, pair.



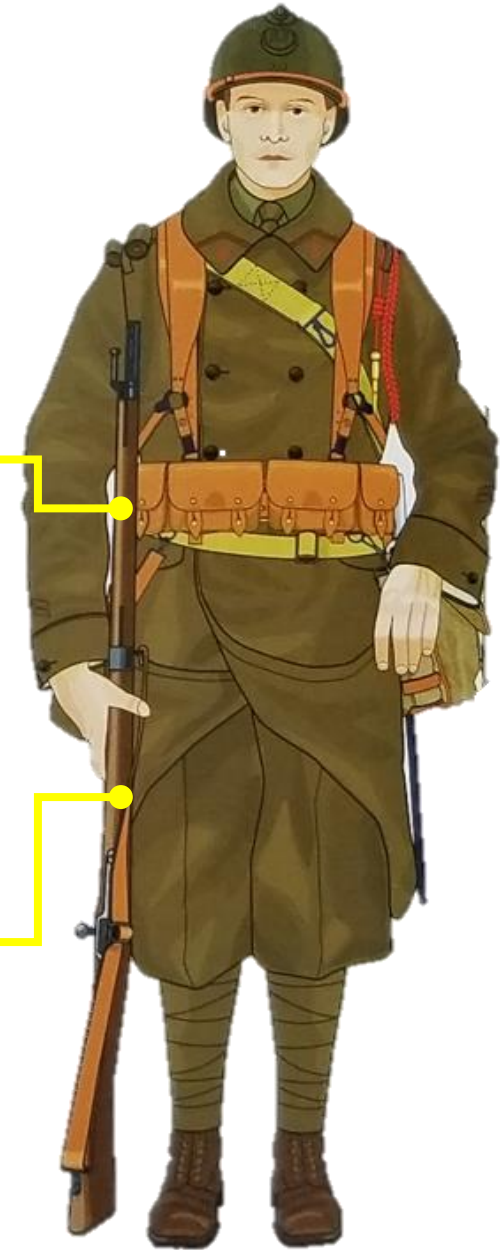
Fusil (rifle)



MAS-36: Black-lacquered steel, three-piece wood stock, steel butt plate, leather sling, spike bayonet carried in tube under barrel, 7.5x54mm.



Berthier M1907/15, M1907/16: Blued steel, solid wood stock, steel butt plate, leather sling, 8mm Lebel or 7.5x54mm (M1907/15-M34).



Off-Duty Dress



Vareuse M1938: Olive-brown wool blend, five-button, rounded olive green, angled flapped hip pockets, sewn shoulder straps, collar insignia cover flaps w/small buttons, turn-back cuffs.

Vendors: *Hikishop*

Vareuse M1920: Olive-brown wool blend, six-button, rounded olive-green, angled flapped hip pockets, sewn shoulder straps, turn-back cuffs, garance piping.

Vendors: *Heritage Militaire*

Blue Sash: Foreign Legion sash acceptable.

Vendors: *eBay/eBay.fr*



“Oriental” Dress

Veste + Gilet: The M1927 veste introduced the regimental number at the collar. The color of the *tombeau* (enclosed loops) traditionally differed by division (red = Algiers, white = Oran, yellow = Constantine, blue = Tunis).

Blue Sash

Garance Sarouel

Dark Blue Band Molletières (leg-wraps)

***Vendors:** Originals can be found on eBay/eBay.fr. Earlier versions of Zouave dress are commercially reproduced; may be custom-made.*

