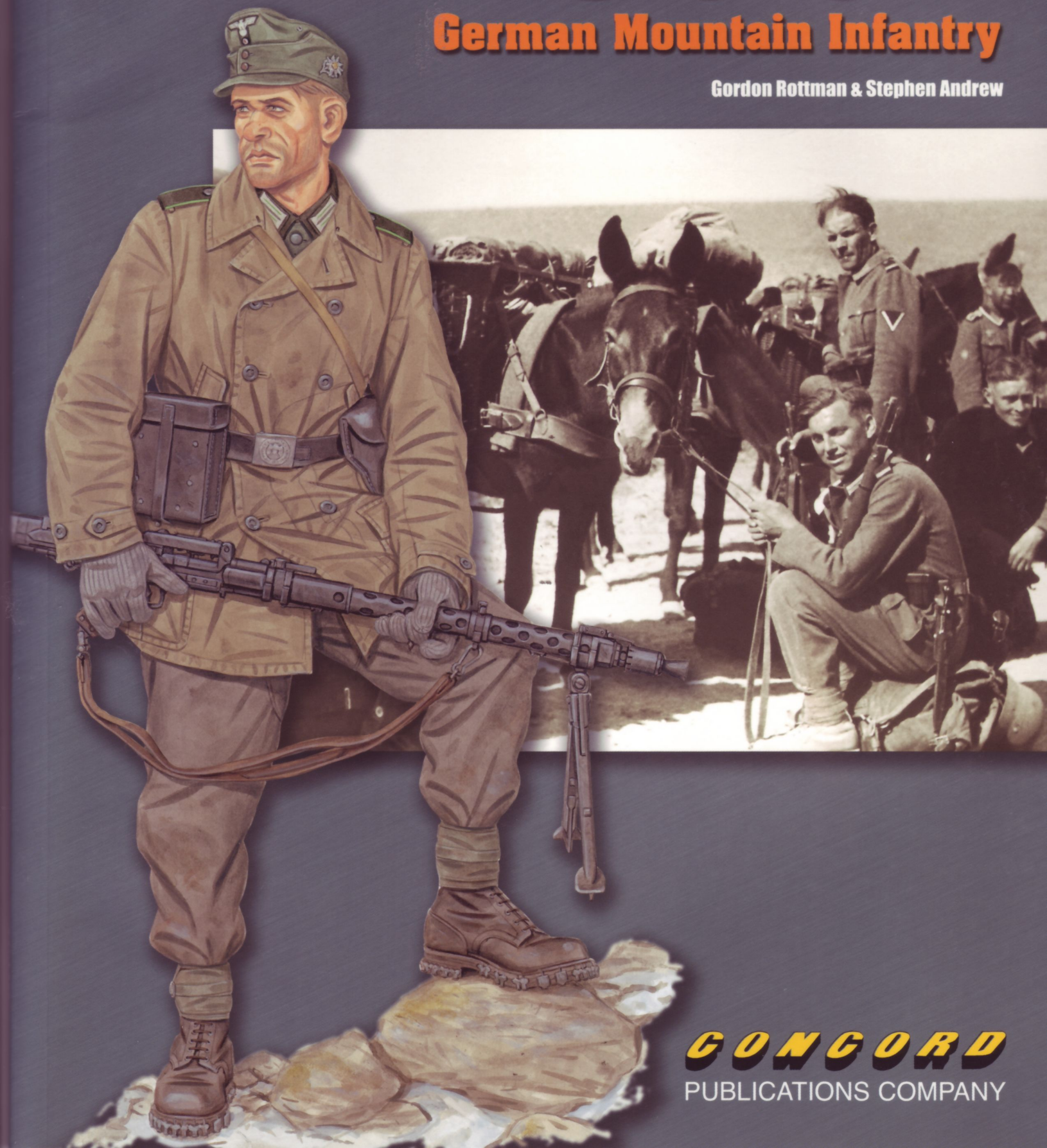


Gebirgsjäger

German Mountain Infantry

Gordon Rottman & Stephen Andrew



CONCORD
PUBLICATIONS COMPANY

Gebirgsjäger

German Mountain Infantry

Text by Gordon Rottman

Color Plates by Stephen Andrew

Editor: Dr. Mark Johnston

German Spell Check: Ralph Zwilling

Copyright © 2007

by CONCORD PUBLICATIONS CO.

B1, 10/F, Kong Nam Industrial Building

603-609 Castle Peak Road

Tsuen Wan, New Territories

Hong Kong

www.concord-publications.com

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior written permission of Concord Publications Co.

We welcome authors who can help expand our range of books. If you would like to submit material, please feel free to contact us.

We are always on the look-out for new, unpublished photos for this series.

If you have photos or slides or information you feel may be useful to future volumes, please send them to us for possible future publication.

Full photo credits will be given upon publication.

ISBN 962-361-137-4

printed in Hong Kong

INTRODUCTION

The Gebirgstruppen (Mountain Troops) constituted one of the most interesting organizations within the World War II German Army (Heer). The Gebirgstruppen were a category of troops especially trained and equipped to operate in mountainous regions. They included all types of units assigned to Gebirgs-Divisionen (mountain divisions). This included infantry, artillery, antitank, reconnaissance, pioneer (engineer), signals, sanitation (medical), transport, and supply units. With the exception of the infantry units, these units were prefixed with "Gebirgs-" to identify them as belonging to the Gebirgstruppen. "Gebirgsjäger" identifies mountain infantry units.

The term "Jäger" literally means "hunter." In a military context it refers to light infantry. Jäger units have long existed within the German military. They equated to Rifles and Chasseurs, the latter being French for hunters. Such units served as skirmishers and scouts. They were lightly equipped, usually armed with shorter length muskets and later with rifled muskets to achieve better accuracy, and were outfitted in more subdued uniforms than line troops. They were trained to operate in dispersed formations in small groups, and to make maximum use of concealment. This description applied equally to the training of the Gebirgsjäger of World War II. Other German units made use of the term "Jäger", including light infantry (Jäger), ski infantry (Ski-Jäger), parachute infantry (Fallschirmjäger), and antitank (Panzerjäger). The last-named was an exception in that it did not identify a light infantry unit. Instead it emphasized the hunting, aggressive aspect of antitank units, rather than the less offensively oriented "Panzerabwehr" (armor defense) designation used until 1940.

Historical background

Prussia, on the North German plains, did not have a tradition or need for mountain troops. The same applied to the more mountainous southern Germany. The actual mountain or alpine regions of southern Germany were small, the rest being only rugged hills. There were Jäger units, some of which were home-stationed in mountainous areas, specifically in Bavaria and Württemberg. In 1914 there was no perceived need for mountain troops, beyond a few very small units, even though regular German troops fared poorly against French Chasseurs Alpins in the remote and small scale operations in the Vosges Mountains.

This changed in 1915 when Italy declared war on Austro-Hungary. The Austro-Hungarian Empire, encompassing large mountain and alpine regions, did possess especially trained units in the form of 14 Gebirgsbrigaden, which soon demonstrated their value in the Italian Alps.

German units too were committed to this front and faced the excellent Italian Alpini. Among the German units were a number of Jäger battalions converted to mountain troops and employing men from alpine areas. In 1915 they were brigaded and other mountain-trained specialty units were raised. These include sharpshooter, artillery, mortar, pioneer, and signals units. In 1916 they were formed into the Alpenkorps, a two-brigade division-sized force. The Alpenkorps fought in the Tyrol on the Italian Front and in Serbia. It also saw action in Romania and the Vosges as well as serving outside of its element at Verdun.

After the Armistice the only remaining mountain units were three Bavarian regiments. Austria too maintained mountain units, the Alpenjäger. In accordance with the expansion of the Heer from 1933 the Bavarian mountain units were consolidated into the Gebirgs-Brigade in June 1935. It was in turn expanded into 1. Gebirgs-Division in April 1938. That same month the Federal Army of the Republic of Austria was absorbed into the German Army during the Anschluss (annexation). The 2. and 3. Gebirgs-Divisionen were organized from former Austrian mountain units. No other Gebirgstruppen units were raised until 1940.

The Gebirgsjäger

The Gebirgstruppen had specialized organization, weapons, and equipment, but it was the soldiers themselves who gave the units their special character. Germany recruited and conscripted troops and assigned them to units stationed in their home areas, the defense districts (Wehrkreise). The Wehrkreis was the home of an army corps, several divisions, and numerous non-divisional units. It was responsible for manning, training, and supporting the units. The vast majority of Gebirgsjäger were recruited from mountainous districts, namely VII (München) in Bavaria and XVIII (Salzburg) in former Austria. Some were also obtained from XIII (Nürnberg) and XVII (Vienna).

Many of the young men from these areas had some degree of experience with rugged terrain and cold weather. By no means all were experienced climbers, especially those from the cities and towns. However, many had undertaken hiking, hill-walking, snow skiing, and winter camping trips. If nothing else they were better acclimatized than northern Germans, who were used to broad rolling plains and little snow. The large number of civilian climbing and hiking clubs also provided experienced men. Some of these clubs had been employed during World War I to provide training to the new mountain and ski units. Dialects, customs, and traditions differ from region to region in Germany, so assigning troops from the same region to the same unit made the transition to military service easier and their common identity greatly enhanced unit esprit de corps.

The mountain environment offered a wide range of challenges to any unit attempting to operate in it. Traversing steeply inclined terrain has its own physical challenges for men and animals. The ground is irregular, broken, and rugged. Often it is rocky making it more difficult to traverse. Gullies, draws, ravines, and gorges make travel extremely difficult as do rushing streams and rivers. Vegetation can be dense restricting movement and observation. It also provides concealment. Fields of observation and fire can be either broad or extremely restricted. In Europe the tree-line, the altitude at which trees do not grow, is between 6,000 and 8,000 feet (1,830 and 4,240 meters). In Northern Finland it is as low 1,300 feet (400 meters).

Roads and trails were few in number and non-existent in most areas. They were difficult to maintain in harsh weather and easy to block with a small well-dug-in force. This applied to blocking mountain passes too. Since it was difficult or impossible to bypass such routes it required little in the way of mines; artillery, mortar and automatic weapons fire, and manmade obstacles to block them. The many ravines, gorges, and streams meant numerous bridges on the few developed routes. These were easily destroyed and difficult to replace. A capability was necessary to bridge such gaps and it was difficult to move the necessary materials and equipment to the bridging sites.

Europe's long winter, featuring deep snow, freezing rain, hail, sleet, high winds, and fog made operations extremely difficult. With this came icy roads, mud, fallen trees, and mud, rock and landslides. Snow was very difficult to traverse, especially on broken ground. Snow skis and snowshoes were often needed. The below freezing temperatures caused their own problems as did related illnesses, including frostbite, exposure (known today as hypothermia), dehydration, snow-blindness, immersion foot, and upper respiratory illnesses. High altitudes mean oxygen deprivation. Altitude sickness is felt by the unacclimatized at 6,000 feet (1,830 meters) and can be disabling. Above 10,000 feet (3,050 meters) oxygen is necessary. However, combat action was seldom if ever experienced at such high altitudes. The Gebirgsjäger had as much a chance of becoming a weather casualty or injured in an accident as he did of becoming a combat casualty.

This all meant that the Gebirgsjäger had to be an extremely fit and well acclimatized individual. He also required a high degree of morale and faith in his fellow soldiers. Conventional soldiers could carry comparatively light loads and was rely on a fairly consistent supply line. Though sometimes in short supply, ammunition, rations, and water were usually issued on a fairly reliable basis. Medical evacuation was reasonably routine. It was a different matter for the Gebirgsjäger. Supply lines were lengthy and fragile. The terrain and weather affected them even more than in other areas. If truck transport could not be employed, as was usually the case, wagon, cart, and pack-mule and horse transport, supplemented by man-packing, were the only recourse. These could only provide a fraction of the supplies delivered by trucks.

The Gebirgsjäger had to be more self-sufficient. Rather than being provided rations from field kitchens on a daily or even meal-by-meal basis he would have to carry several days' rations and ample ammunition. He also knew medical evacuation and treatment would be sporadic. It was an absolute necessity that he be in a high state of physical fitness, acclimatized, and above average marksman, and proficient in the skills necessary to function effectively in a brutal environment.

Specialized training was provided within units and NCO and officer leaders received advanced training. One example of this is the rating as a Heeresbergführer (Army Mountain Leader). In order to earn the coveted badge NCOs had to have a year's experience and meet qualifying goals. Ski training was not provided to all Gebirgsjäger and only specialized high alpine units received advanced technical rock climbing training. Units routinely conducted various close-combat and antitank courses.

Gebirgstruppen were provided several means of identification befitting an elite formation. On the left side of their distinctive Bergmütze (mountain cap) they wore a metal Edelweiss flower badge. A larger embroidered Edelweiss emblem was worn on the right upper sleeve. The tradition of the Edelweiss goes far back into alpinist history. The white flower grows high in inaccessible places, on rocky surfaces in fissures and on glass meadows facing the sun. Climbers returning from a climb would wear the flower on their caps as proof of their feat. (Today it is forbidden to pick the protected flower in Europe.)

Weapons and equipment

The weapons employed by Gebirgstruppen had to be light, compact, and able to function in harsh conditions. For the most part normal infantry weapons sufficed as these same characteristics were also desirable for them. Gebirgsjäger units were generally allocated the same numbers and types of weapons as conventional infantry.

In the area of shoulder weapons there were some substitutes, with the distribution of "rifles" shorter in length than the Kar 98k carbine, the standard shoulder weapon of the Heer. Individual weapons issued to Gebirgsjäger units included:

- 7.92mm Kar98k carbine (Mauser)
- 7.92mm Gew33/40 and Gew33(t) rifles (Mauser)
- 7.92mm Gew43 rifle
- 7.92mm MG34 and MG42 machine guns
- 7.92mm MP43 and MP44 machine pistols and Stg44 assault rifle
- 7.92mm PzB39 antitank rifle
- 9mm MP38 and MP40 machine pistols
- 9mm P08 pistol (Luger)
- 9mm P38 pistol (Walther)
- Panzerfaust 30, 60, and 100 antitank rocket launchers
- 8.8cm RPzB43 and RPzB 54 antitank rocket launchers
- cup-type rifle grenade discharger

Crew-served weapons were a different matter. While some standard weapons were employed, alternative weapons were sometimes provided. They were either lighter in weight or could be broken down into smaller components for mule/horse or man-packing. Sometimes obsolescent weapons were issued as they were lighter and more compact than current models. Often the alternative weapons were of smaller caliber than standard weapons. Of particular importance were mountain artillery pieces. Artillery by nature is large and heavy. Mountain artillery pieces had to be as light as possible. This sacrificed range and stability when firing. They were required to be able to fire at both high angles and low depression in order to reach targets behind high ground. For this same reason mortars were of particular value owing to their high angle of fire. Several of the following crew-served weapons were specifically designed or modified from the basic model for use by Gebirgstruppen and are identified as such by the inclusion of "Gebirgs" (Geb) in their designations:

- 3.7cm Pak35/36 antitank gun
- 5cm Pak38 antitank gun
- 5cm leGrW36 light mortar
- 8cm mGrW34 medium mortar
- 8cm kzGrW42 short mortar
- 12cm sGrW42 heavy mortar

7.5cm leIG18 and leGebIG18 light infantry guns
 15cm sIG33 heavy infantry gun
 7.5cm GebK15 mountain cannon
 7.5cm GebG36 mountain gun
 10.5cm GebH40 mountain howitzer
 10.5cm leFH18 light field howitzer
 15cm sFH18 heavy field howitzer
 2cm Flak30, Flak38, and GebFlak38 antiaircraft guns

Individual equipment was much the same as for other infantrymen. Gebirgsjäger were provided larger water bottles and special high-capacity rucksacks. Rather than high leather jackboots or low-topped laced marching shoes the Gebirgsjäger wore heavy, sturdy climbing boots and puttees. Various clothing items were provided including wind jackets, snow camouflage suits, and other cold weather clothing. For mobility snow skis, snowshoes, and 10-point crampons for ice-climbing were issued. Only selected individuals and specialized units were trained in technical high alpine rock climbing skills. They were provided with ice axes, hard-lay climbing rope, pitons and piton hammers, carabiners, and avalanche marker cords and flags for use when searching for victims.

Organization

The Gebirgs-Division was organized along the same lines as the standard Infanterie-Division, but with reduced manning, heavy weapons, and transport scales. The manning and equipage levels of divisions varied during the war, but examples are provided here for comparison purposes. An early war 17,000-man Infanterie-Division could possess about 900 motor vehicles, 450 motorcycles, 1,110 horse-drawn wagons, and 5,300 horses. A 13,000-man Gebirgs-Division would have assigned 500 motor vehicles, 200 motorcycles, 1,000 horse-drawn wagons, and 5,000 horses and mules.

The organization of the Gebirgs-Division changed over the course of the war, but not drastically. Most changes were reflected in the allocation of weapons. Heavier weapons were provided as the war progressed and many of the Gebirgs-Divisionen found themselves fighting in open terrain as standard infantry divisions. The major difference between the Gebirgs- and Infanterie-Divisionen was that most Gebirgs-Divisionen had only two regiments instead of three.

Gebirgs-Division

Divisions-Stab
 Divisions-Kartenstelle (motorisiert)
 Gebirgsjäger-Regiment (x2)
 Regiments-Stab
 Gebirgsjäger-Bataillon (x3)
 Bataillons-Stab
 Gebirgsjäger-Kompanie (x3)
 schwere Kompanie
 Stabs-Kompanie
 Panzerjäger-Kompanie
 leichte Gebirgsjäger-Kolonne
 Gebirgs-Artillerie-Regiment
 Regiments-Stab
 leichte Gebirgs-Artillerie-Abteilung (x3)
 Abteilungs-Stab
 leichte Gebirgs-Geschützatterie (x3)
 schwere Gebirgs-Artillerie-Abteilung
 Abteilungs-Stab
 schwere Gebirgs-Haubitzenatterie (x3)
 Gebirgs-Panzerjäger-Abteilung
 Bataillons-Stab
 Panzerjäger-Kompanie (x2)
 Gebirgs-Aufklärungs-Abteilung
 Abteilungs-Stab
 Radfahr-Kompanie (x2)
 Kraftrad-Kompanie
 schwere Kompanie
 Gebirgs-Pionier-Bataillon
 Bataillons-Stab
 Pionier-Kompanie (motorisiert)
 Pionier-Kompanie (x2)
 Gebirgs-Divisions-Nachrichtenabteilung
 Abteilungs-Stab
 Funk-Kompanie (motorisiert)
 Fernsprech-Kompanie (motorisiert) (x2)

Mountain Division

Divisional Staff
 Divisional Map Station (Motorized)
 Mountain Infantry Regiment (x2)
 Regimental Staff
 Mountain Infantry Battalion (x3)
 Battalion Staff
 Mountain Infantry Company (x3)
 Heavy Company
 Staff Company
 Antitank Company
 Light Mountain Infantry Column
 Mountain Artillery Regiment
 Regimental Staff
 Mountain Light Artillery Battalion (x3)
 Battalion Staff
 Light Mountain Gun Battery (x3)
 Mountain Heavy Artillery Battalion
 Battalion Staff
 Heavy Mountain Gun Battery (x3)
 Mountain Antitank Battalion
 Battalion Staff
 Antitank Company (x2)
 Mountain Reconnaissance Battalion
 Battalion Staff
 Bicycle Company (x2)
 Motorcycle Company
 Heavy Company
 Mountain Pioneer Battalion
 Battalion Staff
 Pioneer Company (Motorized)
 Pioneer Company (x2)
 Mountain Divisional Signals Battalion
 Battalion Staff
 Radio Company (Motorized)
 Telephone Company (Motorized) (x2)

Gebirgs-Feldersatz-Bataillon	Mountain Field Replacement Battalion
Bataillons-Stab	Battalion Staff
Feldersatz-Kompanie (x3)	Field Replacement Company (x3)
Gebirgs-Divisions-Nachschubführer*	Mountain Divisional Supply Leader
kleine Kraftwagen-Kolonne (x2)	Small Motor Transport Column (x2)
Gebirgs-Fahr-Kolonne (x5)	Mountain Transport Column (x5)
kleine Kraftwagen-Kolonne für Betriebsstoff	Small Motor Transport Column for Fuel
Werkstatt-Kompanie (motorisiert)	Workshop Company (Motorized)
Gebirgs-Träger-Bataillon†	Mountain Carrier Battalion
Bataillons-Stab	Battalion Staff
Gebirgs-Träger-Kompanie (x4)	Mountain Carrier Company (x4)
Gebirgs-Divisions-Sanitätsdienst	Mountain Divisional Sanitation Service
Sanitäts-Kompanie (motorisiert)	Sanitation Company (Motorized)
Sanitäts-Kompanie	Sanitation Company
Krankenkraftwagen-Kolonne (x2)	Ambulance Column (x2)
Gebirgs-Divisions-Verwaltungsdienst	Mountain Divisional Administrative Service
Bäckerei-Kompanie (motorisiert)	Bakery Company (Motorized)
Schlachtere-Zug (motorisiert)	Butcher Platoon (Motorized)
Verpflegungsamt	Provisions Office
Gebirgs-Veterinär-Kompanie	Mountain Veterinary Company
Feldgendarmarie-Trupp (motorisiert)	Field Military Police Troop (Motorized)
Feldpostamt (motorisiert)	Field Post Office (Motorized)

* Redesignated Kommandeur Gebirgs-Divisions-Nachschubtruppen (Commander Mountain Divisional Supply Troops) in November 1942.

† Optional attachment.

The Gebirgsjäger-Regiment, while similar to a standard infantry regiment, did possess some organizational differences. This was mainly in the allocation of heavier weapons. For example, there was no regimental infantry gun company. Infantry guns were allocated to the infantry battalions to allow for more decentralized control. Gebirgsjäger units often fought on narrow frontages separated from "adjacent" units by distance and terrain feature. The battalions had to be more self-contained. The nine rifle companies were organized into a company troop (headquarters), three rifle platoons (three light machine guns, one 5cm mortar), a heavy machine gun group (two heavy machine guns) and an antitank rifle group (three rifles). By 1943 the mortars and antitank rifles had been deleted as being ineffective. The heavy company had a platoon of two 7.5cm infantry guns and another with six 8cm mortars. The staff company also possessed a 7.5cm infantry gun platoon, a pioneer platoon with three machine guns, and a signal platoon. The battalion also had a company-sized light train (leichter Troß) for ammunition, ration, and baggage transport.

The artillery regiment's three light gun battalions originally had two batteries, but this was soon increased to three batteries and the 7.5cm GebG36 mountain guns were often replaced by 10.5cm field howitzers. The fourth battalion had two or three batteries of 10.5cm GebH40 mountain howitzers and later 15cm sFH18 field howitzers. The later heavier weapons were issued in order to give the division the same capability as a standard division. When necessary they could be replaced by mountain guns. The batteries each had four guns plus two light machine guns.

The antitank battalion's two companies had twelve 3.7cm Pak guns each in three platoons, which also had a light machine gun. By 1941 one platoon had been provided with three or four 5cm Pak guns. Armament and organization of the reconnaissance battalions varied. An example is that the bicycle companies had 12 light and two heavy machine guns, three 5cm mortars, and two 7.5cm infantry guns. The motorcycle company had three fewer light machine guns and lacked the infantry guns. The heavy company had a pioneer platoon with three light machine guns, an antitank platoon with three 3.7cm guns, and an infantry gun platoon with two pieces. The pioneer companies each had nine light machine guns and three 7.92mm antitank rifles. A Gebirgs-Brücken-Kolonne "B" (mountain bridging column "B") was often added. Light machine guns were widely distributed through the division's service units with two to six per company-equivalent element.

1-4.Hochgebirgsjäger-Bataillone (high mountain infantry battalions) were raised in 1942/43 especially trained and equipped to conduct operations in high alpine regions. They were sometimes attached directly to Gebirgs-Divisionen. A battalion had five rifle companies and a Stabs-Kompanie like the regular Gebirgsjäger-Bataillone.

Units

The brief histories of the Gebirgs-Divisionen follow along with their assigned regiments. The term "Divisionseinheiten" (divisional units) refers here to the numerical designation or ancillary number assigned to most of the organic battalion sized units; some units bore different numbers.

1.Gebirgs-Division

This division began life as the Gebirgs-Brigade organized in June 1935 at Garmisch-Partenkirchen in Bavaria. The brigade was a three-regiment formation, but lacked most of the support and service units customary for a division. In April 1938 it was expanded to division size. It operated in southern Poland in 1939 and France in 1940. The 1.Gebirgs-Division was designated to take part in the aborted invasions of Britain and Gibraltar. In 1941 it participated in the invasions of Yugoslavia and the USSR. In the latter it fought in the Ukraine and the Caucasus Mountains. It was withdrawn from the USSR in 1943 to Yugoslavia and Greece. It was moved to Hungary then back to the Balkans for anti-partisan duties. It again fought the Russians in Hungary in 1944 and withdrew to Austria where it surrendered to the Americans at the war's end. Gebirgsjäger-Regimenter 98, 99, 100, Gebirgs-Artillerie-Regiment 79, Divisionseinheiten 54

2.Gebirgs-Division

The 2.Gebirgs-Division was organized at Innsbruck in April 1938 from the Austrian 6.Infanterie-Division. After participating in the invasion of Poland the division fought in Yugoslavia and then Russia until 1943. It was then transferred to the Balkans, where it remained through 1944. During that period it also briefly deployed to Greece. For the rest of the war it operated in the Balkans and Hungary, where it surrendered to the Soviets.

Gebirgsjäger-Regimenter 136, 137, 140, Gebirgs-Artillerie-Regiment 11, Divisionseinheiten 67

3.Gebirgs-Division

Like 2.Gebirgs-Division, this division was organized from troops of former Austrian formations, the 5. and 7.Infanterie-Divisionen. It was stationed in Graz until sent into Poland in 1939. It was involved in the invasion of northern Norway in 1940. It remained there until the end of 1941 when it was sent to Finland. It deployed to Leningrad in 1942 and fought in Russia until 1944 when it began to operate in the Balkans. It was then sent to Hungary, where it eventually surrendered.

Gebirgsjäger-Regimenter 138, 139, Gebirgs-Artillerie-Regiment 112, Divisionseinheiten 68

4.Gebirgs-Division

The original 4.Gebirgs-Division began forming in June 1940, but this was cancelled and the few organized units were reassigned to 6.Gebirgs-Division. A new 4.Gebirgs-Division was organized in October 1940 near Vienna. Its regiments were drawn from infantry divisions being converted to motorized infantry and consequently each lost a regiment. The division served in Yugoslavia in 1941 and then in Russia from 1941 to 1944. It was then withdrawn to Hungary, where it surrendered to the Soviets.

Gebirgsjäger-Regimenter 13, 91, Gebirgs-Artillerie-Regiment 94, Divisionseinheiten 94

5.Gebirgs-Division

Organized on 25 October 1940 in Salzburg, it was mainly composed of Bavarians. One of its regiments, Gebirgsjäger-Regiment 100, came from 1.Gebirgs-Division, which originally had three regiments. It operated in Yugoslavia and then Greece. It was landed on Crete by air and sea supporting the Fallschirmjäger. In early 1942 it was sent to Russia, serving on the Leningrad front until transferred to Italy at the end of 1943. It was the last Gebirgs-Division to fight on Alpine terrain before surrendering to the Americans in northern Italy.

Gebirgsjäger-Regimenter 85, 100, Gebirgs-Artillerie-Regiment 95, Divisionseinheiten 95

6.Gebirgs-Division

The division was organized in Heuberg in June 1940. It first conducted occupation duty in France then Poland before being sent into Yugoslavia then Greece. It was sent to Norway in late 1941 then deployed to Finland where it fought the Soviets until Finland surrendered in late 1944. At that time it was withdrawn to Norway where it remained until surrendering to the British at the war's end.

Gebirgsjäger-Regimenter 141, 143, Gebirgs-Artillerie-Regiment 118, Divisionseinheiten 91

7.Gebirgs-Division

In November 1941 99.leichte Infanterie-Division was converted to 7.Gebirgs-Division at Grafenwöhr, Germany. It was moved piecemeal into Finland where it fought until withdrawn to Norway in late 1944. It surrendered to the British.

Gebirgsjäger-Regimenter 206, 218, Gebirgs-Artillerie-Regiment 82, Divisionseinheiten 99

8.Gebirgs-Division

The creation of this division began in March 1944, but was cancelled. In October 1944 157.Reserve-Division, a training unit, was reorganized and redesignated 157.Gebirgs-Division. In February 1945 it was redesignated 8.Gebirgs-Division. It fought briefly on the Italian Front and surrendered to the Americans.

Gebirgsjäger-Regimenter 296, 297, Gebirgs-Artillerie-Regiment 1057, Divisionseinheiten 1057

9.Gebirgs-Division

Owing to confusion in the last months of the war directions were issued for the raising of two 9.Gebirgs-Divisionen. The "Nord" division was formed in Norway from Divisionsgruppe Kräutler, but continued to use that designation. The "Ost" division was incompletely raised from various Gebirgsjäger training units in Austria, which had been assembled into Kampfgruppe Semmering and this title was actually retained. It surrendered to the Soviets there.

188.Gebirgs-Division

Raised as 188.Reserve-Gebirgs-Division in October 1943, it served as a training unit. In February 1944 it was sent to the Balkans and redesignated 188.Gebirgs-Division in March. It surrendered to Yugoslavian forces at the war's end.

Gebirgsjäger-Regimenter 901, 902, 903, 904, Gebirgs-Artillerie-Regiment 1088, Divisionseinheiten 1088

Gebirgs-Korps

A number of Gebirgs-Korps Commands were formed through the war. Some functioned in the role of controlling mountain and other light units to include anti-partisan operations. Many though operated no differently than other corps commands and often controlled Panzer-, Panzergrenadier-, and Infanterie-Divisionen. They included: XV, XIX, XXI, XXII, XXXVI, XXXIX, and LI Gebirgs-Korps. There was also a 20.Gebirgs-Armee (aka Lappland Armee) operating in Finland.



A Gebirgsjäger company stands formation. The embroidered Gebirgsjäger badge is evident on their right upper arms and the silver-colored metal Edelweiss badge is on the left side of their Bergmützen. The Gebirgsjägerabzeichen consists of an Edelweiss flower (yellow stamen, white petals, light green stem and leaves) surrounded by a light gray rope with a silver carabiner and piton (snap-link and spike) on a dark bluish-green oval backing.



Loaded aboard a troop train Gebirgsjäger demonstrate their morale by painting slogans on the sides of passenger cars. They are enjoying bottles of beer provided by the Deutsches Haus (German House) which distributed food and snacks at railroad stations. One slogan reads "You will see us again at home." "Heil Jäger!" is self-explanatory. Among these are caricatures of a Gebirgsjäger and a teary-eyed woman.



A troop train loaded with Gebirgsjäger rolls through scenic Bavaria. While the work and exertion faced by Gebirgsjäger was rigorous, they often undertook training in some of the most beautiful areas of Germany and Austria.



Two Gebirgsjäger take a Feuerpause (firebreak) beside road signs pointing the way to different Austrian towns. Two of the three pre-war mountain infantry divisions were raised in Austria from former Federal Austrian Army units in 1938. "Feuerpause" was the formal term for "cease-fire," but it also meant a cigarette break or rest break.



Gebirgsjäger march across the Reichsgrenze (National Frontier) into another country. The sign is white with a red border and black letters. The Jäger in the center carries an MG34 heavy machine gun tripod strapped to his rucksack. He carries rations in his helmet. The man to the right carries machine gun ammunition cases.



Marching to the front, these Gebirgsjäger carry water bottles for mountain troops (Flasche für Gebirgsgruppen). These were larger than the standard M31 water bottle carried by other troops. It held 1-liter (about 34 fluid ounces) as opposed to the M31's 0.8-liter (about 28 fluid ounces). Production halted in 1943, but they remained in use. Some mountain units had previously been equipped with the M31 or received them as replacements.



Gebirgsgruppen units on the move crossing the Polish border. All three existing German mountain divisions were committed to Plan Z, the invasion of Poland, mostly operating in the south. The returning pack mules are moving rearward to pick up more supplies. Most German units employed large numbers of horses along with motorized transport, but the Gebirgsgruppen were even more reliant on pack animals.



A group of Gebirgsjäger pose for a photograph at a kilometer post in an unidentified country. Actually it makes little difference as the scene could be in almost any country the Germans invaded. Gebirgsgruppen fought in virtually every theater; small numbers even served in North Africa. Most have anti-gas sheet (Gasplane) cases fastened to their gasmask case carrier shoulder straps on their chests. Their helmets are hung on their left cartridge pouches by the chinstraps.



Gebirgsjäger assemble Yugoslavian prisoners of war during the April 1941 invasion. The Royal Yugoslavian Army troops wear brownish olive drab uniforms. The Gebirgsjäger in the foreground wears some form of non-issue haversack, probably a captured item. Both men carry 7.92mm Mauser Kar 98k carbines, the standard rifle employed by the Heer.

Gebirgsgruppen of a supply transport column direct dejected Yugoslavian prisoners to the rear. It was a common practice to disarm prisoners and simply direct them to move down a road to the rear unescorted until the Field Military Police (Feldgendarmarie) collected them. Wicker baskets are slung on the sides of the mules as supply carriers. These were sometimes numbered in order to identify components of disassembled crew-served weapons or the types of supplies they carried.





Yugoslavian prisoners are questioned by Gebirgsjäger. The questions would concern their unit identification, strength, weapons, location, and what they had heard their unit was going to do next.



A company command troop studies maps and the terrain as they advance through northern Yugoslavia's Kamnisko-Savinjske Alpe in 1941. XLIX.Gebirgskorps was the westernmost of the German forces advancing into the country.

Gebirgsjäger clean out a trench system in the Kamnisko-Savinjske Alpe. Yugoslavia's forces were stretched thinly along the entire frontier facing Italy, Germany, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. When German, Italian, and Hungarian forces invaded it was a simple matter to punch through the weak overextended lines and, facing no in-depth defenses and few reserves to drive on to Belgrade and other major cities.



A pack transport column passes through overrun Yugoslavian positions. A Gebirgs-Division was assigned five company-size mountain transport columns (Gebirgs-Fahrkolonnen) with pack mules and horses and wagons. They could also have a mountain carrier battalion (Gebirgs-Träger-Bataillon) of four companies attached. This was a man-pack transport unit.

The stone block, corrugated steel-roofed building was probably for supplies storage. Higher up are lightly constructed rock shelter bunkers. These would offer protection from light artillery and mortars, but only marginal defense against other artillery. The troops are heavily burdened. Mountain troops were more heavily loaded than regular infantry, as they could not always be served daily meals by company field kitchens, but had to carry several days' rations as well as additional cold weather clothing.



A considerable quantity of equipment could be packed by a mule. These loads of signal equipment serve as examples. The precarious footing of the narrow trail demonstrates how Gebirgsjäger could move through rugged terrain. As can be seen here a considerable body of troops could move down a narrow trail. It was slow going though, even under favorable weather conditions such as these.



Luftwaffe air defense troops assemble a 2cm Flak30 anti-aircraft gun atop a ridge line. This position probably overlooks a supply route. The collar tabs on their blue-gray uniforms are red. This weapon, although being replaced by the improved 2cm Flak38, was also used by the Heer. They may belong to the leichte Gebirgs-Flak-Abteilung 1 (Light Mountain Air Defense Battalion 1) of the Luftwaffe.



Two Sanitäter (sanitation soldiers—medical aidmen) carry a casualty on a litter (Bahre). Soldiers referred to the Sanitäter as a "Sani". Medical personnel wore a red cross on a white armband. The lead Krankenträger wears an Anti-partisan Badge (Bandenkampfabzeichen) on his left breast pocket. The man to the right, possibly an officer, is wearing a wind jacket for mountain troops (Windjacke für Gebirgstruppen). The sage green (a grayish green) jacket was loose fitting, allowing it to be worn over equipment.

These two Gebirgsjäger are armed with Czechoslovak-made 7.92mm Mauser Gew33(t) rifles. Several rifles and carbines of shorter length than the standard Kar98k carbine were issued to Gebirgsjäger. The inconsistency of German ordnance designations led this weapon to be called a "rifle" even though it was almost 4.5 inches shorter than the Kar98k carbine. In Czechoslovak service this rifle was known as the Musketon vz.16/33 and was built under license granted by Mauser.



Two Gebirgsjäger on patrol. Besides the distinctive sleeve and cap badges, the Bergmütze too was one of the most recognizable distinctions. It would, however, be copied for use by the rest of the Heer. The standard tunic was worn, but special "Knickerbocker" style trousers with heavy climbing boots (Bergschuhe) and puttees (Wickelgamaschen) were used rather than standard trousers. Puttees were not used by other units.



Gebirgsjäger wearing greatcoats (Mäntel) move up a fir-covered hillside. The man to the right is a Leutnant. His Bergmütze (mountain cap) is tucked into his belt. The greatcoat was field gray with dark bluish-green collar facing.





The crew of a 3.7cm Pak35/36 antitank gun gathers around the weapon. This was the standard German antitank gun at the beginning of the war. Even though almost immediately obsolete and although more powerful weapons were fielded, it remained in use through the war. The second man from the left, an NCO, wears the silver-colored lanyard of the Marksman Badge of the German Army (Schützenabzeichen des deutschen Heeres).



Pack mules were reserved for carrying heavy weapons, ammunition, essential equipment, and supplies. The mule-handlers carried their own gear. The foreground man carried a heavily loaded rucksack 1931 for high mountain troops (Rucksack 31 für Hochgebirgstruppen). This Bergen-type rucksack, made of olive green canvas, was found to be much more suitable for carrying individual gear than the traditional backpack. From late 1941 battle rucksacks of similar, but more simplified design, began to be issued to other combat troops.



Only relatively small numbers of mules were bred in Europe compared to horses, on which most units relied. The Gebirgstruppen received priority on mules (Maultiere), which were hardy pack animals better suited for rough terrain than horses. Here, while fitted with pack harnesses, the mules are not carrying any equipment other than their own blankets.

The mule near the center carries ammunition containers. One of its mule-handlers (Maultiertreiber) has slung his carbine across his chest as was common practice when leading a mule or packhorse. Mules and horses were provided a dark gray wool saddle blanket (Satteldecke) measuring 6 feet 4 inches by 7 feet 7 inches. For saddle horses it was folded in quarters to place under the saddle. It was also used to protect the animal in cold weather.





While Gebirgstruppen units were equipped with motor transport, there were many occasions in which vehicles were ill-suited or unusable. Here a number of headquarters personnel, including staff officers, attempt to assist an automobile on its way. The near spread-eagled officer in the center wears a wind jacket for mountain troops, breeches, which were commonly worn by Gebirgstruppen officers, and calf-length white wool socks.

A Generalleutnant reads a message delivered by a messenger (Melder). The much higher quality of a senior officer's uniform, including his Bergmütze, can be compared to that of the enlisted soldier. The messenger's dark bluish-green shoulder strap can be seen here. It would be piped in light green (Hellgrün), the Waffenfarbe (arm of service color) of the Gebirgsjäger. Only the personnel of the divisional headquarters and the Gebirgsjäger-Regimenter would wear this Waffenfarbe. Other divisional units, even though designated "Gebirgs-", would wear the normal color for their branch. Light green was also worn by Jäger (light infantry) units.



The NCO in the foreground is a Feldwebel, possibly the company reporting NCO holding the Hauptfeldwebel position equivalent to a US first sergeant or British Commonwealth company sergeant major. Note the short puttees above the climbing boots. This was meant to keep out snow or gravel.

A mule-handler leads his charge, which is pulling an If.8 infantry cart. One cart was allotted to each rifle platoon for hauling ammunition. They were also used by heavy machine gun and mortar troops. This one has rubber-rimmed steel wheels. A cart could carry 350 kilograms (772 pounds) of cargo. It was limited to lighter loads on extremely rough or steep terrain.



Partly hidden behind the lead mule is another If.8 infantry cart. These were also used by standard infantry platoons. Besides numbers, letters were painted on wicker carrier baskets. The meaning of "K.Tr." is unknown, but among other things "Tr." was the abbreviation of "Träger" (carrier). These markings might be in white, dark yellow, or light green.

Gebirgsjäger units fought on flat and open terrain just as frequently as they did in hills and mountains. Most of these mules have canvas feedbags slung beneath their necks. On summer days like this the commander would order the top tunic button to be opened and the sleeves rolled up.



When the war began Gebirgs-Artillerie units were using mostly obsolescent weapons. There were some new designs, but they were just entering production. Most mountain artillery units were equipped with impounded foreign weapons, or in some instances, weapons purchased from abroad just prior to the war as stop-gap measures. A bewildering array of mountain artillery was encountered. This piece is a German-made 7.5cm GebG36 Gebirgsgeschütz, the more or less standard weapon at the war's beginning. Besides being mule-drawn it could be broken down into mule-pack loads. The man to the left is an Obergefreiter with less than six years' service.



Here a 7.5cm GebG36 Gebirgsgeschütz has been broken down into eight mule-pack loads for transport. It could be reassembled and ready for firing in less than 10 minutes. The GebG36 was fitted with either steel or wooden spokes, as here.

A battery firing position with 7.5cm GebG36 Gebirgseschütze.

There were four guns in a battery, three batteries in a mountain artillery battalion (Gebirgs-Artillerie-Abteilung), and three or four battalions in a Gebirgs-Artillerie-Regiment assigned to a Gebirgs-Division. Two or three battalions would be 7.5cm and the other 10.5cm, although there were variations.



A mountain artillery battery's observation post in action. Often the battery commander himself served as the main observer with the second-in-command in charge of the firing battery. Acquiring targets in mountainous areas was frequently a challenge. Observation posts were located well forward with the infantry they supported. It was essential that they be well dug in and/or concealed to ensure they survived.

Gebirgs-Artillerie units were sometime issued the standard German divisional artillery field pieces when they conducted prolonged operations outside mountainous regions. A Gebirgsjäger unit might also have conventional artillery attached in support. This is a 10.5cm le.FH.18 light field howitzer (leichte Feldhaubitze). Contrary to popular misconception the 8.8cm antiaircraft gun was not the standard field artillery piece and while used as an antitank weapon, it was seldom employed in the indirect fire role.





Gebirgsjäger occupying an old fortification possibly dating back to World War I. Gebirgsjäger possessed a high degree of esprit de corps. This unit has adopted color neckerchiefs, a common practice. They are probably blue or red with white polka dots.



The effort of the climb can be seen in this Gebirgsjäger machine gun troop. The two lead men each carry a spare barrel carrier (Laufschützer 34) for an MG34. They additionally carry a metal ammunition case (Patronenkasten 41) holding up to 300 rounds. Note that the second man has fashioned a web, padded carrying sling for his ammunition case.

A close-up view of an eight-man shelter-quarter tent. The sealed head opening slits in the center of each shelter-quarters can be seen. Steel helmets have been set on the ends of the peaks where the upright poles protrude to prevent rainwater leakage. In a heavy wind-blown rain the seams between the shelter-quarter seriously leaked. Sod has been stacked along the lower edge to help keep out rain. It was a tight fit, but there was room for eight men. Note the simple fence erected around the tent for a homely atmosphere.



After a demanding march a unit has set up its bivouac in a tranquil setting. The mules are tethered to a picket line in the rear. Sixteen soldiers have contributed their shelter-quarters to assemble a functional tent. There were also standard designs using four, eight, and 12 shelter-quarters to shelter a like number of men. A four-man tent can be seen to the right rear.



An orderly rear area bivouac site with eight-man shelter-quarter tents as well as standard 5x6-meter field tents capable of housing 12 men. The field tents were of ordinary design, but had a fly tarp pitched 30cm over it to provide insulation from the sun. The sun beating directly on an unprotected tent becomes extremely hot.



In order to keep the road clear for motorized traffic mule trails paralleled roads. Here, since the stream is dry, a mountain sanitation (medical) unit frees up the bridge for trucks. The white markings on the ends of the dark green (field gray) boxes are "Gebirgs- San. Lazarett"—Mountain Sanitation Hospital, along with red crosses on white discs. Collapsed litters are strapped to the top of the boxes.



A rifle group quick-steps through a clear mountain stream. If their thick wool socks and puttees became wet they took quite some time to dry out. The group is probably out for an exercise march. The group leader (Gruppenführer) is an Oberjäger in the lead to the left with the black leather report/map case (Meldekartentasche 35).



Crossing a swiftly rushing mountain stream was a dangerous undertaking. It was easy to lose one's footing on the rocky bottom. Even a stream like this only a few inches deep was flowing fast enough to knock a man off his feet. A soaked wool uniform in such cold conditions was extremely difficult to dry and could result in exposure. During operations, using fires for drying was rarely possible.



NCOs at the head of their platoon out on a practice march. Most are Oberjäger, but the NCO to the left is a Feldwebel. In particularly hot weather all headgear, even the Bergmütze was removed. When marching uphill the heavy rucksack tended to pull backwards. It was common to carry the carbine slung across the chest as a bit of a counterbalance.



Another unit trudges in after a long practice march. One man carries a metal staff flag (Stabsflagge) identifying a battalion or regimental headquarters. The colors are (from top to bottom): black, white, and red. The unidentified tactical symbol is black. In the second photograph the mule-handler for an If.8 infantry cart carries a similar flag.



A rifle group (squad) takes a meal break in a forest. Tinned meat and tinned vegetables were part of the march ration. Other than their special rucksack and larger canteen, mountain troops' other individual equipment was identical to conventional infantrymen's.



This kind of broken terrain was exhausting to traverse and reduced movement to a crawl, often only one or two kilometers per hour as opposed to the normal six and a half kilometers. Marching through this type of terrain meant a lot of stop and go movement, creating an accordion effect. This is quite frustrating to troops and leads to more rapid exhaustion than when an even, steady pace can be maintained.



A unit moves along a mountain road cleared of snow. During the war some standard infantry units were converted to Gebirgsjäger. They often retained their jackboots, as leather shortages and longer production time made for shortages of climbing boots.



A Gebirgs-Division commander watches as his formation moves forward. He is accompanied by his staff. To the right his aide is prepared to record notes and messages, which he will dispatch by messenger directly to the subordinate unit or to the unit message center for transmission by field telephone or radio.



Subordinate unit commanders consult their notebooks as they report the status of their units to the Gebirgs-Division commander at the far right. It was a common practice for German unit commanders to appear among forward units, or anywhere else in their unit area, and they expected subordinate commanders to be able to report all aspects of their unit's status: strength, casualties, both combat and non-combat; available weapons, ammunition stocks, rations on-hand, number of horses and mules, transport, and medical supplies.



A Gebirgs-Artillerie unit forward observer position with two scissor binoculars. Note the piece of a tank used as a shield at the lower end of the trench. A battery observation post often had two scissor telescopes. One was used to adjust fire on the engaged target and the other was searching for and plotting additional targets.



The tripod-mounted 6x30 Sf.14Z Scherenfernrohr (scissors binoculars) was known as the Eselsohren (donkey ears) for obvious reasons. In the U.S. Army this was called a battery commander's or BC scope.



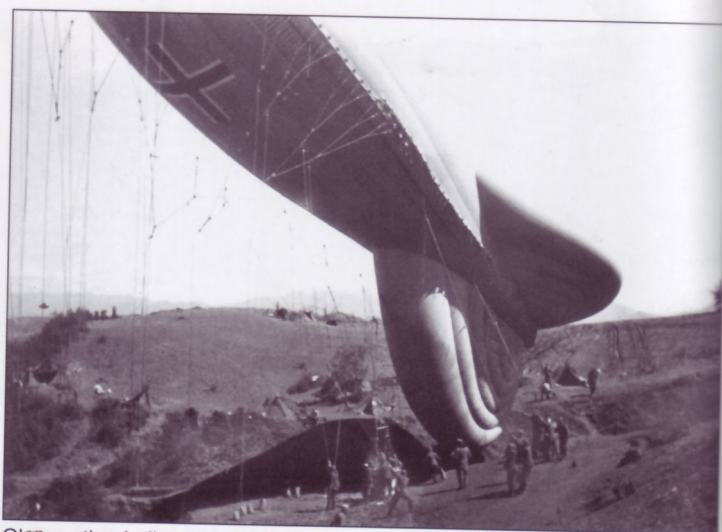
Reminiscent of World War I, captive observation balloons were employed by the Germans on the Eastern Front. Operated by artillery observation balloon batteries, they were quite effective in supporting Gebirgstruppen in the rugged, remote areas where they operated. The enemy had little artillery and aircraft in these areas. The hydrogen-filled balloons were extremely vulnerable to air attack. A battery operated a single balloon. In the left foreground is a four-man shelter-quarter tent.



Observation balloon crewmen were each provided with a special fur-lined, windproof flier's protective suit, (Fliegerschutzanzug). The rayon suit was field gray with a large dark brown fur collar. Even a few hundred feet above the ground it could be quite cold and much windier than on the ground. The balloonists also wore emergency parachutes as it took some time to winch a balloon down if aircraft approached.



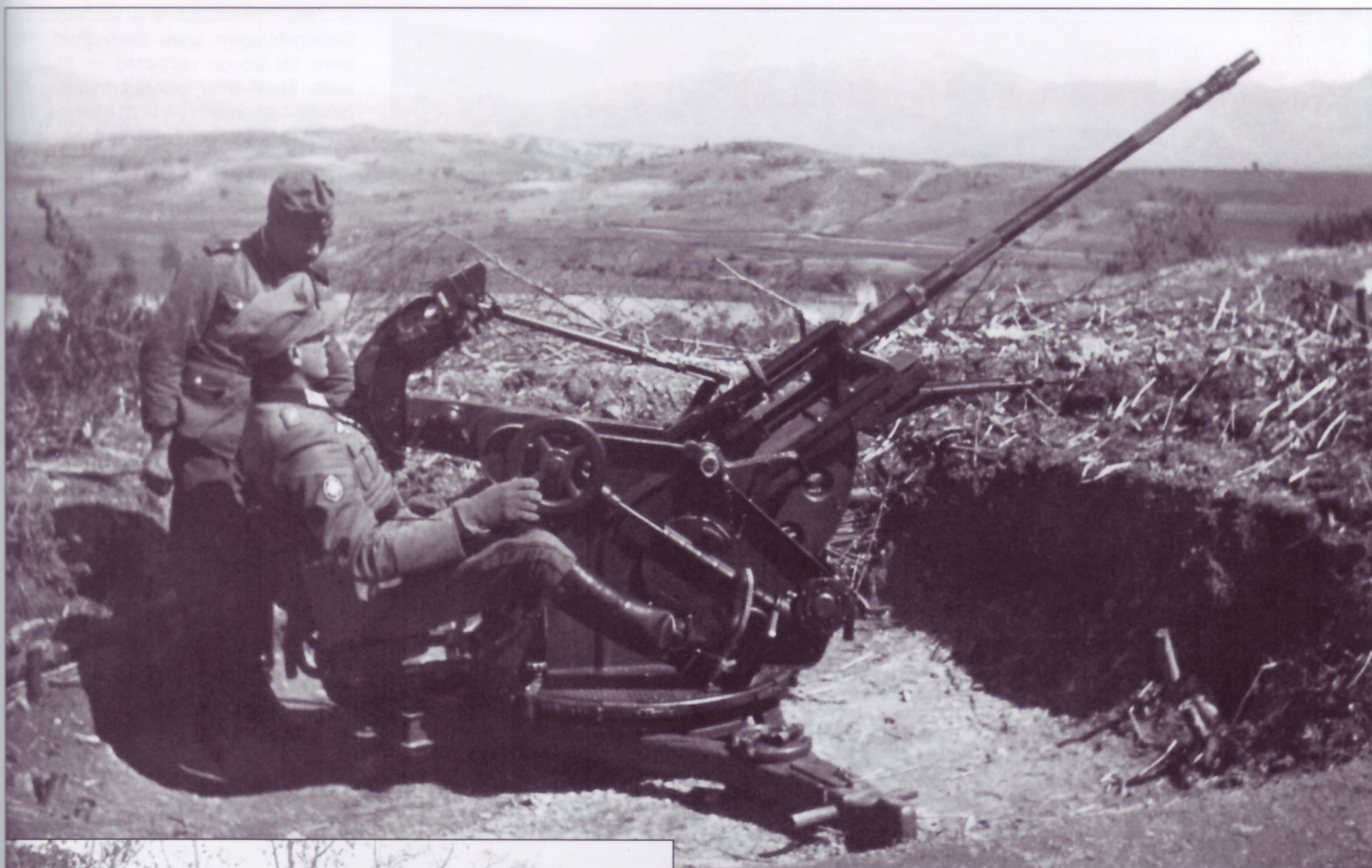
The launch site is on low ground protected by a ridge to limit the effects of artillery fire and for protection from ground winds. Two men went aloft with the balloon: the observer and another to record data and relay it to the ground by telephone. He would also be on lookout for the approach of any aircraft. The crew would be as nervous of approaching friendly aircraft as enemy.



Observation balloons provided a capability to observe areas masked by the intervening high ground that frustrated ground observers. Besides the large black and white Balkenkreuz painted on the balloon, a German national flag was draped on the observer's basket to prevent attacks by friendly aircraft. The balloon itself was light gray.



The balloon ground control station supervised the charging of the balloon with hydrogen, determining the amount of ballast sandbags necessary for the desired altitude and expected temperatures, transmitted ascent and descent orders, and monitored wind speed and direction. Orders were transmitted using signs.



Here a 2cm Flak 30 anti-aircraft gun is positioned for close-in defense of the balloon. These guns were operated by light flak companies organic to Gebirgs-Divisionen. Rather than the red Waffenfarbe worn by most flak units, these companies displayed the Gebirgsjäger light green. The guns used by these units had their shields removed to lighten their weight.



A unit command post with officers busy at work relaying orders and receiving reports. Radios were little used, especially in static situations, with field telephones (Feldfernsprecher 33) being much preferred. Radios of the period were heavy, bulky, temperamental, unreliable, and could be monitored by the enemy. Moreover, their range was greatly affected in mountainous areas. The tables, benches, and stools are covered with mosquito nets as a means of camouflage.

Here a backpacked Tornister Funkgerät k—T.Fug.k (back-pack radio equipment "k") is in use at a forward command post. They were very useful in mobile situations. However, they could not be operated on the move, but had to be set up, the different components connected, and antennas erected. Not only the radios, but also the batteries were heavy. Additionally, battery life was relatively short and they had to be recharged using a hand-cranked power generator. A radio operator was known as a "Funcker", a term similar to the American "Sparks".





A ski patrol departs. Not all Gebirgstruppen were ski-trained. Nor were ski troops restricted to Skijäger units. They wear colored friend-or-foe recognition stripes on both sleeves. The upper surface of snow skies were painted white as were the ski poles. The undersides were left unpainted to allow waxing. Note here that the unit has taken the unusual measure of whitewashing its weapons. The Kar98k carbine's bolt action and rear sight have not been whitewashed.

This ski patrol wears two-piece camouflage snow suits (Schneetarnanzüge) over whatever cold weather clothing they've donned. The T.Fug.k. radio set in the lower left and its antenna have been whitewashed as have the commander's 6x30 binoculars. Note that the commander has a white camouflage cover fitted over his Bergmütze. The Funker wears a white anorak wind blouse (Windbluse) with a Wehrmacht eagle over the right breast. Anoraks were usually field gray.



Sentries keep a sharp lookout on the edge of a Russian village. A trench has been dug adjacent to a frozen haystack. One Gebirgsjäger is armed with a captured Soviet Tokarev 7.62mm SVT-40 semi-automatic rifle, which the Germans designated the SIGew259(r). This was a popular weapon and many rifle groups (squads) had at least one. This one has been whitewashed.

Oberschütze, 3.Gebirgs-Division, Norway, Spring 1940



The rank naming system was slightly different in the Gebirgsjäger, where "Oberschütze" was used to indicate a first-class Jäger, as the rank "Oberjäger" was equivalent to an Unteroffizier.

This is the typical image of the early war Gebirgsjäger in mountainous regions. The distinctive and specialist uniform sets him aside from his other army counterparts. He is wearing the regulation 'Bergmütze' mountain field cap with its unique 'Edelweiss' metal badge insignia (introduced in May 1939). For cold weather conditions the Gebirgsjäger had the option of wearing the standard greatcoat or the more practical windjacket (as seen here). The windjacket was double-breasted and made from waterproof cotton. The cut of the jacket was designed to be loose fitting. It also had a large collar, which could be turned up and buttoned over in severe weather. No insignia was worn apart from the rank shoulder straps (piped in light green for mountain troops). Under his windjacket he wears the standard M36 field blouse with its dark-green facing collar and M35 'Litzen' collar insignia, incorporating two light-green central stripes for the Gebirgsjäger. The cloth 'Edelweiss' sleeve badge would be worn on the upper right arm of the field blouse.

The early war stone grey colored mountain trousers were modeled on the civilian ski trouser ('Keilhose' design). They differed from the standard army service trouser by having a cloth reinforcement seat, buttoned pocket flaps and tapered legs to fit into heavily studded and cleated mountain boots with wool ankle puttees.

He is holding the general purpose MG34. The machine-gunner was issued the MG34 toolbox (attached to his army belt) and the P38 pistol (in its hardshell holster).

Other equipment worn is the M1931 bread bag, the special 1 liter flask for mountain troops and gasmask in its M1938 metal canister. All other equipment was carried in the M1931 mountain rucksack. In action this heavy rucksack would be laid down and the Gebirgsjäger would fight in light order.



Feldwebel, 6.Gebirgs-Division, North Russia, Winter 1942-43

The Gebirgsjäger Divisions were assigned what were arguably the most difficult tasks on the Russian front: campaigning in the high peaks of the Caucasus mountains in the south, the vast swampland and forests of the Volkhov front and in the sub-zero conditions of the Arctic Circle in northern Russia. As the war progressed these elite troops were used, like the Fallschirmjäger, in a more conventional infantry role.

The standard issue winter uniform used by the German army in 1941 was totally inadequate for the Russian winter. After the bitter experiences of the Wehrmacht's first winter more practical winter wear was developed, and introduced in autumn 1942. The uniform consisted of layers of insulating material with a water-repellent outer shell fabric. Additionally the uniform was reversible, a white side for snow camouflage and a gray side for other conditions. Priority issue went to elite units such as the Gebirgsjäger.

This Gebirgsjäger NCO wears a reversible insulated winter suit (hooded jacket and trousers) with the white side outermost for snow camouflage. His jacket is slightly open, showing a part of the reversible grey side. He wears a woolen toque underneath the distinctive 'Bergmütze'. A white camouflage cover was also produced for this cap. On his 'Bergmütze' is a pair of special tinted goggles used by mountain troops. Thick woolen gloves are worn rather than cumbersome fingerless winter suit mittens. Underneath this winter suit he wears the standard Gebirgsjäger service uniform; M40 field blouse, mountain trousers (now in field-gray) and mountain boots with wool ankle puttees.

He has a pair of the 6x30 field binoculars issued to squad leaders and senior NCOs and is armed with the MP40 (painted in whitewash). He also wears a pair of 1st pattern MP38/40 magazine pouches. Tucked into his army enlisted man's belt is an M24 stick grenade. For maneuvering in the deep snow he has a pair of snowshoes (one of many models used) and a high mountain troops' ice axe.



SS-Jäger, 13.Waffen-Gebirgs-Division Der SS 'Handschar', Yugoslavia, Summer 1944



The Waffen-SS formed six mountain divisions. The majority of these were created as security units, fighting the brutal partisan war in the Balkans and surrounding territories. These divisions were made up of mainly 'volunteer' ethnic Germans and foreign personnel. The SS-Gebirgs-Divisions were not elite frontline units like their army Gebirgsjäger counterparts.

The 'Handschar' division was formed from Croatian and Bosnian Muslims in Yugoslavia. Himmler intended by this means to exploit the hatred that continued between the ethnic peoples of that area, where the partisans were mainly Christian Serbs. The 'Handschar' Division's troops were allowed to practice their religious beliefs and were issued a fez, traditional headwear for these people, instead of the SS 'Bergmütze'. The divisional collar patch was a scimitar (an Arabian sword) and swastika.

This 'Handschar' SS-Jäger wears the unique field-gray fez with SS insignia (a deep-red type was used for walking out dress). The rest of the uniform is standard issue to SS divisions that were raised in 1943. He is issued the M1942 SS camouflage smock (here in 'plain tree') with its foliage attachment loops and skirt pockets. Underneath his smock the field-gray service uniform consists of the SS M42 field blouse with plain pockets, pointed pocket flaps and five-button front; the 'Handschar' collar patch insignia can be seen on the blouse. By this period the M42 'Keilhose' pattern service trousers were being issued, replacing the mountain trousers, similar though they were in design. As a member of a mountain division this SS-Jäger is wearing the obligatory mountain boots and ankle puttees.

Standard rifleman's equipment and weapons are issued, SS enlisted man's leather belt, two rifle ammunition pouches with two M39 egg grenades attached, a folding shovel, M1931 field flask, mess kit M1931, S84/98 bayonet, and M1931 bread bag and SS shelter-quarter (Zeltbahn). He is holding the mid-war production Karabiner 98k rifle. To ease the burden of the equipment, the improvised use of the bread bag strap was common, as mountain troops were not issued infantry support straps. Slung over his ammunition pouch is the M40 SS steel helmet with a 1st type SS camouflage cover (in 'oak leaf' pattern).

ANDREW
'06

Oberjäger (Gebirgs-Pioneer Battalion), 1.Volks-Gebirgs-Division, Hungary, Spring 1945

The 'Windbluse' and 'Windhose' were issued to the Gebirgsjäger in 1942. This special clothing was commonly worn by the Gebirgsjäger from the mid-war period to the end of hostilities in 1945. It was made from a waterproof reversible material, produced in various shades of gray, tan and olive. The other side was white for snow camouflage. A later type was manufactured with a 'marsh' camouflage side but to what degree this was worn is not known.

The 'Windbluse' was a windproof anorak. It had a drawstring rim hood and a lace-up front slit, which was covered by a windproof flap that was secured on the left edge by three buttons. It had three large chest pockets and two rear hip pockets. The cuffs could be tightened with an inbuilt tape and buckle and the waist with a drawstring. The anorak could also be secured at the bottom by a cloth strap that came from the back, passing between the legs, and buttoned at the front. The 'Windhose' windproof trousers were of a generous cut and very baggy in appearance. In the waistband it had an internal cloth belt (with a 3-prong buckle) and cloth tapes securing the bottom of the legs. However these trousers were not as popular as the anorak.

This figure shows the late war Gebirgsjäger in combat wearing the M42 steel helmet. By 1944 the Gebirgsjäger, if not issued with the 'Bergmütze', wore the M43 field cap. To a lesser extent canvas gaiters and standard lace-up ankle boots were issued too, if mountain boots could not be supplied. In this case he has a pair of mountain boots. Under his reversible windproof anorak and trousers he wears the M43 field-grey service uniform.

As he is fighting as light infantry, his equipment and weapons consist of an army belt, a pair of MP44 canvas magazine pouches, an S84/98 bayonet, the 'Sturmgewehr 44' (also known as the MP44 assault rifle), the M43 stick grenade and the Pioneer's 'Geballte Ladung' 3kg (concentrated charge). Other equipment carried includes the M1931 bread bag, M1931 field flask, mess kit M1931 and small entrenching tool.





The Gebirgsjäger wears two wool toques (Balaclava helmets) beneath his Bergmütze. The Germans called this an ear protector (Ohrenschützer). Typically two were worn, one over the head and the other around the neck. Their main purpose was to provide warmth when wearing a steel helmet, which provided no insulation from the cold. The tops of frozen ears would stick to the inside of an unlined helmet. He also wears insulated two-finger mittens (Handschuhe) to further protect his gloved hands.



A Gebirgsjäger unit award ceremony. An Oberleutnant (right) congratulates a Leutnant on his award of the Iron Cross 2nd Class (Eisernes Kreuz II. Klasse). The Oberleutnant wears the Iron Cross 1st Class and the silver Infantry Assault Badge (Infanterie-Sturmabzeichen) on his left breast pocket. Beyond the Oberleutnant the unit commander presenting the decorations is wearing a heavy white fur-lined surcoat.



The greatcoat was provided with a button-tab that allowed the large collar to be folded up and held in-place. Adequate cold weather headgear was often unavailable and whatever was available was pressed into service. War economy greatcoats like this were produced from 1943. It was made from thinner, lower quality wool, but the collar was larger for better neck protection. Its collar was not faced with the dark bluish-green cloth.



In the brutal Russian winter the Germans found it essential to utilize villages and farm buildings for shelter. This brought danger, though, especially when the Soviets launched offensives. Soviet massed artillery barrages obliterated even the smallest villages and isolated buildings. German units often established their defenses well outside villages. Here a unit holds a morning formation.



A patrol takes a break amid a clump of fir trees. Fir and pine tree boughs were frequently used to provide effective insulation from the frozen ground. The men wear colored friend-or-foe recognition stripes on their left sleeves. Units daily changed colors and alternated between wearing a band on one sleeve and on both sleeves.



Mail call as a ski patrol returns to friendly lines. The troops wear a variety of outfits. Partly off frame to the left are a white fur-lined surcoat, standard greatcoat, two-piece snow suit, a field gray greatcoat lined with sheep skin (in the background), one-piece snow suit, and another two-piece snow suit. The wearer of the last-named also wears a seldom seen white wool knit skull cap.



Exhaling breath, especially when a man is exerting himself as these ski troops are, causes frost to build up around the mouth and nose, on the eyebrows, and on the ear protectors. Note the tinted snow goggles. Snow glare, even on a cloudy day, can temporarily blind a man. Their 7.92mm Mauser Gew33/40 rifles, shorter than the Kar98k carbine, are whitewashed. The Gew33/40 was a slightly modified version of the Czechoslovak Musketon vz.16/33, which continued to be produced under the Germans and widely used by Gebirgsjäger.



Another view of a leichte Tarnjacke with the snow camouflage side out. It was sufficiently loose-fitting that it could be worn over field equipment. While they cannot be seen here, a slit on either side of the chest allowed the wearer to reach beneath into his tunic pockets and cartridge pouches.



A Gebirgsjäger takes aim with a 9mm MP40 machine pistol. This was the main submachine gun used by the Heer. He wears a light camouflage jacket (leichte Tarnjacke) similar to the Waffen-SS camouflage smock. It was made of waterproof fabric. He is wearing it with the white side out. The other side was printed with the same three-color splinter camouflage pattern seen on shelter-quarters.



Disoriented Russian prisoners are brought in by a patrol. They will soon be liberated of their excellent felt boots and two-finger mittens. The felt boots were especially prized items, as were Russian fur caps.

Road marches through the mountains in winter were extremely brutal for both man and beast. Besides exerting themselves, they were exposed to the full force of wind, rain, snow, or sleet.



It takes two to three times longer to accomplish anything under harsh, low temperature and snow conditions. It also requires more manpower. Here an artillery piece is manhandled through the snow to a firing position. Up to 36 men are pulling the weapon when fewer than a dozen would suffice under normal conditions. The artillery piece is unidentified, but is obviously of a comparatively modern foreign design. Many of the troops wear wind jackets.





These are Reichsarbeitsdienst (National Labor Service) personnel. The RAD badge is visible on the field caps of some of the Arbeiter. These pre-military labor personnel were sometimes employed in support of the Wehrmacht. These personnel are in Norway with 2. Gebirgs-Division. They are armed with Norwegian-made 6.5mm Gew 211(n) rifles, known as the Krag-Jorgensen m/1894 rifle to the Norwegians.

The wind jacket or anorak was a pullover type of garment provided with a hood. This one is white, but they were also issued in field gray. They were not reversible. On the chest are three button-secured pockets with the center one larger than those on either side. He wears his pistol holster on his left side, which was Wehrmacht practice.



Here an artillery piece is moved on add-on sledge-like skids. Firing an artillery piece in the snow could be problematic. The recoil would drive the weapon into the snow and often it would sink unevenly to one side. This affected accuracy. Usually a platform of timbers or logs was constructed to support the piece.



This 7.5cm GebG36 Gebirgsgeschütz is in a firing position high in the mountains. Ammunition and propellant change boxes double as snow revetments. In this instance the piece appears to be firing at a target on another mountainside at roughly the same elevation. More often than not in mountain warfare the gun and the target were located at much different elevations and this difference had to be closely calculated or the gun would seriously miss.





A camouflaged battalion command post situated on a sapling-covered hillside. The metal battalion flag had a black horizontal center bar and the upper and lower bars were in the branch color. In a Gebirgs-Division these would include: Gebirgsjäger- light green, reconnaissance- gold yellow, artillery- red, antitank- pink, signals- lemon yellow, and supply- light blue. Pioneer battalions, which used black Waffenfarbe, used black horizontal and vertical bars on a white backing. In peacetime the battalion designation was painted in black on the upper bar near the staff, but this was painted out in wartime for security reasons.



Bivouacked on open terrain, this unit is camouflaging its four-man shelter-quarter tents with limbs cut from brush. Many mountainous areas were devoid of trees. The four-man tent would be the largest used in forward areas and they would be widely dispersed, irregular patterns making them more difficult to detect from the air.



A Gebirgsjäger unit establishes a bivouac on the reverse slope of a ridge. The tan-colored tents are being camouflaged with brush limbs. The light colored tents would be extremely conspicuous on the green ridge.



A Gebirgsjäger unit struggles to its feet after a rest halt. The small group of men in the foreground appears to be a company command group, what the Germans called the "Kompanie-Trupp" (company troop).



A Gebirgsjäger unit prepares to move out. On the left edge a wagon is led off and in the background can be seen an as yet unlimbered small field stove trailer.



Officers observe the action from a temporary vantage point. By their positioning it appears there is some danger of fire. The officer to the left wearing a leather greatcoat watches the forward movement of reserve units. It was just as important to keep track of reserve and support unit activities as those of the frontline units. The popular leather greatcoat (Ledermantel) was dyed gray-green.



Passing a destroyed stone bridge, two soldiers carry supply bundles on a pole. This was a common means of man-packing bulky supplies too awkward for one man.



Gebirgsjäger clean their weapons, a procedure known as "Putz- und Flickstunde" (clean and patch hour), a period set aside not only for cleaning weapons, but also for cleaning and repairing clothing. To soldiers the phrase came to mean taking care of small details.



A pack column marches through a battered city. These animals appear to be donkeys, probably obtained from Italy. Any and all animals were pressed into service owing to the massive numbers required by the Wehrmacht.



A truck passes a horse-drawn wagon supply column. Besides horse-drawn supply units the Gebirgs-Division possessed two small motor transport columns and a third for fuel. These columns were company-size units. The wagon here is a commandeered civilian wagon rather than a standard issue item.



This version of the If.8 infantry cart has a wooden body. Bombed out trucks, which have been pushed off the road, and scattered ammunition crates litter the route over which a pack-mule column has already passed.





A pack-mule unit takes a rest break. One of the mule-handlers relaxes on a sack of supplies.



Staff cars cross a portable bridge. The white triangular flag symbol on the car's left rear indicates it belongs to a unit headquarters. The solid white triangle at the staff's base identifies the unit as Gebirgsjäger. Heeres vehicles were provided with registration number plates marked in black on white six- or seven-digit numbers. "WH" means "Wehrmacht Heer". The rear plates measured 200x320mm and the front plates 90x475mm. Two 20-liter (5.05-US gallon) Benzinkanister (gasoline containers) are carried over the rear fenders. These were also used as Wasserkkanister (water containers). Troops called these Wehrmachtskanister (Defense Forces containers). The Allies called them "Jerry" or "Blitz cans". The Germans began producing them in 1937, copying an Italian design.

A column of Gebirgsjäger march through a hillside town. They wear the standard Heeres haircut, longish on top and short on the sides.



A Gebirgstruppen mule-handler crosses a stream with an If.8 infantry cart. The passing cavalymen are no doubt envious of the bull he has "liberated" for his unit. A white Edelweiss, the insignia of 1.Gebirgs-Division, has been painted on the cart's front. 6.Gebirgs-Division used a similar insignia, but in dark yellow.



Mule-drawn If.8 infantry carts of 1.Gebirgs-Division cross a stream. In the far background at the base of the hill can be seen lengthy supply columns. A division in march column on a single route, which was common in remote, undeveloped regions, could stretch out up to 50 kilometers.



A pack-mule column crosses a shallow stream. Pioneer troops have provided a crude footbridge for the mule-handlers. On the far bank pioneer troops salvage timber from a destroyed former bridge in order to construct a new one. Note the canvas feedbag hung below the mule's neck.



Locally commandeered ox carts were widely used by Gebirgstruppen. Oxen are more powerful than horses and able to pull wagons through deep mud. Local civilians were often hired to drive wagons in order to supplement German manpower. While the second wagon is similar in design to German military wagons, a quick way of determining if a wagon is military or civilian is that the front and rear wheels on military wagons are the same size. Civilian wagons typically had smaller front wheels.





Gebirgsjäger paddle a medium pneumatic boat across a river. These boats were 18 feet in length and had a beam of 6 feet 1 inch. They could carry 1.35 tons of cargo, but were also used to construct pontoon brigades and multi-boat rafts capable of transporting vehicles. Here a number of bicycles are stacked aboard. This river appears to be sufficiently shallow for the boat to have become grounded.

Civilian sedans of all types were commandeered by the Germans. The last two cars in the column seem to have been taxi cabs in their former lives. It appears that this column is halted as it waits for pioneers to put the finishing touches on a new bridge.



A Gebirgsjäger general officer looks on as pioneers complete a wooden trestle bridge with the end bridging a deeper channel supported by four pontoons. The light wooden pontoons are for the bridge equipment "C" (Brückengerät "C").

combination motorcycle is the first vehicle to cross the completed bridge. The Germans obtained dimensioned lumber from three sources in occupied countries: 1) commandeered lumber stocks; 2) contracted local timber companies and sawmills; 3) German pioneer units operating their own portable sawmills.



An air lookout stands watch beside a 2cm Flak30 anti-aircraft gun overlooking the bridge. The gun's shields have been removed. Russian ground attack aircraft could appear day or night. In all probability another gun is nestled in the brush on the low hill on the river's far side.





A motorcyclist leading a convoy waits as a column of refugees clears the bridge. This timber trestle bridge spans what appears to be a man-made canal. Note the spoil bank on the far side. He has a rucksack strapped on his motorcycle's rear seat along with the standard brown leather "saddlebag," or pack case for motorcycle (Packtasche für Kradrad).



A camera crew films the opening of the bridge. German war correspondents, radio commentators, printers, photographers, and film crews were assigned to propaganda companies (Propagandakompanien). It was not uncommon for personnel attached to Gebirgsgruppen units to adopt their insignia, even though this was not an authorized practice.



Not quite ready for military service. An Oberfeldwebel and an Obergefreiter clown a bit for the camera. This Obergefreiter has less than six years' service. An Obergefreiter with over six years' service added a four-point star to his arm insignia. That was a rarely seen rank in wartime. The vast bulk of the Heer had only one to five years service. There were few with over six years' service who had not been promoted Unteroffizier.



This bedraggled-looking group of soldiers, most lacking weapons and equipment, are probably returning from a work detail. Between the two lead men a soldier is standing beside the rain-wet road wearing a grayish-green motorcyclist's protective suit (Schutzmantel für Kraftradfahrer).



A staff car passes a Gebirgstruppen pack-mule column. The command plate indicates that the passenger is an armor group commander. The upper triangle is black and the lower red on a white backing. A corps commander's plate is similar, but rectangular in shape.



An army commander departs after inspecting a Gebirgsjäger unit. An army command flag was a quartered square with two black and two white squares on a field gray backing. The flag on the right fender appears to be a field marshal's flag displaying crossed batons and above it, though not visible, a folded wing Wehrmacht eagle. The officer standing behind the windshield is the adjutant identifiable by the dull silver-colored adjutant's aiguillette (Adjutantsschnüre) on his right shoulder as a sign of office. Other staff officers sometimes wore the adjutant's aiguillette.



Their dress and bearing leave little doubt that these Gebirgsjäger are veteran troops.

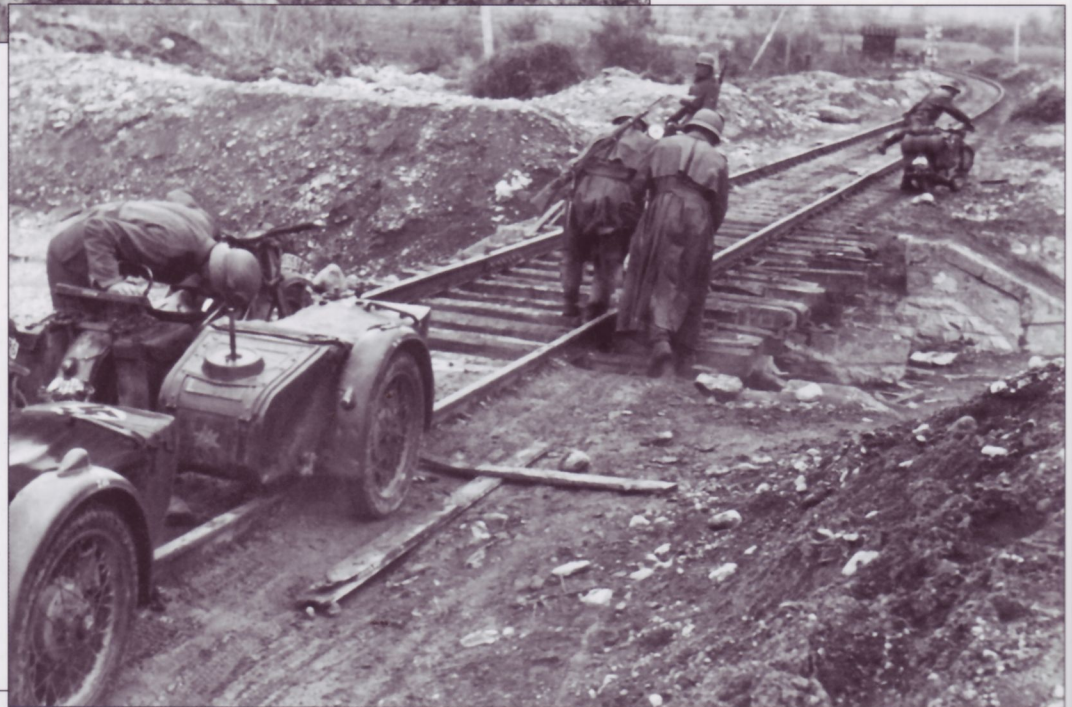
Most of these mule-handlers wear a 9mm wide braid loop on the base of their shoulder straps indicating they are NCO candidates (Unteroffiziersanwärter). Besides formal instruction at NCO schools they were expected to perform active field service and learn practical skills in all aspects of combat operations. The sitting soldier in the right front wears the S.84/98 bayonet. The Germans seldom used the term "bayonet" (Bajonett), but rather "sidearm" (Seitengewehr). While designed for the Kar 98k carbine, the S.84/98 could be attached to the other models of Mauser rifles and carbines issued to Gebirgsjäger.





Note that mule-handlers do not walk directly behind the mule in front of them, but to the right side. This prevents them from being kicked or stepping on something unpleasant.

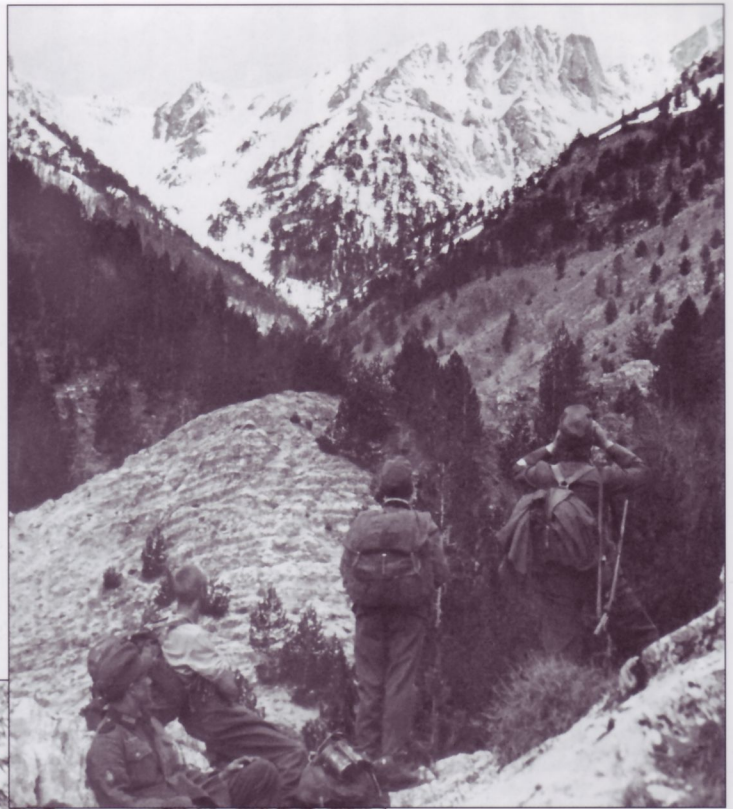
These motorcycles are assigned to the Mountain Reconnaissance Battalion 54 (Gebirgs-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 54) of 1.Gebirgs-Division. The combination motorcycle driver checks the fitting of the sidecar brackets as the ride across the railroad ties would be extremely jolting. All wear motorcyclists' protective suits.



The white tactical symbol on this motorcycle's rear fender indicates that it belongs to 1.Kompanie/Gebirgs-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 54. Motorcycle troops often protected their gear by wrapping it up in shelter-quarters and securing the bundles to the rear of sidecars or on the motorcycle's rear seat. Ahead a 45-kilometer per hour (28 miles per hour) speed limit sign is posted over a red and white quartered sign.



These mountain reconnaissance troops dismounting from their motorcycles are preparing to reconnoiter a hilltop castle. A couple of men would be left to guard the motorcycles.



High mountain terrain can facilitate or restrict observation and fire. High ground, ravines, and vegetation often mask observation and fire. In one area it can be severely limited, while just a few degrees in another direction provide an excellent view. This patrol can see a great distance before them, but an enemy may be hidden just a few meters ahead.



A heavy machine gun troop sets up its 7.92mm MG34 on its tripod mount (Lafette 34). Used on a bipod as the rifle group's (squad) light machine gun, this same weapon served in the heavy machine gun role providing long-range fire support when mounted on a tripod and provided with an optical sight. To obtain the sustained fire capability necessary for this role they were provided three or four spare barrels. Group light machine guns had only one spare barrel.



The shelter-quarter (Zeltbahn) served as a rain garment, but also added warmth because it was made of windproof gabardine. The Zeltbahn was printed in a three color splinter camouflage pattern on both sides. One side was in darker greens and brown and the other in lighter shades. The Jäger to the left has Stg24 stick hand grenade stuck in his belt.



A rifle group (Schützengruppe) poses for a photograph. Most members have their bayonets fixed. Each group (squad) was armed with an MG34 light machine gun to provide its base of fire. The one man without a Zeltbahn is the "Gruppenführer" (group leader). His rank is Oberjäger (senior Jäger). This title was traditionally used in the Gebirgstruppen rather than "Unteroffizier", as used by other branches. The Zeltbahnen appear to be worn with the light camouflage shade side out as appropriate for winter conditions.



A Gebirgsjäger-Kompanie and a pack-mule column pass a British 25-pounder Mk II gun-howitzer abandoned in the Greek mountains. It does not appear that the Germans were trying to recover it, probably because the breech block and sight had been removed and other damage inflicted. The Germans used some of these as the 8.76cm Feldkanone 280(e).



A group of NCOs listening to commercial and military-sponsored radio broadcasts using Volksempfänger (people's receivers), low cost commercial radio receivers. In theory soldiers were to comply with the Rundfunkverordnung (Broadcasting Order, or Verordnung über außerordentliche Rundfunkmaßnahmen—Decree Concerning Extraordinary Broadcasting Measures). The Propagandaministerium (Ministry of Propaganda) had issued a directive making it illegal to listen to foreign radio broadcasts, but soldiers often ignored this in their quest for news and entertainment.



Gebirgsjäger relax while opening what appear to be food parcels sent from home. The accordion was a musical instrument commonly seen in German units. While beards were frowned upon in the Heer, they were occasionally seen in Gebirgsjäger units.



In rear area quarters soldiers would often attempt to make their abode more homely. Here a 75mm artillery projectile, with the explosive filler and fuse removed, finds new life as a flower arrangement holder. The traditional Bergmütze (mountain cap), dating from World War I, was one of the most distinctive items worn by Gebirgstruppen. Its design was influenced by the Austrian mountain troops' M1907 cap. Its design also influenced the tropical and universal field caps adopted in 1943 for the entire Heer.



An attempt at soldier art outside a rear area bunker. An Obergefreiter has fashioned an Iron Cross and Edelweiss in white pebbles. This Wohnbunker (dwelling bunker) or Halbgruppenunterstand (half squad bunker) is well constructed from logs and rock with almost a meter of overhead cover. The stone revetted entry trench is behind the Obergefreiter.



Life in a bunker. Soldiers would endeavor to make living bunkers quite habitable. The walls have been covered with white sheets to hold down dust and brighten the room. One soldier with an artistic flair has displayed his pictures on the wall. They are having a meal of sardines (from Norway or Denmark).



A Gebirgsjäger on leave waiting at a bus stop in the München (Munich) area. Soldiers going on leave carried all of their equipment and their individual weapon. Before being allowed to board a Durchgangszug (troop express train or D-Zug), the soldier had to have an Entlausungsschein (delousing certificate or E-schein). The D-Zug was also known as a "Fronturlaubszug" (front leave special train) or as the "Partisanenexpress", as it sometimes had to fight its way through partisan ambushes.



The 6x30 Sf.14Z Scherenfernrohr (scissors binoculars) have been fitted with tube-like sunshade hoods. These served to prevent reflection off the lenses from revealing the forward observer's position and if angled somewhat in the direction of the sun reduced glare. It appears that the sunshades have been camouflage-painted. The instrument itself is normally gray. While the position is well camouflaged, the cut vegetation is wilting and will have to be soon replaced.



A Gebirgsjäger 3.7cm Pak 35/36 antitank gun crew scores a hit on a Soviet T-26B light tank. A Gebirgsjäger-Regiment had a Panzerjäger-Kompanie with nine 3.7cm guns. The divisional Panzerjäger-Abteilung had two companies with twelve 3.7cm guns each. Regimental and divisional Panzerjäger-Kompanien usually received two or three 5cm Pak38 guns soon after the beginning of the war. The airtight metal ammunition cans each contain 12 rounds. The loader holds a high-explosive round (gray projectile) and the ammunition handler to the right an armor-piercing round (black projectile).



The crew of a Rheinmetall 7.5cm GebG36 Gebirgsgeschütz stands by for orders to fire. This compact weapon was considered heavy in its role as a mountain gun at 750 kilograms (1,654 pounds). It had a range of 9,150 meters (10,010 yards) and a rate of fire of six rounds per minute. These artillerymen wear the silver Jäger cap badge of three oak leaves and an acorn as worn by Jäger-Divisionen (light infantry divisions). An oval cloth version was worn on the upper right arm.



On the Eastern Front the autumn rains and the spring snowmelt and rains turned everything into a sea of mud. The Russians called this the "rasputitza" (big mud), a term adopted by the German soldier. Often mules could go where motor vehicles could not. Here canvas tarpaulins protect pack-mule loads.

Pack-mules and their handlers rest. This photograph displays the complexity of pack frames, which were designed either for multiple types of loads or were especially designed for specific loads.



Gebirgsjäger rest beside a road. In the foreground is one of an infantryman's main tools, the small entrenching tool (kleines Schanzzeug) with an S.84/98 bayonet attached in the normal manner.



Motorcyclists light up substitute cigarettes (Ersatzzigaretten) during a rest halt. Tobacco imports dwindled and although tobacco was grown in southern France and elsewhere in Europe, various substitute dried leaves were used, resulting in bad-tasting cigarettes, which lacked nicotine. The daily ration was five cigarettes. A crude white Edelweiss has been painted on the fuel tank. Note the canvas blackout-drive headlight covers.

Resting motorcyclists (Kraftradfahrer) of Gebirgs-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 54. The white Edelweiss of 1.Gebirgs-Division is painted on the sidecar. The German soldier called a motorcycle simply a Krad, a contraction for Kraftrad (motorcycle). Note the military barbed wire hanging behind them. Its barbs are much longer and spaced at closer intervals than commercial cattle fence-type barbed wire.



An MG34 machine gun with the bipod fitted rearward for use in a defensive position. German machine gun bunker firing ports were usually much smaller, both in width and height, to make them more difficult to detect and hit.

An MG34 machine gunner sights in his weapon. The bipod was normally attached just behind the muzzle, but here it fitted on an attachment on the barrel just forward of the receiver making it easier to setup in a defensive position. To the gunner's right are at least eight Stg24 stick hand grenades, a couple of machine gun ammunition cases, and in the right foreground a two-barrel spare barrel carrier used by heavy machine gun crews.



Mountain artillerymen play a hand of skat, an extremely popular card game. It was a complex game with 17 variations involving three or four players. Each hand could be played in a short time making it ideal for playing during short rest breaks. Their card table is a 15cm s.FH.18 heavy field howitzer propellant cartridge crate.



An MG34 machine gunner (Maschinengewehrschütze), or what German soldiers called the "Trigger" (Abzug), as in triggerman, rests beside the entrance to his dugout shelter (Unterschlupf). Such dugouts were built to shelter one to six men. He is wearing his greatcoat. German soldiers were not issued sleeping bags, but relied on their greatcoats and wool blankets with the floor insulated by pine and fir boughs.



GONGORD
PUBLICATIONS COMPANY

