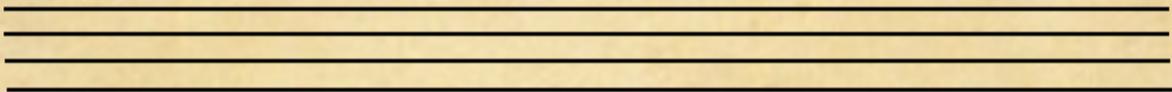


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NUMBER 3 • WEHRMACHT PANZER COMPANIES

# OSTFRONT COMMANDER'S BULLETIN



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OSTFRONT INTELLIGENCE SERVICE  
WAR DEPARTMENT

## Building German Tank Companies for Your Battles

Welcome to the third Ostfront Commander's Bulletin, Colonel. We're going to tackle the German armed forces this time. You're still going to need the Wehrmacht book and the rule set on hand. We're going to focus on companies, as they work well with Ostfront.

### The Differences

As usual, the details changed over the years. In fact, they were quite massive - and that's because of the doctrine. The first thing to remember is that the Germans were not quite as strong logistically as the Allies and often ended up overextended. As a result, it was a rule rather than exception for German divisions to fight under-strength. They were also always in need of materiel, as the Allies made it difficult to obtain. In fact, it's an extremely complex subject and this fundamental weakness - along with an ailing economy - was an important reason as to why they lost, fighting on too many fronts notwithstanding.

While they relied on the Schwerpunkt idea - concentrating force and breaking through - it worked somewhat differently from the way the Soviet concentration of forces worked. Their doctrine was actually closer to modern Western forces. Their infantry tactics centered on machineguns, and they heavily utilized LMGs. This is in stark contrast to the Western forces, which considered rifles sufficient for suppressive fire purposes.

We often think of the Wehrmacht as mechanized, but that's not the case. In fact, the Germans never achieved the mechanization rates of the Allies. But at the same time, there was a different facet to this, observed even recently: German soldiers are often puzzled by how slow compared to them their British allies operate. That happens because while the Germans operate as *mechanized* infantry, the British operate as mechanized *infantry*. This difference in emphasis actually goes way back to World War II.

Furthermore, the most revolutionary thing about the German forces wasn't the use of tanks themselves, or even the smart use of tanks. Compared to modern or allied armored divisions, the Germans had relatively few tanks in a Panzer division. The revolutionary part was that they were organic, and that Panzer divisions were not few in number. In fact, as the war dragged on, more mechanized infantry was added.

## **Tank Platoons**

In the Wehrmacht, the typical tank platoon had 4 tanks of the appropriate type. It should be noted that uniformity was not guaranteed and a single platoon could have different tanks of the same class.

## **The German Tank Company**

The German Tank Company would have anywhere from 3 to 5 tank platoons, a staff component, a signals component, a pioneer component, motorcycle recon and an anti-aircraft platoon. Since there was massive variety like that, and the company could be under-strength, we're going to describe mix and match components.

## **Building Your Company**

We're going to give rough guidelines for periods and specific theaters - while they formed a large part of their army at first, the Germans started phasing out light tanks in Panzer divisions and they were largely gone by 1943; instead, Medium and Heavy Tank companies would form the bulk of the German forces. So, we cover the rough periods before Africa, the African campaign, Operation Barbarossa, the 1943 period - Kursk and Italy - and the 1944+ period, when the Germans were already on the way to defeat. Heavy tanks were also rarely permanently attached to a specific division and instead were used in independent tank battalions. If you're trying to build off a 'typical' division, you might have multiple companies: in general, earlier battalions had more light tanks, then the medium tank component grew to dominate. Sometimes, single platoons from heavy companies would be dispatched to assist. In fact, early heavy companies were sort of padded with Panzer IIIs. As a rule of thumb, the later in war, the more uniform the tanks in the companies were.

We're going to list the components - you should check off the Signals, Pioneers, Recon, Staff, Company Command, and the Anti-Aircraft platoon. Then you should add 3 to 5 platoons of the appropriate type for your company (light, heavy or medium). Note that you can skip some of these to represent the typical under-strength reality the Germans often found themselves in. We'd suggest designing a full-strength, paper company and then crossing off some previous casualties. To build your tank platoons, you should consult the lists further down - they will list the tanks eligible for each type of platoon for a given period. Depending on the battalion, the tank lineups could be relatively uniform, or a mishmash of everything.

## **Signals, Pioneers, Recon, Staff**

1 x Kubelwagen or Motorcycle

## **Company Command**

3 x Tank

## **Anti-Aircraft Platoon**

5 x Anti-Air unit

## **Light Tank Platoon**

5 x Light Tank

## **Medium Tank Platoon**

5 x Medium Tank

## **Heavy Tank Platoon**

5 x Heavy Tank

## **Light Tank, before Africa**

Panzer I B

Panzer II A

Panzer 38(t)

## **Medium Tank, before Africa**

Panzer III H

Panzer IV E (Maximum of 1)

## **Light Tank, Early Africa (1941)**

Panzer I B

Panzer II A

**Medium Tank, Early Africa (1941)**

Panzer III H

Panzer IV E

**Light Tank, Africa (1942-1943)**

Panzer II A

**Medium Tank, Africa (1942-1943)**

Panzer III J

Panzer IV E

Panzer IV G

**Heavy Tank, Late Africa (1942-1943)**

Panzer III J

Panzer VI Tiger (1 maximum)

**Light Tank, Barbarossa**

Panzer II A

Panzer 38(t)

**Medium Tank, Barbarossa**

Panzer III J

Panzer IV E

Panzer IV G

**Heavy Tank, Barbarossa**

Panzer III J

Panzer VI Tiger

### **1943 Medium Tank**

Panzer III J

Panzer IV E

Panzer IV G

### **1943 Medium Tank, Battalions 51 & 52**

Panther

### **1943 Heavy Tank**

Panzer III J

Panzer VI Tiger

### **1944+ Medium Tank**

EITHER

Panzer III N

OR

Any Panzer IV

OR

Panther

### **1944+ Heavy Tank**

EITHER

Tiger

OR

Tiger II

### **Mechanized Infantry**

Since a Panzer division had a sizeable mechanized infantry component. As German infantry itself is a very complex subject, it's a topic for another time. If you

need an infantry detachment from your Panzer division, the easiest way to do it is to build an infantry company with enough Hanomags to transport it.

## **Using these in Ostfront**

Calling back to the American companies Bulletin, Ostfront doesn't enforce any army composition. Depending on the battle size, you can deploy a full tank company, a battered company or whatever you wish.

These lineups should help you build realistic forces. Note that we only covered the mix of tank companies for the Germans. If you're playing a Panzer division element, you'll likely want to add Panzergrenadiers to support you. A Heavy Tank battalion might turn out inflexible, as its companies are powerful but eat up a lot of points.

Knowing how these units were built, you should be able to quickly whip up a realistic force to field. Note that this is entirely modular, so as we mentioned previously: in a bigger fight, you can bring out attachments or even multiple different companies to reach your goals.