

3) German Army Armoured and Mechanised Units

a. Panzer Divisions

Probably no other WWII military organisations have had a greater amount of literature published about them, or their history analysed to a greater degree, than the German panzer divisions. This is because the panzer divisions and *Panzerwaffe* were, famously, almost certainly the single most important component of the *Blitzkrieg* method of war perfected and practiced by the *Wehrmacht*. By June 1941 the panzer division had evolved into an extremely sophisticated organisation for its day. The details of the combat, signal, transport and supply elements authorised in a June 1941 panzer division, equipped with German tanks, are shown in table Pz Div June 1941. Broadly, the summer 1941 panzer division was authorised:

- 1 Panzer Regiment, with
 - 2 Panzer Battalions, each with
 - 2 Light Panzer Companies and 1 Medium Panzer Company
 - 1 Motorised Tank Maintenance and Recovery Company
- 1 Motorised Infantry (*Schuetzen*) Brigade, with
 - 2 Motorised Infantry Regiments, each with
 - 1 Armoured Infantry Battalion, with
 - 3 Armoured Infantry Companies, 1 Armoured Machine Gun Company and 1 Armoured Heavy Company
 - 1 Motorised Infantry Battalion, with
 - 3 Motorised Infantry Companies, 1 Motorised Machine Gun Company and 1 Motorised Heavy Company
 - 1 Motorised Infantry Gun Company
 - 1 Motorcycle Infantry Battalion, with
 - 3 Motorcycle Infantry Companies, 1 Motorcycle Machine Gun Company and 1 Motorised Heavy Company
- 1 Motorised Artillery Regiment, with
 - 2 Motorised Light Artillery Battalions, each with
 - 3 Motorised Light Field Howitzer Batteries
 - 1 Motorised Heavy Artillery Battalion, with
 - 3 Motorised Heavy Field Howitzer Batteries
- 1 Armoured Reconnaissance Battalion, with
 - 1 Armoured Car Company, 1 Motorcycle Infantry Company, and 1 Motorised Heavy Company
- 1 Motorised Anti-Tank (*Panzerjager*) Battalion, with
 - 3 Motorised Anti-Tank Companies
- 1 Armoured Combat Engineer (Pionier) Battalion, with
 - 1 Armoured Combat Engineer Company, 2 Motorised Combat Engineer Companies
 - 1 Motorised Type 'B' Bridge Column and 1 Motorised Type 'K' Bridge Column
- 1 Armoured Signal Battalion, with
 - 1 Armoured Signal Company and 1 Motorised Radio Company
- Divisional Support Services (all motorised), with
 - 9 Transport Columns (30 ton), 2 Transport Columns (60 ton), 3 Fuel Transport (POL) Columns (25 m³), 3 Motor Maintenance Companies, 1 Supply Company, 1 Butcher Company, 1 Baker Company, 2 Medical Companies and 3x Ambulance Platoons.

Note, in all the above a 'Heavy Company' had three heavy-weapon platoons with anti-tank guns, infantry guns and combat engineers (*pioniers*). Therefore battalions with heavy companies had heavy weapons and heavily armed troops if required, enabling a high degree of flexibility in their use. In addition, every panzer division had 2-3 mechanised light flak companies attached from the corps HQ on a semi-permanent basis. These units operated Sd.Kfz 10/4 and Sd.Kfz 7/1 self-propelled flak guns, or truck mounted flak guns, and usually operated near the panzer and armoured infantry regiments. This type of flak was the main reason why directly attacking German armour remained one of the most hazardous and difficult missions conducted by any air-force until the end of the war.

Table Pz Div June 1941

TOE German Panzer Division, February-Summer 1941 (Combat, Signal, Transport and Supply Elements)

Motorised Infantry Battalion														Pz Division							
IPL (x3)	ICo (x3)	MgCo	HIC^*	B Sup^***	I Bat (x1)	InG Co	HQ Co**^	R Sup^**	I Reg (x2)	ReB^**	MoCyBat~	ATB~*	ArR~		EnB*~	Sig B*~	D Sup*~				
3	9				27				54												
H Rifle Sqd	3	9			27				54									108	H Rifle Sqd		
50mm Mor	1	3			9				18	3	9							48	50mm Mor		
HMG		2	8		14				28	2	14						2	74	HMG		
LMG	3	9		1	28				56	19	55	18	22					250	LMG		
81mm Mor			6		6				12		6							30	81mm Mor		
Trucks	7	32	23	22	153	11	16	6	222	65	75	53	165	156	35	375		1522	Trucks		
Light Transport		5	13	7	48	9	14	5	92	36	58	34	228	47	41	82		782	Light Transport		
Sd.Kfz 250 APC****									26									52	Sd.Kfz 250 APC****		
Sd.Kfz 251 APC****									71					6				150	Sd.Kfz 251 APC****		
Motor Cycle Sqd****	2	2	4	2	14	3	8	2	39	26	61	8	20	15	4	25		263	Motor Cycle Sqd****		
75mm Inf G			2		2	4			8	2	2							20	75mm Inf G		
150mm Inf G						2			2									4	150mm Inf G		
37mm ATG				3	3				6	3	3	24						42	37mm ATG		
50mm ATG												9						9	50mm ATG		
Light Halftrack****					1				1			15	30					59	Light Halftrack****		
Sd.Kfz 247 A Cars										2							1	3	Sd.Kfz 247 A Cars		
Sd.Kfz 260/261 A Cars					2		2		4	5	2	2				12		29	Sd.Kfz 260/261 A Cars		
Sd.Kfz 231/232 A Cars									6									6	Sd.Kfz 231/232 A Cars		
Sd.Kfz 221 A Cars									8									8	Sd.Kfz 221 A Cars		
Sd.Kfz 222 A Cars									8									8	Sd.Kfz 222 A Cars		
Sd.Kfz 223 A Cars									4									4	Sd.Kfz 223 A Cars		
Sd.Kfz 263 A Cars									3					1	8			12	Sd.Kfz 263 A Cars		
Sd.Kfz 253 & 254													22					22	Sd.Kfz 253 & 254		
105mm How													24					24	105mm How		
150mm How													12					12	150mm How		
Eng Sqd				3	3		3		9	3	3				24			56	Eng Sqd		
Pz I (Pio)*~															10			10	Pz I (Pio)*~		
Ferry Bridging Sqd															20			20	Ferry Bridging Sqd		
Pz IV Bridge Layer****															4			4	Pz IV Bridge Layer****		
Med Halftrack****													15	8		6		37	Med Halftrack****		
Heavy Halftrack****																		2	Heavy Halftrack****		
Armoured Infantry Battalion																					
IPL (x3)	ICo (x3)	MgCo	HIC^**	B Sup^***	Arm I Bat (x1)												Pz Division				
3	9				27																
H Rifle Sqd	3	9			27	H Rifle Sqd														51	PzMk II
50mm Mor	1	3			9	50mm Mor														77	PzMk III
HMG		2	8		14	HMG															
LMG	3	9		1	28	LMG															
81mm Mor			6		6	81mm Mor															
Trucks	3	6	6	15	36	Trucks															
Light Transport	2	1	2	7	16	Light Transport															
Sd.Kfz 250 APC	2	8	5	7	26	Sd.Kfz 250 APC															
Sd.Kfz 251 APC	5	16	10	13	71	Sd.Kfz 251 APC															
Motor Cycle Sqd	2	2	3	1	12	Motor Cycle Sqd															
75mm Inf G			2		2	75mm Inf G															
37mm ATG			3		3	37mm ATG															
Eng Sqd			3		3	Eng Sqd															
Panzer Regiment																					
Lt Pz Co (x2)	Me Pz Co* (x1)	Pz Pl^	HQ Co**	B Sup^**	Pz Bat (x2)	Lt Pz Pl	ASig Pl	R Sup^**	Pz Reg (x1)												
5	5				22	5			6												
PzBefWg III			2		2				6	PzBefWg III											
PzMk II	5	5	2	5	22	5			49	PzMk II											
PzMk III	17	14	3	1	38	1			77	PzMk III											
PzMk IV		14	1		15				30	PzMk IV											
LMG				12	12				24	LMG											
Motor Cycle Sqd	2		5	1	12			2	26	Motor Cycle Sqd											
Eng Sqd				4	4				8	Eng Sqd											
Light Transport	3	3	13	6	28		6	10	72	Light Transport											
Trucks	14	14	19	1	62	1	1	28	154	Trucks											
Sd.Kfz 251 APC				1	1				2	Sd.Kfz 251 APC											
Light Halftrack	2	2			6				12	Light Halftrack											
Med Halftrack****								8	8	Med Halftrack											
Heavy Halftrack****								2	2	Heavy Halftrack											

Refer attached notes for organisational details and references.

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Notes for: TOE German Panzer Division, February-Summer 1941 (Combat, Signal, Transport and Supply Elements).

* Although KSN 1175(Sd) dated 1 Feb 1941 called for 3 Medium Tank Platoons, no Medium Tank Companies actually had more than 2 Pz IV platoons (10 tanks) on the 22nd June 1941. Reserve Tank Detachment. In Practice, few, if any, Pz Battalions actually had a Reserve Tank Detachment with any tanks in the field during Operation Barbarossa (refer to the TOE of individual Pz Divs). ** *Stabskompanie* (HQ Co Pz Battalion). Includes Company HQ, Light Tank Platoon, Signal Platoon, Scout Platoon (motorcycles), Engineering Platoon, AA Platoon and all company support elements. The AA Plt had 4 dual mounted LMG's on Light Transports, (Kfz.4).

** Includes Tank Battalion HQ.

^^ Includes Panzer Regiment HQ and Panzer Regiment Tank Maintenance and Recovery Company.

^^* Includes Heavy Company HQ, 1x Antitank Platoon, 1x Infantry Gun Platoon, 1x Engineer Platoon and all Company support elements.

*** Includes Battalion HQ with Signal Detachment, Battalion Maintenance Detachment and HQ Trains.

***^ Motorised Infantry Regiment HQ Company includes Company HQ, 1x Signal Platoon, 1x Engineer Platoon, 1x Motorcycle Platoon (messenger), Company Maintenance Section and Company Trains.

***^ Includes Motorised Infantry Regiment HQ.

***^ Includes Armoured Heavy Company, includes: Hvy Company HQ, 1x Armoured Antitank Platoon, 1x Armoured Infantry Gun Platoon, 1x Armoured Combat Engineer Platoon and all Company support elements.

***^ Includes Battalion HQ with Signal Detachment. Battalion Maintenance Detachment and HQ Trains.

*** The Armoured Reconnaissance Battalion includes the Battalion HQ, 1x Signal Platoon, 1x Armoured Car Company, 1x Motorcycle Infantry Company.

1x Motorised Heavy Company and 1x Light Reconnaissance Column.

~ Motorcycle Infantry Battalion includes: Battalion HQ, 3x Motorcycle Infantry Companies, 1x Motorcycle MG Company and 1x Heavy Company.

The later includes Company HQ, 1x Antitank Platoon, 1x Infantry Gun Platoon and 1x Engineer Platoon.

~* Anti Tank Battalion includes the Battalion HQ, 1x Signal Platoon and 3x Anti Tank Companies. 2 Panzer divisions had an additional Heavy AT Rifle Platoon in their Anti Tank Battalions.

~* The Artillery Regiment includes the Artillery Regiment HQ, HQ Battery (with a Signal Platoon), 1x Motorised Artillery Observation Battery, 2x Light Artillery Battalions and 1x Heavy Artillery Battalion. On the 22nd June 1941, some Artillery Regiments were still in the process of converting from an earlier KStN which only called for a Signal Platoon in place of the HQ Battery.

For the purposes of this analysis, it is assumed that all the Pz Division's Artillery Regiments were 'authorised' the HQ Battery, although some had not yet fully converted.

7 Panzer Divisions had a Battery of 105mm Gun K 18s in place of a Battery of 150mm How sFH 18s in their Heavy Artillery Battalion (refer individual Pz Division TOEs for details).

The LMGs were usually dual mounted on cross country Light Transports for AA defence, (Kfz 4s).

*~ The Armoured Combat Engineer Battalion includes the Battalion HQ, 2x Light Combat Engineer Companies, 1x Armoured Combat Engineer Company, 1 Engineer Supply Column (Pz Division),

1x Mot Type B Bridge Column and 1x Mot Type K Bridge Column. The Sd. Kfz 251/5 and 7 were adapted to the combat pioneer role with small assault bridges and mines, etc.

The Pz I (Pto) were Pz Mk Is adapted for pioneer 'demolition' duties and designated *Ladungsleger auf Panzerkampfwagen I Ausf B*. The original *Panzerkampfwagen I* armament was retained.

**~ Armoured Signal Battalion, includes Battalion HQ, 1x Armoured Radio Company, 1x Armoured Signal Company and 1x Light Signal Transport Column.

Armoured radio cars or similarly (radio) equipped transports usually replaced the PzBefWg III (Sd Kfz 266-268) due to shortages of the later, which were reserved primarily for the Panzer Regiments.

*~ Includes the following (all motorised):

i) Panzer Division HQ, 1x Divisional Mapping Detachment, and Motorised Infantry Brigade HQ (Shutzen-Brigade HQ controlling the division's 2 Motorised Infantry Regiments).

ii) HQ Div Supply Battalion, 9x Transport Columns (30 ton), 2x Transport Columns (60 ton), 3x Fuel Transport (POL) Columns (25 m3), 3x Motor Maintenance Companies, and 1x Supply Company,

1x Divisional Commissary Detachment, 1x Butcher Company, 1x Baker Company, 1x MP Platoon (incl motorcycles) and 1x Field Post Detachment.

iii) Medical services, made up of 2x Medical Companies and 3x Ambulance Platoons.

**** The Sd. Kfz 250 was not available in June 1941 as manufacture had just started in that month. In practise (in 1941) it was usually replaced by the range of available

transport vehicles such as Kfz. 15, 16, and 70. Sd. Kfz 250s usually had an additional detachable LMG mounted on the top front.

****^ Sd. Kfz 251's usually had at least 1 additional detachable LMG on the top front. Examples are Sd. Kfz 251/1 (HMG carrier), Sd. Kfz 251/2 (81mm Mortar carrier), Sd. Kfz 251/4 (IG towing vehicle).

****^ The 1941 Panzer Division had over 1350 motorcycles. Many of these were heavy motorcycles equipped with powered wheel sidecars and detachable LMG's.

A typical German Motorcycle Infantry Squad (with a squad LMG) usually used 4 motorcycles with sidecars, and occasionally 8 motorcycles.

****^ The *Brucklenleger IV* utilised a Pz IV tank hull to transport and position a 11m heavy bridge span. Only 20 units were ever manufactured but 16 were reconverted back to Pz IV tanks.

****^ Light Halftracks include 29 Sd.Kfz 10 (1 ton) halftracks and 30 Sd.Kfz 11 (3 ton) halftracks. The Sd.Kfz 11 halftracks were all in the Artillery Regiment's 6 Light Field Howitzer Batteries (105mm hows).

****^ Medium Halftracks were all Sd.Kfz 7 (8 ton).

****^ Heavy halftracks were all Sd.Kfz 9 (18 ton), and they were all in the recovery and maintenance units in the Panzer Regiment

Tank maintenance and recovery platoons used the Sd.Anh. 115 (10-12 ton) tank transporter trailers for light tanks, and the Sd.Anh. 116 (22 ton) tank transporter trailers for medium tanks.

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Michulec, R., Wehrmacht Support Vehicles, Concord Publications Co, Hong Kong, 1999. © Nigel Askey, 2013

Apart from aircraft, the summer 1941 panzer division contained all the 'combined arms' elements required for deep penetration armoured offensives. A fully resourced 1941 panzer division, operating under normal circumstances, included the ability to:

1. Rapidly concentrate armour, artillery and infantry on a narrow front to achieve a quick (less than two days) breakthrough in the enemy line (mainly the Panzer and Motorised Artillery Regiments, Armoured Infantry Battalions, and Armoured *Pionier* Companies).
2. Widen the breach with combat engineers and support units (mainly the Armoured *Pionier* Battalion, Motorised Infantry Battalions and Motorised Artillery Regiment).
3. Rapidly reconnoitre and exploit into the enemy's rear with highly mobile mechanised forces, and (importantly) hold this ground against enemy spoiling attacks (mainly the Armoured Reconnaissance Battalion, Motorcycle Infantry Battalion, Panzer Regiment and Motorised Infantry Regiments).
4. Provide flank protection against even heavy enemy armoured and infantry counterattacks (mainly the Anti-Tank Battalion and Motorised Infantry Regiments, and to a less extent the Motorised Artillery Regiment).
5. Enable mobile and flexible communication, command and control across the whole division, and with superior HQs, in a rapidly changing situation (mainly the Armoured Signal Battalion, Signal Platoons attached to Regimental HQs and in Regimental HQ Companies, Signal Platoons/Detachments attached to Battalion HQs and in Battalion HQ Companies, and the Artillery Observation Battery).
Note, in the Artillery Regiment the Signal Platoons were in the Regimental HQ Battery and Battalion HQ Batteries. In addition, the Panzer Regiment operated specially designed command tanks (*Panzerbefehlswagen*) in its attached Signal Platoon and Battalion HQ Companies.
6. Control and direct close air support and air-based battlefield reconnaissance (mainly the Armoured Signal Battalion and various embedded Luftwaffe Liaison Sections).
7. Provide anti-aircraft (flak) protection to the forward combat elements of the division (mainly attached (Army Corps) Self-Propelled Light Flak Companies, and AA MG Sections in Field Howitzer Batteries and Artillery HQ Batteries).¹
8. Quickly recover damaged or bogged down tanks from the battlefield, and conduct field repair and maintenance in the forward battlefield area (mainly the Panzer Regiment's dedicated Tank Maintenance and Recovery Company, and the division's three Motor Maintenance Companies).²

¹ In Artillery Regiments, AA MG Sections comprised dual mounted MG 34s on cross-country light transports for AA defence (Kfz 4s).

² In addition, most German tanks carried basic spare parts and tools with them. This would include spare tracks, tow ropes, lifting jacks, and easily changeable engine and gun components. These were stowed using metal clasps on the tank, and in a stowage compartment on the rear turret of Pz IIIs and IVs. In addition, 1939-42 panzer crews were trained to conduct routine maintenance and even basic repair on their vehicles. For example, panzer crews often completed an entire track change themselves, and sometimes even replaced broken track links during combat.

9. Ensure adequate ammunition, fuel, spare parts and food could be transported forward to combat units, with a delivery at least every 24 hours and a radius of supply of 100-150km (mainly the 14 divisional transport and fuel transport (POL) columns, as well as the many Combat and Supply Trains embedded in most Company and Battalion sized units).

Note, table Pz Div June 1941 includes all these transport and supply units. Combat trains in Battalions and Companies were designed to be large enough to supply their parent units under combat conditions for around 24 hours. This means individual Battalions could in theory remain in combat for around 48 hours, without a divisional supply delivery, before the unit's combat capabilities degenerated significantly. Ammunition and fuel had the highest priority of supply, followed by water: these consumables (especially ammunition) used most of the lift capacity in the transport columns. The Artillery Regiment in particular, consumed very large amounts of ammunition during offensive operations. Consequently, each Artillery Battery had quite large dedicated Battery Trains and Ammunition Detachments. Food and spare parts had much lower priority for supply, with most combat units carrying enough food for several days.

The total number of authorised tanks in the June 1941 Panzer Division was 182, with 162 in the panzer regiment. An additional 13 'Pz I and II *pionier* tanks' were in the Armoured Pionier Battalion, and another 7 *Panzerbefehlswagen* were authorised for the Armoured Signal Battalion. However the Wehrmacht never had enough German tanks to meet the requirements of the expanding *Panzerwaffe*, and were saved by the availability of some very good Czechoslovakian light tanks designs: namely the Pz 35(t) and Pz 38(t). By June 1941 the 6th, 7th, 8th, 12th, 19th and 20th panzer divisions were equipped with Czech tanks. Panzer divisions equipped with Czech tanks used a few different TOEs within their panzer regiments, which are shown in table Pz Regs June 41 (below). These were authorised:

- 1 Panzer Regiment, with
 - 3 Panzer Battalions, each with
 - 2 Light Panzer Companies and 1 Medium Panzer Company
 - 1 Motorised Tank Maintenance and Recovery Company
 - 1 Motorised Tank Maintenance and Recovery Platoon

Panzer regiments with this organisation were authorised 239 tanks in total, with the appropriately enlarged tank maintenance and recovery units. The 77 additional tanks came from the additional tank battalion and went some way to compensating for the fact that the Czech Pz 38(t) light tank was much less capable than the German Pz III medium tank.

Extract from Volume IIA 3. 3) a.

Table Pz Regs June 41

TOE Panzer Regiment (Czech Tanks), February-Summer 1941 (Combat, Signal, Transport and Supply Elements)

Panzer Regiment (Czech Tanks)											
	(x2)		(x1)		(x3)			(x1)			
	Lt Pz Co	Me Pz Co*	Pz Pl^	HQ	Co**	B Sup**	Pz Bat	Lt Pz Pl	ASig Pl	R Sup^^	Pz Reg
PzBef 38t or 35t	5	2	2	2	2	1	2	2			8
PzMk II	17	3	1	5	3	1	22	5			71
Pz 38t or 35t		14	1	3	1	1	38	1	1		115
PzMk IV							15				45
LMG					12		12				36
Motor Cycle Sqd	2	2		5	1	1	12		3		39
Eng Sqd	3	3	4	4	6		4				12
Light Transport	14	14	19	13	6		28	6	13		103
Trucks			1	19	1		62	1	38		226
Sd.Kfz 251 APC	2	2	1	1			1				3
Light Halftrack							6				18
Medium Halftrack									12		12
Heavy Halftrack									3		3

* Although KSN 1175(Sd) dated 1 Feb 1941 called for 3 Medium Tank Platoons, no Medium Tank Companies actually had more than 2 Pz IV platoons (10 tanks) on 22nd June 1941.
 ^ Reserve Tank Detachment. In Practice, few if any Panzer Battalions actually had a Reserve Tank Detachment with any tanks in the field during Operation Barbarossa (refer to the TOE of individual Pz Divisions).
 ** *Stabskompanie* (HQ Co Pz Battalion). Includes Company HQ, Light Tank Platoon, Signal Platoon, Scout Platoon (motorcycles), Engineering Platoon, AA Platoon and all company support elements. The AA Plt had 4 dual mounted LMG's on Light Transports, (Kfz.4).
 ** Includes Panzer Regiment HQ, Panzer Regiment Tank Maintenance Company and 1x Tank Maintenance Platoon.
 ^^ Includes Tank Battalion HQ.

TOE Panzer Regiment (German Tanks), February-Summer 1941 (Combat, Signal, Transport and Supply Elements)

Panzer Regiment											
	(x2)		(x1)		(x2)			(x1)			
	Lt Pz Co	Me Pz Co	Pz Pl	HQ	Co	B Sup	Pz Bat	Lt Pz Pl	ASig Pl	R Sup	Pz Reg
PzBefWg III	5	2	2	2	2	1	2	2			6
PzMk II	17	3	1	5	3	1	22	5	1		49
PzMk III		14	1	3	1	1	38	1			77
PzMk IV							15				30
LMG					12		12				24
Motor Cycle Sqd	2	2	5	5	1	1	12		2		26
Eng Sqd	3	3	4	4	6		4				8
Light Transport	14	14	19	13	6		28	6	10		72
Trucks			1	19	1		62	1	28		154
Sd.Kfz 251 APC	2	2	1	1			1				2
Light Halftrack							6				12
Med Halftrack									8		8
Heavy Halftrack									2		2

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