

# Foreword

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As its title states, this book attempts to provide an overview of all aspects of German armored reconnaissance forces during the World War II era. It is hoped that the book will be a handy reference guide for the subject matter and, further, serve as impetus for further research into the topic.

My interest in things military started as boy. Living in close proximity to both Gettysburg and other Civil War battlefields as well as the Aberdeen Proving Grounds for much of my youth provided ample fuel to fire my imagination. Over time, my interest became more focused on armor. In researching the history of maneuver warfare, I became increasingly fascinated with the *Panzertruppe* and the role it played in decisively shaping operations in the European theater of World War II. As a newly commissioned armor officer attending the basic course at Fort Knox in 1977, I was further exposed to armored cavalry theory and doctrine and was intrigued by the role played by the scout platoon within the armored battalion of the time and its function as the “eyes and ears” of the commander.

Once stationed overseas in Erlangen—home of the prewar *Panzer-Regiment 25* and the wartime *Panther* school and just down the road from the storied *Panzer-Regiment 35* in Bamberg—with the 1-35 Armor Battalion, I soon learned that the premier job of a lieutenant in an armored battalion was that of scout platoon leader, a position I soon aspired to and eventually obtained. In a subsequent overseas assignment to Wildflecken, our battalion worked closely with the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment since we were also stationed close to the border in the “Fulda Gap,” serving as “speed bumps” for the Warsaw Pact assault that never came. I was always impressed by the regiment’s *élan* and *esprit de corps* and the

impressive and professional way it conducted its business. I encountered the regiment again while serving full-time with the Nevada Army National Guard as its Mobilization and Readiness Officer in the mid-1990s. The state’s armored battalion, the 221st Cavalry, served as a “Roundout” to the 11th ACR, and I spent several enjoyable, if hot, trips to the National Training Center to see the Nevada soldiers working with their modern-day cavalry counterparts.

As luck would have it, I also had several encounters with modern German Army armored reconnaissance forces while serving on active duty in Germany. The first time was in 1978, while serving as a liaison officer to German umpire forces during a REFORGER exercise. Standing on the side of the road at the entrance to a small German town one afternoon during the maneuver phase of the exercise, I was talking to my jeep driver and facing away from the road when I heard a sudden whooshing noise and blast of air behind me coming from the road. When I turned around, I saw the tail end of a *Spähpanzer 2 “Luchs”* as it moved into the town at high speed. For such a large vehicle, it was virtually silent. The second time was in the mid-1980s during a maneuver exercise being conducted near the Baumholder Training Area. The “red” forces had a German *Panzeraufklärungskompanie* attached to them, and my tank company engaged a patrol that was probing our lines during the defensive phase of the exercise. What impressed me most about the encounter was the rapid response of the *Spähpanzer 2* when the vehicle commander realized he was about to run into an M60A3 in a reverse-slope position. Within what seemed to be a fraction of a second, the rear driver took the vehicle out of harm’s way by moving rapidly in reverse.

Much has happened over the intervening years. Together with Michael Pruett, I published two monographs on uniforms related to the *Panzertruppe*, and I was eventually fortunate enough, after retiring from a full-time position with the National Guard, to pursue more fully my interest in all things World War II, first by being a partner in J. J. Fedorowicz Publishing in Canada and now by being a freelance translator and consultant on military history topics. All the while, I have actively collected militaria relating to the *Panzertruppe*, with an emphasis of late on reconnaissance forces. Correspondingly, the desire within me grew to

eventually write a book, together with my friends Mike Pruett and Mike Olive, that addressed my personal interest in this topic.

I truly hope you enjoy our efforts. We would welcome any comments you might have and can be reached through the publisher. Any errata and addenda to the book will also be published at my site: [www.battlebornbooks.com](http://www.battlebornbooks.com).

Robert Edwards  
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# Technical Notes

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Since the authors rely on a number of German-language sources in which technical, professional, and military terminology and soldier slang are used, it might be prudent to outline our approach to translating and naming German units and ranks.

In general, German unit and formation titles will be given their full designation upon first introduction, with no effort made to produce a German-English hybrid, as is often the case in English-language texts that make extensive reference to German formations, equipment, and ranks. Thus, the German 4th Armored Reconnaissance Battalion will initially be rendered as *Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 4*. If extensive reference is made to it, then an abbreviated form may be introduced, such as *Pz.Aufkl.Abt. 4*. In all instances, the abbreviations will follow German practice. To assist in “deciphering” these, extensive use will be made of endnotes; ~~a glossary is provided at the end of the book~~. Ordinal numbers are rendered by the use of a period in German; thus, the 1st Armor Division is *1. Panzer-Division*. Subordinate units within formations are indicated by Arabic numerals in the case of company-size formations and Roman numerals for battalions. Generally, division and higher commands are indicated by ordinal numbers. Brigades are usually indicated by ordinal numerals when an organic part of a higher command, while separate brigades are indicated by the numerical designator following the unit designator. Of course, there were exceptions to this rule of thumb; regiments, battalions, and separate companies generally had the numerical designator following the unit designator.

The term *Abteilung* will generally be translated as “battalion” when it refers to a combat formation and as “detachment” when it refers to an element of the training base. For instance, *Panzer-Ersatz- und Ausbildungs-Abteilung 4* would be the 4th Replacement and Training Detachment, even though it is a battalion-size element.

Generally, when the word “formation” is used, it refers to a battalion or higher element. The term “unit” is reserved for company-size elements and smaller. Although the term *Schwadron* is literally translated as “squadron,” this is actually a troop or company in U.S. usage. When the original German is unclear or a mixture of formations and units is being described, then the term “elements” will be used.

German ranks will be used throughout the text, thus captain will be rendered as *Hauptmann* or *Rittmeister*, depending on the type of unit or actual rank title. Ranks for SS personnel will use the prefix *SS-*, which was the official way of describing the rank, with an second lieutenant in the SS, for example, being *SS-Untersturmführer*. The prefix may be deleted, however, when translating firsthand accounts, since it was not used in colloquial German. For those who are unfamiliar with German ranks, a comparison table is provided at the back of the book.

In cases where official German documents are translated, portions may be changed slightly to facilitate meaning, e.g., abbreviations written out or text added to “shotgun passages” to make complete sentences.