



The Development of Armored Reconnaissance

SETTING THE STAGE

Ever since the dawn of mankind and the conflicts that soon followed, the leaders of armed forces have always sought information about the enemy and, if fighting in an unfamiliar area, about the terrain, climate, and other factors that could aid or impede their efforts to subdue the foe. Only a foolhardy leader would attempt to gain victory without first gathering at least rudimentary information concerning the enemy's forces, dispositions, positions, morale, and intent.

The gathering of information—which is then transformed through analysis into intelligence—may take many forms, especially in modern times with the advent of electronic intelligence-gathering methods, remote sensors, and remotely piloted vehicles (drones). In the case of field armies and ground forces, however, the function is usually performed by select forces whose primary mission is to gather information and provide it to the commander in a timely manner, thus allowing him to shape his decision-making process, no matter how simple or complex, into a coherent course of action. Information is needed at all levels of command, since what is important to the commander of a field army may be of little consequence to a company commander and vice-versa. Operational intelligence is usually gathered at the corps level and higher, tactical intelligence at the division level and below, and battlefield intelligence at the battalion level and below (the fire-and-maneuver or movement level). The ground effort to physically gather information for the intelligence effort is referred to as reconnaissance.¹

It was not uncommon to see armored vehicles on the roadways of prewar Germany, either on exercise or simply to test road worthiness after repairs or maintenance, as seems to be the case with this *Sd.Kfz. 223 (Fu)*. JIM HALEY