

Excerpt from the After-Action Report of an Armored Reconnaissance Battalion

CONCERNING THE EMPLOYMENT OF PANZERSPÄHKOMPANIE (C) IN THE PERIOD FROM 9 MARCH TO 25 APRIL 1944

1. The company¹ arrived at the division location southwest of Kriwoj-Rog on 5 March 1944. It was initially designated as a divisional reserve. The employment of armored reconnaissance sections during that period of predominantly bottomless muck was very difficult. In the course of the retrograde movements in the direction of Wosnessensk and the Bug initiated on 9 March 1944, the company was employed as part of the division's armored battle group. The *Kampfgruppe* was formed in the main by the company, because there were no operational tanks or assault guns or even *SPW*'s on hand.

Operations were restricted to reconnoitering the enemy forces marching in the direction of Nikolajew on the deep right flank, to attacking enemy columns with reinforced armor reconnaissance patrols and to disrupting his lines of communication. Along with three attached *Wespen*,² two *Hummeln*,³ and two 7.5cm antitank guns (the latter from the battalion's 5th Company), the company was able to achieve success and, above all, perform its reconnaissance missions well, despite the difficult terrain and the extremely muddy roads.

Because of the loss of almost all communications means (radio net centers) in not only the battalion but also the division, the coordinated employment of patrols could not be effected. The acting company commander⁴ had to conduct operations based on his own assessment of the situation. On top of that was

the fact that the division proper was employed in completely different sectors of the front and the *Kampfgruppe* frequently changed its attachment status [to other commands].

The commander's vehicle and the radio vehicles of reconnaissance sections not employed at the front had to be used as radio relay stations. It was determined that the radio operators for the patrols needed to have the best radio training that there is. The radio operator needs to have physical endurance and intellectual prowess so that he can stay the course through the nerve-racking exertions that occur when he sits next to the radio all by himself for days on end.

2. Other demands were placed on the company in the fighting north of the Pruth and in the area around Jassi.


For the most part, combat missions were conducted. As a consequence of the mountainous terrain, the operations were conducted at platoon level, together with assault guns and infantry.

The enemy, coming from Balti and advancing in the direction of the Pruth, was located a few kilometers north of the Pruth bridges at Ungheni and had cut the main supply line between Kischinew and Jassi.

The terrain was very broken and parts of it were still under high snow.

The *Kampfgruppe*, consisting of five armored reconnaissance halftracks, two assault guns and a weak company of infantry, had the mission of opening the road again in order to open a path for the motorized divisions coming from the north.

1. The *Panzerspähkompanie (c)* in the title of the report is the armored reconnaissance company issued the *Sd.Kfz. 250/9 SPW*, equipped with a revolving gun turret similar to the one employed on the *Sd. Kfz. 222* armored car. The company was organized under *Kriegsstärkennachweisung 1162c* of 1 November 1943 and was theoretically organized with a company headquarters and headquarters section (1x *Sd.Kfz. 250/5*) and four line platoons, each equipped with 2x *Sd.Kfz. 250/5* and 4x *Sd.Kfz. 250/9*. The headcount in each line platoon was eighteen, with two of the platoons authorized officers as platoon leaders. The company also had an integral maintenance section and combat and field trains. Based on the discussions of the area employed, this report was most likely written by *Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 13* of the *13. Panzer-Division*, commanded by a *Major* Schütz at the time.

2. The Wasp was a medium self-propelled artillery piece mounting a *leichte Feldhaubitze 18* (10.5cm) on a *Panzer II* chassis.  were found in the mechanized artillery battalions of armored divisions (generally two batteries of six guns each) from 1943 on.

3. The Bumble Bee was a heavy self-propelled artillery piece mounting a *schwere Feldhaubitze 18/1 L30* (15cm) on a hybrid **Panzer III/IV** chassis. There was usually one battery of six guns in an armored division's mechanized artillery regiment from about 1943 on.

4. The original German refers to him as the *Kompanieführer*. In non-military German, this could also mean company commander, but since this is part of an after-action report, it is assumed that acting company commander is meant, not the officially appointed company commander (*Kompaniechef*).

