

alent at the time, but its basic company building blocks were based on army organizational principles and standards.

Elements of the reconnaissance battalion (1st, 3rd, 4th and 5th Companies) were deployed to North Africa, where most of the personnel and all of the equipment were lost in May, when the Axis forces capitulated. The remaining forces of the division remained on Sicily initially and then on the Italian mainland, where the reconnaissance battalion was reconstituted and redesignated as *Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung "Hermann Göring."* In subsequent reorganizations, the reconnaissance battalions all assumed an army model.

According to its organization chart dated 1 May 1944, the reconnaissance battalion consisted of battalion headquarters; armored scout company (armored car) (1st), with eighteen armored cars; armored scout company (*SPW*); armored reconnaissance company (*SPW*); armored reconnaissance company (*VW*); and heavy company

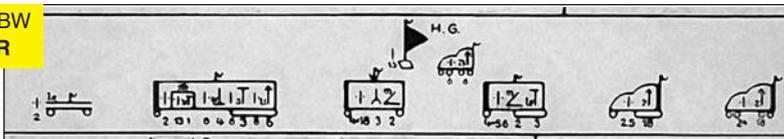
The division spent the first half of 1944 in Italy, before being redeployed to the Warsaw area of the Eastern Front in the middle of July. On 1 October of the same year, the division was used to provide cadre for the creation of *Fallschirm-Panzer-Korps "Hermann Göring,"* with two divisions—*Fallschirm-Panzer-Division 1* and *Fallschirm-Panzer-Grenadier-Division 2*, with each division authorized a reconnaissance battalion of four companies. The *Panzer-Grenadier-Division* had wheeled companies,

while the *Panzer-Division* had *SPW* companies and heavy armored cars in its headquarters company.⁶⁷ The corps took part in the final fighting for Germany and surrendered to the Soviets in the area north of Dresden in May 1945.

Higher Commands

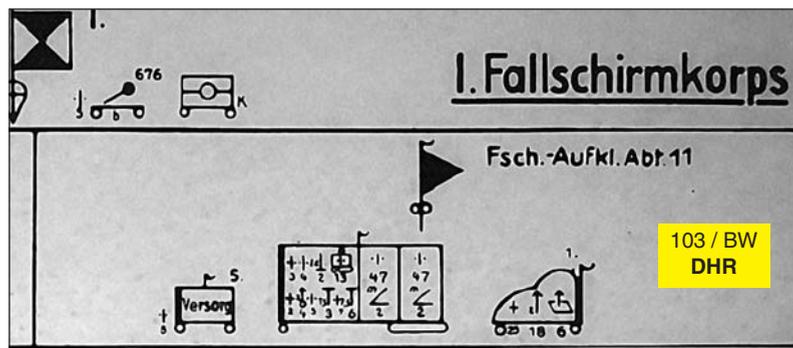
According to the *Frontnachweiser* of December 1944, *Fallschirm-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 14* was allocated to *Panzer-Fallschirm-Korps "Hermann Göring,"* but the exact composition of this reconnaissance battalion is unknown.⁶⁸ In addition, the two *Fallschirm-Korps* each had a reconnaissance battalion of five companies, as of 1 May 1944. *Fallschirm-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 11* was assigned to *I. Fallschirm-Korps*, *Fallschirm-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 12* to *II. Fallschirm-Korps*. The 1st Company of each of the battalions had armored cars. The 2nd and 3rd Companies were *SPW* armored reconnaissance companies and the 4th Company was the heavy company. The heavy company had a combat engineer platoon (*SPW*), an infantry gun platoon (two light infantry guns), a *Flak* platoon (four 2cm guns), and two anti-tank platoons (one with three 7.5cm guns and the other with six 7.5cm guns). In accordance with the *freie Gliederung* model, the 5th Company was a supply company. The tactical symbols used for the organizational chart indicate that there was a battery of assault guns organic to the armored car company as well, although no additional information is available.

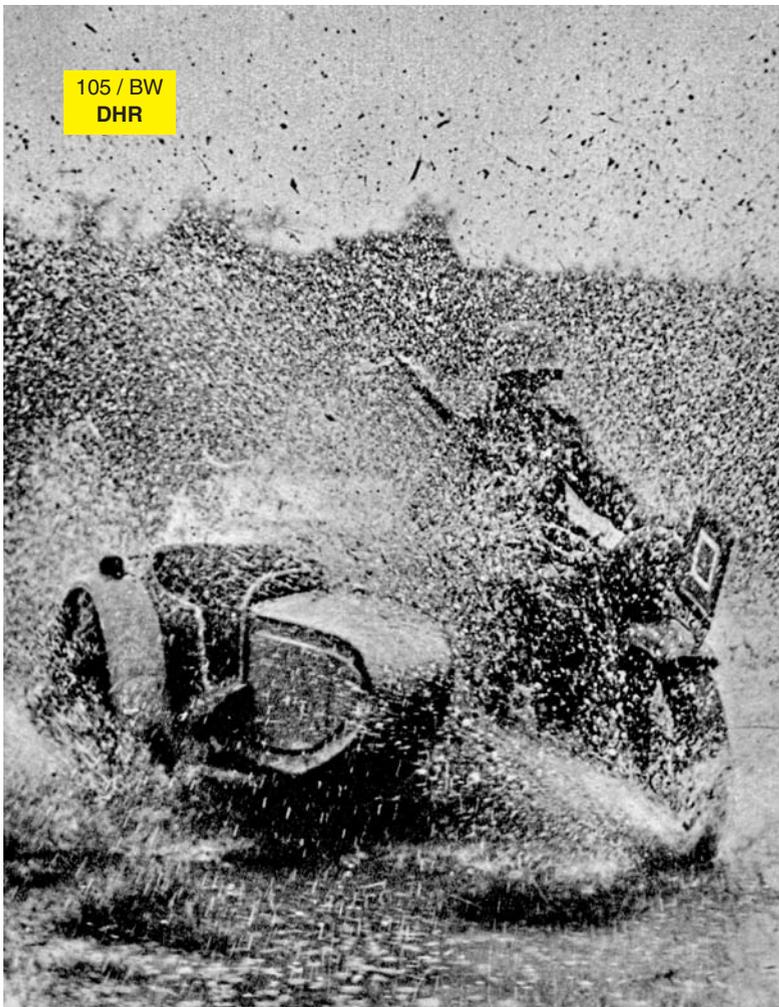
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The armored reconnaissance battalion of the *Hermann Göring Division* mirrored that of its army counterparts in 1944.

Right: *Fallschirm-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 11* of the *I. Fallschirm-Korps*. Its sister battalion in the *II. Fallschirm-Korps* was organized the same way.





Although great effort was made to glamorize the role of the motorcycle infantry, they did not have an easy time of it. They were subjected to the whims of Mother Nature just like their foot infantry brethren and their relative speed on the battlefield did little to counteract the lack of armored protection once battle was joined. While their great speed enabled them to frequently surprise and overwhelm the enemy, it also exposed them to greater danger against a prepared and determined foe, who could usually get the first shot off.



The prewar imagery of the armored forces was filled with romance, as evidenced by this mid-1930s postcard image of a column of *Kfz. 13*'s moving down a rural road, accompanied by a motorcycle messenger, who must be serving as a liaison between the section and its higher headquarters. Normally, a scout section would be accompanied by a radio vehicle, but it is presumed the artist took some liberties with his subject matter.