Armored Reconnaissance Vehicles

To a certain extent, the development of vehicles specifically designed for armored reconnaissance mirrored that of the armored forces as a whole. While the Versailles Treaty did allow Germany to possess some armored cars for internal security purposes, it forbade the development and possession of armored cars capable of conducting modern battlefield reconnaissance and scouting.

Despite those prohibitions, it was generally understood what was needed in a vehicle capable of conducting ground reconnaissance: speed, maneuverability, cross-country capability, radio communications, armored protection against small arms, extended range, and (limited) self-defense capability. Unique, perhaps, among German design features was the desire for the ability to move at the same speed in both forward and reverse, which essentially required two drivers.[1] Indeed, proposals as early as 1924 called for an all-wheel drive engine capable of delivering 75 horsepower, an amphibious capability, and a revolving turret with machine guns or a combination of a machine gun and a 2cm automatic cannon. Needless to say, such design concepts did not come to fruition at the time, for a variety of reasons, primarily financial.[2]

As with all armored vehicle development, the ideal combination of capabilities often proved elusive. Starting with civilian vehicles pressed into military service—the *Kfz. 13* and *14*—German industry slowly developed families of vehicles that came ever closer to the ideal. These were mostly wheeled designs, since those were the only ones initially permitted by the Allies or capable of being designed in such a way as to avoid Allied intervention. Once Hitler came into power and declared national sovereignty without sanctions, work could proceed with purpose-built

An *Sd.Kfz. 221* of *Aufklärungs-Abteilung 5 (mot)*. The unit's prewar tactical signs are painted on both fenders, and the three-tone camouflage can be identified on the cover for the spare tire. JIM HALEY