



# Waffen-SS

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The **Waffen-SS** (German pronunciation: [ˈvaːfən.ɛs.ɛs], Armed SS) was created as the armed wing of the Nazi Party's *Schutzstaffel* ("Protective Squadron"),<sup>[2]</sup> and gradually developed into a multi-ethnic and multi-national military force of Nazi Germany.<sup>[3]</sup>

The Waffen-SS grew from three regiments to over 38 divisions during World War II, and served alongside the *Heer* (regular army) but was never formally part of it.<sup>[4]</sup> Adolf Hitler resisted integrating the Waffen-SS into the army, as it was to remain the armed wing of the Party and to become an elite police force once the war was won.<sup>[5]</sup> Prior to the war it was under the control of the *SS Führungshauptamt* (SS operational command office) beneath *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler. Upon mobilization its tactical control was given to the High Command of the Armed Forces (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*).<sup>[6]</sup>

Initially membership was open to *Aryans* only in accordance with the racial policy of Nazi Germany, but the rules were partially relaxed in 1940, although Jews and Poles remained banned. Hitler authorized the formation of units composed largely or solely of foreign volunteers and conscripts. By the end of the war, non-Germans made up approximately 60 percent of the Waffen-SS.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

At the post-war *Nuremberg Trials* the Waffen-SS was condemned as a criminal organization due to its essential connection to the Nazi Party and involvement in numerous war crimes. Waffen-SS veterans were denied many of the rights afforded to veterans who had served in the *Heer* (army), *Luftwaffe* (air force), or *Kriegsmarine* (navy). An exception was made for Waffen-SS conscripts sworn in after 1943, who were exempted because of their involuntary servitude.

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Waffen-SS	
Active	1933–1945
Country	Nazi Germany
Allegiance	Adolf Hitler
Branch	Schutzstaffel
Type	Panzer Panzergrenadier Cavalry Infantry Mountain Infantry Police
Size	38 Divisions and many minor units at its peak
Part of	Wehrmacht ( <i>de facto</i> )
Garrison/HQ	SS Führungshauptamt, Berlin
Motto	<i>Meine Ehre heißt Treue</i> (My Honor is Loyalty) <sup>[1][a]</sup>
Engagements	World War II
Commanders	
Ceremonial chief	Heinrich Himmler
Notable commanders	Josef Dietrich Paul Haussner Theodor Eicke Felix Steiner Kurt Meyer

## Origins (1929–1939) [edit]



Parade for the third anniversary of the [Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler](#) on the barracks' grounds. [Sepp Dietrich](#) is at the lectern. May 1935.

The origins of the Waffen-SS can be traced back to the selection of a group of 120 SS men in March 1933 by [Josef "Sepp" Dietrich](#) to form the [Sonderkommando Berlin](#).<sup>[7]</sup> By November 1933 the formation was 800 men strong, and at a remembrance ceremony in Munich for the tenth anniversary of the failed [Munich Putsch](#) the regiment swore allegiance to [Hitler](#). The oaths pledged were *Pledging loyalty to him alone and Obedience unto death*.<sup>[7]</sup> The formation was given the title *Leibstandarte* (Bodyguard Regiment) *Adolf Hitler* (LAH).<sup>[8]</sup> On 13 April 1934, by order of Himmler, the regiment became known as the *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler* (LSSAH).<sup>[8]</sup>

The *Leibstandarte* demonstrated their loyalty in June 1934 during the [Night of the Long Knives](#), the purge of the [Sturmabteilung](#) (SA).<sup>[7]</sup> The SA had over two million members at the end of 1933. Led by one of Hitler's old comrades, [Ernst Röhm](#), the SA represented a threat to Hitler's relationship with the German Army and threatened to sour his relations with the conservatives of the country, people whose support Hitler needed to solidify his position in the German government. Hitler decided to act against the SA.<sup>[9]</sup> The SS was put in charge of eliminating Röhm and the other high-ranking officers of the SA.

The [Night of the Long Knives](#) between 30 June and 2 July 1934 saw the killing of approximately 82 SA men, including almost its entire leadership, effectively ending the power of the SA. This action was largely carried out by the *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler*.<sup>[7]</sup> In September 1934, Adolf Hitler authorized the formation of the military wing of the [Nazi Party](#) and approved the formation of the [SS-Verfügungstruppe](#) (SS-VT), a special service troop under Hitler's command.<sup>[7]</sup> The SS-VT had to depend on the [German Army](#) for its supply of weapons and military training and they had control of the recruiting system, through local draft boards responsible for assigning conscripts to the different branches of the [Wehrmacht](#), to meet quotas set by the [German High Command](#) (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht or OKW in German). The SS was given the lowest priority for recruits.<sup>[10]</sup>

Even with the difficulties presented by the quota system, [Heinrich Himmler](#) formed two new SS regiments, the [SS Germania](#) and [SS Deutschland](#), which together with the *Leibstandarte* and a communications unit made up the SS-VT.<sup>[10]</sup> At the same time Himmler established the [SS-Junkerschule Bad Tölz](#) and [SS-Junkerschule Braunschweig](#) for training officers to lead the new regiments.<sup>[10]</sup> Both schools used the regular army training methods and used former Army officers to train potential officers.<sup>[10]</sup> The officer candidates had to meet stringent requirements before being allowed entry to the schools: all SS officers had to be a minimum height of 180 cm (about 5 foot 11 inches) for the *Leibstandarte* and they also had to have served some time in the ranks.<sup>[10][11]</sup>

Members of the SS could be of any religion, but atheists were not allowed. In 1937, Himmler wrote in a letter to a pastor that an SS man's religious denomination was his own personal choice. Himmler wrote, "Atheism is the only world-view or religious view that is not tolerated within the SS."<sup>[12]</sup> Himmler resented the fact that Christianity or the Christian churches could forbid SS men from having any leadership role in the church.<sup>[13]</sup>

In 1936, Himmler selected former Lieutenant General [Paul Hausser](#) to be Inspector of the SS-VT with the rank of [Brigadeführer](#). Hausser transformed the SS-VT into a credible military force that was a match for the regular army.<sup>[14][15]</sup>

On 17 August 1938, Hitler declared that the SS-VT would have a role in domestic as well as foreign affairs, which transformed this growing armed force into the rival that the army had feared.<sup>[16]</sup> He decreed that service in the SS-VT qualified to fulfil military service obligations, although service in the [SS-Totenkopfverbände](#) or SS-TV would not. Some units of the SS-TV would, in the case of war, be used as reserves for the SS-VT, which did not have its own reserves.<sup>[17]</sup> For all its training, the SS-VT was untested in a combat situation. This changed in 1938, when two opportunities arose with the [Anschluss of Austria](#) in March and the occupation of the [Sudetenland](#) in October. A battalion of the *Leibstandarte* was chosen to accompany the Army troops in occupying Austria, and the three regiments of the SS-VT participated in the occupation of the Sudetenland. In both actions no resistance was met.<sup>[15][17]</sup>

## World War II [edit]

### 1939 [edit]

#### Invasion of Poland [edit]

Himmler's military formations at the outbreak of the war comprised several subgroups which would become the basis of the Waffen-SS.

- The *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler*, under [Obergruppenführer](#)<sup>[b]</sup> [Josef "Sepp" Dietrich](#)
- The Inspectorate of *Verfügungstruppe*, under [Gruppenführer](#) [Paul Hausser](#), which commanded the *Deutschland*, *Germania* and *Der Führer* regiments. The latter was recruited in Austria after the [Anschluss](#) and was not yet combat-ready.<sup>[18]</sup>
- The Inspectorate of Concentration Camps, under [Gruppenführer](#) [Theodor Eicke](#), which fielded four



infantry and one cavalry [Death's-Head Standarten](#), comprising camp guards of the SS-[Totenkopfverbände](#). These troops wore the SS-TV skull and crossbones rather than the SS-VT "SS" runes.

Execution of Poles in Kórník, 20 October

- Combat-trained non-SS police units of [Obergruppenführer und General der Polizei Kurt Daluege's Ordnungspolizei](#), which reported to Himmler in his capacity as Chief of German Police. These troops used police ranks and insignia rather than those of the SS.

In August 1939, Hitler placed the *Leibstandarte* and the SS-VT under the operational control of the Army High Command ([OKH](#)). Himmler retained command of the *Totenkopfstandarten*, for employment behind the advancing combat units in what were euphemistically called "police and security duties".

Events during the [Invasion of Poland](#) raised doubts over the combat effectiveness of the SS-VT. Their willingness to fight was never in doubt; at times they were almost too eager. The OKW reported that the SS-VT had unnecessarily exposed themselves to risks and acted recklessly, incurring heavier losses than army troops. They also stated that the SS-VT was poorly trained and its officers unsuitable for command. As an example, OKW noted that the *Leibstandarte* had to be rescued by an army regiment after becoming surrounded at [Pabianice](#) by the Poles.<sup>[18]</sup> In its defence, the SS-VT insisted that it had been hampered by having to fight piecemeal instead of as one formation, and was improperly equipped to carry out its objectives.<sup>[18]</sup> During the invasion the *Leibstandarte* (LSSAH) became notorious for torching villages; members of the LSSAH murdered 50 Jews in the town of [Blonie](#).<sup>[19]</sup>

Himmler insisted that the SS-VT should be allowed to fight in its own formations under its own commanders, while the OKW tried to have the SS-VT disbanded altogether.<sup>[18]</sup> Hitler was unwilling to upset either the army or Himmler, and chose a third path. He ordered that the SS-VT form its own divisions but that the divisions would be under army command.<sup>[18]</sup>

### First Divisions [edit]

In October 1939, *Deutschland*, *Germania*, and *Der Führer* were reorganized into the [SS-Verfügungs Division](#). The *Leibstandarte* remained independent and was increased in strength to a reinforced motorized regiment.<sup>[15][18]</sup> Hitler authorized the creation of two new divisions: the [SS Totenkopf Division](#), formed from militarized *Standarten* of the [SS-Totenkopfverbände](#), and the [Polizei Division](#), formed from members of the national police force.<sup>[20]</sup> Almost overnight the force that the OKW had tried to disband had increased from 18,000 to over 100,000 men.<sup>[21]</sup> Hitler next authorized the creation in March 1940 of four Motorized Artillery battalions, one for each division and the *Leibstandarte*. The OKW was supposed to supply these new battalions with weapons, but was reluctant to hand over guns from its own arsenal. The weapons arrived only slowly, and by the time of the [Battle of France](#) only the *Leibstandarte* battalion was up to strength.<sup>[22]</sup>

### 1940 [edit]

#### France and the Netherlands [edit]

The three SS divisions and the *Leibstandarte* spent the winter of 1939 and the spring of 1940 training and preparing for the coming war in the west. In May they moved to the front, and the *Leibstandarte* became part of the Army's [227th Infantry Division](#). The *Der Führer* Regiment was detached from the SS-VT Division and relocated near the Dutch border, with the remainder of the division behind the line in [Münster](#), awaiting the order to invade the [Netherlands](#). The [SS Totenkopf](#) and [Polizei](#) Divisions were held in reserve.<sup>[23]</sup>

On 10 May the *Leibstandarte*, wearing Dutch uniforms, overcame Dutch border guards to spearhead the German advance into the Netherlands, and the *Der Führer* advanced towards [Utrecht](#). The following day the rest of the SS-VT Division crossed into the Netherlands and headed towards [Rotterdam](#), which they reached on 12 May.<sup>[23]</sup> After the surrender of Rotterdam, the *Leibstandarte* left for the [Hague](#), which they reached on 15 May, capturing 3,500 Dutch as [prisoners of war](#).<sup>[24]</sup>

In France the [SS Totenkopf](#) was involved in the only Allied tank attack in the [Battle of France](#). On 21 May units of the [1st Army Tank Brigade](#), supported by the [50th \(Northumbrian\) Infantry Division](#), took part in the [Battle of Arras](#). The [SS Totenkopf](#) was overrun, finding their standard [anti-tank gun](#), the 3.7 cm PaK 36, was no match for the British [Matilda tank](#).<sup>[25]</sup>

After the Dutch surrender, the *Leibstandarte* moved south to France on 24 May. Becoming part of the XIX Panzer Corps under the command of General [Heinz Guderian](#), they took up a position 15 miles south west of [Dunkirk](#) along the line of the Aa Canal, with a bridgehead at [Saint-Venant](#).<sup>[24]</sup> That night the OKW ordered the advance to halt, with the [British Expeditionary Force](#) trapped. The *Leibstandarte* paused for the night, but the following day, in defiance of Hitler's orders, continued the advance. Dietrich ordered his III Battalion to cross the canal and take the height beyond, where British artillery observers were putting the regiment at risk. They assaulted the heights and drove the observers off. Instead of being censured for his act of defiance, Dietrich was awarded the [Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross](#).<sup>[26]</sup>

The same day the British attacked Saint-Venant, forcing the SS-VT Division to retreat, the first time an SS unit had been forced to withdraw and relinquish ground.<sup>[24]</sup> On 26 May, the German advance resumed. On 27 May the [Deutschland](#) regiment reached the allied defensive line on the [Leie River](#) at [Merville](#). They forced a bridgehead across the river and waited for the [SS Totenkopf](#) Division to arrive to cover their flank. What arrived first was a unit of British tanks, which penetrated their positions. The SS-VT managed to hold on against the British tank force, which got to within 15 feet of commander [Felix Steiner](#)'s position. Only the arrival of the [Totenkopf Panzerjäger](#) platoon saved the [Deutschland](#) from being destroyed.<sup>[27]</sup>

At the same time, another unit from the [Totenkopf](#), the 14 Company, was involved in the [Le Paradis massacre](#), where 99 men of the 2nd Battalion, [Royal Norfolk Regiment](#) were machine gunned, with survivors finished off with [bayonets](#).<sup>[15][28]</sup>



The farmhouse where the survivors of the Royal Norfolks surrendered but were subsequently murdered by the Waffen-SS at Le Paradis

By 28 May the *Leibstandarte* had taken [Wormhout](#), only ten miles from Dunkirk.<sup>[24]</sup> Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion were responsible for the [Wormhout massacre](#), where 80 British and French prisoners of war were killed.<sup>[29]</sup>

By 30 May the British were cornered at [Dunkirk](#), and the SS divisions continued the advance into France. The *Leibstandarte* reached [Saint-Étienne](#), 250 miles south of Paris, and had advanced further into France than any other unit.<sup>[26]</sup> The next day the French surrendered.<sup>[30]</sup> Hitler expressed his pleasure with the performance of the *Leibstandarte* in the Netherlands and France, telling them, "Henceforth it will be an honour for you, who bear my name, to lead every German attack."<sup>[26]</sup>

### 1940 expansion [edit]

Himmler gained approval for the Waffen-SS to form its own high command, the [Kommandoamt der Waffen-SS](#) within the [SS-Führungshauptamt](#), which was created in August 1940. It received command of the SS-VT (the *Leibstandarte* and the [Verfügungs-Division](#), renamed *Reich*) and the armed SS-TV regiments (the *Totenkopf-Division* together with several independent *Totenkopf-Standarten*).

In August 1940, Gottlob Berger approached Himmler with a plan to recruit volunteers in the conquered territories from the ethnic German and Germanic populations. At first Hitler had doubts about recruiting foreigners, but he was persuaded by Himmler and Berger. He gave approval for a new division to be formed from foreign nationals with German officers, and by June 1941 Danish and Norwegian volunteers had formed the SS Regiment Nordland, with Dutch and Flemish volunteers forming the SS Regiment Westland. The two regiments, together with Germania (transferred from the Reich Division), formed the SS Division 'Wiking'.<sup>[31]</sup> Volunteers came forward in such numbers that the SS was forced to open a new training camp just for foreign volunteers at Sennheim in Alsace-Lorraine.<sup>[31]</sup>

## 1941 [edit]

At the beginning of the new year the *Polizei-Division* was brought under FHA administration, although it would not be formally merged into the Waffen-SS until 1942. At the same time the *Totenkopf-Standarten*, aside from the three constituting the TK-Division, lost their Death's Head designation and insignia and were reclassified *SS-Infanterie- (or Kavallerie-) Regimenter*. The 11th Rgt. was transferred into the *Reich* Division to replace *Germania*; the remainder were grouped into three independent brigades and a battle group in Norway.

By the spring of 1941 the Waffen-SS consisted of the equivalent of six or seven divisions: the *Reich*, *Totenkopf*, *Polizei*, and *Wiking* Divisions and *Kampfgruppe (later Division) Nord*, and the *Leibstandarte*, 1 SS Infantry, 2 SS Infantry, and SS Cavalry Brigades.



Leibstandarte advances in the Balkans

## Balkans [edit]

In March 1941, a major Italian counterattack against Greek forces failed, and Germany was forced to come to the aid of its ally. Operation Marita began on 6 April 1941, with German troops invading Greece through Bulgaria and Yugoslavia in an effort to secure its southern flank.<sup>[32]</sup> Reich was ordered to leave France and head for Romania, and the *Leibstandarte* was ordered to Bulgaria. The *Leibstandarte*, attached to the XL Panzer Corps, advanced west then south from Bulgaria into the mountains, and by 9 April had reached Prilep in Yugoslavia, 30 miles from the Greek border.<sup>[33]</sup> Further north the SS *Reich*, with the XLI Panzer Corps, crossed the Romanian border and advanced on Belgrade, the Yugoslav capital, arriving on 12 April to accept the city's surrender.<sup>[33]</sup> The Yugoslav Army surrendered a few days later.<sup>[33]</sup>

The *Leibstandarte* had now crossed into Greece, and on 10 April engaged the 6th Australian Division in the Battle of the Klidi Pass. For 48 hours they fought for control of the heights, often engaging in hand-to-hand combat, eventually gaining control with the capture of Height 997, which opened the pass and allowed the German Army to advance into the Greek interior.<sup>[34]</sup> This victory finally gained praise from the OKW: in the order of the day they were commended for their "unshakable offensive spirit" and told that "The present victory signifies for the *Leibstandarte* a new and imperishable page of honour in its history."<sup>[34]</sup>

The *Leibstandarte* continued the advance on 13 May. When the Reconnaissance Battalion under the command of Kurt Meyer came under heavy fire from the Greek Army defending the Klisura Pass, they routed the defenders and captured 1,000 prisoners of war at the cost of six dead and nine wounded.<sup>[34]</sup> The next day, Meyer captured Kastoria and took another 11,000 prisoners of war. By 20 May the *Leibstandarte* had cut off the retreating Greek Army at Metsovo and accepted the surrender of the Greek Epirus-Macedonian Army.<sup>[34]</sup> As a reward, the *Leibstandarte* was nominally promoted to a full motorized division, although few additional elements had been added by the start of the Russian campaign and the "Division" remained effectively a reinforced brigade.

## Soviet Union [edit]

Operation Barbarossa, the German invasion of the Soviet Union, started on 22 June 1941, and all the Waffen-SS formations participated (including the SS *Reich*, which was formally renamed to SS *Das Reich* by the Fall of 1941).

SS Division Nord in northern Finland took part in Operation Arctic Fox with the Finnish Army and fought at the disastrous battle of Salla, where against strong Soviet forces they suffered 300 killed and 400 wounded in the first two days of the invasion. Thick forests and heavy smoke from forest fires disoriented the troops and the division's units completely fell apart.<sup>[35]</sup> By the end of 1941, Nord had suffered severe casualties. Over the winter of 1941–42 it received replacements from the general pool of Waffen-SS recruits, who were supposedly younger and better trained than the SS men of the original formation, which had been drawn largely from Totenkopfstandarten of Nazi concentration camp guards.



Men and Horses of the SS Cavalry Brigade. September 1941.

The rest of the Waffen-SS divisions and brigades fared better. The SS *Totenkopf* and *Polizei* divisions were attached to Army Group North, with the mission to advance through the Baltic states and on to Leningrad.<sup>[15][36]</sup> The SS Division *Das Reich* was with Army Group Centre and headed towards Moscow.<sup>[15][36]</sup> The SS Division *Wiking* and the *Leibstandarte* were with Army Group South, heading for the Ukraine and the city of Kiev.<sup>[15][36]</sup>

The war in the Soviet Union proceeded well at first, but the cost to the Waffen-SS was extreme: by late October the *Leibstandarte* was at half strength due to enemy action and dysentery that swept through the ranks.<sup>[37]</sup> *Das Reich* lost 60% of its strength and was still to take part in the Battle of Moscow. The unit was decimated in the following Soviet offensive. The Der Führer Regiment was reduced to 35 men out of the 2,000 that had started the campaign in June.<sup>[37]</sup> Altogether, the Waffen-SS had suffered 43,000 casualties.<sup>[37]</sup>

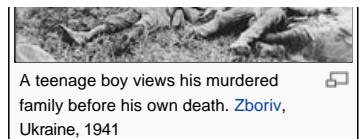
While the *Leibstandarte* and the SS divisions were fighting in the front line, behind the lines it was a different story. The 1 SS Infantry and 2 SS Infantry Brigades, which had been formed from surplus concentration camp guards of the SS-TV, and the SS Cavalry Brigade moved into the Soviet Union behind the advancing armies. At first they fought Soviet partisans and cut off units of the Red Army in the rear of Army Group South, capturing 7,000 prisoners of war, but from mid-August 1941 until late 1942 they were assigned to the Reich Main Security Office headed by Reinhard Heydrich.<sup>[35][38]</sup> The brigades were now used for rear area security and policing, and were no longer under Army or Waffen-SS command. In the autumn of 1941, they left the anti-partisan role to other units and actively took part in the Holocaust. While assisting the Einsatzgruppen, they participated in the liquidation of the Jewish population of the Soviet Union, forming firing parties when required. The three brigades were responsible for the murder of tens of thousands by the end of 1941.<sup>[38]</sup>

Because it was more mobile and better able to carry out large-scale operations, the SS Cavalry Brigade played a pivotal role in the transition to the wholesale extermination of the Jewish population.<sup>[39]</sup> On 27 July, the Brigade was ordered into action, and by 1 August the SS Cavalry Regiment was responsible for the death of 800 people; by 6 August, this total had reached 3,000 "Jews and partisans".<sup>[40]</sup> On 1 August, after a meeting between Himmler, Erich von Bach-Zelewski and Hinrich Lohse, the brigades received the following order: "Explicit order by RFSS: All Jews must be shot.



Drive the female Jews into the swamps."<sup>[41]</sup>

Gustav Lombard, on receiving the order, advised his Battalion that "In future not one male Jew is to remain alive, not one family in the villages."<sup>[41]</sup> Throughout the next weeks, soldiers of SS Cavalry Regiment 1 under Lombard's command murdered an estimated 11,000 Jews and more than 400 dispersed soldiers of the Red Army.<sup>[42]</sup>

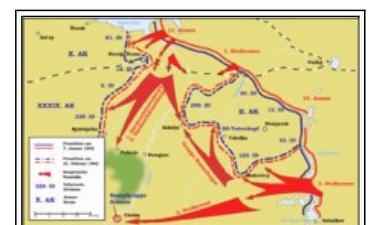


A teenage boy views his murdered family before his own death. [Zboriv](#), Ukraine, 1941

## 1942 [edit]

### 1942 expansion [edit]

In 1942, the Waffen-SS was further expanded and a new division was entered on the rolls in March. By the second half of 1942 an increasing number of foreigners, many of whom were not volunteers, began entering the ranks.<sup>[43]</sup> The 7th SS Volunteer Mountain Division *Prinz Eugen* was recruited from **Volksdeutsche** (ethnic Germans) drafted under threat of punishment by the local German leadership<sup>[43]</sup> from **Croatia**, **Serbia**, **Hungary**, and **Romania** and used for anti-partisan operations in the Balkans.<sup>[35][44]</sup> Himmler approved the introduction of formal compulsory service for the Volksdeutsche in German occupied Serbia.<sup>[43]</sup> Another new division was formed at the same time, when the SS Cavalry Brigade was used as the **cadre** in the formation of the 8th SS Cavalry Division *Florian Geyer*.<sup>[35]</sup>



Offensive of the Red Army south of Lake Ilmen, 7 January – 21 February 1942, creating the [Demyansk Pocket](#)

### Panzergrenadier divisions [edit]

The front line divisions of the Waffen-SS that had suffered through the Russian winter of 1941–1942 and the Soviet counter-offensive were withdrawn to France to recover and be reformed as Panzergrenadier divisions.<sup>[45]</sup> Thanks to the efforts of Himmler and Obergruppenführer Paul Hausser, the new commander of the SS Panzer Corps, the three SS Panzergrenadier divisions *Leibstandarte*, *Das Reich*, and *Totenkopf* were to be formed with a full regiment of tanks rather than only a battalion. This meant that the SS Panzergrenadier divisions were full-strength Panzer divisions in all but name. They each received nine **Tiger tanks**, which were formed into the **heavy panzer companies**.<sup>[45]</sup>



Soldiers of the 3rd SS Division *Totenkopf* on the [Eastern Front](#)

### Demyansk Pocket [edit]

The Soviet offensive of January 1942 trapped a number of German divisions in the **Demyansk Pocket** between February and April 1942; the 3 SS *Totenkopf* was one of the divisions encircled by the Red Army. The Red Army liberated **Demyansk** on 1 March 1943 with the retreat of the German troops. "For his excellence in command and the particularly fierce fighting of the *Totenkopf*",

Obergruppenführer Theodor Eicke was awarded the Oak Leaves to the **Knight's Cross** on 20 May 1942.<sup>[46]</sup>

## 1943 [edit]

### 1943 expansion [edit]

The Waffen-SS expanded further in 1943: in February the 9th SS Panzer Division *Hohenstaufen* and its sister division, the 10th SS Panzer Division *Frunzberg*, were formed in France. They were followed in July by the 11th SS Volunteer Panzergrenadier Division *Nordland* created from Norwegian and Danish volunteers. September saw the formation of the 12th SS Panzer Division *Hitlerjugend* using volunteers from the Hitler Youth. Himmler and Berger successfully appealed to Hitler to form a **Bosnian Muslim** division, and the 13th Waffen Mountain Division of the SS *Handschar* (1st Croatian), the first non-Germanic division, was formed, to fight Josip Broz Tito's Yugoslav Partisans. This was followed by the 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS (1st Ukrainian) formed from volunteers from Galicia in western Ukraine. The 15th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS (1st Latvian) was created in 1943, using compulsory military service in the Ostland. The final new 1943 division was the 16th SS Panzergrenadier Division *Reichsführer-SS*, which was created using the Sturmbrigade *Reichsführer SS* as a cadre. By the end of the year, the Waffen-SS had increased in size from eight divisions and some brigades to 16 divisions.



Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, [Haj Amin al-Husseini](#) inspects Bosnian Waffen SS recruits, November 1943

### Kharkiv [edit]

On the Eastern Front, the Germans suffered a devastating defeat when the 6th Army was defeated during the **Battle of Stalingrad**. Hitler ordered the SS Panzer Corps back to the Eastern Front for a counter-attack with the city of **Kharkiv** as its objective.<sup>[47]</sup> The SS Panzer Corps was in full retreat on 19 February, having been attacked by the Soviet 6th Army, when they received the order to attack.<sup>[47]</sup> In an example of an SS Commander disobeying Hitler's order to "stand fast and fight to the death", Hausser withdrew in front of the Red Army. During **Manstein's** counteroffensive, the SS Panzer Corps, without support from the **Luftwaffe** or neighbouring German formations, broke through the Soviet line and advanced on Kharkiv.<sup>[48]</sup> Despite orders to encircle Kharkiv from the north, the SS Panzer Corps directly attacked in the **Third Battle of Kharkov** on 11 March.<sup>[49]</sup> This led to four days of house-to-house fighting before Kharkov was recaptured by the 1 SS *Leibstandarte* on 15 March. Two days later the Germans recaptured **Belgorod**, creating the **salient** that in July 1943 led to the **Battle of Kursk**. The German offensive cost the Red Army an estimated 70,000 **casualties** but the house-to-house fighting in Kharkiv was particularly bloody for the SS Panzer Corps, which lost approximately 44% of its strength by the time operations ended in late March.<sup>[50]</sup>

### Warsaw Ghetto uprising [edit]

The **Warsaw Ghetto Uprising** was a Jewish **insurgency** that arose within the **Warsaw Ghetto** from 19 April to 16 May, an effort to prevent the transportation of the remaining population of the ghetto to **Treblinka extermination camp**. Units involved from the Waffen-SS were 821 Waffen-SS **Panzergrenadiers** from five reserve and training battalions and one cavalry reserve and training battalion.<sup>[51][52]</sup>



### Kursk [edit]

Stroop Report original caption: "The leader of the grand operation." SS-Brigadeführer Jürgen Stroop (center) watches housing blocks burn.



Tiger tank Company Das Reich during the Battle of Kursk

The next test for the Waffen-SS was the [Battle of Prokhorovka](#), which was part of the Battle of Kursk. The SS Panzer Corps had been renamed the [II SS Panzer Corps](#) and was part of the [4th Panzer Army](#), which was chosen to spearhead the attack through the Soviet defenses. The attack penetrated to a depth of 35 kilometres (22 mi) and was then stopped by the [Soviet 1st Tank Army](#).

During the fighting over the next few days, the II SS Panzer Corps thought they were close to driving a wedge between the 1st Tank Army and Soviet 69th Army, and had even broken through the third line of Soviet defenses at [Prokhorovka](#). Wrongly believing they had made a breakthrough, they were prepared to exploit the opportunity the next day.<sup>[53][54]</sup> The Soviet reserves had been sent south to defend against a German attack by the [III Panzer Corps](#). With the loss of their reserves, any hope they may have had of dealing a major defeat to the SS Panzer Corps ended. But the German advances now failed – despite appalling losses, the Soviet tank armies held the line and prevented the II SS Panzer Corps from making the expected breakthrough.<sup>[55]</sup>

While the exact losses on each side cannot be established precisely, the outcome is clearer. Neither the Fifth Guards Tank Army nor the II SS Panzer Corps accomplished their objectives that day. The sudden and violent attack by strong Soviet reserves and the need to break off the assault by the German 9th Army on the northern shoulder of the Kursk salient due to [Operation Kutuzov](#) contributed to Hitler's decision to discontinue the attack, the implications of which made him 'sick to his stomach'. A parallel attack by the Red Army against the new 6th Army on the Mius river south of [Kharkov](#) necessitated the withdrawal of reserve forces held to exploit any success on the southern shoulder of Kursk, and the OKW also had to draw on some German troops from the Eastern Front to bolster the Mediterranean theatre following the Anglo-American [Invasion of Sicily](#) on the night of 9–10 July 1943. Regardless of the tactical outcome, the Battle of Prokhorovka was an operational victory for the Red Army. The Soviets were not beaten, and the strategic initiative had swung to the Red Army.

### **Italy** [edit]

After the [Allied invasion of Italy](#) in September 1943, Hitler ordered the II SS Panzer Corps to move to Italy, but in the end only the *Leibstandarte* was sent, where the only other Waffen-SS unit was the 16 SS Panzergrenadier Division *Reichsführer-SS*.<sup>[56]</sup>

After the [Italian surrender](#) and collapse of 8 September 1943, the *Leibstandarte* was ordered to begin disarming nearby Italian units.<sup>[57]</sup> It also had the task of guarding vital road and rail junctions in the north of Italy and was involved in several skirmishes with partisans.<sup>[57]</sup> This went smoothly, with the exception of a brief skirmish with Italian troops stationed in [Parma](#) on 9 September. By 19 September all Italian forces in the [Po River plain](#) had been disarmed, but the OKW received reports that elements of the [Italian Fourth Army](#) were regrouping in [Piedmont](#), near the French border. [Joachim Peiper](#)'s mechanised III Battalion, SS Panzergrenadier Regiment 2, was sent to disarm these units.<sup>[57]</sup> On arriving in the province of [Cuneo](#), Peiper was met by an Italian officer who warned that his forces would attack unless Peiper's unit vacated the province immediately. After Peiper refused, the Italians attacked. Peiper's battalion defeated the Italians in a fierce battle, and then disarmed the remaining Italian forces in the area.

While the *Leibstandarte* was operating in the north, the 16 SS *Reichsführer-SS* sent a [Kampfgruppe](#) to contain the [Anzio landings](#) in January 1944. In March, the bulk of the 1st Italienische Freiwilligen Sturmbrigade (or *Brigata d'Assalto, Volontari* in Italian) was sent to the Anzio beachhead, where they fought alongside their German allies, receiving favourable reports and taking heavy losses. In recognition of their performance, Himmler declared the unit to be fully integrated into the Waffen-SS.

### **1944** [edit]

#### **1944 expansion** [edit]

The Waffen-SS expanded again during 1944. January saw the formation of the [19th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS \(2nd Latvian\)](#), formed from the two SS Infantry Brigades as cadre with Latvian conscripts. The [20th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS \(1st Estonian\)](#) was formed via general conscription in February 1944, around a cadre from the [3rd Estonian SS Volunteer Brigade](#). The [21st Waffen Mountain Division of the SS Skanderbeg \(1st Albanian\)](#) was formed in March 1944 from Albanian and Kosovan volunteers, for anti-partisan duties in [Albania](#) and [Kosovo](#).<sup>[59]</sup> A second Waffen-SS cavalry division followed in April 1944, the [22nd SS Volunteer Cavalry Division Maria Theresa](#). The bulk of the soldiers were [Hungarian Army Volksdeutsche](#) conscripts transferred to the Waffen-SS following an agreement between Germany and Hungary. The [23rd SS Volunteer Panzer Grenadier Division Nederland](#) followed, formed from the 4th SS Volunteer Panzergrenadier Brigade Nederland, but it was never more than a large brigade. The [24th Waffen Gebirgs Division der SS](#) was another division that was never more than brigade size, consisting mainly of ethnic German volunteers from Italy and volunteers from Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, and Ukraine. They were primarily involved in fighting partisans in the [Kras](#) region of the [Alps](#) on the frontiers of [Slovenia](#), [Italy](#), and [Austria](#), the mountainous terrain requiring specialized mountain troops and equipment.<sup>[60]</sup> Two Hungarian divisions followed: the [25th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS Hunyadi \(1st Hungarian\)](#) and the [26th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS \(2nd Hungarian\)](#). These were formed under the authority of the Hungarian defense minister, at the request of Himmler. One regiment from the Hungarian Army was ordered to join, but they mostly consisted of Hungarian and Rumanian volunteers.<sup>[61]</sup>



After D-Day, the Indische Legion was transferred from the Heer to Waffen-SS.<sup>[58]</sup>

The [27th SS Volunteer Division Langemarck](#) was formed next in October 1944, from [Flemish](#) volunteers added to the 6th SS Volunteer Sturmbrigade Langemarck, but again it was nothing more than a large brigade. The 5th SS Volunteer Sturmbrigade Wallonien was also upgraded to the [28th SS Volunteer Grenadier Division Wallonien](#). Like the 27th SS, it was never more than a large brigade. Plans to convert the Kaminski Brigade into the [29th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS RONA \(1st Russian\)](#) were dropped after the execution of their commander, [Bronislav Kaminski](#); instead the Waffen Grenadier Brigade of SS (Italian no. 1) became the [29th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS \(1st Italian\)](#). The [30th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS \(2nd Russian\)](#) was formed from the Schutzmanschaft-Brigade Siegling. The final new division of 1944, was the [31st SS Volunteer Grenadier Division](#), formed from conscripted Volksdeutsche, mainly from the [Batschka](#) region of Hungary.

### **Korsun-Cherkassy Pocket** [edit]

The Korsun-Cherkassy Pocket was formed in January 1944 when units of the 8th Army withdrew to the [Panther-Wotan Line](#), a defensive position along the Dnieper River in Ukraine. Two army corps were left holding a [salient](#) into the Soviet lines extending some 100 kilometres (62 mi). The Red Army deployed the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian Fronts to form two armoured rings around the pocket, with an inner ring and an external ring to prevent relief formations from reaching the trapped units. Trapped in the pocket were a total of six German divisions, including the 5 SS *Wiking*, with the attached 5th SS Volunteer Sturmbrigade *Wallonien*, and the Estonian SS Battalion *Narwa*.<sup>[62]</sup> The Germans broke out in coordination with other German forces from the outside, including the 1 SS *Leibstandarte*. Roughly two out of three encircled men successfully escaped the pocket.<sup>[63]</sup>

### Raid on Drvar [edit]

The [Raid on Drvar](#), codenamed *Operation Rösselsprung*, was an attack by the Waffen-SS and Luftwaffe on the command structure of the Yugoslav partisans. Their objective was the elimination of the partisan-controlled Supreme Headquarters and the capture of Tito. The offensive took place in April and May 1944. The Waffen-SS units involved were the [500th SS Parachute Battalion](#) and the [7 SS Prinz Eugen](#).

The assault started when a small group parachuted into [Drvar](#) to secure landing grounds for the following [glider](#) force. The 500th SS Parachute Battalion fought their way to Tito's cave headquarters and exchanged heavy gunfire resulting in numerous casualties on both sides. By the time German forces had penetrated into the cave, Tito had already escaped. At the end of the battle only 200 men of the 500th SS Parachute Battalion remained unwounded.<sup>[64]</sup>

### Baltic states [edit]

In the Baltic states the [Battle of Narva](#) started in February. The battle can be divided into two phases: the [Battle for Narva Bridgehead](#) from February to July and the [Battle of Tannenberg Line](#) from July to September. A number of volunteer and conscript Waffen-SS units from Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Estonia fought in Narva, in what has been called by several authors the [Battle of the European SS](#).<sup>[c]</sup> The units were all part of the [III SS \(Germanic\) Panzer Corps](#) in [Army Group North](#), which consisted of the 11th SS Panzergrenadier Division *Nordland*, the 4th SS Volunteer Panzergrenadier Brigade *Nederland*, the 5th SS Volunteer Sturmbrigade *Wallonien*, the 6th SS Volunteer Sturmbrigade *Langemarck*, and the conscript 20th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS (1st Estonian), under the command of [Obergruppenführer Felix Steiner](#).<sup>[65]</sup>

Also in Army Group North was the [VI SS Corps](#), which consisted of the [15th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS \(1st Latvian\)](#) and the [19th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS \(2nd Latvian\)](#). Latvian Waffen SS and German army units held out in the [Courland Pocket](#) until the end of the war.

### Normandy [edit]

[Operation Overlord](#), the Allied "D-Day" landings in [Normandy](#), took place on 6 June 1944. In preparation for the expected landings the I SS Panzer Corps *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler* was moved to [Septeuil](#) to the west of Paris in April 1944. The Corps had the 1 SS *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler*, 12 SS *Hitlerjugend*, the 17 SS *Götz von Berlichingen* and the Army's [Panzer-Lehr-Division](#) divisions assigned to it.<sup>[66]</sup> The corps was to form a part of General [Leo Geyr von Schweppenburg](#)'s [Panzer Group West](#), the Western theatre's armoured reserve.<sup>[66]</sup> The Corps was restructured on 4 July 1944 and only the 1 SS *Leibstandarte* and the 12 SS *Hitlerjugend* remained at strength.<sup>[67]</sup> After the landings, the first Waffen-SS unit in action was the 12 SS *Hitlerjugend*, which arrived at the invasion front on 7 June, in the [Caen](#) area. The same day they were involved in the [Ardenne Abbey massacre](#).<sup>[68]</sup> The next unit to arrive was the 17 SS *Götz von Berlichingen* on 11 June, which came into contact with the [101st Airborne Division](#).<sup>[69]</sup> The [SS Heavy Panzer Battalion 101](#) arrived next to protect the left wing of the I SS Panzer Corps. The 1 SS *Leibstandarte* arrived towards the end of the month with lead elements becoming embroiled in the British offensive [Operation Epsom](#).

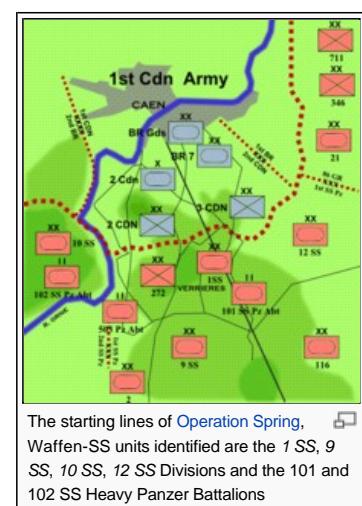
The only other Waffen-SS unit in France at this time was the 2 SS *Das Reich*, in [Montauban](#), north of [Toulouse](#). They were ordered north to the landing beaches and on 9 June were involved in the [Tulle murders](#), where 99 men were murdered. The next day they reached [Oradour-sur-Glane](#) and massacred 642 French civilians.

The II SS Panzer Corps consisting of the 9th SS *Hohenstaufen* and 10th SS *Frundsberg* divisions and the [SS Heavy Panzer Battalion 102](#) was transferred from the Eastern Front to spearhead an offensive to destroy the Allied beachhead. However, the British launched Operation Epsom and the two divisions were fed piecemeal into the battle, and launched several counterattacks over the following days.



Without any further reinforcements in men or materiel, the Waffen-SS divisions were hard put to stop the Allied advance. 1 SS *Leibstandarte* and 2 SS *Das Reich* took part in the failed [Operation Lüttich](#) in early August.<sup>[70]</sup> The end came in mid August when the German Army was encircled and trapped in the [Falaise pocket](#), including the 1 SS *Leibstandarte*, 10 SS *Frundsberg* and 12 SS *Hitlerjugend* and the 17 SS *Götz von Berlichingen*, while the 2 SS *Das Reich* and the 9 SS *Hohenstaufen* were ordered to attack [Hill 262](#) from the outside in order to keep the gap open.<sup>[71]</sup> By 22 August the Falaise pocket had been closed, and all German forces west of the Allied lines were dead or in captivity.<sup>[72]</sup> In the fighting around Hill 262 alone, casualties totalled 2,000 killed and 5,000 taken prisoner.<sup>[73]</sup> The 12 SS *Hitlerjugend* had lost 94 per cent of its armour, nearly all of its artillery, and 70 per cent of its vehicles.<sup>[74]</sup> The division had close to 20,000 men and 150 tanks before the campaign started, and was now reduced to 300 men and 10 tanks.<sup>[74]</sup>

With the German Army in full retreat, two further Waffen-SS formations entered the battle in France, the [SS Panzergrenadier Brigade 49](#) and the [SS Panzergrenadier Brigade 51](#). Both had been formed in June 1944 from staff and students at the [SS-Junkerschule](#).<sup>[75]</sup> They were stationed in Denmark to allow the garrison there to move into France, but were brought forward at the beginning of August to the area south and east of Paris. Both Brigades were tasked to hold crossings over the [Seine River](#) allowing the Army to retreat. Eventually they were forced back and then withdrew, the surviving troops being incorporated into the 17 SS *Götz von Berlichingen*.



While the bulk of the Waffen-SS was now on the Eastern Front or in Normandy, the 4th SS Polizei Panzergrenadier Division was stationed in Greece on internal security duties and anti-partisan operations. On 10 June they became involved in the [Distomo massacre](#), when over a period of two hours they went door to door and massacred Greek civilians, reportedly in revenge for a [Greek Resistance](#) attack. In total, 218 men, women and children were killed. According to survivors, the SS forces "bayoneted babies in their cribs, stabbed pregnant women, and beheaded the village priest." [76]

### Italy [edit]

On the Italian Front the 16 SS *Reichsführer-SS*, conducting anti-partisan operations, is remembered more for the atrocities it committed than its fighting ability: it was involved in the [Sant'Anna di Stazzema massacre](#) in August 1944 [77] and the [Marzabotto massacre](#) between September and October 1944. [78]



German troops in front of buildings set ablaze during the [Distomo massacre](#)

### Finland [edit]

In Finland, the 6 SS *Nord* had held its lines during the Soviet summer offensive until it was ordered to withdraw from Finland upon the conclusion of an armistice between the Finns and the Soviets in September 1944. They then formed the rear guard for the three German corps withdrawing from Finland in [Operation Birch](#), and from September to November 1944 marched 1,600 kilometres to [Mo i Rana](#), Norway, where it entrained for the southern end of the country, crossing the [Skagerrak](#) to Denmark.

### Arnhem and Operation Market Garden [edit]

In early September 1944, the II SS Panzer Corps (9 SS *Hohenstaufen* and 10 SS *Frundsberg*) were pulled out of the line and sent to the [Arnhem](#) area in the Netherlands. [79] Upon arrival they began the task of refitting, and the majority of the remaining armoured vehicles were loaded onto trains in preparation for transport to repair depots in Germany. On Sunday 17 September 1944 the Allies launched [Operation Market Garden](#), and the British [1st Airborne Division](#) was dropped in [Oosterbeek](#), to the west of Arnhem. Realizing the threat, [Wilhelm Bittrich](#), commander of II SS Panzer Corps, ordered *Hohenstaufen* and *Frundsberg* to ready themselves for combat. Also in the area was the Training and Reserve Battalion, 16th SS Division *Reichsführer-SS*. The Allied airborne operation was a failure, and [Arnhem was not liberated](#) until 14 April 1945. [80]

### Warsaw Uprising [edit]

At the other end of Europe, the Waffen-SS was dealing with the [Warsaw Uprising](#). Between August and October 1944, the [Dirlewanger Brigade](#) (recruited from criminals and the mentally ill throughout Germany) and the [Waffen-Sturm-Brigade RONA](#) were sent to Warsaw to put down the uprising. During the battle, the [Dirlewanger](#) behaved atrociously, raping, looting, and killing citizens of Warsaw regardless of whether they belonged to the Polish resistance or not; the unit commander [SS-Oberführer Oskar Dirlewanger](#) encouraged their excesses. The unit's behavior was reportedly so bestial and indiscriminate that Himmler was forced to send a battalion of SS military police to ensure the Dirlewanger convicts did not turn their aggressions against the leadership of the brigade or other nearby German units. [81] At the same time they were encouraged by Himmler to terrorize freely, take no prisoners, and generally indulge their perverse tendencies. Favoured tactics of the Dirlewanger men during the siege reportedly included the ubiquitous gang rape of female Poles, both women and children; playing "bayonet catch" with live babies; and torturing captives to death by hacking off their arms, dousing them with gasoline, and setting them alight to run armless and flaming down the street. [82][81] The Dirlewanger brigade committed almost non-stop atrocities during this period, in particular the four-day [Wola massacre](#).



85 per cent of Warsaw was destroyed. Centre: ruins of [Old Town Market Place](#), Warsaw



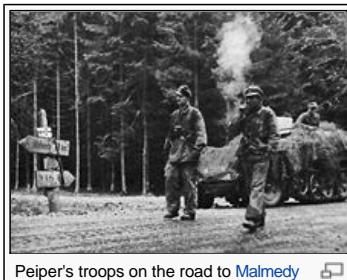
Photo taken by the Polish Underground showing the bodies of women and children murdered by troops of the [SS-Sturmbrigade Dirlewanger](#) in Warsaw, August 1944

The other unit, [Waffen-Sturm-Brigade RONA](#) (made up of ethnic [Volga German](#) volunteers from the occupied regions of the Soviet Union) was tasked with clearing the [Ochota](#) district in Warsaw that was defended by members of the Polish [Underground Home Army](#). Their attack was planned for the morning of 5 August, but when the time came, the RONA unit could not be found; after some searching by the SS military police, members of the unit were found looting abandoned houses in the rear of the German column. Later, thousands of Polish civilians were killed by the RONA SS men during the events known as [Ochota massacre](#); many victims were also raped. [d][e] In following weeks, the RONA unit was moved south to the [Wola](#) district, but it fared no better in combat there than it did in Ochota; in one incident a sub-unit of the RONA brigade advanced to loot a captured building on the [front line](#), but was subsequently cut off from the rest of the SS formation and wiped out by the Poles. Following the fiasco, [SS-Brigadeführer Bronislav Vladislavovich Kaminski](#), the unit's commander, was called to [Łódź](#) to attend a SS leadership conference. He never arrived; official Nazi sources blamed Polish partisans for an alleged ambush that killed the RONA commander. But according to various other sources he was arrested and tried by the SS, or simply shot on the spot by the [Gestapo](#). The behaviour of the RONA during the battle was an embarrassment even to the SS, and the alleged rape and murder of two German [Strength Through Joy](#) girls may have played a part in the eventual execution of the brigade's commander. [83]

### Vistula River line [edit]

In late August 1944, 5 SS *Wiking* was ordered back to [Modlin](#) on the Vistula River line near Warsaw, where it was to join the newly formed [Army Group Vistula](#). Fighting alongside the Luftwaffe's [Fallschirm-Panzer Division 1 Hermann Göring](#), they annihilated the Soviet 3rd Tank Corps. The advent of the Warsaw Uprising brought the Soviet offensive to a halt, and relative peace fell on the front line. The division remained in the Modlin area for the rest of the year, grouped with the 3 SS *Totenkopf* in the [IV SS Panzer Corps](#). Heavy defensive battles around Modlin followed for the rest of the year. Together they helped force the Red Army out of Warsaw and back across the Vistula River, where the front stabilized until January 1945.

## Ardennes Offensive [edit]



Peiper's troops on the road to Malmedy

The Ardennes Offensive or "Battle of the Bulge", between 16 December 1944 and 25 January 1945, was a major German offensive through the forested Ardennes Mountains region of Belgium. The Waffen-SS units included the 6th Panzer Army under Sepp Dietrich. Created on 26 October 1944, it incorporated the I SS Panzer Corps (1 SS Leibstandarte), the 12 SS Hitlerjugend and the SS Heavy Panzer Battalion 101). It also had the II SS Panzer Corps (2 SS Das Reich and the 9 SS Hohenstaufen). Another unit involved was Otto Skorzeny's SS Panzer Brigade 150.



Aftermath of the Malmedy Massacre

The purpose of the attack was to split the British and American line in half, capture Antwerp, and encircle and destroy four Allied armies, forcing the Western Allies to negotiate a peace treaty on terms favorable to the Axis Powers.<sup>[84]</sup>

The attack was ultimately a failure. It is infamous for the Malmedy massacre, in which approximately 90 unarmed American prisoners of war were murdered on 17 December 1944 by the Kampfgruppe Peiper, part of the 1 SS Leibstandarte.<sup>[85]</sup>

## Siege of Budapest [edit]

In late December 1944, the Axis forces, including IX Waffen Mountain Corps of the SS (Croatian), defending Budapest, were encircled in the Siege of Budapest. The IV SS Panzer Corps (3 SS Totenkopf and 5 SS Wiking) was ordered south to join Hermann Balck's 6th Army (Army Group Balck), which was mustering for a relief effort code named Operation Konrad.

As a part of Operation Konrad I, the IV SS Panzer Corps was committed to action on 1 January 1945, near Tata, with the advance columns of Wiking slamming into the Soviet 4th Guards Army. A heavy battle ensued, with the 5 SS Wiking and 3 SS Totenkopf destroying many of the Soviet tanks. In three days their panzer spearheads had driven 45 kilometres, over half the distance from the start point to Budapest. The Soviets maneuvered forces to block the advance, and they barely managed to halt them at Bicske, only 28 kilometres (17 mi) from Budapest. Two further attacks, Operations Konrad II and III, also failed.<sup>[86]</sup>

The Hungarian Third Army was besieged in Budapest along with the IX Waffen Mountain Corps of the SS (Croatian) (8 SS Florian Geyer and 22 SS Maria Theresia). The siege lasted from 29 December 1944 until the city surrendered unconditionally on 13 February 1945. Only 170 men of the 22 SS Maria Theresia made it back to the German lines.

## 1945 [edit]

### 1945 expansion [edit]

The Waffen-SS continued to expand in 1945. January saw the 32nd SS Volunteer Grenadier Division 30 Januar formed from the remnants of other units and staff from the SS-Junkerschules. In February the Waffen Grenadier Brigade or SS Charlemagne (1st French) was reformed as the 33rd Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS Charlemagne (1st French), and the SS Volunteer Grenadier-Brigade Landstorm Nederland was upgraded to the 34th SS Volunteer Grenadier Division Landstorm Nederland. The second SS Police division followed when the 35th SS and Police Grenadier Division was formed from SS Police units that had been transferred to the Waffen-SS. The Dirlewanger Brigade was reformed as the 36th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS. There was now a real shortage of Waffen-SS volunteers and conscripts, so units from the Army were attached to bring it up to strength. The third SS Cavalry division 37th SS Volunteer Cavalry Division Lützow was formed from the remnants of the 8 SS Florian Geyer and 22 SS Maria Theresia, which had both been virtually destroyed. The last Waffen-SS division was the 38th SS Division Nibelungen, which was also formed from students and staff from the SS-Junkerschule, but consisted of only around 6,000 men, the strength of a normal brigade.

The XV SS Cossack Cavalry Corps, which contained the 1 SS Cossack Division, was transferred to the Waffen-SS on 1 February 1945. Despite the refusal of its commander, General von Pannwitz, to enter the SS, the corps was placed under SS administration and all Cossacks became formally part of the Waffen-SS.<sup>[87]</sup>

## Operation Nordwind [edit]

Operation Nordwind was the last major German offensive on the Western Front. It began on 1 January 1945 in Alsace and Lorraine in north-eastern France, and it ended on 25 January. The initial attack was conducted by three Corps of the 1st Army. By 15 January at least 17 German divisions (including units in the Colmar Pocket) were engaged, including the XIII SS Army Corps (17 SS Götz von Berlichingen and 38 SS Nibelungen) and the 6 SS Nord and 10 SS Frundsberg.<sup>[88]</sup> At the same time, the Luftwaffe mounted a large offensive over the skies of France. Some 240 fighters were lost and just as many pilots. It was the 'last gasp' attempt for the Luftwaffe to take back air supremacy from the western allies.

## Operation Solstice [edit]

Operation Solstice, or the "Stargard Tank Battle" (February 1945) was one of the last armoured offensive operations on the Eastern Front. It was a limited counter-attack by the three corps of the Eleventh SS Panzer Army, which was being assembled in Pomerania, against the spearheads of the 1st Belorussian Front. Originally planned as a major offensive, it was executed as a more limited attack. It was repulsed by the Red Army, but helped to convince the Soviet High Command to postpone the planned attack on Berlin.<sup>[89]</sup>

Initially the attack achieved a total surprise, reaching the banks of the Ina River and, on 17 January, Arnswalde. Strong Soviet counter-attacks halted the advance, and the operation was called off. The III (Germanic) SS Panzer Corps, was pulled back to the Stargard and Stettin on the northern Oder River.

## East Pomeranian Offensive [edit]

The East Pomeranian Offensive lasted from 24 February to 4 April, in Pomerania and West Prussia. The Waffen-SS units involved were the 11 SS Nordland, 20 SS Estonian, 23 SS Nederland, 27 SS Langemark, 28 SS Wallonien, all in the III (Germanic) SS Panzer Corps, and the X SS Corps, which did not command any SS units.<sup>[90]</sup>

In March 1945, the X SS Corps was encircled by the 1st Guards Tank Army, 3rd Shock Army, and the Polish 1st Army in the area of Dramburg. This pocket was destroyed by the Red Army on 7 March 1945.<sup>[91][92]</sup> On 8 March 1945, the Soviets announced the capture of General Krappe and 8,000 men of the X SS Corps.<sup>[93]</sup>



This section **needs additional citations for verification**. Please help [improve this article](#) by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. (January 2013)

After the Ardennes offensive failed, the SS Divisions involved were pulled out and refitted in Germany in preparation for [Operation Spring Awakening](#), with top priority for men and equipment. The replacements were a mixed group of raw recruits and drafted Luftwaffe and [Kriegsmarine](#) personnel no longer needed by their own branch of service, as they had no aircraft or ships to serve in. The 6th SS Panzer Army would again take the lead, with the I SS Panzer Corps (1 SS *Leibstandarte* and 12 SS *Hitlerjugend*) and the II SS Panzer Corps (2 SS *Das Reich* and the 10 SS *Frundsberg*). Also present but not part of the 6th SS Panzer Army was the IV SS Panzer Corps (3 SS *Totenkopf* and 5 SS *Wiking*). This was the first time that six SS Panzer Divisions took part in the same offensive.

As planned, the offensive got under way on 6 March 1945, spearheaded by the 6th SS Panzer Army. The attack surprised the Soviets, and impressive gains were made for an offensive launched at such a late date in the war. However, once the Soviets realized that elite SS units were involved, they took the German offensive seriously, utilizing 16 rifle divisions, two tank corps (with some 150 tanks), and two mechanized corps, in direct support just behind the front line south west of [Lake Balaton](#). The Soviets had been building up their forces for their own offensive along the [Danube](#) valley, which meant the 6th SS Panzer Army's attack was confronted by an overwhelming Soviet force of more than 1,000 tanks, which ground the German advance to a halt.

By 14 March the attack was in serious trouble. The advance of the 6th SS Panzer Army, while impressive, was well short of its targets. Two days later, the Soviets launched a massive counterattack, which drove the 6th SS Panzer Army back to its start line within 24 hours. All six of the Waffen-SS divisions suffered grievously during Spring Awakening, and by the end most were below 50 per cent strength without much prospect of reinforcements to replace their losses.

### **Armband order** [edit]

This failure is famous for the notorious "armband order" that followed. The order was issued to Sepp Dietrich by Adolf Hitler, who claimed that the troops, and more importantly, the 1 SS *Leibstandarte*, "did not fight as the situation demanded".<sup>[94]</sup> As a mark of disgrace, the *Leibstandarte* units involved in the battle were ordered to remove their treasured "Adolf Hitler" cuff titles. Dietrich was disgusted by Hitler's order and did not relay it to his troops.

### **Vienna Offensive** [edit]

After Operation Spring Awakening, the 6th SS Panzer Army withdrew towards [Vienna](#) and was involved in the [Vienna Offensive](#). The only major force to face the attacking Red Army was the II SS Panzer Corps (2 SS *Das Reich* and 3 SS *Totenkopf*), under the commanded of [Wilhelm Bittrich](#), along with *ad hoc* forces made up of garrison and anti-aircraft units.<sup>[95]</sup> Vienna fell on 13 April.<sup>[96]</sup> Bittrich's II SS Panzer Corps had pulled out to the west that evening to avoid encirclement.<sup>[97]</sup>

### **Berlin** [edit]

The [Army Group Vistula](#) was formed in 1945 to protect Berlin from the advancing Red Army. It fought in the [Battle of the Seelow Heights](#) (16–19 April) and the [Battle of Halbe](#) (21 April – 1 May), both part of the [Battle of Berlin](#). The Waffen-SS was represented by the III (Germanic) SS Panzer Corps.

On 16 April, the remnants of the 11 SS *Nordland*, 33 SS *Charlemagne*, and the Spanish Volunteer Company of SS 101 were ordered to move to the front line east of Berlin. From 17 to 20 April they were in constant combat all along the front and pushed back into the city.

On 23 April, Brigadeführer [Wilhelm Mohnke](#) was appointed by Hitler as Battle Commander for the centre government district (Zitadelle sector), which included the [Reich Chancellery](#) and [Führerbunker](#). Mohnke's command post was in the bunkers under the Reich Chancellery.<sup>[98]</sup> He formed *Kampfgruppe Mohnke* (Battle Group Mohnke), divided into two weak regiments. It was made up of the LSSAH Flak Company, replacements from LSSAH Training and Reserve Battalion from Spreenhagan (under Standartenführer Anhalt),<sup>[98]</sup> 600 men from the [Begleit-Bataillon Reichsführer-SS](#),<sup>[99]</sup> the Führer-Begleit-Company, and the core group—800 men of the LSSAH Guard Battalion assigned to guard the Führer.<sup>[98]</sup>

On 25 April, Brigadeführer [Gustav Krükenberg](#) was appointed the commander of (Berlin) Defence Sector C. This included the *Nordland* Division, whose previous commander, [Joachim Ziegler](#), was relieved of his command the same day.<sup>[100]</sup> On 27 April, after a spirited but futile defence, the remnants of *Nordland* were pushed back into the centre government district (Zitadelle sector) in Defence sector Z. There Krükenberg's *Nordland* headquarters was a carriage in the Stadtmitte U-Bahn station.<sup>[101]</sup> The men of *Nordland* were now under Mohnke's overall command. Since Mohnke's fighting force was located at the nerve centre of the German Third Reich, it fell under the heaviest artillery bombardment of the war. The bombardment began as a birthday present to Hitler on 20 April 1945 and lasted until the end of hostilities on 8 May 1945. Under pressure from the most intense shelling, the SS troops put up stiff resistance as the Red Army raced to take the Reichstag and Reich Chancellery. This condemned the SS troops to bitter and bloody street fighting.<sup>[102]</sup> By 26 April, the *Nordland* defenders were pushed back into the Reichstag and Reich Chancellery. There over the next few days, the survivors (mainly French SS troops from the former 33 SS *Charlemagne*) held out against overwhelming odds.

On 30 April, after receiving news of Hitler's suicide, orders were issued that those who could do so were to break out. Prior to the breakout Mohnke briefed all commanders that could be reached within the Zitadelle sector about Hitler's death and the planned breakout.<sup>[103]</sup> The break out started at 2300 hours on 1 May. There were ten main groups that attempted to head northwest towards Mecklenburg. Fierce fighting continued all around, especially in the [Weidendammer Bridge](#) area. What was left of the 11 SS *Nordland* under Brigadeführer [Gustav Krükenberg](#) fought hard in that area, but Soviet artillery and anti-tank guns dispatched the groups. Several very small groups managed to reach the Americans at the [Elbe](#)'s west bank, but most, including Mohnke's group, could not make it through the Soviet rings.<sup>[103]</sup>

On 2 May hostilities officially ended by order of [Helmut Weidling](#), Kommandant of the Defense Area Berlin. News of the surrender led some of the encircled Waffen-SS men to change their minds as to suicide. Historian Thomas Fischer related the following example of the mindset of some of the men:

Mohnke's adjutant, SS-Obersturmführer Gert Stehr of the Führer Escort Detachment, formerly ... [with] Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler ... shot himself before the group surrendered to the Soviets. His last words: "Whoever has sworn an oath on the flag of the Führer, no longer has anything that belongs to him!"<sup>[103]</sup>



Waffen-SS soldiers are executed by the U.S. Army at Dachau on 29 April 1945.

## Commanders [edit]

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- Josef "Sepp" Dietrich was a former Army sergeant with a peasant background who commanded the forerunner of the Waffen-SS, the Sonderkommando Berlin. He would command the [Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler](#) from its inception to Regiment, Brigade, and Division. He was then given command of the I SS Panzer Corps [Leibstandarte](#) and by the end of the war was the commander of the 6th SS Panzer Army.<sup>[7]</sup>
- Paul Hausser, a former General in the regular army, was chosen by Himmler to transform the SS-VT into a credible military organisation. He was the first divisional commander of the Waffen-SS when the SS-VT was formed into a Division for the [Battle of France](#). He went onto command the II SS Panzer Corps and the 7th Army.<sup>[14]</sup>
- Theodor Eicke, a former army pay master and police informant. He was the first commander of [Dachau concentration camp](#). He formed the SS Totenkopf Division from members of the [SS-Totenkopfverbände](#) and was killed in action on 26 February 1943 on the [Eastern Front](#).<sup>[14]</sup>
- Felix Steiner, another former army officer and veteran of [World War I](#). He was given command of the SS Regiment [Deutschland](#). He is credited with the creation of small mobile [Battle Groups](#). He armed his men with [Submachine guns](#) and [Grenades](#) instead of rifles and issued [camouflage](#) clothing. He commanded the SS Division [Wiking](#) and the III (Germanic) SS Panzer Corps.<sup>[16]</sup>
- Kurt Meyer started the war in command of the [Leibstandarte](#) anti-tank company, was promoted and given command of the Reconnaissance Battalion, which he led in the Balkans and Russia. He was chosen to lead the SS Panzergrenadier Regiment 25 in the newly formed 12th SS Panzer Division [Hitlerjugend](#), and at the age of 33 became a divisional commander when he took over command of the division (after the death of [Fritz Witt](#)) in Normandy in 1944.

## Casualties [edit]

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Total casualties amongst the Waffen-SS will probably never be known, but one estimate indicates that they suffered 180,000 dead, 400,000 wounded, and 40,000 missing.<sup>[104]</sup> [World War II casualties](#) indicates that the Waffen-SS suffered 314,000 killed and missing, or 34.9 per cent.<sup>[f]</sup> By comparison, the United States Army suffered 318,274 killed and missing in all theatres of the war.<sup>[105][106]</sup>

## War crimes [edit]

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The separately organised [Allgemeine SS](#) was responsible for the administration of [extermination camps](#). Many members of it and the SS-Totenkopfverbände subsequently became members of the Waffen-SS, forming the initial core of the [Totenkopf Division](#).<sup>[18][21]</sup> Many Waffen-SS members and units were responsible for [war crimes](#) against civilians and allied servicemen. After the war the SS organisation as a whole was held to be a criminal organization by the post-war German government, due to evidence that it was responsible for war crimes. Formations such as the [Dirlewanger](#) and [Kaminski Brigades](#) were singled out, and many others were involved in large-scale massacres or smaller-scale killings such as murder of 34 captured allied servicemen ordered by Josef Kieffer during [Operation Bulbasket](#) in 1944, the Houtman affair,<sup>[107]</sup> or murders perpetrated by Heinrich Boere. The most infamous incidents include the following:

- Wormhoudt massacre by SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler, 1940, France
- Le Paradis massacre by SS Division Totenkopf, 1940, France
- Oradour-sur-Glane massacre by SS Division Das Reich, 1944, France
- Ochota massacre by SS Kaminski Brigade, 1944, Poland
- Wola massacre by SS-Sturmbrigade Dirlewanger, 1944, Poland
- Huta Pieniacka massacre by SS-Galizien division 1944, Poland
- Tulle massacre by SS Das Reich, 1944, France
- Marzabotto massacre by 16th SS Panzergrenadier Division Reichsführer-SS, 1944, Italy
- Malmedy massacre by Kampfgruppe Peiper, part of 1st SS Panzer Division, 1944, Belgium
- Ardeatine massacre by two SS officers, 1944, Italy
- Distomo massacre by 4th SS Polizei Division, 1944, Greece
- Sant'Anna di Stazzema massacre by 16th SS Panzergrenadier Division Reichsführer-SS, 1944, Italy
- Ardenne Abbey massacre by 12th SS Panzer Division Hitlerjugend, 1944, France



Photograph from the [Stroop Report](#), prepared for Jürgen Stroop



Burned out cars and buildings still litter the remains of the original village in [Oradour-sur-Glane](#), as left by Das Reich SS division

The linking of the SS-VT with the [SS-Totenkopfverbände](#) (SS-TV) in 1938 posed important questions about Waffen-SS criminality,<sup>[17]</sup> since the SS-TV were already responsible for imprisonment, torture, and murder of Jews and other political opponents through providing the personnel for manning of the concentration camps. Their leader, [Theodor Eicke](#), who was the commandant of Dachau, inspector of the camps, and murderer of [Ernst Röhm](#), later became the commander of the 3 SS Totenkopf Division.<sup>[14]</sup> With the invasion of Poland, the Totenkopfverbände troops were called on to carry out "police and security measures" in rear areas. What these measures involved is demonstrated by the record of SS Totenkopf Standarte Brandenburg. It arrived in [Włocławek](#) on 22 September 1939 and embarked on a four day "Jewish action" that included the burning of [synagogues](#) and the execution en masse of the leaders of the Jewish community. On 29 September the Standarte travelled to [Bydgoszcz](#) to conduct an "intelligentsia action". Approximately 800 Polish civilians and what the [Sicherheitsdienst](#) (SD) termed "potential resistance leaders" were killed. The Totenkopfverbände was to become one of the elite SS divisions, but from the start they were among the first executors of a policy of systematic extermination.

Several formations within the Waffen-SS were found guilty of war crimes, especially in the opening and closing phases of the war.<sup>[2]</sup> In addition to documented atrocities, Waffen-SS units assisted in rounding up Eastern European Jews for deportation and utilised [scorched earth](#) tactics during anti-partisan operations. Some Waffen-SS personnel convalesced at concentration camps, from which they were drawn, by serving guard duties. Other members of the Waffen-SS were more directly involved in genocide.<sup>[108]</sup>

The end of the war saw a number of war crime trials, including the [Malmedy massacre trial](#). The counts of indictment related to the massacre of more than 300 American prisoners "in the vicinity of [Malmedy](#), [Honsfeld](#), [Büllingen](#), [Ligneuville](#), [Stoumont](#), [La Gleize](#), [Cheneux](#), [Petit Thier](#), [Trois Ponts](#), [Stavelot](#), [Wanne](#), and [Lutrebois](#)", between 16 December 1944 and 13 January 1945, and the massacre of 100 Belgian civilians mainly in the vicinity of Stavelot.<sup>[109]</sup>

During the [Nuremberg Trials](#), the Waffen-SS was declared a criminal organisation, except conscripts from 1943 onward, who were exempted from that judgement as they had been forced to join.<sup>[110]</sup>

Main article: [HIAG](#)

The HIAG (German: *Hilfsgemeinschaft auf Gegenseitigkeit der Angehörigen der ehemaligen Waffen-SS*, literally "Mutual Help Association of Former Waffen-SS Members") was an organization founded in 1951 by former members of the Waffen-SS to provide assistance to veterans, and campaign for the rehabilitation of their legal status with respect to veterans' pensions. Unlike soldiers of the regular [Wehrmacht](#), pensions had been denied to members of the Waffen-SS as a result of it having been declared a criminal organization at the Nuremberg trials.<sup>[111]</sup>

## See also [edit]

- [Allgemeine SS](#)
- [German war crimes](#)
- [Germanic-SS](#)
- [Glossary of Nazi Germany](#)
- [List of Knight's Cross recipients of the Waffen-SS](#)
- [List of SS personnel](#)
- [List of Waffen-SS units](#)
- [ODESSA](#)
- [SS-Standarte Kurt Eggers](#)
- [SS and Police Leader](#)
- [Uniforms and insignia of the Schutzstaffel](#)
- [Waffen-SS foreign volunteers and conscripts](#)

## References [edit]

### Explanatory notes [edit]

1. ^ This motto was not used by foreign conscript formations such as the 15th and 19th Latvian and 20th Estonian Waffen Grenadier Divisions.
2. ^ Equivalent to a full General. The independence of the LSSAH can be partly explained by Dietrich's rank, as well as his personal friendship with Hitler.
3. ^ In the context of this battle, the term "Battle of the European SS" merely refers to the high proportion of foreign nationals present. [Ailsby 2004](#), p. 145; [Ripley 2004](#), p. 189.
4. ^ "Adolf Hitler is not interested in further existence of Warsaw [...] the whole population shall be executed and all buildings blown up." [Madajczyk 1972](#), p. 390.
5. ^ According to the evidence of [Erich von dem Bach in Nürnberg](#), Himmler's order (issued on the strength of an order of Hitler), read as follows: "1. Caught razed insurgents shall be killed despite whether they fight in accordance with the [Hague Convention](#) or they infringe it. 2. Non-fighting part of population, women, children, shall also be killed. 3. All the city shall be razed to the ground, i.e. buildings, streets, facilities in that city, and everything which is within its borders." [Wroniszewski 1970](#), pp. 128–129.
6. ^ According to a report from 12 July 1972 from the German bureau responsible for notifying next-of-kin of men killed in the former Wehrmacht, the total Waffen-SS casualties, including those who died in P.O.W. camps, amounted to 6 per cent of the entire German Armed Forces. That included 181,000 men killed and 72,000 missing in action, totaling approximately 253,000 casualties. That constitutes 25–28 per cent of the total strength of the Waffen SS. [Wenn Alle Brüder Schweigen 2003](#).

## Citations [edit]

1. ^ [Mollo 1991](#), p. 1.
2. ^ [Repä 2006](#).
3. ^ [Bender & Taylor 1971](#), p. 23.
4. ^ [McNab 2009](#), pp. 56, 57, 66.
5. ^ [Reitlinger 1989](#), p. 84.
6. ^ [Bender & Taylor 1971](#), p. 8.
7. ^ [abcdef Flaherty 2004](#), p. 144.
8. ^ [ab Cook & Bender 1994](#), pp. 17, 19.
9. ^ [Kershaw 2008](#), pp. 306–313.
10. ^ [abcde Flaherty 2004](#), p. 145.
11. ^ [Williamson 1994](#), p. [\[page needed\]](#).
12. ^ [Longerich 2012](#), p. 220.
13. ^ [Longerich 2012](#), p. [\[page needed\]](#).
14. ^ [abcd Flaherty 2004](#), p. 146.
15. ^ [abcde fg Windrow & Burn 1992](#), pp. 7–8.
16. ^ [ab Flaherty 2004](#), p. 147.
17. ^ [abc Flaherty 2004](#), p. 148.
18. ^ [abcde fg Flaherty 2004](#), p. 149.
19. ^ [Butler 2001](#), p. [\[page needed\]](#).
20. ^ [Flaherty 2004](#), pp. 149–150.
21. ^ [ab Flaherty 2004](#), p. 150.
22. ^ [Flaherty 2004](#), p. 151.
23. ^ [ab Flaherty 2004](#), p. 152.
24. ^ [abcd Flaherty 2004](#), p. 154.
25. ^ [Harman 1980](#), p. 100.
26. ^ [abc Flaherty 2004](#), p. 143.
27. ^ [Flaherty 2004](#), p. 155.
28. ^ [Jackson 2001](#), pp. 285–288.
29. ^ [Butler 2001](#), pp. 81–83.
30. ^ [Flaherty 2004](#), p. 156.
31. ^ [ab Flaherty 2004](#), p. 160.
32. ^ [Evans 2008](#), p. 153.
33. ^ [abc Flaherty 2004](#), p. 163.

34. ^ **a b c d** Flaherty 2004, p. 165.
35. ^ **a b c d** Windrow & Burn 1992, p. 9.
36. ^ **a b c** Flaherty 2004, p. 166.
37. ^ **a b c** Flaherty 2004, p. 168.
38. ^ **a b** Hannes & Naumann 2000, p. 136.
39. ^ Browning 2007, p. 279.
40. ^ Browning 2007, p. 280.
41. ^ **a b** Browning 2007, p. 281.
42. ^ Cuppers 2006, p. 279.
43. ^ **a b c** Stein 1984, p. 171.
44. ^ Mitcham 2007, p. 148.
45. ^ **a b** Reynolds 1997, p. 9.
46. ^ Fellgiebel 2000, p. 59.
47. ^ **a b** Flaherty 2004, p. 173.
48. ^ Flaherty 2004, pp. 173–174.
49. ^ Margry 2001, p. 20.
50. ^ Reynolds 1997, p. 10.
51. ^ Stroop 1943.
52. ^ Holocaust Memorial Museum.
53. ^ Dunn 2007, p. 153.
54. ^ Glantz & House 1995, pp. 166–167.
55. ^ Bergstrom 2007, p. 81.
56. ^ Clark 1966, pp. 337–338.
57. ^ **a b c** Reynolds 1997, p. 15.
58. ^ Thomson 2004.
59. ^ Ailsby 2004, p. 169.
60. ^ Williamson & Andrew 2004, p. 4.
61. ^ Williamson & Andrew 2004, pp. 5–6.
62. ^ Zetterling & Frankson 2008, p. 335.
63. ^ Nash 2002, p. 366.
64. ^ Eyre 2006, pp. 343–376.
65. ^ Mitcham 2001, pp. 261–262.
66. ^ **a b** Reynolds 1997, p. 131.
67. ^ Reynolds 1997, p. 145.
68. ^ Latimer 2001.
69. ^ *Götz von Berlichingen Diary*.
70. ^ Fey 2003, p. 145.
71. ^ Jarymowycz 2001, p. 196.
72. ^ Hastings 2006, p. 306.
73. ^ McGilvray 2005, p. 54.
74. ^ **a b** Bercuson 2004, p. 233.
75. ^ Landwehr 1999, pp. 22, 129.
76. ^ BBC News 2003.
77. ^ Jewish Virtual Library, Sant'Anna massacre.
78. ^ BBC News 2007.
79. ^ Harclerode 2005, pp. 455–456.
80. ^ Ellis 2004, pp. 313–315.
81. ^ **a b** Bell 1966, pp. 89–91.
82. ^ Conot 1984, pp. 278–281.
83. ^ Kirchmayer 1978, p. 367.
84. ^ United States History.
85. ^ Reynolds 2003.
86. ^ Zwack 1999.
87. ^ Michaelis 2006, p. 36.
88. ^ 100th Division.
89. ^ Beevor 2002, p. 91.
90. ^ Raus 2005, pp. 324–332.
91. ^ Tessin 1973, p. 164.
92. ^ Ustinow 1981, p. 179.
93. ^ Schramm 1982, p. 1156.
94. ^ Dollinger 1967, p. 198.
95. ^ Dollinger 1967, p. 199.
96. ^ Ustinow 1981, pp. 238–239.
97. ^ Gosztony 1978, p. 262.
98. ^ **a b c** Fischer 2008, pp. 42–43.
99. ^ Lumsden 2002, p. 149.
100. ^ Beevor 2002, p. 301.
101. ^ Beevor 2002, p. 323.
102. ^ Beevor 2002, pp. 365–367, 372.
103. ^ **a b c** Fischer 2008, p. 49.
104. ^ Windrow & Burn 1992, p. 10.
105. ^ Overmans 2000, p. [page needed].
106. ^ Leland & Oboroceanu 2010, p. 2.
107. ^ Zimmermann 2004.
108. ^ WBSTV 2007.
109. ^ US War Department 1948.
110. ^ Jewish Virtual Library, Waffen SS.
111. ^ Wilke 2006.

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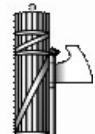
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## External links [edit]

- Media related to Waffen-SS at Wikimedia Commons

VTE		— Waffen-SS Brigades —
Panzer	SS Panzer Brigade Gross SS Brigade Westfalen SS Panzer Brigade 150	
Panzergrenadier	SS Brigade Schuldt 4th SS Volunteer Panzergrenadier Brigade Nederland SS Panzergrenadier Brigade 49 SS Panzergrenadier Brigade 51	
Sturmbrigade	5th SS Volunteer Sturmbrigade Wallonien 6th SS Volunteer Sturmbrigade Langemarck Sturmbrigade Reichsführer SS 8th SS Volunteer Sturmbrigade France SS-Sturmbrigade Dirlewanger S.S. Sturmbrigade R.O.N.A.	
Cavalry	SS Cavalry Brigade	
Infantry	1 SS Infantry Brigade 2 SS Infantry Brigade 3rd Estonian SS Volunteer Brigade SS Volunteer Grenadier Brigade Landstorm Nederland Waffen Grenadier Brigade of SS (Italian No. 1) Waffen Grenadier Brigade of SS Charlemagne (French No 1)	
Police	Schutzmanschaft-Brigade Siegling	
VTE		— Waffen-SS Divisions —
Panzer	1st SS Division <i>Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler</i> 2nd SS Division <i>Das Reich</i> 3rd SS Division <i>Totenkopf</i> 5th SS Panzer Division <i>Wiking</i> 9th SS Panzer Division <i>Hohenstaufen</i> 10th SS Panzer Division <i>Frundsberg</i> 12th SS Panzer Division <i>Hitlerjugend</i> SS Heavy Panzer Battalions	
Panzergrenadier	11th SS Volunteer Panzergrenadier Division <i>Nordland</i> 16th SS Panzergrenadier Division <i>Reichsführer-SS</i> 17th SS Panzergrenadier Division <i>Götz von Berlichingen</i> 18th SS Volunteer Panzergrenadier Division <i>Horst Wessel</i> 23rd SS Volunteer Panzergrenadier Division <i>Nederland</i>	
Mountain	6th SS Mountain Division <i>Nord</i> 7th SS Volunteer Mountain Division <i>Prinz Eugen</i> 13th Waffen Mountain Division of the SS <i>Handschar</i> (1st Croatian) 21st Waffen Mountain Division of the SS <i>Skanderbeg</i> (1st Albanian) 23rd Waffen Mountain Division of the SS <i>Kama</i> (2nd Croatian) 24th Waffen Mountain (Karstjäger) Division	
Cavalry	8th SS Cavalry Division <i>Florian Geyer</i> 22nd SS Volunteer Cavalry Division Division <i>Maria Theresia</i> 33rd Waffen Cavalry Division of the SS (3rd Hungarian) 37th SS Volunteer Cavalry Division <i>Lützow</i>	
Infantry	14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS <i>Galizien</i> (1st Ukrainian) 15th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS (1st Latvian) 19th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS (2nd Latvian) 20th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS (1st Estonian) 25th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS <i>Hunyadi</i> (1st Hungarian) 26th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS (2nd Hungarian) 27th SS Volunteer Grenadier Division <i>Langemarck</i> (1st Flemish) 28th SS Volunteer Grenadier Division <i>Wallonien</i> 29th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS <i>RONA</i> (1st Russian) 29th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS (1st Italian) 30th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS (2nd Russian) 30th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS (1st Belarussian) 31st SS Volunteer Grenadier Division 32nd SS Volunteer Grenadier Division <i>30 Januar</i> 33rd Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS <i>Charlemagne</i> (1st French) 34th SS Volunteer Grenadier Division <i>Landstorm Nederland</i> 36th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS	

	38th SS Division Grenadier Nibelungen
Police	4th SS Polizei Division 35th SS and Police Grenadier Division
Deception Divisions	26th SS Panzer Division 27th SS Panzer Division
VTE	 — Waffen-SS Corps — 
Panzer	I SS Panzer Corps II SS Panzer Corps III (Germanic) SS Panzer Corps IV SS Panzer Corps VII SS Panzer Corps XI SS Panzer Corps
Mountain	V SS Mountain Corps IX Waffen Mountain Corps of the SS (Croatian)
Infantry	VI SS Army Corps (Latvian) X SS Corps XII SS Corps XIII SS Army Corps XIV SS Corps XVI SS Corps XVII Waffen Corps of the SS (Hungarian) XVIII SS Corps
Cavalry	VIII SS Cavalry Corps XV SS Cossack Cavalry Corps
VTE	SS
Branches	Allgemeine SS Totenkopfverbände (SS-TV) Waffen-SS
Leadership	Reichsführer-SS SS and Police Leader SS personnel SS commands
Leaders	Julius Schreck Joseph Berchtold Erhard Heiden Heinrich Himmler Karl Hanke
Main departments	Office of the Reichsführer-SS Head Administrative Office Head Operational Office Reich Main Security Office (RSHA) Economics and Administration Office Office of Race and Settlement (RuSHA) Main Office for Ethnic Germans (VOMI) Office of the Reich Commissioner for Germanic Resettlement (RKFDV) Courts Office Personnel Office Education Office
Ideological institutions	Ahnenerbe Das Schwarze Korps SS-Junkerschule Bad Tölz
Police and security services	Regular uniform police (Orpo) Criminal police (Kripo) Secret State police (Gestapo) SS Security Service (SD)
Führer protection	SS-Begleitkommando des Führers Begleitkommando-SS Reichssicherheitsdienst
Paramilitary units	Einsatzgruppen Ypatingasis būrys Lithuanian Security Police Rollkommando Hamann Arajs Kommando Ukrainian Auxiliary Police Ukrainian collaboration Volksdeutscher Selbstschutz Trawniki
Waffen-SS divisions	Verfügungstruppe (SS-VT) Leibstandarte (LSSAH) Totenkopf-Division Polizei-Division
Foreign SS units	Germanic-SS Germaansche SS in Nederland Germaansche SS in Vlaanderen Germanske SS Norge Schalburg Corps Britisches Freikorps Europäische Freiwillige S.S. Sturmbrigade R.O.N.A. Finnisches Freiwilligen-Bataillon
SS-controlled enterprises	Ostindustrie Deutsche Wirtschaftsbetriebe Deutsche Ausrüstungswerke DEST Allach porcelain Apollinaris Mattoni Sudetenquell Anton Loibl
Ranks, uniforms and insignia	Uniforms and insignia of the SS Ranks and insignia of the Waffen-SS Ranks and insignia of the Orpo Corps colours of the Waffen-SS
VTE	Fascism
	Theory
Core tenets	Nationalism Imperialism Authoritarianism Single-party state Dictatorship Social Darwinism Social interventionism Proletarian nation Propaganda Eugenics Heroism Militarism Economic interventionism Anti-communism
Topics	Definitions Economics Fascism and ideology Fascism worldwide Symbolism
Ideas	Actual Idealism Class collaboration Corporatism Heroic capitalism National Socialism National syndicalism State capitalism Supercapitalism Third Position Totalitarianism
	Movements
Africa	Greyshirts Ossewabrandwag
Asia	Brit HaBirionim Ganap Party Sakurakai Tōhōkai
Western Europe	Black Front (Netherlands) Breton Social-National Workers' Movement British Fascists British People's Party (1939) British Union of Fascists La Cagoule Clerical People's Party Faisceau Falange Flemish National Union French Popular Party General Dutch Fascist League Imperial Fascist League National Fascisti National Front (Switzerland) Nationalist Party (Iceland) National Socialist Dutch Workers Party National Socialist League National Socialist Movement in the Netherlands National Socialist Movement of Norway National Union (Portugal) New Party (UK) Rexism
Central Europe	Arrow Cross Party Austrian National Socialism Fatherland's Front Hungarian National Socialist Party Italian Fascism Italian Social Republic Nasjonal Samling National Fascist Community National Fascist Party National Radical Camp Falanga National Socialist Bloc National Socialist Workers' Party (Sweden) Nazism Nazi Party Pērkonkrusts Republican Fascist Party Sammarinese Fascist Party Sudeten German Party Ustaše ZBOR
Eastern Europe	Albanian Fascist Party Crusade of Romanianism Greek National Socialist Party Iron Guard Lapua Movement Metaxism National Fascist Movement National Italo-Romanian Cultural and Economic Movement National Social Movement (Bulgaria) National Romanian Fascia National Renaissance Front Patriotic People's Movement (Finland) Romanian Front Russian Fascist Party Russian Women's Fascist Movement Slovak People's Party Union of Bulgarian National Legions
North America	Fascism in Canada Canadian Union of Fascists Parti national social chrétien Red Shirts (Mexico) Gold shirts German American Bund Silver Legion of America
South America	Falangism in Latin America Brazilian Integralism Bolivian Socialist Falange National Socialist Movement of Chile Revolutionary Union
	People
	Abba Ahimeir Nimio de Anquin Sadao Araki Marc Augier Maurice Bardèche Jacques Benoist-Méchin Henri Béraud Zoltán Böszörményi Giuseppe Bottai Robert Brasillach Alphonse de Châteaubriant Corneliu Zelea Codreanu Gustavus Celmiřš Enrico Corradini Carlo Costamagna Richard Walther Darré Marcel Déat Léon Degrelle Pierre Drieu La Rochelle Gottfried Feder Giovanni Gentile Joseph Goebbels Hans F. K. Günther Heinrich Himmler Fumimaro Konoe Adolf Hitler Hideki Tojo Iki Kita Vihtori Kosola Agostino Lanzillo Dimitrije Ljotić Leopoldo Lugones Curzio Malaparte Iannis Metaxas Robert Michels Oswald Mosley Benito Mussolini Eoin O'Duffy Gearóid Ó Cuinneagáin Sergio Panunzio Giovanni Papini Ante Pavelić William Dudley Pelley Alfred Plotz Robert Poulet Vidkun Quisling José Antonio Primo de Rivera Lucien Rebattet Dionisio Ridruejo Alfredo Rocco Konstantin Rodzaevsky Alfred Rosenberg Plínio Salgado Rafael Sánchez Mazas Margherita Sarfatti Carl Schmitt Ardengo Soffici Othmar Spann Oswald Spengler Ugo Spirito Ferenc Szálasi Gonzalo Torrente Ballester Georges Valois Anastasy Vonsyatsky
	Works
	



<b>Literature</b>	<i>The Doctrine of Fascism</i> <i>Fascist manifesto</i> <i>Manifesto of the Fascist Intellectuals</i> <i>Mein Kampf</i> <i>My Life</i> <i>The Myth of the Twentieth Century</i> <i>Zweites Buch</i> <i>Zaveshchanie russkogo fashista</i>
<b>Periodicals</b>	<i>La Conquista del Estado</i> <i>Das Reich</i> <i>Der Angriff</i> <i>Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung</i> <i>Deutsche Zeitung</i> <i>in Norwegen</i> <i>Deutsche Zeitung</i> <i>in den Niederlanden</i> <i>Figli d'Italia</i> <i>Fronten</i> <i>Gândirea Gioventù Fascista</i> <i>Je suis partout</i> <i>La France au travail</i> <i>Münchener Beobachter</i> <i>Novopress</i> <i>NS Månedshete</i> <i>Norsk-Tysk Tidsskrift</i> <i>Das Schwarze Korps</i> <i>Der Stürmer</i> <i>Il Popolo d'Italia</i> <i>Sfarmă-Piatră Signal</i> <i>Vlajka</i> <i>Völkischer Beobachter</i> <i>Nash Put'</i> <i>Fashist l'Alba</i>
<b>Film</b>	<i>Der Sieg des Glaubens</i> <i>Tag der Freiheit: Unsere Wehrmacht</i> <i>Triumph of the Will</i>
<b>Sculpture</b>	Allach
<b>Related topics</b>	Art of the Third Reich <i>Fascist architecture</i> <i>Heroic realism</i> <i>Nazi architecture</i> <i>Nazism and cinema</i> <i>Nazi plunder</i>
<b>Organizations</b>	
<b>Institutional</b>	Ahnenerbe Chamber of Fasci and Corporations Grand Council of Fascism Imperial Way Faction Italian Nationalist Association Nationalsozialistischer Reichsbund für Leibesübungen Quadrumvirs
<b>Activist</b>	Fascist Union of Youth German American Bund Russian Fascist Organization Union of Fascist Little Ones Union of Young Fascists – Vanguard (boys) Union of Young Fascists – Vanguard (girls)
<b>Paramilitary</b>	Albanian Militia Black Brigades Blackshirts Blueshirts Einsatzgruppen Gold shirts Greenshirts Greyshirts Hitler Youth Heimwehr Iron Wolf (organization) Lāncieri Makapili Silver Legion of America Schutzstaffel Sturmabteilung <b>Waffen-SS</b> Werwolf
<b>International</b>	Axis powers NSDAP/AO ODESSA
<b>History</b>	
<b>1910s</b>	Arditi Fascio
<b>1920s</b>	Aventine Secession Acerbo Law March on Rome Beer Hall Putsch Italian economic battles
<b>1930s</b>	March of the Iron Will German federal election, November 1932 German federal election, March 1933 Enabling Act 6 February 1934 crisis 1934 Montreux Fascist conference Spanish Civil War Anti-Comintern Pact
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Anti-fascists Books about Hitler British fascist parties Fascist movements by country (A-F G-M N-T U-Z) Nazi ideologues Nazi leaders SS personnel	
<b>Related topics</b>	
Anti-fascism Anti-Nazi League Christofascism Clerical fascism Cryptofascism Ecofascism Esoteric Nazism Fascist (epithet) Fascist mysticism Germanisation Glossary of Nazi Germany Hitler salute Italianization Italianization of South Tyrol Islamofascism Japanization Ku Klux Klan Neo-fascism Neo-Nazism Roman salute Social fascism Synarchism Unite Against Fascism Völkisch movement Women in Nazi Germany	
<b>Category Portal</b>	
Categories: <a href="#">Nazi SS</a>   <a href="#">German words and phrases</a>   <a href="#">Military history of Germany during World War II</a>   <a href="#">Military units and formations of the Waffen-SS</a>   <a href="#">Military wings of political parties</a>	

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