

TAC NEWS

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Modeling Excellence Since 1967

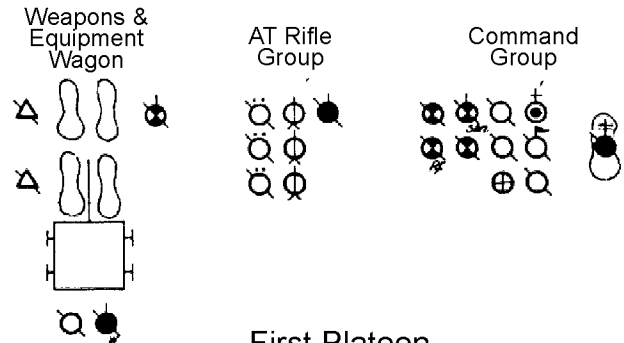
The German *Schutzen-Kompanie* of 1941

The non-motorized infantry organization which the German Army utilized during the invasion of the Soviet Union differed little from the structure with which they began World War II. The experience gained in combat during the Polish and French campaigns showed that the *schulzen-kompanie* (Rifle Company) was a well balanced force capable of both offensive and defensive operation. Although the German Army had been restricted in quantity and types of weapons by the Treaty of Versailles (in particular, being forbidden heavy machine guns), careful

prewar testing of tactics and techniques had resulted in an organization well suited for its role in combat. The purpose of this article is to

explain and analyze the structure of the German *schulzen-kompanie* at the time of the invasion of the Soviet Union.

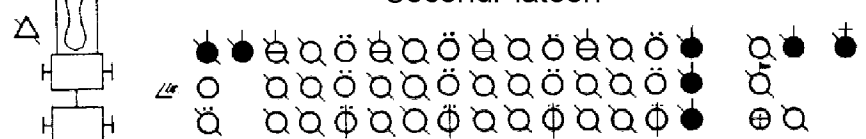
Company Headquarters



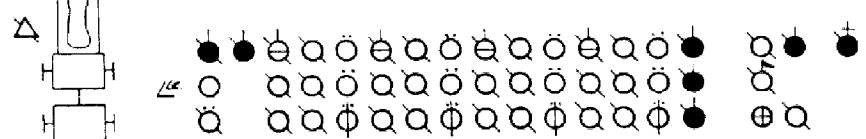
First Platoon



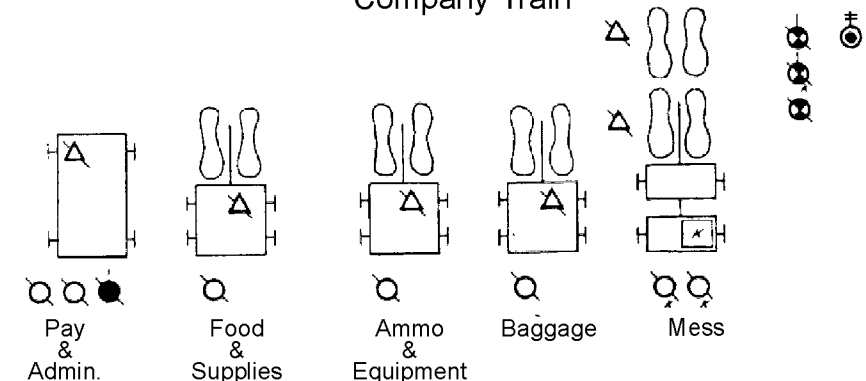
Second Platoon



Third Platoon



Company Train



Legend

- ⊠ Company Commander
- ⊕ Platoon Leader
- ⊕ First Sergeant
- ⊕ Senior Sergeant
- ⊕ Junior Sergeant
- ⊕ Assistant Squad Leader
- Enlisted Man
- Radioman
- Messenger
- ⊕ Medic
- Man armed w/ pistol
- Man armed w/ machine pistol
- Man armed with rifle
- ⊕ Light Machine Gunner
- Ammunition Bearer
- ⊕ Anti-Tank Rifleman
- △ Driver
- Cook
- Weapons, Ordnance Technician
- Horse Handler, Ferrier
- ⊕ Bicyclist
- Horse

The *schutzen-bataillon* which was the parent organization for the *schutzen-kompanie* was simply formed, utilizing a structure common to most armies of the period. As shown in figure 1, the battalion consisted of a *stab undstabskompanie* (headquarters and headquarters company), three line *schutzen-kompanien*, and a *schwere-kompanie* (heavy weapons company). The headquarters company was organized to provide effective support to the battlaion commander in commanding and controlling the forces available to him. The three line companies were organized as shown below. The heavy weapons company was provided with a mix of weapons suitable to support most of the operations invisioned for the battalion. This *schwere-kompanie* will not be covered here because of the wide variation between units formed within different "waves" of organizations. Additional support weapons, such as antitank guns or heavy infantry guns, were available from regimental companies when needed.

The 1941 period *schutzen-kompanie* was organized under *Kriegsstarknachweisung* (KStN) 131e dated 1 February 1941. It was provided with 4 officers, 27 non-commissioned officers (NCOs), and 160 enlisted personnel. Personal sidearms consisted of 48 pistols (either the P.08 Luger of the more modern P.38), 131 rifles (of the Kar.98k type), and 16 machine pistols (MP.38 or MP.40). The company's crew-served weapons consisted of 12 light machine-guns (MG34), 3

light mortars (of 50mm calibre), and 3 anti-tank rifles. The company had 18 horses, all but one of which were draft animals, and 1 medium, cross-country capable truck. The company was structured with a company headquarters, three rifle platoons, a train section, each of which will be covered in detail below.

Before beginning the detailed examination of the *schutzenkompanie*, a brief explanation must be made of the illustration conventions used in this article. The figure on the previous page utilizes the standard German Army diagram conventions officially used to illustrate KStN organizations. The *schutzen-kompanie* is illustrated as if viewed from overhead, and is shown as if formed for parades or other dress formations. Each man is facing toward the top of the page. Each circle or triangle represents a man within the unit, and all changes or alterations to the basic circle/triangle are done to illustrate differences in rank, position, or weapons carried or used. See the figure legend for a detailed breakdown of these symbols. An elongated "blob" represents a horse, while a square or rectangle represents a wagon or vehicle, drawn complete with wheels and axles. Note that the unit is also shown as if in its line of march; this action is performed by facing the entire unit to the right, and forming the company into a column arrangement with the subunits formed from page top to bottom.

The *schutzen-kompanie* headquarters consisted of three small

sections, all under the overall command of the company commander, who was usually an *oberleutnant* (first lieutenant). The small command group consisted of 2 NCOs and 8 enlisted men, four of whom were provided with bicycles for transportation. The walking group consisted of a section leader (NCO), a messenger, three riflemen/messengers, and a medic. The bicycle part of the group consisted of a medic (NCO), a horse handler or farrier, and two riflemen/messengers. The headquarters section also contained a seven man anti-tank group, consisting of a group leader (NCO) and three anti-tank teams. Each team had a gunner and an ammunition bearer. The third group within the company headquarters was the weapons and equipment wagon, under the command of an NCO, and carrying two drivers, the weapons NCO and his helper.

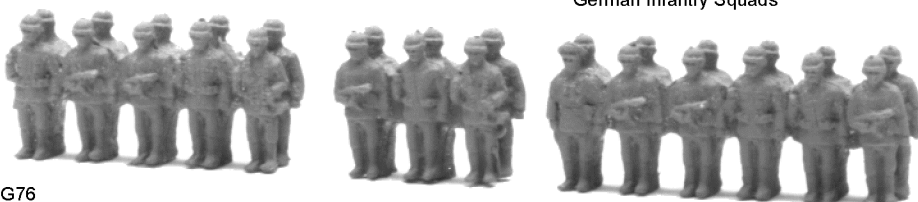
Supply Wagon



G75

Each of the three rifle platoons was under the command of a platoon leader, listed in the KStN as an officer, usually a *leutnant* (second lieutenant). As junior officers were generally in short supply, especially after the start of the Russian campaign, these positions were often filled by senior NCOs or accepted officer candidates. Each rifle platoon had a platoon headquarters, four rifle squads, and a mortar section. To support the operations of the platoon leader, there was a small platoon headquarters with a section leader, a messenger, two riflemen, and a medic. Each of the platoon's four

German Infantry Squads



G76

rifle squads had ten men, and was organized around a MG34 light machinegun; the squad consisted of an NCO squad leader, and enlisted assistant squad leader, five riflemen, and the three man MG team. The small mortar mortar section had one 50mm light mortar, and was structured with an NCO squad leader, an mortar gunner, and an ammunition bearer. Each platoon also had a wagon for resupply, with one driver/rifleman, carrying among other things mortar and machine gun ammunition. Note that, within the platoon formation, the rifle squads are not formed in single files or columns as is typical in the US Army. Instead, three of the form the heads of each column in march order, but their squads were grouped together down the line of march. The senior squad leader also acted as the platoon sergeant, taking a position near the rear of the platoon where he served to control the rear of the long march column, enforcing discipline and stopping straggling. The rear of the platoon march column was also the position for the mortar section, positioned where it could be most effective upon contact with the enemy, and where it was under the immediate command of the senior squad leader.

The company trains section was under the command and control of the company first sergeant (*Hauptfeldwebel*) and, since it was frequently split up to function at several locations, had a three man bicycle section to enforce control. One of the bicyclists was the unit supply sergeant, while another was a mess sergeant. The five wagons/vehicles were functionally organized into two groups: a forward and a rear echelon. Within the forward echelon, one wagon transport-

ed the mess squad and mess equipment, one wagon carrying the packs and sleeping equipment for the company's personnel, and one wagon carrying extra ammunition (rifle, machinegun and mortar) to affect resupply as needed. The remaining two vehicles of the train section operated as the rear echelon; one

wagon served as a transport for food and administrative supplies, carrying the unit clerk as well as a driver.

The sole motor vehicle, a 1.5 ton medium truck, carried the company paymaster, a shoemaker, and a tailor. The rear echelon generally operated in the vicinity of the parent battalion headquarters company.

by James Stuard

MODELLING AND GAMING THE VIET CONG AND NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY

While much has been written about U.S. forces in the Vietnam War, relatively little has been published about their main enemy: the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army. Both the soldier/peasant V.C. and their N.V.A. allies had been waging their war for freedom for nearly twenty years before U.S. forces first arrived in 1963. They would continue to fight until their final victory in 1975. Armed with his trusty AK-47 assault rifle and various home-made weapons, the V.C. would generally work in the fields by day and set ambushes and raids during the nighttime hours. The ambush was the preferred form of combat and this should be reflected in your gaming. In riverine terms, a boat or two would be slowly making its way up or down a river when suddenly a hailstorm of rifle and recoilless rifle fire would open up from the banks. The V.C. would then stick around as long as could be considered safe and then leave as suddenly as they had struck. Even though boats were not usually lost, crew casualties were frequently high. On the other hand, the N.V.A. would be more willing to go for a pitched battle involving battalions or sometimes regiments. They would fight like tigers until they felt that they had taken too

many casualties and then simply melt into the surrounding countryside. The combination of these two elusive but deadly opponents was enough to make even the toughest soldier respect and fear them.

The gamer has to find something to fill their place. Here are some easy ideas. The best way to make V.C. and N.V.A. infantry is to simply take British infantry (UK 12) and paint them in V.C. and N.V.A. livery. Black uniform with white hats for V.C., olive drab overall for N.V.A. Use three stands per platoon, three platoons per company and three companies per battlaion. Depending on which rules you use, you shouldn't need more than a battalion or two. When setting up ambushes, many heavy weapons were used. Recoiless rifles, mortars, machine guns and rocketpropelled grenades were the most popular. To model these simply rummage around in your spares box until you find the weapons you need. You should be able to find extra machine guns from vehicle packs, mortars from heavy weapons packs and recoilless rifles from the WWII U.S. jeep pack (US 11). Mount these upon a seperate base with a couple of crew figures and you should have all the heavy weapons you need. Armour was not

used by the V.C. at all and was rarely used in any quantity by the N.V.A. until late in the war. However, the N.V.A. twice used PT-76 light tanks (W2) against the Lang Vei Special Forces camp. They used approximately eight tanks in an attack in May 1967 and ten in February 1968. Due in part to poor handling, the N.V.A. tended to lose the PT-76s to U.S. troops armed with the M-72 LAW. Tanks were not seen again until operation LAM SONG 719, February through April 1971. During this penetration into Laos, U.S. and A.R.V.N. troops came up against N.V.A. PT-76s and T-55s (W43). While many were lost, the shock effect was substantial on

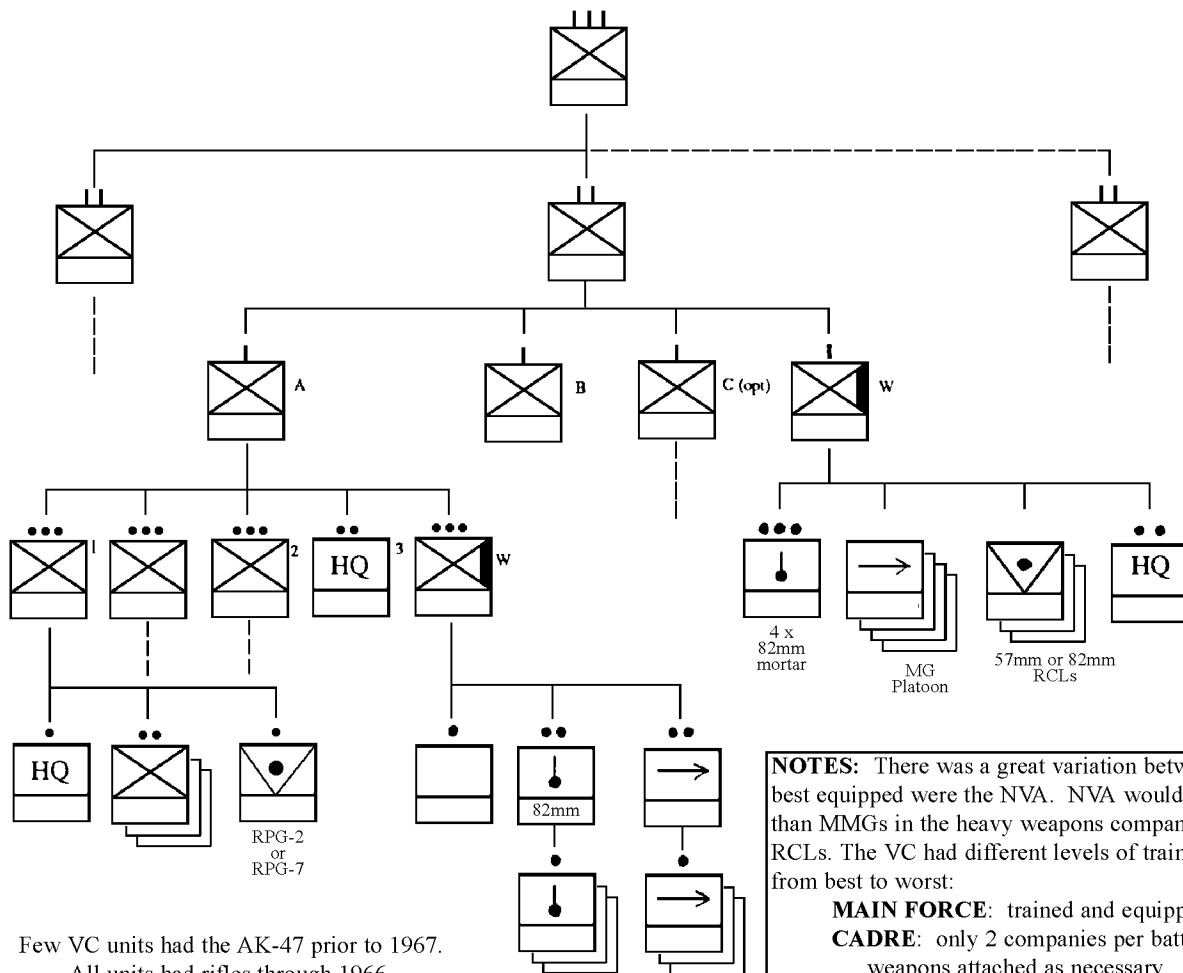
South Vietnamese troops. In the spring invasion of 1972, the N.V.A. used T-55s to help capture over a dozen South Vietnamese bases in the northern provinces. The A.R.V.N. troops did not lose all the encounters, however. When T-54s ran into A.R.V.N. M-48s (N17), the N.V.A. took quite a beating. During the 1975 invasion, the N.V.A. used masses of T-54s mixed with captured A.R.V.N. armour and routed everything that they came against. Most N.V.A. vehicles were tanks, though some were Chinese K-63 APCs (VN 9).

When gaming Vietnam actions, remember that both the V.C.

and N.V.A. were primarily infantry armies. Many heavy weapons were used (recoilless rifles, anti-aircraft missiles, mortars, machine guns, etc.) and armour was not the prevalent arm, even though much was used in the final stages of the war. The V.C. are more apt to go for ambushes while the N.V.A. just might stand up and fight. However, neither had the numbers to fight U.S. troops on an even scale. So, fight until U.S. reinforcements arrive and, unless you are sure you can destroy them, disappear. It is better to run away and live to fight another day.

By Bart Kersteter

VIET CONG INFANTRY REGIMENT



Few VC units had the AK-47 prior to 1967.
All units had rifles through 1966.

NOTES: There was a great variation between VC/NVA units. The best equipped were the NVA. NVA would have had HMGs rather than MMGs in the heavy weapons company, and may have 107mm RCLs. The VC had different levels of training and equipment, listed from best to worst:

- MAIN FORCE:** trained and equipped similarly to the NVA.
- CADRE:** only 2 companies per battalion, w/ heavy weapons attached as necessary.
- PROVISIONAL:** Part-time fighters, poorly armed, no RCLs.