

The German Armored Engineer Company

Unlike the American and British Combat Engineers, the Pioniere (or Engineers) of the World War II German Wehrmacht were organized for dual combat missions. In addition to the normal engineer mission of combat support (such as minefield clearance, bridge construction and the erection of fortifications), the German Army engineers were a highly motivated and highly trained assault troop, which considered themselves as the elite of all assault infantry. In many cases, German Pionier-Bataillonen (or Engineer Battalions) were awarded the honorary title of Sturm-Pioniere (Storm or Assault Engineers).

The Pionier-Bataillon of the Panzer-Division was a highly specialized engineer battalion, designed for the effective support of the attacking armored division, with assault bridging, demolition, flame-thrower support and mine laying and clearance capabilities. This battalion was organized with the following sub-units:

Stab, Panzer-Pionier-Btl.	Battalion Staff, Armored Engr. Bn.
Stabskompanie (mot), Pz.Pi.Btl.	Headquarters Company (Motorized)
1. Pionier-Kompanie (mot)	1st Motorized Engineer Company
2. Pionier-Kompanie (mot)	2nd Motorized Engineer Company
3. Pionier-Kompanie (gp.)	3rd Armored Engineer Company
Brucken-Kolone, 60t.	60 ton Bridge Column

The motorized Pionier-Kompanien (the 1st and 2nd Companies) were the construction troops of the battalion; they provided the specialized labor force for the battalion's operations. When the bridges were delivered by the Brucken-Kolone, which was purely a transportation and advisory detachment, the regular engineers of the two motorized companies were employed to erect it. When engineers were needed for minefield laying or removal, these line companies were used, often in front of the leading infantry units. In the infantry role, these two units were usually employed in the defense, holding portions of the defensive positions of the division.

The Panzer-Pionier-Kompanie was the really assault element of the battalion, being equipped with full-armored personnel carriers (Sd.Kfz.251 half-tracks) to carry the engineers forward without exposing the men to enemy small-arms fire. This company was equipped in a similar manner to the other two units, but it had the far more dangerous job of engineer support for the attacking tank and armored infantry units. These armored engineers were truly the elite of all of the German Pioniere, being specialists in armored tactics as well as engineer support.

The Panzer-Pionier-Kompanie illustrated in the chart on the included page was organized under the German Army Tables-of-Organization and Equipment (KStN und KAN) numbered 714; it consisted of three officers, twenty-nine non-commissioned officers and one hundred and eighty-four enlisted men. For weapons, the company had 77 rifles, 96 pistols, 19 sub-machine guns (or machine pistols), with an additional 25 sub-machine guns on board the armored half-tracks, 18 light machine guns (either MG34 or MG42), with an additional 25 on the vehicles, 2 heavy machine guns (mounted on tripods), 2 medium (81mm) mortars and 3 light (20mm) anti-aircraft guns. This imposing array of firepower was more than the usual amount carried by the typical German infantry company. For vehicles, the company had 3 light cars (usually the VW Kubelwagen), 6 Sd.Kfz. 2 Kettenkrader (or tracked motorcycles) generally used for communications duties in Russia, 6 Sd.Kfz. 3 Maultier unarmored half-tracks (converted Opel 3-ton trucks) and 3 Medium Trucks, each towing a trailer to carry engineer equipment and supplies. In addition, the company had 25 armored half-tracks of various types, as listed below:

2 ea	Sd.Kfz. 251/2	Armored 81mm Mortar Carrier
2 ea	Sd.Kfz. 251/3	Armored Communications Vehicle
18 ea	Sd.Kfz. 251/7	Armored Engineer Vehicle w/ bridging equipment
3 ea	Sd.Kfz. 251/17	Armored 20mm Flak Vehicle

In the supplied chart, the vehicle type numbers are shown near the appropriate silhouette, which is an attempt to accurately represent each vehicle type. The personnel carried in each vehicle are listed below the silhouette; please note that not all of the company's platoons are shown, due to space limitations.