The Complete Guide to the Creation & Combat Employment of Germany’s Tank Force • 1943-1945

Formations • Organizations • Tactics
Combat Reports • Unit Strengths • Statistics

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ahead. About 0225 hours, the strong artillery barrage began.
The artillery from our division fired from over 80 tubes. About
0600 hours, a conference was held by the Kampfgruppen
commander, Oberst von Oppeln. The 24-ton bridge that the
Kampfgruppe planned to use had been destroyed by a di-
rect hit from artillery fire. The Kampfgruppe was to cross
over a different bridge in Michailowa. At 1030 hours, the
Kampfgruppe set off in the direction of Michailowa in the
following order: Panzer-Regiment 11 with the armored
Pionier-Zug, the II./Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 114, and
the remainder of the 3.Kompanie/Panzer-Pionier-Bataillon
57. The column stopped before reaching the bridge in
Michailowa. The Kampfgruppe waited until 1700 hours. Then new orders came from the division:
"Kampfgruppe von Oppeln will be sent in along the attack
routes of the 7.Panzer-Division."

About 2000 hours, the Kampfgruppe left Michailowa,
moving through Bjelgorod to the new assembly area south of
Kolonoe-Dubowoje. All of the elements of the Kampfgruppe
arrived in the ordered assembly area by about 0200 hours.
The I./Panzer-Artillerie-Regiment 76 and a Tiger-Kompanie
were attached to the Kampfgruppe.
6 July 1943 - In a forest south of Kolonoje-Dubowoje

The night passed quietly except for enemy air activity.
About 1100 hours, a conference was held by the
Kampfgruppen commander, Oberst von Oppeln. Orders to
attack were given. About 1200 hours, the Kampfgruppe set
out in the following order: Tiger-Kompanie, Panzer-Regi-
ment 11, and II./Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 114. About
1300 hours, the 60-ton bridge was reached. Oberst von
Oppeln drove ahead to get in contact with the bridgehead
commander from the 7.Panzer-Division. About 1430 hours,
the Kampfgruppe formed up in depth and started to attack
in the direction of Generalowka. The Tiger-Kompanie
drove at the point, followed by the Regiments-Stab with Oberst
the right rear, and 8.Kompanie echeloned toward the left rear.
II./Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 114 followed at an interval.
Subjected to the heaviest enemy artillery and tank gun fire,
the Kampfgruppe reached Point 216.1 and Height 207.9. The
6. and the 8.Kompanien supported by Tigers were sent
toward collective farm Szołojew and encountered strong en-
emy resistance. Both Kompanien suffered losses. About
2000 hours, contact was made on the right with the advancing
Panzer-Regiment 25 of the 7.Panzer-Division. During the
night, Kampfgruppe von Oppeln pulled into a hedge-
hog formation on Height 207.9. The objective for the day was
reached.
Results: 7 enemy tanks (of which 6 T34 and 1 T70), 10
anti-tank guns, 1 infantry gun, 3 17.2 cm guns, 1 anti-aircraft
battery of 4 7.62 cm guns, and approximately 120 enemy
dead.

Losses: 8 Panzers from hits, 3 by mines.
7 July 1943 - At Sewrikowo

The night passed quietly. About 0430 hours, Oberst von
Oppeln gave the orders for further attacks on Jastrebowo
and Sewrikowo. At 0730 hours, the Kampfgruppe started to
attack. 7.Kompanie/Panzer-Regiment 11 and the Tiger-
Kompanie drove at the point. After a Stuka attack, the
Kampfgruppe reached Jastrebowo in a quick bound. A large
minefield was spotted and the 3.Kompanie/Panzer-Pionier-
Bataillon 57 cleared a gap. The Kampfgruppe had to pass
through the minefield in single file. Heavy anti-tank and tank
gun fire struck the Kampfgruppe from Sewrikowo and the
right flank. In spite of this, with 7.Kompanie in the lead,
Sewrikowo was reached at about 1100 hours. Both bridges
over the Rasumnaja River were destroyed and there wasn't
a ford available. The Pioniere pulled forward the equipment
needed to build a 24-ton bridge. Russian heavy artillery and
rocket salvos interfered with the Pioniere building the bridge.
II./Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 114 dismounted and built an
infantry bridgehead over the Rasumnaja. The 24-ton bridge
was completed at about 2000 hours. The Kampfgruppe re-
mained in Sewrikowo in order to start an attack across the
Rasumnaja early the next day.

Results: 1 T34, 8 7.62 cm anti-tank guns, 3 17.2 cm guns
with towng vehicles, 12 trucks destroyed or captured.
8 July 1943 - At Sewrikowo

At 0200 hours, Kampfgruppe von Oppeln set off over the
completed 24 ton bridge toward Kampfgruppe Unruein in the
following order: 7., 5., 8., and 6.Kompanien/Panzer-Regi-
mant 11 followed by Artillerie-Abteilung Jahn and
Sturmgeschütze. The Flammpanzer and the leichter Zug
remained behind on guard. The assembly area was on Height
212.1. About 0730 hours, Kampfgruppe von Oppeln set off
to attack Melichowo with the 7.Kompanie/Panzer-Regiment
11 at the point. At first the attack went smoothly forward. Heavy
artillery and rocket salvo fire along with threats to the flanks
from Postnikoff and Kalinina significantly hindered the attack.
An anti-tank trench was encountered 4 kilometers in front of
Melichowo. Pioniere were sent to use explosives to create a
crossing point. The anti-tank trench could be crossed at about
1300 hours. The area behind the anti-tank trench was heavily
mined. Pioniere cleared a gap. The Panzer-Grenadieri
dismounted and fought on foot through terrain that was heavily
occupied by the enemy. Crossing the anti-tank trench with
Panzer went very slowly. Several Panzers ran onto mines.
At Point 218.3, strong enemy anti-tank and tank gun fire was
encountered out of the northwest. Then a short assembly
was made to prepare for the attack on Melichowo. The 8.
and 5.Kompanien/Panzer-Regiment 11 were assigned to
the point. Strong enemy resistance, encountered in

OPPOSITE: Two Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.Gs of the 6.Kompanie/Panzer-
Regiment 11 pulling out of a ravine. (BA)
Melichowo, was very quickly broken by a rapid charge. Here, the Tigers shot up six T34 tanks.

Melichowo was taken at 1600 hours. The attack continued toward Schlachowoje after a short halt. The Tigers and 6.Kompanie/Panzer-Regiment 11 were sent in frontally to tie down the opponent. Strong tank gun fire came out of Schlachowoje. The 5., 7., and 8.Kompanien/Panzer-Regiment 11 attacked Schlachowoje from the west, striking from the northwest side of Melichowo over the road from Dalnaja Igumenka to Schlachowoje toward Point 220. The 5.Kompanie/Panzer-Regiment 11 was sent to screen the left flank. The commander decided to pull into the woods west of Melichowo for the night.

Results: 6 tanks shot up, 19 anti-tank guns destroyed, 2 trucks and 11 towing vehicles captured or destroyed, about 100 enemy dead and 130 prisoners.

9 July 1943 - In forests west of Melichowo

About 0700 hours, Staffel Mueller joined up. Due to the heavy vehicle traffic, the Kampfgruppe received heavy artillery fire. The stationary Panzers of the 6. and 8.Kompanien were spotted in their positions by enemy anti-tank guns and artillery. Several Panzers were hit and set on fire. Several members of the Kampfgruppe were killed or wounded. Due to this unfavorable position, the commander decided to pull back to the forest southwest of Melichowo, leaving behind a Panzer-Zug under Leutnant Arzbruster and two Kompanien of the II./Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 114. This reorganization occurred after nightfall.

10 July 1943 - In forest southwest of Melichowo

The Kampfgruppe remained in a reserve position because it had reached its initial objective and the neighboring division hung back a bit. Only scattered harassing artillery fire.

11 July 1943 - In forest southwest of Melichowo

The planned attack on Olchowatka was delayed because of unfavorable weather. The Tiger-Abteilung under the command of Hauptmann von Kageneck was attached to the Kampfgruppe and the Kampfgruppe was reorganized. Due to the high number of Panzers lost, the II./Panzer-Regiment 11 was consolidated into two Kompanien commanded by Oberleutnant Spiekermann and Oberleutnant Reutemann.

The attack on Olchowatka began at 0300 hours. The Tiger-Abteilung in the lead (which had increased again to 19 operational Tigers), followed by the 8. and 7.Kompanien/Panzer-Regiment 11. After crossing the Dalnaja lumenka to Schlachowoje road, the Abteilung came under strong anti-tank gun fire from Points 220 and 230.3. The Kampfgruppe could only advance very slowly due to the heavily mined area. After reaching Point 230.3, the 8.Kompanie/Panzer-Regiment 11 turned east, drove around the wood lot north of Schlachowoje, and charged toward the northeast into Schlachowoje. Strong enemy resistance was met within Schlachowoje, which was destroyed by energetic blows from the 8.Kompanie/Panzer-Regiment 11 commanded by Oberleutnant Spiekermann.

The Tiger-Abteilung and 7.Kompanie/Panzer-Regiment 11 struck farther toward Olchowatka. The opponent attempted to break up the attack with strong artillery and rocket salvo fire. Except for one delay, the attack went forward smoothly. Heavy enemy resistance was not encountered in Olchowatka itself. After Olchowatka was taken, the Kampfgruppe continued to attack, took Point 224.4, and struck further toward Snamenka. Little enemy resistance was encountered in Snamenka. On Point 223.3, the Kampfgruppe was hit by enemy artillery and rocket salvos. The Kampfgruppe pushed east past Werchne Oly Johanen and with the 8.Kompanie/Panzer-Regiment 11 in the lead broke into Worche Oljchanetz out of the northeast. The village was lightly occupied by the enemy. The 7.Kompanie/Panzer-Regiment 11 reached Point 234.3 and the lead elements encountered an anti-tank trench south of Kasatschje.

A crossing over the anti-tank ditch was scouted by 7.Kompanie/Panzer-Regiment 11 at dusk. Afterward, the Kampfgruppe arrived in Kasatschje toward 2200 hours. The village was lightly occupied by the enemy. It was decided to spend the night in Kasatschje. Oberst von Oppeln gave the order to strike toward Rshawez in order to build a bridgehead over the Ssewernjy Donets. The 7.Kompanie/Panzer-Regiment 11 took the point, followed by the 7.Kompanie/Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 114, 8.Kompanie/Panzer-Regiment 11, the rest of the II./Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 114 and the Tigers. The Kampfgruppe rolled through Kurakowka at 0030 hours without encountering enemy activity. A Russian truck convoy was passed without recognizing their enemy. At 0040 hours, the point, under the command of Leutnant Huchtmann, arrived at the east entrance of Rshawez. In spite of numerous guards, moving convoys, and horse-drawn vehicles, the point passed through Rshawez unrecognized and advanced to the bridge. The integrity of the column was broken when a vehicle broke down. The point led by Leutnant Huchtmann met a column of T34 tanks carrying infantry. An attempt was made to get past the tank column without being recognized. The rest of the Kampfgruppe arrived resulting in a short confusion. A firefight started with the T34 tanks. Five T34 tanks were destroyed in close combat by Major Dr. Baeke and Leutnant Zobel. Altogether, 10 T34 and 1 T70 tanks were destroyed. Further along, four anti-tank gun positions were rolled over, and two rocket launchers and several towing vehicles were destroyed. Rshawez itself was taken. The II./Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 114 crossed over the destroyed bridge and built a bridgehead on the far bank of the Donets.

The I./Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 114 arrived in Rshawez at about 0500 hours and reinforced the bridgehead.

12 July 1943 - In Rshawez

The 7. and 8.Kompanien/Panzer-Regiment 11 took over the defense of Rshawez. A Panzer-Zug, under Oberfeldwebel Parhofer from the 7.Kompanie/Panzer-Regiment, was sent on reconnaissance through Kurakowka toward Point 214 and reported that strong enemy tank forces were in Alexandrowka.
CHAPTER 24: OPERATION ZITADELLE

The Russians attempted to attack Rshewez at about 1800 hours. After three T34 tanks were shot up, the Russians pulled back again.

13 July 1943 - In Rshawez
Elements of the Kampfgruppe remained on guard. The opponent tried to attack the Rschawez bridgehead. Three T34 tanks were shot up. In unsuitable positions, four Panzers were hit and knocked out of action. Heavy losses occurred when our own bombers dropped bombs on Kampfgruppe positions. The Regiment and Kampfgruppe commander Oberst von Oppeln Bronikowski and his adjutant Oberleutnant Guckel were wounded. 13 July was not only a black day for Panzer-Regiment 11 but also for the entire division. After already having been wounded once in the morning, in the forward line Generalmajor von Huenersdorff was again severely wounded when hit in the head. He later died as a result of this severe wound.

Major Dr. Baeke took over command of the Regiment for Oberst von Oppeln and Hauptmann Scheibert took over the Abteilung. About 1800 hours, the Regiment pulled out and moved to a new assembly area near Kurakowka to attack Alexandrowka.

14 July 1943 - At Kurakowka
The attack began at 0700 hours. Sturmgeschuetze and Tigers were attached. The Panzers of the Kampfgruppe were consolidated into one Kompanie. Alexandrowka was taken after the anti-tank ditch was crossed. Strong tank forces and numerous enemy infantry were there. A large number of prisoners were captured. Six T34 and five T60 tanks were destroyed during the battle in addition to numerous infantry weapons. In the evening, the Kampfgruppe took up a defensive line that ran directly west of Alexandrowka.

15 July 1943
On orders from the division, the Kampfgruppe was left to rest and held in reserve for counterstrikes.

16 July 1943
The Kampfgruppe pulled into an assembly area near Point 240, with II./Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 114 to strike forward at about 1700 hours toward Point 222.1 to help the
I./Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 4 to advance. Kompanie Spiekermann encountered strong enemy tank forces on Point 222.1. Two of our own Panzers fell out due to hits. Three Panzers under Leutnant Glosemeyer remained on guard through the night at Point 222.1. All of the wounded found on Point 222.1 were rescued during the night.

17 July 1943

The Russians broke into our positions on Point 241.5. At 0310 hours, Kompanie Schoener started to counterattack accompanied by Sturmgeschütze and II./Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 4. After a short, hard battle, the height was taken by the Sturmgeschütze and II./Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 4. Oberleutnant Schoener remained in reserve and defended toward the east. The Regiment returned to the old assembly area southwest of Point 240, leaving behind a Panzer-Zug on guard at Point 241.5.

An alarm call at 1745 hours. The enemy were reported to be attacking Point 222.1 with tanks.

By 1800 hours, the attack had already been repulsed by the infantry. One Panzer-Zug remained south of Point 222.1 on guard. The rest pulled into an assembly area by the antitank ditch 1 kilometer southwest of Point 240.

At 1830 hours, Generalmajor von Huenersdorff died of his wounds. The Regiment was immediately given the name Panzer-Regiment 11 "von Huenersdorff."

18 July 1943 - At Nowo Oskotschnoje

The situation remained unchanged.

The Regiments command post was moved to the southeast exit of Nowo Oskotschnoje. Major Baeke had the task of overseeing the quick repair of the Panzers located in the Werkstätten. During the night of 18/19 July 1943, at 0200 hours, two companies of Russians attacked Point 222.1. They were thrown back after a short battle and the area of the breakthrough was mopped up.

Results: 1 T34 shot up, about 100 enemy killed.

19 July 1943 - At Kurakowka

Hauptmann Scheibert took over command of the Kampfgruppe consisting of Panzer-Regiment 11, II./Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 114, and the armored elements of Panzer-Pionier-Bataillon 57.

At 0930 hours, a messenger sent to the division received the verbal order to pull back and pull into the main defense line, a line from Olchanetz to the north edge of Nowo Oskotschnoje to Schalokowo to 2 kilometers north of Heimenoje. Infanterie-Regiment 168 was on the right, Infanterie-Regiment 315 on the left.

The Russians strengthened their attacks on the new defense line during the day, sometimes only with infantry forces; sometimes a few tanks also appeared. The hot points in the defense were by the II./Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 4 north of Alexanjewka, Points 241.4 and 231.5, as well as Points 222.1 and 224.3 by the I./Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 4. The occupiers of these points changed frequently. The counterattacks to regain these heights, conducted by Panzer-Züge of the consolidated Kompanie Reutemann, resulted in high losses for the opponent. The opponent finally managed to occupy Points 231.4 and 241.5 after a strong attack supported by 14 T34 tanks and a large number of anti-tank guns in the evening. At the same time, Panzer-Zug Krautwurst (5.Kompanie/Panzer-Regiment 11) shot up a T34 tank at Point 222.1.

In spite of further enemy penetrations threatening to disrupt the planned retirement of the entire division, all available Panzers (except Panzer-Zug Krautwurst and the S.P.W. of the II./Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 6) were sent in to build up a defense line at Point 2 directly west of Alexejewka. After briefly testing this line, the Russians broke off their advance. About 2100 hours, under cover of this defense line, the II./Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 4 broke off contact with the enemy.

At 2115 hours, the rear guard under Hauptmann Scheibert pulled back to the crossroads 1 kilometer west of Kasatschje. Because elements of the division, including Panzer-Zug Krautwurst, were still in contact with the opponent and at night the terrain, cut by numerous ravines presented no possibility for finding ones way back, the rear guard remained at the crossroads by Point 240 until first light.

20 July 1943 - At Kriwzowo

At 0430 hours, the Kampfgruppe under the command of Hauptmann Scheibert arrived in Kriwzowo. The day was occupied in repairing vehicles. About 1700 hours, the command post was moved to the north exit of Sabynio. Here they awaited the return of Major Baeke.

The night passed quietly with the exception of light harassing fire by enemy artillery.

Results: 2 antitank guns, 1 T34 tank, and 2 anti-aircraft guns destroyed and about 150 enemy killed.

In spite of General Guderian's advice that Tigers should be employed concentrated in a schwere Panzer-Abteilung, on 4 July 1943, one schwere Panzer-Kompanie from the schwere Panzer-Abteilung 503 was attached to each of the 6., 7., and 9.Panzer-Divisions. On 6 July 1943, the commander of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 503, Hauptmann Graf Kageneck, reported the problems with mines and poor tactical handling that his scattered unit was encountering:

III.Panzer-Korps reported the loss of 13 Tigers in one Kompanie that had started out with 14 Tigers on the morning of 5 July 1943. Nine Tigers fell out due to mine damage. It would take two or three days to repair each one of them.

The reasons for this extraordinarily high loss rate from mines was:

1. From the start, there wasn't a single map available showing the location of mines that had been laid by the German units in front of the bridgehead. Two completely contradictory mine plans were available, and both were incorrect. Therefore, two Tigers ran onto our own mines directly after setting off. Another two Tigers hit mines during further ad-
vances across terrain that was shown on the map to be free
of mines.

2. Mine clearing was sloppily conducted, so that three
additional Tigers fell out due to mines after being shown sup­
posedly mine-free gaps.

And yet again on the morning of 5 July, two trucks from
Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 74 hit mines on a road declared
to be clear of mines. After this, 120 mines were lifted from an
area shown on the map to be free of mines.

3. The eighth Tiger drove onto enemy mines directly in
front of the enemy positions even though he was
directed by
Plonlere that had already gone ahead.

The ninth Tiger ran onto mines when it attempted to move
into position against an enemy tank attack reported on the
left flank.

Counter to the original plan, in which the Tigers were to
advance in direct contact with Panzer-Grenadiere and di­
rectly behind the mine-detecting sections of Plonlere, the
Tigers were actually sent out in front of the Grenadiere and
Plonlere. By the evening of 5 July, four Tigers stood 50 to 80

meters in front of the infantry elements.

Eight Tigers fell out for two or three days as a result of
carelessness or tactically incorrect employment. Therefore,
during this period they were not available for their actual
purpose, fighting enemy tanks and heavy weapons.

The cause of losses during their first three days in action
were reported by schwere Panzer-Abteilung 503 on 8 July
1943 as follows:

39 Tigers started out on 5 July. An additional 5 Tigers
were operational by 6 July. During the period from 5 through
8 July, a total of 34 Tigers fell out, requiring repairs that would
take over eight hours (7 were hit, 16 were damaged by mines,
and 9 broke down mechanically). Two burned-out Tigers were
total write-offs. Up to now, 22 Tigers have been repaired. At
1200 hours on 8 July 1943 the Tiger situation was: 33 opera­
tional, 8 requiring short-term (up to 8 days) repairs, 2 requir­
ing long term (over 8 days) repairs, and 2 written off as total
losses.