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# Fallschirmjäger

**German Paratroopers  
from Glory to Defeat 1939 - 1945**

I.M. Baxter & Ronald Volstad



**CONCORD**  
PUBLICATIONS COMPANY



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## German Paratroopers from Glory to Defeat 1939-1945

Text by I.M. Baxter

Edited by Tom Cogle

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# Introduction

Germany's airborne troops, or Fallschirmjäger, were developed through the 1930's as an elite force trained in warfare tactics that set them apart from other branches of the Reich's armed forces. Landing suddenly and without warning on the field of battle by parachute or in specially designed gliders, they provided the means by which specific objectives could be captured in the enemies rear areas and held until relieved by the main body of the attacking force. After the battle for Crete, this band of men were seldom used as parachutists, fighting instead as elite infantry and frequently being given tasks that brought their combat abilities to the very limits of their skill and endurance.

In their daring campaigns in Western Europe, Scandinavia, Crete, Italy, and the first trying days of the Normandy landings, the Fallschirmjäger fought with distinction and honor, despite heavy casualties. Often on the point of complete destruction they regrouped and continued to fight with heroism right to the last days of the Reich. Their loyalty to their unit and comrades and tenacity on the battlefield earned them the respect of both friend and foe alike.

## Poland, Denmark and Norway

When the Wehrmacht attacked Poland in September 1939, Generalmajor Kurt Student's Fallschirmjäger regiments were assigned several tasks including the capture of a bridge over the Vistula and occupation of some airfields located between there and the Bug River. It was here that they took their first casualties. Both Student and his men were disappointed that they had not been utilized in the role for which they had trained so long and hard, but Hitler assured him they would soon get their chance.

Student finally got his chance on 9 April 1940 with the invasion of Denmark and Norway. 4.Kompanie of I./FJR 1, under the command of Hauptmann Gericke, was ordered to capture the strategic bridge at Stoerstrom, linking the islands of Falster and Seeland, and the Aalborg Airport. The surprised Danish troops defending the bridge quickly surrendered.

The operation in Norway was not to prove as easy. Oberleutnant von Brandis, commander of 3.Kompanie, was assigned the task of capturing the airfield at Stavenger-Sola, where stiff opposition was encountered from its defenders. Only after reinforcements were brought in by Ju-52 transports was the airfield finally secured. At Oslo-Fornebu, Hauptmann Walther's 2.Kompanie was prevented from landing by fog and were preceded in their attack by air landed infantry. After the fog had lifted, the men of 2.Kompanie were able to drop in and join the fight securing the airfield later that day. The Fallschirmjäger were also to suffer their first taste of defeat when, on 14 April, 1.Kompanie under Oberleutnant Schmidt was parachuted into the Gudbrandsdal Valley 90 miles north of Oslo to intercept British forces aimed at relieving Trondheim. After four days of continuous fighting during which they suffered severe casualties, they were forced to surrender when their ammunition ran out.

## The Assault on Eben-Emael

For the Wehrmacht's forthcoming invasion of Belgium and Holland, Student's 7.Flieger-Division and 22.Luftlande-Division were chosen to capture a series of fortifications along the Belgian border along with neutralizing the Dutch high command in The Hague and the capture of several strategic bridges. The most dangerous of these objectives was the huge fortress of Eben-Emael in Belgium, constructed 45m (150 feet) above the west bank of the Albert Canal alongside the River Maas and considered at the time to be impregnable. A special unit called 'Sturmabteilung Koch' (Assault Group Koch) after its commander Hauptmann Walter Koch, was formed to capture it and three nearby bridges. Consisting of one company from each of I. and II./FJR 1 and a glider group, the force numbered nearly 500 men. They were split into four sections each with a specific objective. Group 'Eisen' (Iron) under

Leutnant Schächter was assigned the Canne bridge, Group 'Beton' (Concrete) under Leutnant Schacht the Vroenhoven bridge and Group 'Stahl' (Steel) under Oberleutnant Altmann the Veldwezelt bridge. For the attack on Eben-Emael itself, Leutnant Rudolf Witzig commanded Group 'Granit' (Granite) which was assigned to seize the fortress with 85 men landing in 11 DFS230 gliders.

At 0520 in the early morning of 10 May 1940 the glider pilots set down on the roof of the fortress. In an instant the paratroopers plunged into action with flame-throwers, demolition charges and hollow charge grenades. While machine gun fire and shells burst around them, the explosive charges were planted and set, blasting huge holes in the sides of the cupolas and concrete walls. Minutes later, 7 casemates and 14 guns were out of action. Fighting continued throughout the day until, on the morning of 11 May, reinforcements arrived and shortly after the Belgians surrendered.

By late afternoon the battle was over and the Fallschirmjäger had conquered one of the strongest fortifications in the world. In total, nearly one thousand officers and men surrendered. Casualties in Witzig's 'Granit' Group amounted to 20 wounded and 6 killed.

Groups 'Beton' and 'Stahl' also managed to achieve their objectives, however the Belgians demolished the Canne bridge as Group 'Eisen' approached the landing zone. In the ensuing battle, its commander, Leutnant Schächter was killed.

## Cracking 'Fortress Holland'

The performance of the paratroopers in Belgium was equally matched with the skill and courage of airborne units attacking 'Fortress Holland'. Key airfields and bridges in an area that contained the cities of Amsterdam, Utrecht, Rotterdam and Dordrecht, were the targets of 2,000 troops of 7.Flieger-Division and 12,000 troops of 22.Luftlande-Division. Although the Dutch forces had been alerted to the invasion and stiff resistance was encountered from an army determined to defend its country, the Fallschirmjäger's skillful deployment and battle tactics ensured the successful capture of all its objectives. Over the city of Rotterdam, bewildered and confused inhabitants watched in horror as German paratroopers landed in the football stadium, and then quickly advanced to capture the Meuse bridge. The Moerdijk and Dordrecht bridges were captured intact and held in the face of heavy resistance. After two days the leading Panzers of Kuechler's 18.Armee reached the Moerdijk bridge - 'Fortress Holland' had been cracked. On the last day of battle, an unfortunate incident occurred in which General Student was severely wounded in the head, putting him out of action for several months.

During the following months under General Putzier, who had assumed command of 7.Flieger-Division when General Student was wounded, the Fallschirmjäger went through several organizational changes. Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 3 (FJR 3) was formed and 'Sturmabteilung Koch' was expanded into the Fallschirmjäger-Sturmregiment (FJStR). By January 1941, Student had recovered from his wounds and returned to assume command of the newly constituted XI.Fliegerkorps, which included 7.Flieger-Division (FJR 1, FJR 2 and FJR 3), 22.Luftlande-Division and FJStR. A newly formed glider wing and two wings of transport aircraft were also allotted to the formation.

## The Corinth Canal

In October 1940, the Italians attacked Greece from neighboring Albania. Initially, the Greek Army held the Italians at bay, even winning back some lost territory and sending the Italians into retreat. In March 1941, the Empire Expeditionary Force consisting of British, Australian and New Zealand troops, was sent to help bolster the Greek defenses. Seeing that the war in the Balkans was not going well for the Italians, Hitler was forced to intervene on their behalf. In April the German Army attacked



Greece and by the end of the month the Allies were in full retreat down the Greek peninsula. Their principal escape route was across a single bridge over the Corinth Canal west of Athens that linked the Aegean and Ionian Seas. If the bridge could be captured before they got there, the Allied forces would be trapped. FJR 2 was given the task of capturing the bridge.

The attack began at dawn on 26 April with a small force of paratroopers commanded by Leutnant Hans Teusen, landing on both ends of the bridge. Their mission was to hold the bridge until the remainder of FJR 2 could be safely landed. All gliders except one landed without loss and the paratroopers quickly overran the British guards and began removing demolition charges. During a counterattack, a stray British shell managed to hit the stacked charges detonating them in a huge explosion, demolishing the bridge and killing many of the paratroopers. Shortly after, II./FJR 2 landed and pursued the retreating British troops to the south, persuading a large number of them to surrender. Meanwhile, I./FJR 2 landed on the north side eventually capturing 10,000 British and Greek soldiers. German losses amounted to 63 killed and 174 wounded.

### Operation Merkur

The attack on Crete in May 1941 stands as the single most defining action undertaken by the Fallschirmjäger during World War Two. It was also to be their last major airborne operation. The island of Crete posed a problem for the Germans in the Mediterranean as it provided a base from which Allied bombers could strike the oil refineries in Ploesti, Romania which supplied over half of Germany's petroleum needs.

Codenamed Operation 'Merkur' (Mercury), the assault would utilize all available airborne forces with the exception of 22.Luftlande-Division that had been sent to guard Ploesti. The attack began on 20 May 1941 and consisted of nearly 13,000 paratroopers and glider troops from 7.Flieger-Division and the Luftlande-Sturm-Regiment (LLStR), formerly the Fallschirmjäger-Sturmregiment, along with 9,000 mountain troops from 5.Gebirgs-Division transported in 502 Junkers Ju-52s and 85 DFS230 gliders. Unknown to the Germans, British intelligence had broken their Ultra code and was routinely reading German radio intercepts. The defenders knew they were coming. In addition, the German Abwehr had underestimated Allied strength on the island.

The attack force was separated into three battle groups named 'West', 'Center' and 'East' and carried out in two waves. The first wave included LLStR from 'Group West' and FJR 3 from 'Group Center', descending on Maleme airfield and Canea with the transport planes then returning to pick up the second wave. The second wave was to involve an assault on the airfields at Rethymnon by FJR 2, also from 'Group Center' and Heraklion by FJR 1 from 'Group East'. As the armada of aircraft flew over Crete, down below nearly 27,500 British and Commonwealth troops and 14,000 Greek troops had already been alerted by a series of large-scale dive-bombing attacks carried out by some 280 bombers, 150 Stukas and 200 fighters. As lumbering transports droned overhead leaving thousands of blossoming parachutes in their wake, soldiers on the ground began firing desperately and as fast as they could with all weapons into the skies above. Hundreds of paratroopers were killed before they hit the ground and all over the drop zones bodies were found hanging from branches or caught in undergrowth, their rigging snarled in the branches. Others never even made it to their objectives for they were dropped over the sea.

By nightfall on the first day 'Group West' had taken some of their objectives, but had still not secured the airfield at Maleme. Many German commanders had already been killed or injured, including Generalleutnant Süßmann who was killed when his glider crashed and Generalmajor Meindl and Major Koch who were seriously wounded.

The second wave suffered a setback right from the start. The time allowed for refueling was inadequate and the dust slowed down takeoff and landing operations resulting in them being committed to battle in small groups instead of one large wave as had been planned. To complicate matters even more, the Royal Navy intercepted the ragtag fleet of Greek

fishing boats carrying the first elements of 5.Gebirgs-Division and sent most of them to the bottom.

Despite numerous blunders made during the drops, the paratroops gradually seized their objectives after which they broke up and destroyed the strong enemy defense positions that stretched nearly 260 kilometers. By 27 May, with most of the demoralized Allies having already retreated or evacuated from the island, the Fallschirmjäger captured the town and airfield at Heraklion without much resistance.

In spite of the tremendous victory, Hitler was shocked by the losses. Afterwards, he told Student 'Crete has shown that the days of the paratrooper are finished' feeling that paratroopers are a weapon of surprise and the surprise factor has been lost. German losses were 3,250 dead and missing and 3,400 wounded compared to Allied losses in dead and wounded of around 2,500 and another 10,000 prisoners. Although Student thought that Crete would serve as a starting point for bigger and bolder operations, the start of the Russian campaign in June 1941 had relegated the Mediterranean to lesser importance. Instead, over the next months the paratroopers would be utilized in ground operations as an elite infantry force rather than as an airborne assault group.

### North Africa

The first Fallschirmjäger to see action in North Africa was a small force of 614 men from Fallschirm-Lehr-Bataillon. Kampfgruppe 'Burckhardt' under Major Burckhardt arrived in Tripoli in early January 1942. After a four-day journey by truck they arrived at the front lines in time to join Rommel's newly formed Panzerarmee Afrika in their counter offensive that drove the British Eighth Army back to Cyrenaica. They remained in North Africa until late March when they were transported back to Italy via Maleme in Crete.

In July 1942, Fallschirmjäger-Brigade Ramcke under the command of Generalmajor Bernhard Ramcke arrived and was immediately placed in a static defense position in the front lines near El Alamein. The harsh conditions did not agree with the men and contributed to their disenchantment at having their highly trained, elite force wasted in the desert. In October when General Montgomery launched his offensive, the Brigade was cut off without any transport. In a remarkable feat of arms, 600 men fought their way back across 200 miles of open desert using captured British transport.

As Rommel's armies gradually retreated west, FJR 5 was flown to Tunis from Naples in November 1942 in response to the Allied landings in North Africa. They continued to fight alongside the remnants of Fallschirmjäger-Brigade 'Ramcke' until the surrender of the Axis forces on 13 May 1943 at which time most of them were marched into captivity.

### Sicily and Italy

On 10 July 1943, Operation Husky, the Allied invasion of Sicily began. Opposing the 180,000 troops of 15th Army Group were two Italian Army corps and some 30,000 troops of XIV.Panzer-Korps. To reinforce them, FJR 3 and I. and III./FJR 4 were parachuted and transported to the German positions near Catania between 12 and 14 July where they were immediately engaged against the British 1st Parachute Brigade. During the bitter struggle that followed, the Fallschirmjäger were forced to gradually withdraw along with the balance of the German forces and were among the last troops to be evacuated to the Italian mainland in mid-August.

As the fortunes of war continued to go against the Italians, discontent with the Fascist government grew among the population. Mussolini was arrested in July and control of the government was turned over to Marshal Badoglio who immediately began secret negotiations for an armistice that came into effect on 8 September. Germany responded by sending 2.FJD and 3.Panzergranadier-Division to Rome to assist in disarming the Italian garrison. The situation had already worsened when the British Eighth Army landed at Reggio di Calabria on 3 September and was then followed by the U.S. Fifth Army at Salerno on 9 September 1943. In an amazing



operation staged on 12 September, a small group of paratroops from 1.Kompanie of Fallschirm-Lehr-Bataillon, supported by 40 Waffen-SS commandos under SS-Hauptsturmführer Otto Skorzeny, landed in 12 DFS230 gliders on the summit of the Gran Sasso, a mountain retreat northeast of Rome where Mussolini was being held. No resistance was offered and Mussolini was quickly whisked away in a Feiseler Storch accompanied by Skorzeny. The German propaganda machine made the most of the daring feat however, it was Skorzeny's SS who received most of the credit.

The Allied advance continued steadily up the Italian peninsula and by the end of 1943 had reached the small town of Cassino located on the confluence of the Liri, Rapido and Garigliano Rivers. 1.Fallschirmjäger-Division was assigned the task of defending this part of the 'Gustav Line' utilizing I. and II./FJR 1 and III./FJR 3. Dominated by an ancient Benedictine monastery at its summit, Monte Cassino would become synonymous with courage for the men of 1.FJD. Unable to make any headway, the Allies bombed the Monastery on 15 February 1944 but the rubble only provided the German defenders with excellent cover and made the position more difficult to take. They endured almost five long months of bitter fighting as they refused to budge from the ruins of the monastery and the town of Cassino below. When the Poles finally took Monte Cassino, the remnants of 1.FJD were able to successfully disengage and escape north towards Rome.

On 22 January 1944, the Allies staged an amphibious landing in the Anzio-Nettuno area to try and get around and in behind the German defenses on the 'Gustav Line'. To counter this threat, the newly formed 4.Fallschirmjäger-Division, made up of FJR 10, 11 and 12, was rushed into battle and contained the Allied beachhead for several weeks while inflicting heavy losses.

As the German Army withdrew north through the autumn of 1944, 1.FJD and 4.FJD continued to fight a series of delaying actions notably in Florence and the Futa Pass before falling back to Bologna in early 1945. The Allies opened up a major offensive to take Bologna on 9 April 1945, quickly pushing the German troops back. As the end approached and with their defenses collapsing all around, German forces in Italy surrendered on 2 May 1945.

### The Eastern Front

Fresh from their mauling in Crete, 7.Flieger-Division was returned to Germany to rest and refit instead of taking part in Operation 'Barbarossa', the German invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941. In September they received orders to be flown to the Leningrad sector, where Army Group North had laid the city under siege, and were immediately thrown into the battle. Here, they were committed piecemeal from one crisis to the next, often in company, battalion or regiment strength, earning them the name 'The Führers Firemen'. Through one of the worst winters on record, they held their positions until relieved and sent back to Germany in December. Operations were also carried out in the Ukraine by I. and II./FJR 2 during this time.

In early February 1942, a small battle group under Generalmajor Meindl was sent to the area around Vyasma, east of Smolensk and then north to the Leningrad sector. During May, the Soviets launched an attack on Army Group North with General Morozov's 11th Red Army and General Vlasov's Second Shock Army that FJR 2 took the full force of before they were stopped.

Later in the year, an airborne operation was planned in support of the summer offensive into the Caucasus, however it was called off at the last minute and the men returned to the front lines as infantry. They were now facing another winter on the Russian Front.

The winter months were to prove to be relatively peaceful for the Fallschirmjäger primarily due to the Soviet preoccupation with the battle then raging around Stalingrad. In March 1943, 1.Fallschirmjäger-Division

successfully repulsed an attack by Marshal Timoshenko's forces around Smolensk. No Fallschirmjäger units took part in the great Kursk battle in July 1943, however 2.FJD was deployed to the area around Zhitomir in late November in support of 1.SS-Panzer-Division. By mid-December they were in action again in the Kirovgrad area.

This pattern continued throughout 1944 as the decimated Fallschirmjäger units were desperately moved from one hot spot to another in an attempt to plug holes in the German Army's faltering defenses, all the time being slowly pushed closer to the Reich's borders. By 1945, only remnants of 9.FJD and 10.FJD were left on the Eastern Front, some of whom fought their last battle in Berlin itself. Of those captured, few returned to Germany after the war.

### The Western Front

When the Allies finally landed on the shores of Normandy on 6 June 1944, FJR 6 under Major von der Heydte was one of the very first German units to engage the U.S. 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions around Carentan. 3.FJD, 5.FJD and FJR 15 were rushed to Normandy as reinforcements. In the fierce battles that followed 1./FJR 6 was virtually destroyed. For a month the battle raged in and around the bocage while the Allies built up their strength on the beaches. On 27 July, Operation Cobra was launched towards St. Lô crushing all German resistance in its path while the British and Canadians advanced towards Falaise. As Patton's Third Army swept around the German positions, they began a desperate withdrawal to avoid being encircled. When the pincers closed in mid-August, among the many German divisions trapped were 3.FJD, 5.FJD and what remained of FJR 6. To the south in Brittany, the rest of General Ramcke's 2.FJD consisting of FJR 2 and FJR 7, were concentrated around the German naval base at Brest. As the U.S. Army's VIIIth Corps advanced south, these units were eventually surrounded finally surrendering on 20 September with General Ramcke himself becoming a prisoner.

By September, the German front lines had been pushed back into Belgium. Several new units were being formed and decimated units reformed to create 1.Fallschirmarmee under General Student that was located near Eindhoven in the Netherlands. When paratroopers from the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division landed around Nijmegen and the 101st Airborne Division at Eindhoven during Operation Market Garden on 17 September, they were in an excellent position to oppose them. Their resistance gained them a little time but it was not long before they were pushed back over the border and were now fighting on their home ground.

The last airborne operation the Fallschirmjäger would undertake in the war was during the Ardennes Offensive when a battle group under Oberstleutnant von der Heydte was assigned the mission of parachuting in north of Malmédy to hold the road against Allied reinforcements. Treacherous weather and inexperienced pilots created havoc and only ten percent of the force was dropped near the target. Initially, von der Heydt was able to gather only about 125 men though the size of his force eventually swelled to over 300. Meeting stiffer resistance than expected and short of supplies, he disbanded his troops in groups of 3-4 and with orders to make their way back to German lines on 20 December. Injured in the drop, von der Heydte surrendered to the Americans at Monschau a couple of days later. Other Fallschirmjäger units to see action in the Ardennes were 3.FJD and 5.FJD.

Scattered remnants of Hitler's once vaunted Fallschirmjäger Regiments that had brought Germany string of victories during the early part of the war, continued to fight in the final defense of the Reich until they were gradually overrun and surrendered. On 2 May 1945 the Fallschirmjäger received its last Order of the Day by Generalleutnant Richard Heidrich: 'We have done our duty to the end, and we do not feel we have been defeated. Keep your Fallschirmjäger Spirit! Even if we have to undergo a temporary separation, we remain a single entity. Each of you must know that the darkest hour of our people demands mainly dignity. Remember our dead comrades - those who died for us all.'





Although Germany had already formed a small parachute force in the early 1930s, it was successful Russian demonstrations of an airborne assault, observed by members of the German general staff, that provided the inspiration for an expanded Fallschirmjäger unit with the name 'Regiment Herman Göring' on 1 April 1935. On 29 January 1936, this was officially changed to 'General Göring Regiment' with the first battalion commanded by Major Bruno Bräuer. Here several German officers observe an early demonstration of an airborne exercise on 4 October 1936 in Lower Saxony.



Fallschirmjäger board a Ju-52/3m transport during training. The JU-52 was the standard transport aircraft of the Luftwaffe and as such, was used as in this role as well as for towing gliders and air landing operations. The men are wearing the first model jump smock in olive green that featured shorter legs with elasticized ends, two full length zippers on the front and a short standing collar. The trousers are also first model and have a full flap with three press-studs on the gravity knife pocket on the right leg.

Initially, Fallschirmjäger were recruited primarily from volunteers who were subjected to a grueling eight week training course to prepare them for the combat duties that would be expected of them. The first half of the course provided for basic training and the second half was devoted to parachute instruction. By the end of this training, the recruit would have completed six successful jumps, after which he would be awarded his wings. Here, recruits are learning the art of controlling their descent under the guidance of a Luftwaffe Feldwebel instructor.



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A paratrooper checks the static line on his comrade's parachute. He is wearing the newer second model olive green jump smock that had longer legs with a press-stud that allowed the legs to be gathered tightly. It also featured a normal stand and fall collar that could be worn open or closed. His helmet is an early variant with a slot cut into the lower front edge. It has the Luftwaffe eagle decal on the left side and, judging from the helmet on the paratrooper on the left, the three-color national shield on the right side as well. Note the first model jump smock worn by the paratrooper on the left with the elasticized legs and two full-length zippers.



A paratrooper attaches his static line to the anchor line running the length of the fuselage inside a Ju-52 transport. He is wearing the second model jump smock and M38 double decal helmet. This photo also shows the special dark brown or black leather paratrooper gauntlet gloves being worn.



Fallschirmjäger jump from Heinkel He-111 bombers during training. As there was no side door on this type of aircraft, the jump had to be made through a hatch in the floor of the fuselage. This resulted on one occasion in the hapless man's parachute snagging on the tail wheel. Miraculously, he was rescued when an open cockpit Dornier Do-23, also being used for training jumps, flew below him and the crew hauled him in to safety. Close formation flying such as exhibited here was extremely difficult under combat conditions when faced by anti-aircraft and machine gun fire.

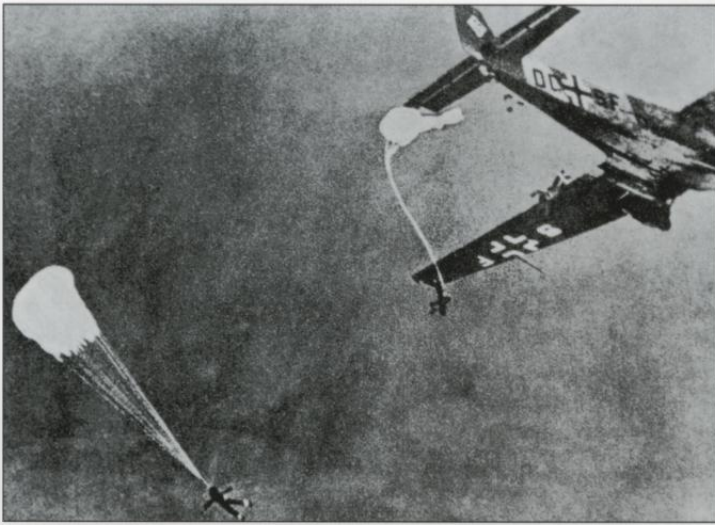


This photograph illustrates the difference between the British and American style of parachute with its two sets of shrouds compared to the German parachute with a single shroud. This arrangement permitted the paratrooper to hang upright and provided him with some measure of navigation and control by pulling on the shrouds. The German RZ 1 parachute was based on an Italian design with one shroud attached to single point behind the shoulders. As a result, the paratrooper had very little control during descent. This was not rectified until late in the war with the introduction of the RZ 36.

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Fallschirmjäger jumping from a Ju-52 in an early training photograph. The paratrooper was required to launch himself vertically from the doorway. The nine-meter long static line pulled open the parachute pack deploying the parachute, which then brought the man to a bone-jarring stop when the shrouds had completely deployed. Once he had made six successful parachute jumps, he was awarded the parachute badge - an insignia featuring a gilt diving eagle clutching a swastika and framed by a silver oval wreath. With this proudly pinned to his tunic, only then could he call himself a real Fallschirmjäger.



Probably the most well known personality in the Fallschirmjäger was former world heavyweight boxing champion, Max Schmeling, a member of FJR 3, seen here on the left with a comrade after a training jump. Both are wearing an early version of the second model jump smock, often referred to as the 'jump school smock', that had no pockets. Schmeling was incorrectly reported to have been killed in Crete, but he survived the war and became an executive with Coca-Cola in Germany.



Fallschirmjäger enjoy a meal break during training prior to the outbreak of World War II. They are all wearing the second model olive green jump smock and at least two of them are equipped with a small handsaw in a black leather sheath hung from their belts. Three models of jump helmet can be seen. The man kneeling down in front is wearing the standard M38 pattern while the two men laying down in front have modified M35 helmets with slots punched in the lower rim in two different locations. Note as well the two different types of chin straps.



The design of the German parachute harness restricted the amount of equipment the paratrooper could carry with him during a jump. Special containers, called Waffenhälter, were used to carry weapons, equipment, medical supplies, food and anything else that would be needed during an assault. They were parachuted along with the men. Inevitably, the men and their supplies were frequently scattered resulting in the unnecessary loss of life while the men attempted to reach their weapons. This was especially true in Crete where well armed British troops were waiting on the ground.





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A paratrooper equipped with the RZ 1 parachute pack. He is wearing the first model olive green jump smock and modified M35 jump helmet with a slot punched in the rim above his ear. The static line in his left hand automatically opened the parachute when it reached its full length of nine meters enabling a lower drop altitude than the manually operated ripcords used by aviators.



A youthful Gefreiter, clutching his static line in his left hand, poses in his second model olive green jump smock and RZ 1 parachute harness in the autumn of 1939. The elasticized cuffs on his dark brown or black paratrooper gauntlet gloves are well illustrated here.



Paratroopers of 1./FJR 1 parade in Berlin on Hitler's birthday, 20 April 1939. They are in parade dress with their Fliegerbluse, white shirt and black tie under an early second model jump smock without pockets, second model trousers with tapered flap on the right leg and normal marching boots. They are also equipped with the rare, early style of K98 ammunition bandoleer with the small pull-tabs. Trapezoidal and rounded flaps were more common on later versions.



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Paratroopers load a Junkers Ju-52 with canvas carrying bags (Bekleidungssack) containing their folded parachutes. In the early 1930s, German parachute design was developed by the Technical Equipment Division of the German Air Ministry and resulted in the RZ 1 (Rückenpackung Zwangauslösung 1). The improved RZ 16 was introduced in early 1940 following reports of oscillation and some fatalities due to static line malfunctions. In 1941, the RZ 20 was brought into service and continued to be used until the end of the war.



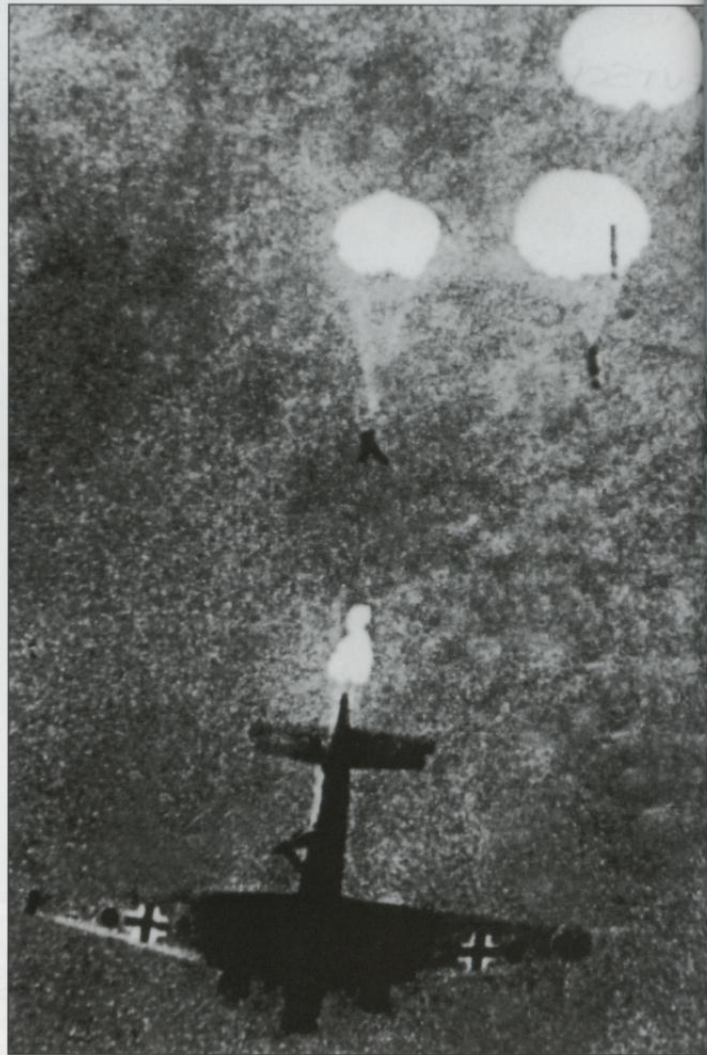


## Poland, Denmark and Norway



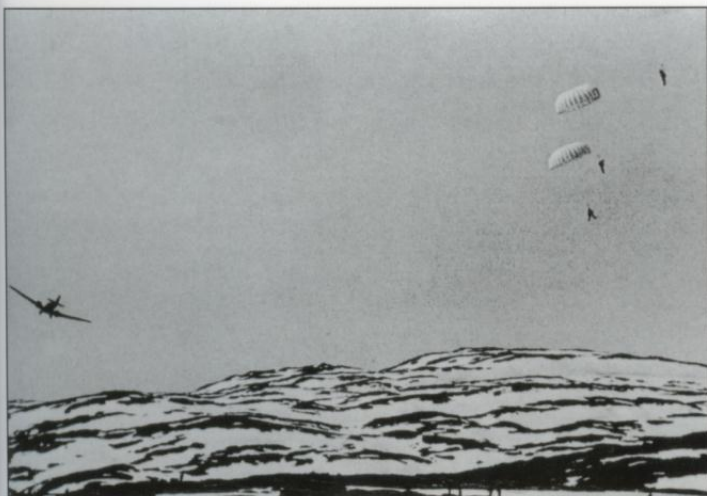
A Fallschirmjäger dives headlong out of a Ju-52 transport over Norway on 9 April 1940, his static line still connected to his parachute. Training jumps normally took place around 250m (820 ft.), however during combat situations, this was usually reduced to as little as 150m (500 ft.)

Paratroops from I./FJR 1 jump from a Junkers Ju-52 transport. On 14 April 1940, Oberleutnant Herbert Schmidt's 1.Kompanie parachuted into the Gudbrandsdal Valley near Dombas after British troops had landed at the small fishing port of Aandalsnes. Here, they held the city for six days preventing the British from advancing south towards Oslo.



With the invasion of Denmark and Norway on 9 April 1940, General Kurt Student's Fallschirmjäger took part in the first major paratrooper operation of the war that would utilize the elite tactics his men were trained for. Various aircraft acted in support or escort roles such as this Junkers Ju-88 heading for Narvik and strafing by Messerschmidt Me-110's at the Fornebu airbase at Oslo assisted in airlanding operations by Junkers Ju-52's there.





Another photo of I./FJR 1 jumping near Narvik. On 14 May 1940, the reformed 1.Kompanie was dropped in to support General Eduard Dietl's 3.Gebirgs-Division which was in danger of being cut off by British and Norwegian troops who had landed near there in mid-April.



On 9 April 1940, paratroopers from Hauptmann Gericke's 4./FJR 1 were assigned to capture the Stoerstrom Bridge connecting the islands of Seeland and Falster on the route to Copenhagen as well as the Aalborg Airport in northern Denmark. This photograph clearly illustrates the single shroud on the German RZ 1 parachute.

## The Low Countries

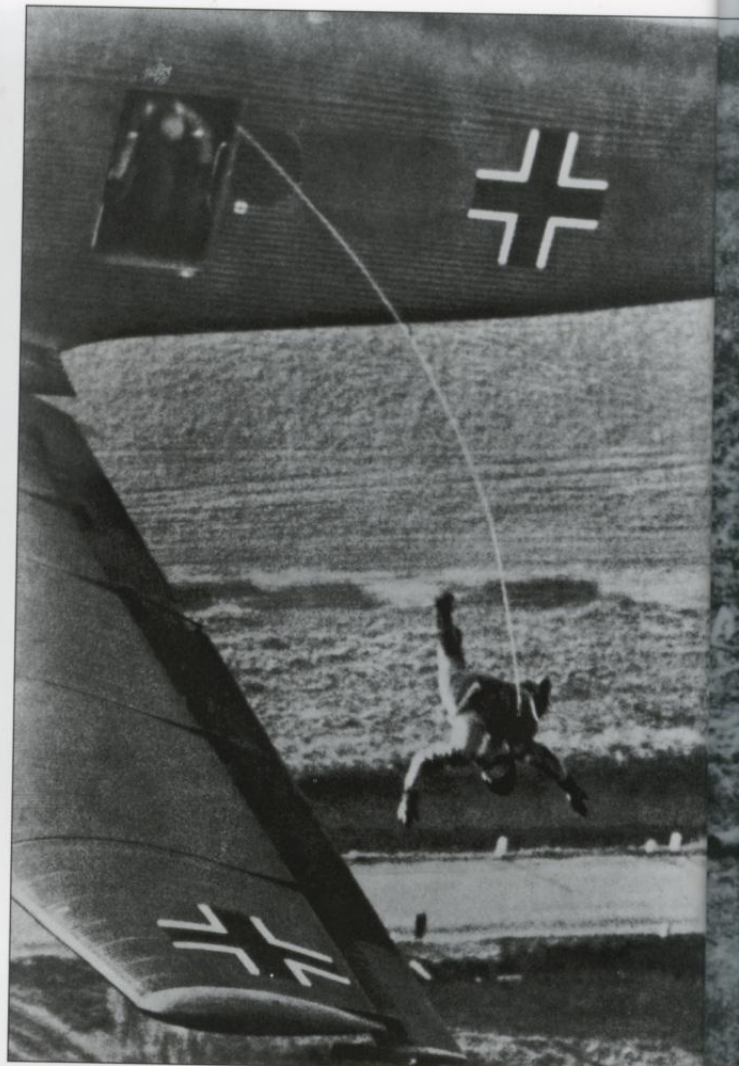
At dawn on 10 May 1940, about 2,000 Fallschirmjäger of General Kurt Student's 7.Flieger-Division combined with 12,000 men of General Graf von Sponeck's newly formed 22.Luftlande-Division, under command of General Albert Kesselring's Luftflotte.2, began the mighty attack that was to begin the subjugation of Europe. While the Luftwaffe raided airfields and towns in Holland and Belgium, Student's paratroopers and von Sponeck's airborne infantry began dropping and landing from hundreds of aircraft.



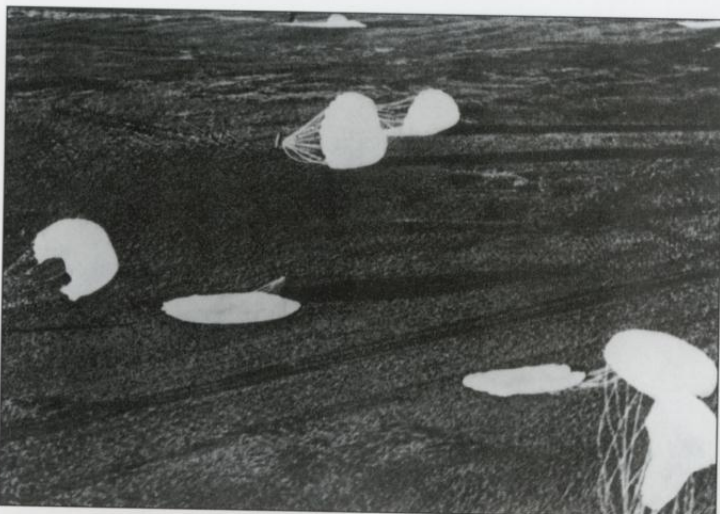




Three Junkers Ju-52 transports release their Fallschirmjäger over the Netherlands on 10 May 1940. Their main objectives were the bridges at Moerdijk and Dordrecht and key airfields. It was the largest airborne action ever undertaken, deploying over 14,000 men.



In the preparatory jump position, with feet wide apart on the aircraft door ledge and hands clinging to rails either side of the door, the paratrooper braced himself, waiting for the instruction to jump. Then in an instant, he flung himself out headfirst into a vertical diving position then falling in a spread-eagle posture waiting for the static line to deploy his parachute. Within seconds, the parachute unfurled and the paratrooper dropped towards his landing zone. Up above him, other men followed this same procedure in rapid succession. The German paratrooper is leaving a plane over Holland on 10 May 1940.



Paratroopers landing near a vital aerodrome during the invasion of Holland. The Fallschirmjäger seized Waalhaven, Valkenburg and many other smaller airfields on 10 May 1940. On some aerodromes the weight of the enemy fire had become so intense that the paratroopers were unable to retrieve their weapon containers. It was not until they had consolidated into a force sufficiently strong enough with supporting arms that they managed to punch their way through and overcome the opposition.



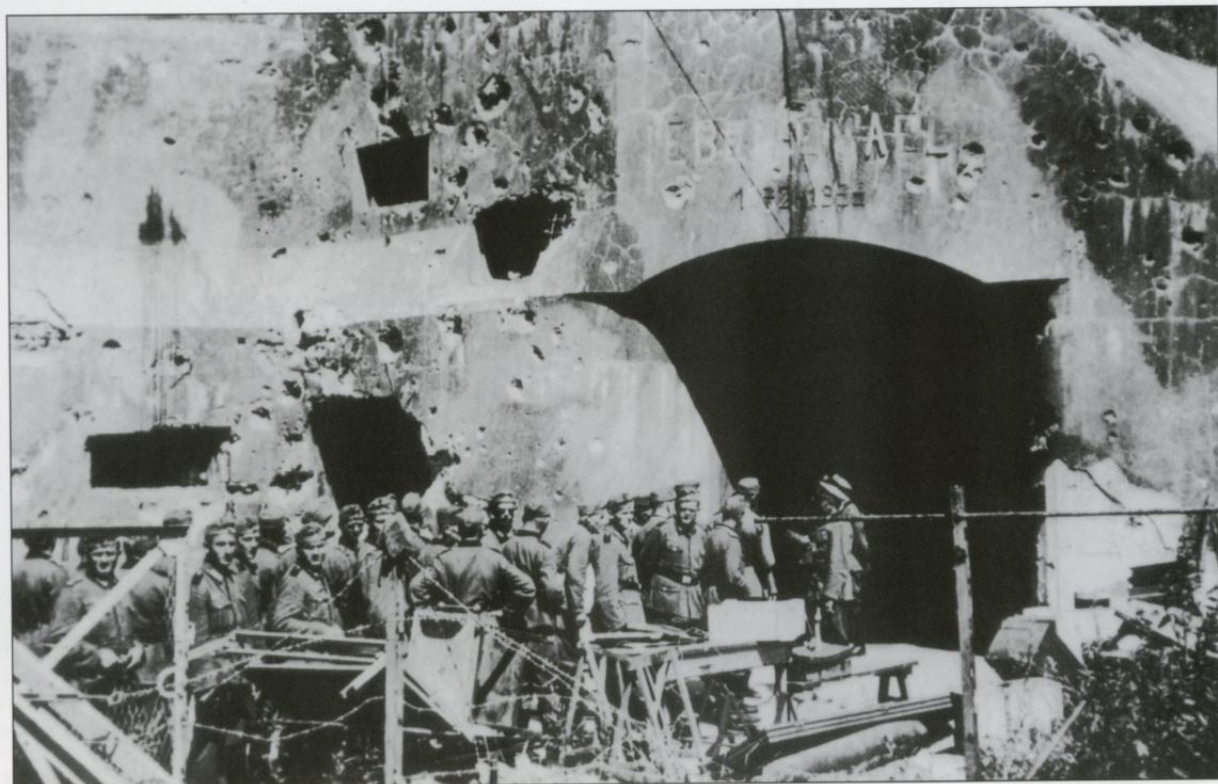
Paratroopers gather their equipment after landing in Holland in May 1940. Operations in Holland and Belgium showed the true value of their elite skills, especially when they were used in rapid commando-style raids against emplacements like the one at Eben Emael.



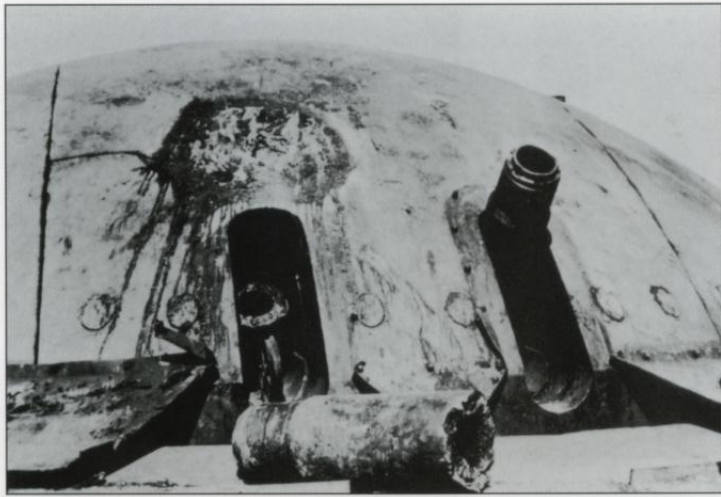


Fallschirmjäger going into action in Holland. After landing safely, the paratroopers quickly unbuckle their parachutes and run to take their assigned positions under the protection of a heavy MG34 which covers the men as they fall onto the landing zone. This was a very important procedure as the paratroopers were constantly exposed to hostile fire for at least one or two minutes before contacting the ground and while making a dash across the open for cover.

German soldiers tour the enormous shell pocked emplacements at Eben-Emael after the battle. Eben-Emael was a fortress constructed 45m (150 feet) above the west bank of the Albert Canal which ran parallel to the River Maas. Inside its 4.5km (2.7 miles) of corridors, stairs and trenches, the massive concrete complex was protected by a garrison of 2,000 men, which could be called upon at a moment's notice to arm the mass of multiple anti-aircraft machine guns and large cupolas housing retractable heavy artillery pieces that surrounded the fort.







One of the destroyed 7.5cm artillery cupolas at Eben-Emael. A 11 kg (25 lb) demolition charge has blown off one of the gun barrels. The heavier 50 kg (110 lb) hollow-charge grenades could blast a hole of molten steel through the cupola and into the emplacement interiors causing considerable damage to anyone or anything that stood in its way.

Men from Oberleutnant Witzig's Sturmgruppe 'Granit' relax and celebrate their historic victory at Eben-Emael on 11 May 1940. They are wearing a variant of the second model olive green jump smock with one diagonal zipper pocket on the left breast. Other variants had two breast pockets and two thigh pockets. Later smocks featured flaps covering the zippers. Note the Wehrmacht breast eagle on the jump smock on the paratrooper on the left indicating he is a former member of the Heeres Fallschirm-Infanterie-Bataillon. Most of them have a liberal coating of mud on their helmets for camouflage.



Hitler poses with the Knight's Cross victors of the Eben Emael operation. From the left, Leutnant Dellmann, Oberleutnant Witzig, Hauptmann Köpcke, Oberleutnant Zierke, Leutnant Ringler, Leutnant Meissner, Oberleutnant Altmann and Oberarzt Jäger. Note the variations in the second model jump smocks being worn.



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Studio portraits of some of the Knight's Cross winners at Eben-Emael (left to right, top to bottom) Hauptmanns Otto Zierach, Gustav Altmann and Walter Kiess, Hauptmann Rudolf Witzig, Major Walter Koch and Oberarzt Dr. Rolf Jäger; and Oberleutnants Helmut Ringler, Egon Delica and Joachim Meissner. Some of the men have been newly promoted.



The successful performance of the Fallschirmjäger in Belgium equally matched the airborne units attacking 'Fortress Holland'. Key airfields and bridges in the areas around the cities of Amsterdam, Utrecht, Rotterdam and Dordrecht, were the objectives assigned to 7.Flieger-Division and 22.Luftlande-Division. Here, German paratroopers from II./FJR 1 assault the Moerdijk bridge early on 10 May 1940. They held the bridge against determined Dutch counter-attacks until 12/13 May when 9.Panzer-Division arrived and relieved them.



Paratroopers from II./FJR 1 man defensive positions on the Moerdijk rail bridge waiting for the Dutch to counter-attack. At 6:40 a.m. on the morning of 10 May, Leutnant Tietjen of 5./FJR 1 parachuted on to the bridge where he successfully neutralized the demolition charges paving the way for its capture. He was awarded the Knight's Cross on 24 May and promoted to Oberleutnant in October.



On 10 May 1940, paratroopers from III./FJR 1 successfully captured the Waalhaven airfield near Rotterdam allowing Junkers Ju-52 transports carrying men from Infanterie-Regiment 16 and 65 of 22.Luftlande-Division to land. Their job was to reinforce the paratroops that had taken the bridges and hold them for the arrival of XXXIX.Panzerkorps.

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Men from Hauptmann Schulz's III./FJR 1, armed with Kar 98K rifles, escort Dutch POWs in Rotterdam on 11 May 1940. Their initial target was the Rotterdam-Waalhaven Airport, which was taken only after Luftwaffe bombing overcame strong Dutch resistance. The neat appearance of their uniforms seems to belie the ferocity of the struggle that has just taken place.

The operation against Holland was without doubt daring and decisive. Although there were a number of casualties, the Fallschirmjäger had proved its worth on the battlefield. With strong support from the Luftwaffe they managed to force a passage for the army to drive through. The civilians of Holland were dumbfounded by this massive display of air dominance. Here in this photograph paratroopers are questioning a civilian and captured Dutch infantrymen.



Paratroopers pose with a Dutch civilian following the successful occupation of Holland in May 1940. Both the Dutch and Belgium forces were not unprepared for the invasion. Although Dutch forces had managed to blow up both bridges across the Meuse north and south of Maastricht with some German forces suffering fearful casualties, their fate was already effectively sealed.



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A heavily armed group of Fallschirmjäger march down a country road in Holland in May 1940. The second man is armed with a 7.92mm Panzerbüchse 39 anti-tank rifle that fired a tungsten cored projectile at 1,265 m/s (4,150 fps) and could penetrate 30mm of armor at 100m. He is also well equipped with hand grenades carried in the grenade bags around his shoulders. All of them are wearing the early olive green second model jump smock without pockets and side laced jump boots.



This photograph came out of a camera taken from a German prisoner in Holland. This Fallschirmjäger member of a heavy MG34 machine gun squad seems unconcerned as he lies waiting by the side of the road somewhere in Holland. He is carrying a spare barrel holder slung over his shoulder and is wearing a second model olive green jump smock. Hundreds of paratroopers took to riding bicycles, and by 1944, as they withdrew from the west, it was their primary method of transport.



Paratroopers often wore bandages wound tightly around the ankle and instep to provide additional support particularly if they had sustained an ankle or foot injury but were still medically fit to jump.

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## The Balkans



A paratrooper Obergefreiter communicates with his battalion during operations at the Corinth Canal on 26 April 1941. During the heavy battle to keep the bridge open 63 paratroopers from FJR 2 were killed and 174 wounded or missing when an apparently stray round detonated the demolition charges being removed from the bridge. This was the only major action involving the Fallschirmjäger in mainland Greece.

Two paratroopers pose for the camera following their victory at the Corinth Canal in April 1941. Both are wearing second model olive green jump smocks and the one on the right is equipped with a relatively rare canvas pouch that held six ammunition magazines for the MP38/40. FJR 2 had been assigned with the daring operation to capture the vital bridge across the Corinth Canal before the British and Greek forces could retreat across it. In the event, the operation was launched about two days too late as the bulk of the enemy forces had already crossed and were able to escape by sea.



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In May 1944, about 600 men from SS-Fallschirmjäger-Bataillon 500 landed by glider and parachute at Drvar where Tito had his HQ at the time, narrowly missing capturing the partisan leader. Here we see two of them pulling a standard supply container with extra boxes of machine gun ammunition on it.



SS-Fallschirmjäger take up a position on the outskirts of Drvar. They were quickly trained by the Luftwaffe and equipped with the same helmets and camouflage jump smocks as the Luftwaffe Fallschirmjäger units but were issued climbing boots instead of jump boots. They wore their standard SS uniforms under the smocks and retained their standard infantry 'Y' straps, but were otherwise identical in appearance.

## Crete



Paratroops wearing the third model splinter pattern camouflage smock over their tan tropical uniforms adjust the harness on their RZ 20 parachutes prior to an airborne operation. The third pattern camouflage smock featured a full zip front with press studs allowing the material to be gathered around the legs instead of the earlier step in type legs. The special kneepads issued to Fallschirmjäger troops can be clearly seen on the nearest man.





Paratroopers don their equipment and check their weapons at a Greek airfield in preparation for the airborne assault on Crete. Both the Unteroffizier on the left and the Feldwebel on the right have the Luftwaffe flight clothing rank insignia sewn onto their olive green second model jump smocks. Life jackets, should they be needed, are laying on the ground around them.



Operation 'Merkur' (Mercury), the massive airborne attack on Crete on 20 May 1941, consisted of nearly 13,000 paratroopers and glider troops from 7. Flieger-Division and the Luftlande-Sturm-Regiment (LLStR) along with 9,000 mountain troops from 5. Gebirgs-Division transported in 50 Junkers Ju-52s and 85 DFS230 gliders. It was to be carried out in two phases with the first wave from LLStR and FJR descending on Maleme airfield and Canea with the transport planes then returning to pick up the second wave. The second phase was to involve an assault on the airfields at Rethymnon by FJR 2 and Heraklion by FJR 1. The armada of aircraft flew over Crete, down below nearly 27,500 British and Commonwealth troops and 14,000 Greek troops had already been alerted by a series of large-scale dive-bombing attacks. The confident, smiling paratroopers in this photo were blissfully unaware of the firestorm that awaited them.

Paratroopers assemble after landing on Crete. The losses suffered by the airborne regiments around Maleme in the early hours of 20 May were truly appalling. One company of Major Scherber's III./LLStR lost 112 killed out of 126 and 400 of the battalion's 600 men were dead before the day ended. The 4th and HQ company of I./LLStR landed in a heavily defended British position and within minutes, Major Koch and half his men were wounded. By the end of the first day, the LLStR had not yet secured the airfield.



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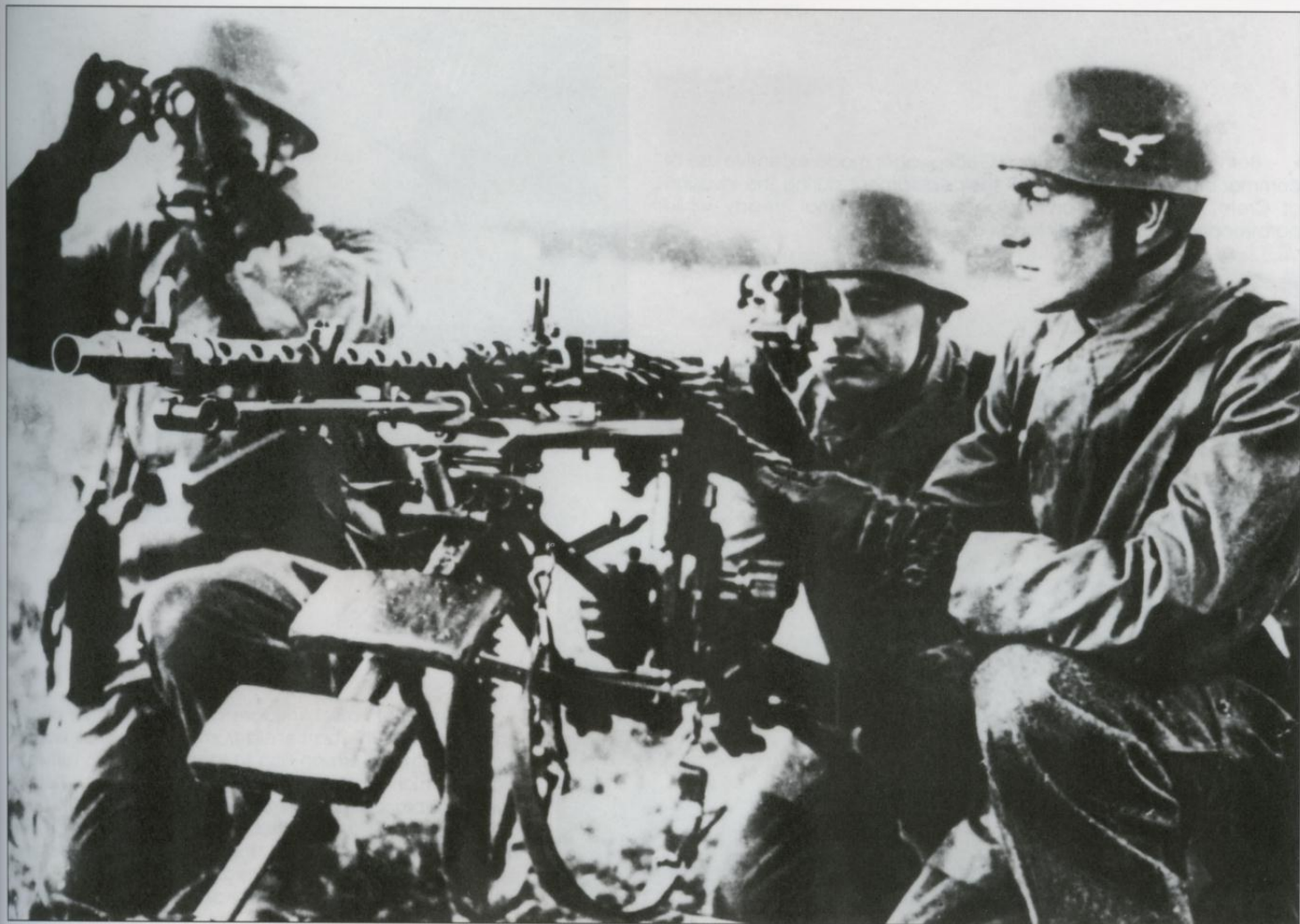


Here on board a Ju-52 transport, Gebirgsjäger from 5.Gebirgs-Division ease the tension with laughter as they approach Maleme airfield on 22 May 1941. Under command of Generalmajor Julius Ringel, 5.Gebirgs-Division was airlanded to support the Fallschirmjäger once the airfields were secured.

Gebirgsjäger from 5.Gebirgs-Division take cover behind a wall after being flown into Maleme airfield by Ju-52 transports on 22 May 1941. After a day of bitter fighting against New Zealand defenders in the mountains around the airport, they gained the upper hand. Once the airfield was secured, reinforcements, along with artillery and heavy equipment could be safely landed.



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A Fallschirmjäger MG34 heavy machine gun team in action during the invasion of Crete. Although at first it seemed that Student's forces would bleed to death in the battle for the island, only after suffering many casualties did they gradually seize their objectives.





Oberst Bruno Bräuer is briefed by an Unteroffizier during the landings in Crete. The Unteroffizier wearing an olive green second model jump smock with the Luftwaffe flight suit insignia adopted for use by the Fallschirmjäger. He also has a plain olive green cloth helmet cover which has a band sewn around it for attaching foliage. Partisans were responsible for killing some 135 injured Fallschirmjäger, resulting in the Germans exacting their own measure of revenge against the civilian population. Oberst Bräuer was executed by the Greek government in 1947 for ordering the reprisals against Cretan civilians during and after the battle.

Both the Fallschirmjäger and Gebirgsjäger made extensive use of commandeered mules to pack their equipment during the invasion of Crete. Here, a Cretan civilian holds his animal steady while paratroopers tie down their load.



A group of Fallschirmjäger and Gebirgsjäger officers and men view the battlefield from a hilltop, their position marked with a German flag to identify them to Luftwaffe planes which controlled the skies over Crete. Despite numerous blunders made during the drops, this elite body of men gradually seized their objectives after which the Cretans broke up and destroyed the strong enemy defense machine positions that stretched nearly 260 kilometers. By 27 May the Allies with most of the demoralized Allies having already retreated or evacuated from the island, the German Fallschirmjäger captured the town and airfield at Heraklion without much resistance.



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After the capture of Canea, General Student flew to Crete to inspect what was left of his Fliegerkorps XI. Here, he and other officers gather around a map while he is briefed on the battle that has taken place.



The battle over, a paratrooper samples some of the local wine in early June, his MP38 ready in his lap. The MP38/40 was normally issued to squad, platoon or company leaders. He is also equipped with a P-08 hard shell holster on a Luftwaffe pattern black leather belt with metal buckle worn over his olive green second model jump smock. The apparent success of the German parachute forces in Crete directly led to the immediate expansion of the American and British airborne forces.



Paratroops in Crete relax in their camp, cleaning their weapons and enjoying the warm sun after the island had been conquered. Two small tents made up of splinter pattern camouflaged shelter quarters, or 'Zeltbahns', have been set up to the right. In the foreground are a number of crush panels that would be attached to the end of the 'Waffenhalter'.



Gebirgsjäger troops perform weapons maintenance on Crete. In the foreground, a soldier is cleaning an MG34 machine gun, while the man to the right is cleaning its tripod. In the background, other men clean their rifles or load belts of machine gun ammunition into boxes. Captured stocks of British Army issue khaki shorts were issued to the troops as most German tropical uniforms had been sent to North Africa.

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## PLATE 1

### 3rd Fallschirmjäger Regiment, Holland, May 1940

The basic uniform of the German Airborne Forces in WWII consisted of the blue gray flight blouse and field gray jump trousers worn with high lace up boots. However it was the rimless helmet and jump smock that primarily distinguished the Fallschirmjäger.

At the time of the operations in Holland, the second pattern smock was standard although some of the multi-zippered first pattern were still being worn. It was still essentially a safety garment worn over equipment to prevent the fouling of parachute lines. Most still lacked exterior pockets although some were seen with zippered openings. This "step-in" smock was primarily made from gray green (sometimes described as olive green) material several shades lighter than the field gray trousers. The national emblem was generally the sole insignia worn on the smock at this time. The collar patches of the 'Fliegerbluse' were generally visible to show the rank of the wearer.

The wool trousers were standard throughout the war. Generously tailored, they featured slits at the outside of each knee through which the early type of internal knee pads could be removed. A hidden snap closed these openings. On the right knee was an additional pocket with a flap that held the gravity knife issued to all German parachutists! The trouser cuffs were bloused into high leather jump boots. The initial version had rubber soles and had peculiar side lacing.

The M38 Fallschirmjäger helmet had evolved from modified versions of the M35 helmet. It had foam padding and a four point chinstrap was provided. In Holland, the smooth field gray paint and helmet decals proved most unsatisfactory and many FJ liberally smeared their helmets with mud for camouflage.

Throughout the war, Fallschirmjäger seemed to operate with little personal equipment. They jumped with the following tucked within their jump smock: gas mask, pistol, ammunition bandoleer, 2 bread bags, 2 water flasks and 4 stick grenades, all supported by a brown leather belt and suspenders. Upon landing they would have to strip their smock off and remove the gear to install it over the smock. All other weaponry and equipment was to have retrieved from the drop canisters, consequently it is uncommon to see FJ with less than complete equipment!

## PLATE 3

### 1st Parachute Division, Italy, 1944

The rugged terrain of Italy made it perfect for the infantry defense that the Fallschirmjäger had proved so adept! The uniform worn here was typical in the Mediterranean Theater from 1942 until the end of the war. The M38 helmet was commonly painted a yellowish tan to match the local terrain color.

The jump smock had evolved further. While it was a popular item, highly prized by the Fallschirmjäger, in its "step-in" style it was rather impractical for extended field wear.

In order to answer the call of nature it had to be removed entirely making it quite inconvenient at times! Thus the step-in feature was eliminated and a set of snaps allowed it to be fastened around the legs when desired. Existing smocks, including some of the gray green type were also modified and at this time, a built-in holster for a signal pistol was added to the right rear hip. A loop for the handle of an entrenching tool was sewn on the lower left leg.

The Luftwaffe tropical uniform was widely worn by the Fallschirmjäger during the summer months in the Mediterranean area of operations but it should be noted that during winter months, the wool uniform replaced it. Items of the two uniforms were forbidden to be mixed, but occasional photos show that it did occur. The tropical shirt and trousers were typically worn with the jump smock. The trousers were noticeably very baggy in fit, although this seems to be mitigated by the height of the individual. The cuffs were gathered around the boots and secured with a built in tab. A large pocket was located on the front of the left thigh. The boots were now made in a front lace configuration. Due to shortages, not all of these boots had rubber soles.

The FG 42 was the only weapon designed specifically for the German Airborne Forces in WWII. It is unclear exactly when the type E version first saw use but some were apparently encountered at Monte Cassino. It is thought that only about 2000 of the type E were made and 5000 of the type G with most being used in North West Europe after the Normandy Invasion. Bandoleers were made from both splinter and water pattern material but spare magazines could easily be carried in the large pockets of the jump smock.

## PLATE 2

### 7th Parachute Division, Crete, May 1941

The uniform of the Fallschirmjäger had received some modifications after the operations in the previous year.

They still wore the wool flight blouse and trousers and suffered for it in the extreme heat of the island. For unexplained reasons, the Fallschirmjäger weren't provided with the new Luftwaffe tropical uniform. The "step-in" jump smock had been retrofitted with 4 pockets with zippers and flaps. Any new production was made with these features. The invasion of Crete saw limited use of the first camouflage "splinter" pattern jump smocks, also made in the "step-in" style. A system of rank insignia had been devised for flight crew wear on overalls and flight suits and Fallschirmjäger were authorized to use on their jump smocks. This Feldwebel has done so but in reality the practice was not widespread.

Experience had demonstrated the need for better camouflage for the helmet. After the operations in Holland, the tri-color decal was discontinued. Camouflage cover made from the same material of the uniform was devised which was snug fitting, held in place by 6 hooks. A band to secure local foliage was stitched around it and a cross of narrower tape was sewn across the top. Later versions were made from Luftwaffe "Splinter B" camouflage material.

Some Fallschirmjäger had learned the value of having a more powerful weapon than a pistol available immediately upon landing. On Crete, some had jumped with their MP38/40 strapped to their torso, beneath the parachute harness. Their magazine pouches had leather straps sewn to the backs so that they could be fastened around the lower legs of the jumper.

Most however, would still have to retrieve their weapons, ammunition and equipment from the supply containers. These canisters were marked according to their contents but unfortunately the key to the markings has yet to be deciphered. The wheels and drawbar were stowed within the canisters and could be quickly attached.

It can be noted that some items of personal equipment such as bread bags and ammunition bandoleers were made in the Luftwaffe gray color. This didn't negate the use of standard Army issue equipment though. The first bandoleer for the K98 was Luftwaffe gray and initially had angular flaps. The first round flapped bandoleer was also that color but later made in the tan the "Splinter B" camouflage. The cloth gas mask bag was always made in an olive green shade.

The weapons equipping Fallschirmjäger were standard Wehrmacht issue.

## PLATE 4

### 3rd Fallschirmjäger Division, Ardennes, December 1944

Even as hopes of victory collapsed around them, the Fallschirmjäger were largely able to maintain his elite appearance. By this late date the Airborne Divisions had been decimated and few veterans were to be seen in the original gray green jump smocks.

The jump smock was still standard issue in either "splinter" or "water" camouflage pattern. By this time wide variation could be seen in the details of the smocks with some having larger pockets than others. The actual colors used in the camouflage patterns were subject to considerable variation, particularly in the splinter version.

While the M38 Fallschirmjäger helmet remained standard, it was not unknown for the standard M35 or M42 helmet to be worn. Camouflage covers for the FJ helmet were made in two styles, one fastening with 6 hooks and the other using a drawstring. The drawstring type cover doesn't seem to have had the web tape cross sewn to the top. It appears that "water" pattern material was not officially used in making these covers.

A rectangular large mesh net was also available for camouflage. When installed, it had an excess of netting that could be pulled down over the face when needed otherwise the excess was simply thrown back over the helmet. Some paratroopers, as here, chose to trim the net down for a more snappy appearance.

By this period, it was not uncommon to see Fallschirmjäger wearing marching boots or short ankle boots rather than the jump boots. Interestingly the paratrooper gloves were still worn. The elastic cuffs provided a good weather seal. In actuality, these gloves were dark brown leather rather than black.

Typically, equipment has been kept to a minimum, with only basic sustenance carried in the bread bag. Ammunition could be easily carried in the large pockets of the jump smock often making pouches unnecessary. Still, one has gotten an early blue gray bandoleer along with a magazine pouch for the FG 43. A pistol was still commonly carried. The issue of the semi-automatic FG 43 and full-auto MP 44 gave a great deal of firepower and helped to make up for the lack of combat experience of some of the new paratroopers.



### 3rd Fallschirmjäger Regiment, Holland, May 1940



VOLSTAD '01

3rd Fallschirmjäger Regiment, Holland, May 1940



7th Parachute Division, Crete, May 1941





1st Parachute Division, Italy, 1944



VOLSTAD '01



3rd Fallschirmjäger Division, Ardennes, December 1944



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Four German parachute troops wearing their distinctive olive green second model jump smocks. The zippered thigh pockets are bulging with their contents. Two different patterns of boots are being worn, the early side laced type and the newer front-laced type introduced in early 1941 to replace them. This photograph reportedly fell in to British hands during the invasion of Crete and was taken in Germany sometime earlier.

'Operation Mercury' was over, but the price of victory had been very high. One in four paratroopers who landed on the island of Crete had been killed and many more injured. It was to be the last major airborne operation for the Fallschirmjäger until late 1944 during the Ardennes Offensive. Here, survivors of Crete parade at their home barracks in new splinter pattern camouflage second model jump smocks, their necks adorned with garlands of flowers. In spite of the high cost, the operation was still used for maximum propaganda effect in Germany.



Four Fallschirmjäger Oberleutnants who were awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross for bravery during the battle for Crete. From left to right Alfred Genz, Chef 1./LLStR; Karl-Heinz Becker, Chef 10./FJR 1; Andreas Hagl, Zugführer 2./FSJ 3 and Rudolf Toschka, Zugführer 1./LLStR.



## North Africa

Paratroops carefully fill their water bottles from a jerrican, which were marked with a white cross to distinguish them from fuel cans. Water rationing was a chronic problem for all troops in North Africa and washing and showering were often forbidden, as was drinking during the daytime. Supplies generally came from distilled seawater.



Paratroopers from FJR 5 under the command of Oberstleutnant Walter Koch march through Tunisia after being transported by air from Naples, November 1942. Shortly after, at Depienne, Tunisia, the German 'Green Devils' met the British 'Red Devils' in combat for the first time. He, Oberstleutnant Koch was instrumental in preventing a group of captured British paratroopers from being executed by their guards.

Oberstleutnant Walter Koch presents the Iron Cross Second Class to paratroopers from his battalion who have distinguished themselves in combat. He is wearing the Luftwaffe tropical uniform and field cap, or 'Hermann Meyer' cap as it was often called by the troops, a sarcastic reference to Hermann Göring's boast that if a single enemy bomb fell on Germany, 'you can call me Hermann Meyer'. The men are wearing both the olive green and newer splinter pattern camouflage jump smocks.







A group of Fallschirmjäger pause for a cigarette break in Tunisia. The four men on the left all wear the olive green second model jump smock while the officer at right wears the later splinter pattern camouflage jump smock. Note that three of them are equipped with leather Kar 98K ammunition pouches as well as their special Fallschirmjäger ammunition bandoleers.



Three men from Sonderverband z.b.V.288 aboard a Zundapp KS750 motorcycle combination in Tunisia. They are wearing the Luftwaffe tan tropical uniform with a khaki drill shirt worn open at the neck and Fallschirmjäger helmets. On the upper right sleeve, they have sewn the embroidered cloth insignia of their unit, a green wreath encircling a palm tree and a rising sun over the desert with a small swastika at the base.



A column of Fallschirmjäger on Zundapp KS600 motorcycle combinations travel along a country road in Tunisia in late 1942. On the front of the sidecar, a black outline shield with an eagle's head inside has been painted. The driver is equipped with a second model ammunition bandoleer in blue/gray cloth for the Kar 98 slung around his neck. He and all of the other men appear to be wearing the olive green second model jump smock.



A flight of Ju-52s approaches the Tunisian coast in 1943. After the American landings in Algeria and French Morocco on 8 November 1942, the Germans sent FJR 5 commanded by Oberstleutnant Walter Koch and a small detachment of paratroops under the command of Oberst Walther Barentin to occupy and set up a defensive ring around Tunis. Only by holding the airport were the Germans able to continue to pour in reinforcements.



An MG34 machine-gun team set up in a defensive position in Tunisia ready for an Allied attack. The man nearest to the camera is wearing a new splinter pattern camouflage jump smock while the machine gunner still wears the older olive green second model smock. Both have applied mud to their helmets for camouflage. The man nearest also appears to have painted on the black cross emblem used by 1./FJR 5, although it was more commonly seen the head down and the tail streaming up and away.

## Italy



In Sicily and Italy, paratroopers were used to help blunt the Allied spearhead, and in the course of the battle they fought superbly, despite terrible casualties. Here two Fallschirmjäger lay Teller anti-tank mines along a narrow Italian country road. In spite of the generally unsuitable terrain, the Allies relied heavily on armored fighting vehicles during the Italian campaign and mines were a very effective method in dealing with them.





A 5cm PaK 38 from Fsch.Pz.Jg.Abt.1 of 1.FJD in action near Salerno in September 1943. Two of the crew are wearing the olive green second model jump smock while the third wears a splinter pattern camouflage Zeltbahn shelter quarter over his Luftwaffe tropical uniform. A variety of M38 jump helmet and M35 or M42 standard steel helmet is also being worn.



On 12 September 1943 an airborne task force, led by SS-Hauptsturmführer Otto Skorzeny, rescued Mussolini from the mountain resort in the Gran Sasso where he was confined after his arrest. Here a group of paratroopers pause on the approach to the funicular railway station in the valley. Note the special ammunition bandoleer for the new FG42 assault rifle carried by the paratrooper on the right.





Fallschirmjäger in action on the Gran Sasso. Mussolini was being held prisoner in the Albergo-Rifugio Campo Imperatore hotel near summit of the mountain and Hitler was determined to rescue his old ally and restore the fascist government in Italy. The rescue of Mussolini hailed a complete success, however the contribution of the Fallschirmjäger was overshadowed by the publicity given to the involvement of Skorzeny, who was awarded the Knight's Cross and promoted to SS-Sturmbannführer.



The paratroops that participated in Operation 'Eiche' (Oak), the rescue of Mussolini, came from 1. Kompanie of Fallschirm-Lehr-Battalion under the command of Major Mors. In this photo, they all wear the newer splinter pattern camouflage jump smock over their Luftwaffe uniform and are heavily armed. Several of them carry belts of MG42 ammunition and at least two are armed with the new (Fallschirmjärgewehr 42) assault rifle and can be identified by the camouflage cloth bandoleer with four large pockets on each side hanging around their necks. The fourth man from the left is equipped with a Kar 98K rifle fitted with a rifle grenade launcher and carries a pot of 'waterwing' canvas bags for stick grenades. The man next to him carries a bandoleer of signal flares along with two belts of MG42 ammunition.



A heavily equipped paratrooper walks along a rocky path in early 1944. He is wearing a reversible field gray/white mountain troop's anorak with the field gray side out and Luftwaffe tropical pants. On his head is the Luftwaffe single button Replacement Flight Cap (Einheitsfliegermütze) in blue-gray cloth introduced in September 1943 with the Luftwaffe eagle emblem and Cockade on the front. His helmet can be seen hanging from its strap looped over a stick hand grenade tucked into one of the chest pocket on the front of the anorak.



Fatigue from the continuous Allied assault lines the faces of these Fallschirmjäger from 3./FJR 1 in Monte Cassino during March 1944. The Jäger in the middle, tucking two stick grenades into his belt, and the machine gunner on the right are both wearing the splinter pattern camouflage second model jump smock while the one on the left, armed with an MP40, is wearing a standard Luftwaffe issue blue-gray greatcoat. Unusually, the man in the middle is also equipped with standard black leather Kar 98K ammunition pouches instead of the special Fallschirmjäger bandoleer.

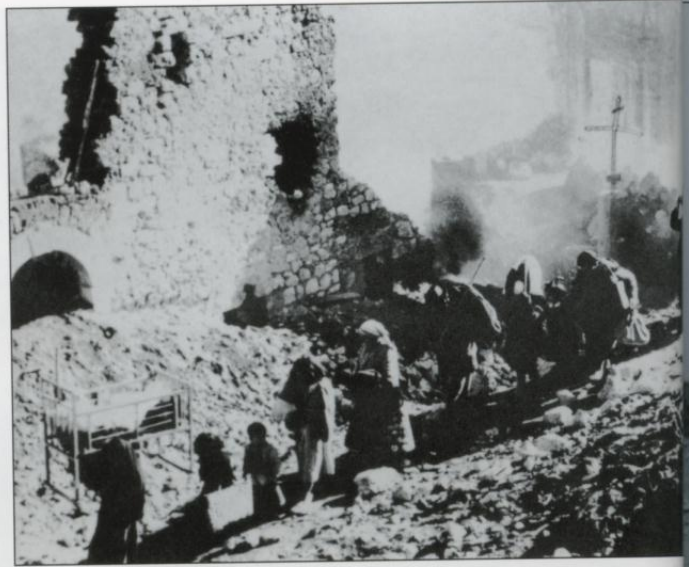
Monte Cassino probably ranks as the single greatest battle for the Fallschirmjäger during World War Two. They endured almost five long months of bitter fighting as they refused to budge from the ruins of the monastery on Monte Cassino and the town of Cassino below. 1.Fallschirmjäger-Division was assigned the task of defending this part of the 'Gustav Line' utilizing I. and II./FJR 1 and III./FJR 3. Here, paratroopers carry boxes of ammunition during the initial stages of the defensive battle.





After the Allies bombed the Monastery on 15 February 1944, the rubble provided the German defenders with excellent cover and made the position more difficult to take. Here, a paratrooper armed with the early 'E-type' FG42 assault rifle, characterized by its swept back pistol grip and mid-mounted bipod, fires from a window opening in the thick masonry walls. Only about 2,100 of these weapons were produced, making them fairly rare.

Two paratroopers run through the bombed out remains of the Monastery. The decision to bomb the Monastery was made more for the effect it would have on the attackers who believed that the Germans were using it for military purposes. In fact, they were not, but after the bombing, did not hesitate to occupy the ruins.



Italian civilians flee from the town of Cassino through the rubble strewn streets after Allied shelling and bombing virtually destroyed the town. Prior to the bombing, the Allies dropped leaflets on the town and the Monastery advising the citizens to evacuate, a warning that many ignored.



A paratrooper MG42 team fighting among the ruins of the monastery at Monte Cassino. From 15 to 18 February 1944, the 4th Indian and 2nd New Zealand Divisions attempted to take Monastery Hill, Monte Calvario and Cassino but were driven back by withering machine gun fire from the steep hillside above. Note as well the climbing boots worn with the heavy socks rolled down over the tops of the boots instead of the jump boots.



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This series of photographs shows paratroopers from FJR 3 being led into captivity on 15 March 1944, by men from 2nd New Zealand Division supported by M4A2 Shermans from 19 Battalion, 4th New Zealand Armoured Brigade. The unit emblem, a white fern leaf on a black rectangle over a white '80' on a red rectangle can be seen on the rear plate of the closest tank. Most of the Fallschirmjäger still wear their splinter pattern camouflage second model jump smocks as well as their helmets. A variety of boots can also be seen including jump boots, climbing boots, marching boots and ankle boots with gaiters. One source identifies the paratrooper with the cigarette in his mouth as Gefreiter Hölzinger and the man in front of him as Gefreiter Möbius, both of 2./FJR 3. The defense of the Cassino sector cost the Germans over 25,000 casualties. As the Germans began to lose their hold on the area, remnants of 1.Fallschirmjäger-Division, battered but defiant, were able to make a successful withdrawal on 18 May 1944.





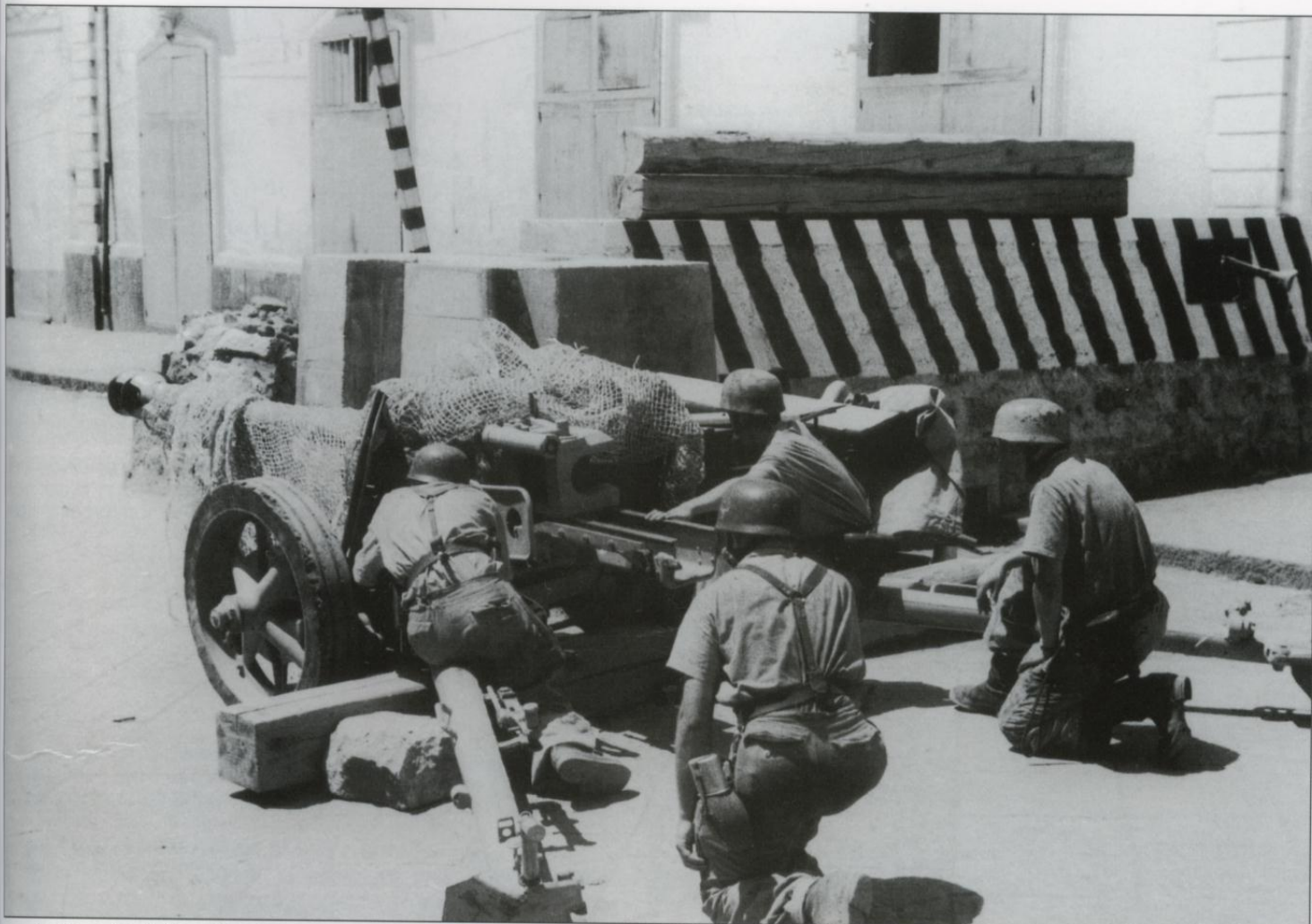
While their comrades fought valiantly at Cassino, Fallschirmjäger-Lehr-Regiment, 4.FJD and elements of 1.FJD and Italian paratroopers from 'Regiment Nembo' held back the Allied landings at Anzio-Nettuno for five months. Here, paratroopers review their positions on a map in the Nettuno area. Although by this time the splinter pattern camouflage jump smock had been in use for some time, it was not unusual to still see the early olive green jump smock as seen on the paratrooper on the left.

Three paratroopers, one driving a Zundapp KS750 motorcycle combination, meet in St. Peter's Square in Rome in early June 1944. All are wearing the second model olive green jump smock over their Luftwaffe tropical uniform and all are armed with MP40 machine pistols. The two on the left have daubed mud on their helmets for camouflage. Shortly after, on 5 June 1944, the U.S. Fifth Army under Lieutenant General Mark Clark marched into Rome, the first enemy capital to fall to the Allies.



Fallschirmjäger troops fire their 12cm Granatwerfer 42 mortar on Allied positions during the fighting in Italy during the summer of 1944. A splinter pattern camouflage jump smock belonging to one of them can be seen hanging from the lower end of the tube. The 12cm Gr.W. 42 was copied from a Soviet design and could throw a 34 lb. bomb to 5,700 meters making it the best mortar in the German arsenal.





A 7.5cm PaK 40 anti-tank gun set up behind a barricaded street in Rome during the Allied advance on the city in late May 1944. Their distinctive helmets are the only things that identify the gun crew as Fallschirmjäger who also wear the standard Luftwaffe tan tropical uniform. The low gun shield only provided basic protection for the crew who were otherwise exposed to small arms and high explosive return fire. Heavy timbers and large rocks have been placed behind the wheels to absorb the gun's recoil forces on the smooth tiled street.



German paratroopers wait in the courtyard of a house in a northern Italian village near Bologna. On 13 September 1944, the U.S. Fifth Army launched an assault on the Gothic Line directed at Bologna through the Il Giogo Pass. The pass was protected by two 3,000-foot high mountains on either side which were taken at the cost of 2,731 American casualties before the Germans retreated to a new defensive line farther north.





FJR 3 defended the mountain passes southwest of Castel San Pietro against the British Eighth Army during the spring of 1945. On 9 April, a British attack across the Senio River resulted in a general withdrawal that ended with the surrender of German forces in Italy on 2 May 1945.

Paratroopers from FJR 3 consult a map in the mountains of northern Italy during the winter of 1944-45. The officer or NCO pointing to the map is wearing the splinter pattern camouflage second model jump smock while the man on the right still wears the old olive green smock. In winter conditions such as this, neither provided much in the way of camouflage protection.

## The Eastern Front



During their first winter on the Russian front in 1941-42, the Fallschirmjäger were no better equipped for the extreme cold weather than their Wehrmacht or SS counterparts. Here, a paratrooper in the Leningrad sector, wearing a splinter pattern camouflage jump smock, throws a stick grenade during close quarters combat in the trenches around the city.



The Fallschirmjäger units in action at Leningrad included I. and III./FJR 1, FJR 3, I. and II.Fallschirm-Pioneer-Battalion, II./LLStR and assorted other small machine gun and artillery units. The combination of extreme cold and combat severely reduced the strength of some companies by 70-80 percent, however the paratroopers were able to contain the Russian winter offensive.



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Their status as an elite division did not prevent the Fallschirmjäger from treating the Soviet civilian population less harshly than the rest of the German Army. Here, a paratrooper watches a house burn in a Russian village.

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A column of Fallschirmjäger wearing their olive green and splinter pattern camouflage jump smocks patrol through deep snow during the winter of 1941-42. The advantage of a special winter camouflage uniform is readily apparent in this photograph.



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A lone paratrooper on sentry duty beside a 3.7cm PaK 35/36 anti-tank gun in Russia during the winter of 1942-43. The hinged gun shield has been folded down presenting an unusual view of this outdated weapon. The paratrooper is wearing the new two-piece reversible padded winter uniform with removable hood identical to the one issued to Army personnel. Although designed to be worn over the basic uniform and equipment, the troops preferred to wear their equipment belts on the outside as shown here.





Ski-troopers from 1.Fallschirmjäger-Division in Russia during the winter of 1942-43. They are wearing thin one-piece cotton snow overalls over their normal uniform and have white painted helmets. As the two-piece padded winter suits tended to get dirty quickly and were difficult to clean, single piece snow overalls and two piece suits were issued which were easier to wash. A thin strip of colored fabric was buttoned to each arm to help distinguish German troops from Russian troops who often wore similar snowsuits.



Another Fallschirmjäger ski-trooper wearing the one-piece snow overalls unrolls a Nazi flag to mark the location of the German lines to Luftwaffe aircraft. The remainder of the squad deploys behind him, some of who are wearing the top half of the two-piece cotton snowsuit over their winter greatcoat.



Two paratroopers struggle to free their Russian 'panje' sled carrying supplies from the deep snow. The man on the left is wearing the two-piece cotton snowsuit over his uniform while the man on the right is wearing the less popular one-piece long overall coat which buttoned down the front. The object in his hands is a shovel.

A Fallschirmjäger crew mans a 3.7cm PaK 35/36 anti-tank gun during the winter of 1942-43. By this time, this gun was obsolete, having been replaced by the 5cm PaK 38 and 7.5cm PaK 40 anti-tank guns in late 1940 and 1941. The gun has received a partial coat of whitewash along with the men's helmets and they are wearing a combination of one-piece snow overalls and the bulky coverall coat.







A photograph showing Fallschirmjäger troops training in the use of the 8.8cm Raketenpanzerbüchse 54 (RPzB 54), or 'Panzerschreck' as it was often called. The design was based on the American bazooka, examples of which were captured in Tunisia in 1943. The first model, the RPzB 43, did not have a protective shield and the operator had to wear protective clothing. This appears to be an early, crude attempt as the final production version had a stamped rectangular shield. The range was only 220 yards but the rocket could penetrate up to 8" of armor. Both paratroopers are wearing the reversible winter suit, one with the splinter pattern camouflage side out while the other appears to be mouse gray.

A paratrooper armed with the portable Flammenwerfer 41 flame-thrower. The upper cylinder carried the nitrogen propellant and the lower cylinder carried the fuel. A special protective suit was provided but was not often seen outside the training ground because it was cumbersome to use. This Fallschirmjäger wears only his olive green second model jump smock and jump trousers with the gravity knife pocket visible above the right knee.



Fallschirmjäger replenish their ammunition in preparation for the coming battle. The paratrooper in the middle is wearing the Luftwaffe quilted reversible winter uniform with the diagonal checked pattern. He has a belt of MG34 or 42 ammunition around his neck along with a cloth bandoleer for his Kar 98K ammunition and is holding two M1939 egg grenades in his hands. Note the fur cap with the Luftwaffe eagle sewn on the front being worn by the man on the right.





A paratrooper occupies a water filled shell hole. He is wearing the olive green second model jump smock with a cloth helmet cover and is armed with an MP40 and an M1939 egg grenade.

Fallschirmjäger man a 10.5cm Leichtgeschütz 40 (10.5cm LG 40) recoilless artillery piece. Originally manufactured in a light alloy to reduce the weight for airborne operations, they could be dismantled into five parachute loads or dropped assembled in a special shock-absorbing crate. The weapon utilized the same shell as the leFH 18. These men are all wearing the olive green second model jump smock.



The 7.5cm Leichtgeschütz 40 recoilless rifle was the first gun of its type produced, being followed by the larger 10.5cm LG 40. The back blast was dangerous out to 50m during combat firing and crews were advised to plug their ears, as seen here, during firing as well. Only 450 of these guns were manufactured during the war.





FJR 6 was one of the first German units committed against the U.S airborne landings around Carentan in the early hours of 6 June 1944. In the weeks that followed, they fought a delaying action in the villages and towns of Normandy suffering high casualty rates as the Allies relentlessly advanced. Commanded by Major von der Heydte, it was the only regiment of 2.FJD stationed in France at the time of the landings and was attached to 91.Luftlande-Division. Here, men of 91.Luftlande-Division shelter behind a stone wall during the battle.



A camouflaged paratrooper awaits the Allied advance secure in his trench. His helmet has a heavy wire frame attached to it for retaining the foliage, a common practice in Normandy. He is wearing the third model splinter pattern camouflage smock which is plainly seen here. Around his neck can be seen the strap for his canvas gas mask bag.



Another paratrooper waits concealed in the hedgerows with his 8.8cm Raketenpanzerbüchse 54. The large number of armored vehicle employed by the Allies provided plenty of targets for individual tank hunters armed with weapons like this and the Panzerfaust. A wire frame around his helmet for attaching foliage can be seen along with patches of mud to camouflage it. Although not clear in this photo, he is wearing the water pattern camouflage smock. The single white metal wing on his collar patch indicates he holds the rank of 'Flieger'.





A German paratrooper from 3.FJD rides a BMW R12 motorcycle combination through the ruins of Torigni-sur-Vire during the battle in Normandy during the summer of 1944. The paratrooper appears to be wearing the new water pattern camouflage jump smock first issued in 1944.



Paratroopers on a Zündapp KS600 motorcycle combination make their way through a heavily damaged French town in Normandy. The driver is wearing an olive green second model jump smock while the trooper in the sidecar, covering their rear with what appears to be a 9mm MP28, is wearing a third model splinter pattern jump smock.



An unusual photograph of Fallschirmjäger troops apparently manning a 15cm sFH18 howitzer. As there were no heavy artillery units equipped with this gun in the Luftwaffe, these troops may have been photographed inspecting the piece during a break in the fighting. In any event, it is unlikely that they would have the necessary training to operate it effectively. Tree branches can be seen which have been used to camouflage the gun.





Two Fallschirmjäger Feldgendarmen NCO's of 5.FJD escorting a column of American prisoners from the 29th Infantry Division near St. Lo during the summer of 1944. Both are wearing the distinctive Army pattern duty gorget, or 'Ringkragen', suspended on a flattened chain around their necks. There were several styles of these including one with the Luftwaffe eagle embossed on it. The Feldgendarme Oberfeldwebel on the right also has the Army style cuff title sewn to the left arm of his field blue Fliegerbluse. The one on the left is wearing a third model splinter pattern jump smock and, although equipped with an MP40 ammunition pouch, appears to be unarmed.

Two Fallschirmjäger take a meal break while manning their 2cm Flakvierling 38 anti-aircraft gun. Both are wearing third model splinter pattern camouflage jump smocks with matching helmet covers.



A Fallschirmjäger crew of 3.FJD with their 2cm Flakvierling 38 anti-aircraft gun somewhere on the Western Front during the summer of 1944. The gun had a practical rate of fire of 880 rounds per minute and was one of the most feared anti-aircraft weapons encountered by low-flying Allied aircraft. In August 1944, there were no less than 3,605 of these formidable weapons in service with the Luftwaffe alone. The paratrooper on the left with the stereoscopic range finder (Entfernungsmesser 1m 36) is wearing a late second model jump smock in splinter pattern camouflage material with step-in legs.



A Fallschirmjäger Major, seated in the sidecar of a BMW R75 motorcycle combination, studies his map while the driver looks on. The machine appears to have been slightly damaged and is missing the license plate on the front mudguard. Both men are wearing the splinter pattern camouflage jump smock with the Major displaying the Luftwaffe rank insignia for flight clothing adopted by the Fallschirmjäger visible here on his right sleeve. On his silver piped 'Fliegermütze', he wears a pair of British gas goggles of the type popularized by Field Marshal Rommel in North Africa.



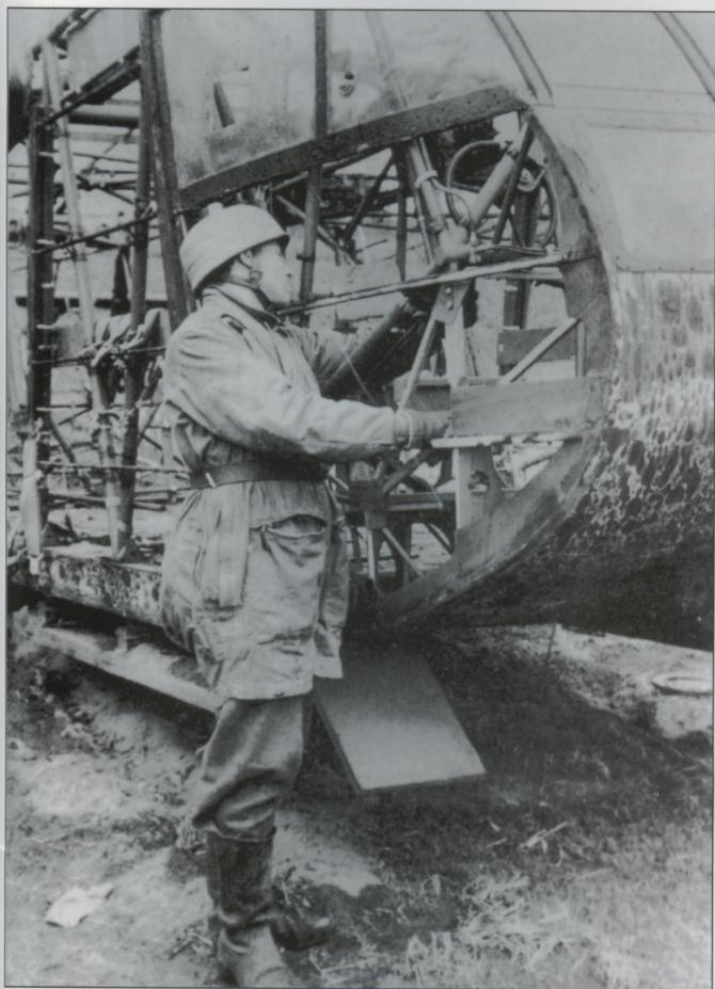
A group of Fallschirmjäger pass a knocked out British or Canadian M4A4 Sherman tank during late summer 1944. One of the men carries an 8.8cm Raketenpanzerbüchse 54 fitted with a shield around the tube to protect the operator from the rocket exhaust. Behind him, another paratrooper carries a Panzerfaust 60 and is also carrying a leather case of unknown origin. They all appear to be wearing third model splinter pattern camouflage jump smocks.

In mid-August 1944, the FFI staged an uprising to coincide with the Allies approach on Paris. Here, jubilant FFI members parade their captive through the streets of a French town. He is wearing a splinter pattern camouflage smock normally issued to Luftwaffe Field Divisions. It was similar to the Fallschirmjäger jump smock except it was not as long, did not have hidden buttons, only had two pockets and was fitted with a cloth strap and button for attaching a shoulder strap to. Late war paratroopers often wore them as well.





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Three paratroopers retrieve weapons and ammunition from a special air dropped metal container called a Waffenhälter. Two different sizes were used up to and during the battle for Crete and were later standardized into one size as shown here, 16" on each side and 5' long. Due mainly to the type of parachute used by the Fallschirmjäger they were unable to carry as much equipment with them on a jump as Allied paratroops and were forced to rely on separate containers.

A veteran Fallschirmjäger trooper still wearing the olive green second model jump smock and marching boots instead of jump boots, inspects a damaged U.S. Waco CG-4A glider probably near Arnhem in September 1944.



German paratroopers man a captured American Browning .30 cal. machine gun near Arnhem in September 1944. Utilizing captured enemy equipment was a common practice in German units, especially at a time when supplies of their own were insufficient. Two of the men have camouflage nets on their helmets for attaching foliage. The paratrooper in the background is also wearing the new water pattern camouflage smock.



A series of photographs showing Fallschirmjäger marching towards Nijmegen from the direction of Mook, a town on its southern outskirts. The same group of paratroopers can be seen in each photograph as they approach the camera. Despite the hardships endured in the months since the Allied landings in Normandy, these Fallschirmjäger can still manage to smile for the PK photographer. In the last photograph, the three men in front can be seen wearing the early olive green second model jump smock, the left one of which is earlier still and is without pockets. The man on the right is equipped with the splinter pattern camouflage K98 ammunition bandoleer around his neck. Behind them, another paratrooper is wearing a third model splinter pattern camouflage smock and is armed with an MP44. They are possibly from 6.FJD which fought in the area against the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division, the British Guards Armored Division and Coldstream Guards on 20 September 1944.







Another group of Fallschirmjäger march down a country road. The lead paratrooper is carrying a portable communications cable reel strapped to his back. FJR 6 and elements of 3., 5. and 6.FJD fought against the Allied airborne landings in the Arnhem corridor during Operation 'Market Garden'.



A wounded Fallschirmjäger Obergefreiter is comforted by a comrade who is wearing a third model splinter pattern camouflage jump smock. Note as well the reversed form of the Luftwaffe eagle on the helmet decal.



Paratroopers from 3.FJD ride on a Tiger II Ausf.B from s.SS.Pz.Abt.501 between Kaiserbaracke and Ligneuville in Belgium during the Ardennes Offensive. They are armed with a variety of weapons including a captured Sten Mk.II, an MG42, a Gewehr 43 and MP40 that can be seen here. The photograph was taken on 19 December 1944.





A Luftwaffe Field Division MG42 team in action against British troops in early 1945. The machine gunner on the left is wearing a 1942 pattern reversible mouse gray/white winter jacket over his Luftwaffe Fliegerbluse and a two-button Einheitsfliegermütze.



Luftwaffe troops march through the streets of Copenhagen, Denmark shortly after paratroops of the British 13th Parachute Battalion arrived on 5 May 1945. The two officers leading the column are both wearing the Luftwaffe Field Division version of the splinter pattern camouflage smock. Judging by the civilian carrying the small British flag, these men are resigned to the fact that the war has been lost.

A studio portrait of a young Fallschirmjäger warrior wearing a third model splinter pattern camouflage jump smock and special side lacing jump boots. He is also wearing a black leather belt with a white metal buckle. Around his neck is a colorful non-regulation civilian scarf often seen in photographs and usually adopted by all the men of a company in the same pattern.





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