



The Colehill Auxiliary Research Team

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Researching Winston Churchill's Secret Army, The Auxiliary Units.

Small Arms and Support Weapons of the Wehrmacht

By Peter Antill

Any consideration of how the Auxiliary Units may have performed had the Germans launched their planned invasion of the UK (Operation *Seelöwe* or *Sealion*) and succeeded in occupying most or all of the country, has to look at the longer term. The Units themselves were only given an initial cache of arms, explosives and supplies to last them two, possibly three weeks, which was, they were warned, their probable life expectancy. However, it is very likely that a number of patrols, managing to avoid German anti-resistance operations, could have survived into the medium or long-term, particularly in areas which provided difficult terrain to search, such as hills, mountains and forests. In such a scenario, these patrols, perhaps even having been augmented by remnants of the regular Army, Territorial Army or Home Guard would have had to resupply themselves in order to continue the fight, albeit at a lower level of activity. One obvious supply source, bar managing to raid British Army or Home Guard stores and depots before they were overrun, or any equipment and supplies brought by stragglers, was the occupying *Wehrmacht*. This could have been in the form of captured weapons and supplies when on operations against their primary targets (airfields, depots, the communications infrastructure, assassinations etc.), ambushing individual patrols or convoys, or even perhaps the objective of a raid itself. The following is a summary of the main small arms and support weapons used by German forces in World War II.

Weapons: Small Arms

The Mauser Kar98k bolt-action rifle



Source: Author's own collection

Figure 1. The Mauser Kar98k bolt-action rifle (Above), chambered for the 7.92x57mm round, which were held in an integral five-round magazine, entered service in 1935. Derived from the Gewehr M1898 rifle (the German Army's battle rifle in World War I) and post-World War I Karabiner 98b, the Kar98k was the standard German battle rifle of World War II. Kar stand for *Karabiner* (carbine) and the k stands for *kurz* (short) so the designation stands for Carbine 98 Short. It can still be found in conflicts all over the world as well as in the civilian gun market.

Weight: 3.7 – 4.1kg (8.2 – 9lbs); Length: 1110mm (43.7in); Barrel Length: 600mm (23.6in); Muzzle velocity: 760m/s (2,493fps).

The MP40 Sub-machinegun



Source: Author's picture, taken at the Infantry Weapons Collection, Warminster

Figure 2. The MP40 Sub-machinegun (MP standing for *Maschinenpistole* or Machine Pistol), chambered for 9x19mm Parabellum, operates with an open-bolt, blowback mechanism, the magazine holding 32 rounds. Introduced into service in 1940, it was a simplified version of the MP38, which itself was a development of the MP36, an SMG designed by Berthold Geipel of Erma. Over 1 million would be made during the War, but contrary to the image perceived in war films and computer games, it was generally only issued to paratroopers, tank crews as well as squad and platoon leaders (Above).

Weight: 4kg (8.8lbs); Length: 833mm (32.8in) with stock extended / 630mm (24.8in) with stock retracted; Barrel Length: 251mm (9.9in); Muzzle velocity: 380m/s (1,247fps); Rate of Fire: 550 rounds per minute.

The MG34



Source: Author's pictures, taken at the Infantry Weapons Collection, Warminster

Figure 3. (Top) The MG34 (the MG standing for *Maschinengewehr* or machinegun) was designed by Heinrich Vollmer of Mauser and accepted into service in 1934, firing the 7.92x57mm cartridge. It was the standard German infantry squad support weapon for the first half of World War II, being supplanted by the MG42 (Figure 4. Bottom) later in the war. Used in this role, it was equipped with a bipod (but could be converted to the heavy machinegun role by putting it on a tripod) and belt-fed, although it could accept 50-round drums.

Weight: 12.1kg (26.7lbs); Length: 1,219mm (48in); Barrel Length: 627mm (24.7in); Muzzle velocity: 755m/s (2,477fps); Rate of Fire: 900 rounds per minute (average).

P-08 Luger semi-automatic pistol



Source: Author's picture, taken at the Infantry Weapons Collection, Warminster

Figure 5. (Above, Right) The 9x19mm P-08 Luger semi-automatic pistol, the design of which was patented by Georg J Luger in 1898, was initially chambered for 7.65x22 Parabellum but was eventually chambered for the 9x19mm cartridge, a round that was developed specifically for it (and hence is also called 9x19mm Luger). It operated using an unusual toggle-lock action instead of the standard slide action of almost all other semi-automatic pistols and featured an eight-round magazine. Made to exacting standards, the design worked well for high-power cartridges but low-power ones could cause feeding problems.

Weight: 871g (1.92lbs); Length: 222mm (8.75in); Barrel Length: 98 - 203mm (3.9 – 8.02in); Muzzle velocity: 350 – 400m/s (4in barrel, 9mm).

(Above, Left) The Walther P-38, a gas-operated semi-automatic pistol, chambered for the 9x19mm Parabellum cartridge, came into service in 1940. It became the *Wehrmacht's* general service pistol, replacing the expensive-to-produce Luger P-08 and used a double-action trigger design, similar to that used on the PPK. It featured an eight-round magazine.

Weight: 800g (1lb 12oz); Length: 216mm (8.5in); Barrel Length: 125mm (4.9in); Muzzle velocity: 365m/s (1,200fps).

Browning semi-automatic pistol



Source: Author's picture, taken at the Infantry Weapons Collection, Warminster

Figure 6. The Browning Hi-Power (Above) was a single-action semi-automatic pistol chambered for the 9x19mm Parabellum cartridge, with a magazine that held thirteen rounds. The initial design came from John Browning to satisfy a French military requirement but after Browning's death in 1926, the design was refined by Dieudonné Saive at *Fabrique Nationale* (FN) of Herstal, Belgium. It entered Belgian service in 1935. The factory continued to produce weapons under German occupation and so large numbers of this pistol saw service in the *Wehrmacht*.

Weight: 800g (1lb 12oz); Length: 216mm (8.5in); Barrel Length: 125mm (4.9in); Muzzle velocity: 365m/s (1,200fps).

The Gewehr-41 semi-automatic rifle



Source: <http://www.adamsguns.com/2036.htm> (via Wikimedia Commons).

Figure 7. The Gewehr-41 (Above) was a semi-automatic rifle chambered for the 7.92x57mm cartridge. Both Walther and Mauser developed designs, with the Walther design being somewhat superior. Both suffered from reliability problems, a result of the overly complex gas system which was difficult to clean and maintain under field conditions combined with fouling caused by the corrosive propellants in the ammunition. It entered service in 1941 but was superseded by the Gewehr-43.

Weight: 4.9kg (10.87lbs); Length: 1,140mm (44.8in); Barrel Length: 546mm (21.5in); Muzzle velocity: 775m/s (2,328fps); Rate of Fire: Semi-automatic.

The Gewehr-43 semi-automatic rifle



Source: <http://www.adamsguns.com> (via Wikimedia Commons).

Figure 8. The Gewehr-43 (Above) was a semi-automatic rifle chambered for the 7.92x57mm cartridge with a 10-round detachable box magazine. Following problems with the Gewehr-41, Walther produced a modified design in 1943, building on the experience they had with captured Soviet SVT-40 semi-automatic rifles. With a new gas system and changeable box magazine, the new rifle was smaller, lighter, easier to maintain, more reliable and quicker to reload. It started to be issued in early 1944 and over 400,000 units were produced.

Weight: 4.1kg (9.7lbs); Length: 1,130mm (44.8in); Barrel Length: 546mm (21.5in); Muzzle velocity: 775m/s (2,328fps); Rate of Fire: Semi-automatic.

The StG44 (also known as the MP43 and MP44)



Source: Author's picture, taken at the Infantry Weapons Collection, Warminster

Figure 9. The StG44 (also known as the MP43 and MP44) is considered by many to be the first modern assault rifle, combining features of a carbine, automatic rifle and sub-machinegun. The StG stands for *Sturmgewehr* or 'assault rifle' and it was chambered for a new, intermediate calibre cartridge, the 7.92x33mm *Kurz* (Kurz meaning 'short') in a 30-round detachable magazine. This, along with the weapon's selective fire design, meant that while it didn't have the long range accuracy or hitting power of a normal rifle chambered for a full-power rifle cartridge (such as the 7.92x57mm Mauser) it did have good ballistic performance out to intermediate ranges and was still controllable for close-up fully automatic fire. This was in-line with *Wehrmacht* studies that indicated that the vast majority of infantry combat took place at less than 400m. Initial variants entered service in October 1943.

Weight: 5.22kg (11.5lbs); Length: 940mm (37in); Barrel Length: 419mm (16.5in); Muzzle velocity: 685m/s (2,247fps); Rate of Fire: 500 – 600 rounds per minute.

Weapons: Hand Grenades



Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:M24_1.JPG



Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:German_grenade_m39.JPG

Figures 10 and 11. Two common hand grenades used by the *Wehrmacht*. The picture at the top shows probably the best known design, known to the Allies as the 'Stick Grenade' or 'Potato Masher', in this case a Mod. 24 *Steilhandgranate*. Two other common types were the Nb. 39 *Nebelhandgranate* (a smoke grenade) and a Mod. 43 *Steilhandgranate*. In the top example, the grenade is primed via a cord that runs down the hollow base. In later models of the stick grenade, the warhead was essentially an *Eihandgranate* on top of a solid wooden handle. The stick grenade can trace its origin to a design first used during World War I. The picture at the bottom shows an example of the M39 *Eihandgranate* (Egg hand grenade), a design first introduced in 1939. The M39 was a continuation of the Mod.1917 Na. egg design, which was a small grenade, making it easier to carry in larger quantities and allowing it to be thrown further.

Weapons: Anti-Tank

The Panzerbüchse



Source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Musee-de-lArmee-IMG_1006.jpg

Figure 12. (Above) The *Panzerbüchse* (literally 'Tank Rifle' – here the word *büchse* mean rifle, as it refers to a large-calibre rifle used in sport or hunting) or PzB 39 was a single-shot, bolt-action anti-tank rifle designed by the firm Gustloff and chambered for a proprietary 13.2x92mm cartridge. It entered service in early 1939 and saw action right the way through the war with some 39,232 rifles being made. While it had reasonable success against contemporary vehicles (it could penetrate up to 25mm of armour at 300m), the increased armour of later AFVs rendered it useless against all but the most lightly armoured or non-armoured vehicles. It was superseded by the Panzerfaust and Panzerschrek, and many were rebuilt as grenade launchers.

Weight: 11.6kg (25.57lbs); Length: 1,620mm (63.8in); Barrel Length: 1,085mm (42.7in); Muzzle velocity: 1,210m/s (3,970fps); Rate of Fire: 10 rounds per minute (approx).

The Faustpatrone Klein



Source: Author's picture, taken at the Infantry Weapons Collection, Warminster

Figure 13. (Above) Designed to give infantry a portable anti-tank capability, the *Faustpatrone Klein* 30 (literally 'Fist Cartridge, Small') was the forerunner to the better known *Panzerfaust* series, introduced in August 1943. The *Panzerfaust* (literally 'Tank Fist') series of weapons were essentially a hollow metal tube with a shaped-charge warhead attached to it. On firing, the warhead would accelerate out of the tube, up to a speed of 100m/s (depending on the design) with stabilising fins deploying after it left the tube. They were reasonably accurate up to 100m (again, depending on the design) and could penetrate up to 220mm of armour. The 30 entered service in August 1943, the 60M in September 1944 and the 100M in November 1944.

Faustpatrone K30: Weight – 3.2kg; Effective Range – 30m; Penetration – 140mm
Panzerfaust 30: Weight – 5.1kg; Effective Range – 30m; Penetration – 200mm
Panzerfaust 60M: Weight – 6.1kg; Effective Range – 60m; Penetration – 200mm
Panzerfaust 100M: Weight – 6.8kg; Effective Range – 100m; Penetration – 220mm

The Panzerschrek



Source: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki>
(Author: Andrew Bossi)

Figure 14. (Left) The *Panzerschrek* (literally 'Tank Terror') was the popular name for the *Raketenpanzerbüchse* (or 'Rocket Armour Rifle'), a German development of the M1A1 Bazooka. The main variants were the RPzB 43 (issued early in 1943), RPzB 54 (issued in October 1943 and had a blast shield to protect the operator) and RPzB 54/1 (shorter but fired an improved rocket). It fired a rocket-propelled shaped-charge warhead that had, in the case of the RPzB 54/1, a range of about 180m and could penetrate over 200mm of armour. It was the

heaviest of the three versions though, at 11kg (empty).

Weapons: Indirect Fire

The Leichter Granatwerfer 36



Source: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki> (Author: Andrew Bossi)

Figure 15. (Left) The German *Leichter Granatwerfer 36* was a light, 5cm mortar used throughout World War II. Development started in 1934 by Rheinmetall-Borsig AG and it was adopted for service in 1936. By 1941, its effectiveness was seen as limited and production eventually ceased. As supplies dwindled, German troops started using captured French and Soviet 50mm mortars but the 5cm LeGrW was always popular due to it being easily portable by two soldiers and provided a decent striking power at a range not immediately accessible to the squad or section. It weighed 14kg (31lbs), had a barrel

length of 465mm (18in) and fired a 3.5kg HE shell up to 520m away.

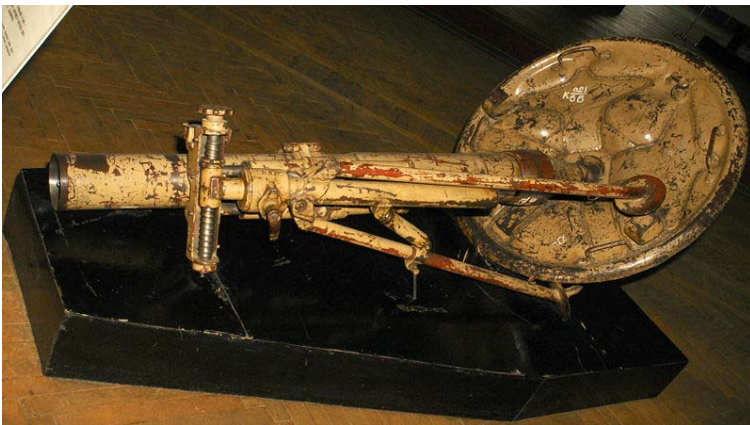
The Granatwerfer 34



Source: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki> (Author: Andrew Bossi)

Figure 16. (Left) The 8cm *Granatwerfer* (GrW) 34 was the standard medium German mortar in World War II. It had a reputation of being reliable, accurate and having a decent rate of fire. The weapon broke down into three loads (barrel, bipod and baseplate) and featured a line of the barrel for rough laying, while a panoramic sight was fitted on the traversing mechanism for fine adjustment. It weighed 62kg (136.6lbs) with a steel barrel or 57kg (125.6lbs) with an alloy barrel, had a barrel length of 1,143mm (45in) and could fire a 3.5kg HE or smoke shell, well over a kilometre, a range that could be extended to almost 2.5km (2,723yds) with up to three additional propellant charges. A shortened version, the kz 8cm GrW42 was developed for use by the paratroopers but its use became much more widespread as the limitations of the 5cm LeGrW became apparent.

The Granatwerfer 42



Source: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki> (Author: George Shuklin)

Figure 17. (Left) The 12cm *Granatwerfer* (GrW) 42 was virtually a direct copy of the Soviet PM-38 120mm mortar and an attempt to give German troops an indirect fire weapon that had better range and striking power than the weapons available at the time. Captured Soviet weapons received the designation 12 cm *Granatwerfer* 378 (r). The GrW had a barrel length of about 1,862 mm (6 ft), weighed 280kg (617.3lbs) and was

towed into firing position using a two-wheeled axle, which was removed while setting up the weapon. It could fire a 15.6kg (34.4lbs) shell approximately 6km (6,561yds).

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