



5. GEBIRGSDIVISION



5. *Gebirgsdivision* was formed in 1940 from 100. *Gebirgs-Regiment* from 1. *Gebirgsdivision* and 85. *Infanterie-Regiment* of 10. *Infanteriedivision*. The remaining units of the division came from both 1. *Gebirgsdivision* and 10. *Infanteriedivision*.

The new division underwent its initial training in the Bavarian Alps. Their home base became Salzburg, Austria, however its personnel were mainly recruited from Bavaria.

COMMANDERS

From the division's creation in 1940 until 1944 their commander was *Generalleutnant* Julius 'Papa' Ringel. He was awarded the Knight's Cross on 13 June 1941 for his successful leadership of the division during the invasion of Greece and Crete. On 1 December 1942, while the division was in Russia, he was promoted from *Generalmajor* to *Generalleutnant*. On 25 October 1943 he was distinguished for his leadership in Russia with oak leaves added to his Knight's Cross. On 1 April 1944 he became commander of the *LXIX Armeekorps* and on 1 June 1944 overall commander of all German mountain troops.

Ringel's replacement as commander of 5. *Gebirgsdivision* from April 1944 was *Generalmajor* (later *Generalleutnant*) Max-Gunther Schrank who commanded the division on the Gustav and Gothic lines until January 1945. The final commander of the 5. *Gebirgsdivision* (18 January 1945 - 8 May 1945) was *Generalmajor* Hans Steets.

EARLY CAMPAIGNS

5. *Gebirgsdivision* first saw combat in March 1941 when they were sent to the Balkans to take part in the Greek campaign. They advanced from Bulgaria into Greece where they first

broke through the Metaxas defence lines after much hard fighting. They took part in further fighting before they finally marched to Athens, driving the retreating Greek and Commonwealth forces before them.

Their next role was as an airlanding force to reinforce the *Fallschirmjäger* on the island of Crete. Initially the division was to arrive by sea from Greece, but the mixed flotilla of improvised transport vessels was intercepted by the British Navy. The warships wreaked havoc on the small wooden fishing boats transporting the *Gebirgsjäger*. Finally on 22 May 1941 the 3rd Battalion of 100. *Gebirgsjäger-Regiment* landed on Maleme airstrip, which had been seized by the paratroopers, in JU-52 transport planes. A combined *Gebirgsjäger-Fallschirmjäger* force secured the remainder of the airfield and surrounding area. A *Gebirgsjäger* force was dispatched to clear the surrounding hills of New Zealand troops. After a day of heavy fighting the *Gebirgsjäger* were able to push the New Zealanders back and take the high ground. Fighting continued until 31 May when the British and Commonwealth troops not evacuated were forced to surrender. The *Gebirgsjäger* played a great role in completing the *Fallschirmjägers'* hard won victory on the island.

RUSSIA

From late Summer 1941 to March 1942 the division retired to Germany to be refitted and rested. They next returned to battle on the Eastern Front with *Heersgruppe Nord*. They fought in the Volkhov region on the Leningrad front. During their twenty months on the front the division was used as a 'fire brigade' for the 18. *Armee*.

5. GEBIRGSDIVISION IN ITALY



ITALY

In December 1943 the division transferred to Italy under the 10. *Armee*. They took part in the fighting retreat up the Italian mainland. The withdrawal halted on the Gustav Line where the 5. *Gebirgsdivision* fought in defence of the Rapido River line and Monte Cifalco. They were part of the *LI Gebirgs Korps* consisting of 5. *Gebirgsdivision*, 1. *Fallschirmjägerdivision* and 44. *Infanteriedivision*. The Korps stretched in a line across the Apennines to Cassino and the Liri River. During the defence of the Cassino sector they faced various Allied troops including the New Zealanders once again, as well as British, French, Poles, Italians and South Africans.

5. *Gebirgsdivision* arrived on the Gustav line just as the French Expeditionary Corps, part of the US Fifth Army's offensive in January 1944, attacked their sector. After being caught initially on the back foot, they soon steadied their line on the fortifications of the Gustav line proper. Here they faced the French North African troops who were equally at home in the rugged mountain terrain. The fighting was bitter and protracted, often involving small unit actions amongst the rocks and bushes surrounding the German positions. The stubborn defence of the *Gebirgsjäger* held true. The defensive advantage they held soon blunted the reckless bravery of the *Tirailleurs* and the attacks had halted by 17 January. US Fifth Army commander, General Mark Clark, refused to support the French attacks with a further division from his US forces and so no further progress was made. *Gebirgsjäger* and other troops were sorely stretched and XIV *Panzerkorps* commander Generalleutnant Fridolin von Senger was concerned that any further pressure in the sector would result in a breakthrough. However, Clark's refusal to reinforce the French brought an end to the immediate threat.

5. *Gebirgsdivision* was next in action in the defence of Monte Cifalco, once more fighting against the French. The wily French commander General Juin side-stepped the defenders with the 3rd Algerian Division and moved against Monte Belvedere. Bitter fighting ensued and the tenacious defence slowed the French before their objective. Once again the French were refused further support by General Clark and the attack ground to a halt.

During the US II Corps attack north of Cassino in late January the left flank positions of the 5. *Gebirgsdivision* were engaged by the US 135th Infantry Regiment, but the 44. *Infanteriedivision* bore the brunt of the unsuccessful attack.

During the second and third battles of Cassino 5. *Gebirgsdivision* was not heavily involved in the fighting.

The next major Allied offensive to face 5. *Gebirgsdivision* occurred when Operation Diadem started on 11 May. Once again the 5. *Gebirgsdivision* was caught re-deploying when the offensive began, as they were taking over

sectors of the 44. *Infanteriedivision*, which was being withdrawn from the line. The division, now deployed on the left flank of the 1. *Fallschirmdivision*, faced the onslaught of the II Polish Corps. The men of the 100. *Gebirgsjäger-Regiment* went into action, adding their firepower to the hail of fire put out by the *Fallschirmjäger* against the Poles as they made their way up the rock-strewn hillside. The initial attack by the Poles was halted, but advances by British and French troops threatened to cut off the German defenders. On 16 May the Poles were ready once more to storm the German positions around the Monte Cassino monastery. The Germans continued to defend skilfully, but the pressure from in front and the threat on the flank forced them to withdraw on 18 May.

The breakthrough of the Gustav line and the failure of the Hitler line forced the *Gebirgsjäger* to conduct a fighting withdrawal until new defensive positions were established on the Gothic Line.

After retreating to the Gothic Line they took up positions in the hills to the west of Rimini. The division transferred to the Ligurian Army in August 1944. The Ligurian Army was formed to defend the northwest coast of Italy from potential landings.

5. *Gebirgsdivision* has the distinction of being the last German mountain division to fight in high alpine terrain after being transferred to the Western Alps on the Italian-French border in 1945. On 20 April seven *Gebirgsjäger* climbed up the northeast face of *Roc Belleface*. Their daring raid took the French garrison by surprise and the Germans were able to take the position. After some further fighting the division assembled and withdrew from their positions to march towards Milan and surrender. However fighting continued as partisans harassed them on their journey.

The division eventually surrendered to the Americans in the town of Ivrea, north of Turin.

5. GEBIRGSDIVISION
GEBIRGSJÄGER COMPANY

5. *Gebirgsdivision* is a German-based unit formed around 100. *Gebirgsjägerregiment* (formally of 1. *Gebirgsdivision*). These Bavarian veterans are elite troops specially trained in high alpine warfare. They can scale the highest rocky crags and cope with the most extreme weather.

This Formation uses the following special rule:

Mountaineers: Teams from the Grenadier Company HQ (L6234) and Grenadier Platoons (L6235) in this Formation that start their Movement Step adjacent to an Impassable cliff or mountain side (or another similar terrain feature) roll a Skill Test. If successful, the team may move using Terrain Dash across the terrain.

German, Build, Formation (Grenadier Company), Title

0 POINTS

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5. GEBIRGSDIVISION
7.5CM MOUNTAIN ARTILLERY

They had their own light gun broken down into smaller pieces. Reduce the points per gun.

SS	ROAD	CROSS
5CM	8"/20CM	3+

ROF	MOVING	ANTI-TANK	FIRE-POWER
2	1	2	4+
2	1	6	3+

Unit

0 POINTS

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5. GEBIRGSDIVISION
10.5CM MOUNTAIN ARTILLERY

and their own light gun broken down into smaller pieces. Reduce the points per gun.

Battery as a 10.5cm

Unit by -1 point

Weapon to the guns from om (L6136), but the

0 POINTS

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