

Wehrmacht uniforms

This article discusses the uniforms of the World War II Wehrmacht (Army, Air Force, and Navy). For the Schutzstaffel, see [Uniforms and insignia of the Schutzstaffel](#).



German general Alfred Jodl wearing black leather trenchcoat



Paratrooper's knochensack worn over the standard Luftwaffe jumpsuit (right)

The following is a general overview of the **Wehrmacht main uniforms**, though there were so many specialist uniforms and variations that not all (such as camouflage, *Luftwaffe*, tropical, extreme winter) can be included. SS

uniforms, not included here, began to break away in 1935 with minor design differences.

Terms such as *M40* and *M43* were never designated by the *Wehrmacht*, but are names given to the different versions of the *Modell 1936* field tunic by modern collectors, to discern between variations, as the *M36* was steadily simplified and tweaked due to production time problems and combat experience. The corresponding German term for tunic is *Feldbluse* and literally translates “field blouse”.

1 *Heer*

1.1 Insignia

Main article: [Ranks and insignia of the Heer \(1935–1945\)](#)

For medals see [List of military decorations of the Third Reich](#)

Uniforms of the *Heer* as the ground forces of the *Wehrmacht* were distinguished from other branches by two devices: the army form of the *Wehrmachtsadler* or *Hoheitszeichen* (national emblem) worn above the right breast pocket, and – with certain exceptions – collar tabs bearing a pair of *Litzen* (*Doppellitze* “double braid”), a device inherited from the old Prussian Guard which resembled a Roman numeral II on its side. Both eagle and *Litzen* were machine-embroidered or woven in white or grey (hand-embroidered in silk, silver or aluminium for officers). Rank was worn on shoulder-straps except for junior enlisted (*Mannschaften*), who wore plain shoulder-straps and their rank insignia, if any, on the left upper sleeve. NCO's wore a 9mm silver or grey braid around the collar edge.

Shoulder-straps and, in many cases, collar patches were piped or underlaid in *Waffenfarbe*, a color code which identified the branch of service to which the unit belonged: white for infantry, red for artillery, rose-pink for Panzer troops and so on.

Most belt buckles had the *Heeresadler* with the inscription “Gott mit uns” (“God with us”).

1.2 Field and service uniform

1.2.1 Field Tunic (*Feldbluse*) Model 1936



Enlisted infantryman's M36 uniform. Note the dark-green collar and shoulder-straps (with white *Waffenfarbe*), the *Litzen* collar insignia, and the *Wehrmachtssadler* above the right breast pocket.

When the Nazis came to power in early 1933 the *Reichswehr*, the armed forces of the Weimar Republic, were near the end of a two-year project to redesign the Army *Feldbluse* (field-blouse). Beginning in that year the new tunic was issued to the *Reichsheer* and then the rapidly growing *Wehrmacht Heer*, although minor design changes continued to be made until the appearance of the standardized *Heeres Dienstanzug Modell 1936*. The M36 tunic still retained the traditional Imperial and *Reichswehr* uniform color of grey-green "field gray" (*feldgrau*)^[1] wool, but incorporated four front patch pockets with scalloped flaps and pleats (on *Reichswehr* tunics the lower pockets were internal and angled). The front was closed with five buttons rather than the previous eight, and the collar and shoulder straps were of a dark bottle-green instead of the *Reichswehr* grey. Compared to the Weimar-era uniforms the skirt of the *feldbluse* was shorter and the tailoring was more form-fitting due to Germany's adoption of mechanized warfare: soldiers now spent much time in the confined space of a vehicle and a shorter jacket was less likely to pick up dirt from the seats.^[2] It also included an internal suspension system, whereby a soldier could hang an equipment belt on a series of hooks outside of the tunic. These hooks were connected to two straps inside the lining, which spread the weight of equipment without having to use external equipment suspenders. The M36 was produced and issued until the very end of the war, though successive pat-

terns became predominant.

SS field uniforms were of similar appearance externally but to fit their larger patches had a wider, *feldgrau* collar, and the lower pockets were of an angled slash type similar to the black or grey SS service-dress. The second button of an SS *Feldbluse* was positioned somewhat lower, so that it could be worn open-collar with a necktie. Due to supply problems the SS were often issued army uniforms.



Germans in Paris, 1940

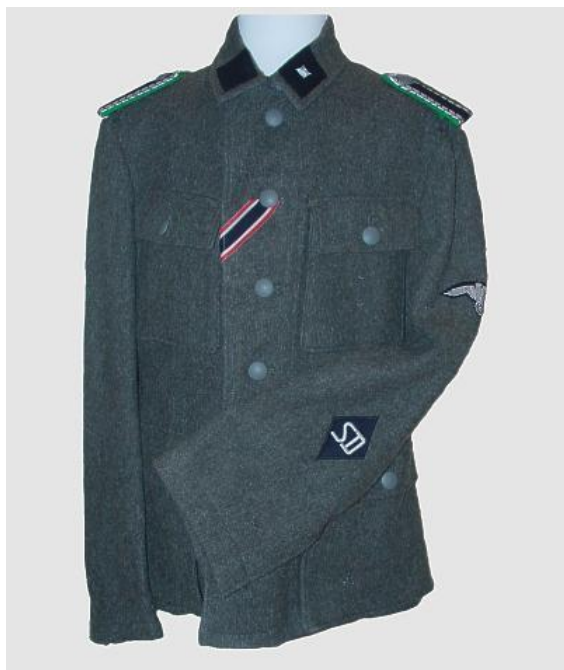


German soldiers with *Stahlhelms* in the Soviet Union in 1942

M40 Tunic The M40 uniform was the first design change in the standard army uniform. It differed from the M36 only in the substitution of *feldgrau* for the bottle green collar and shoulder straps, which began to be phased out in 1938/39, though most combat examples show this variation appearing in 1940, hence the unofficial M40 pattern. The troops liked the older green collars, and M40 (and later) tunics modified with salvaged M36 collars or bottle-green collar overlays are not uncommon.

M41 Tunic The M41 is exactly the same as the M40, but with a 6 button front due to the decline of material quality, which by now was 50% or more viscose rayon and recycled shoddy. SS-specific uniforms nonetheless stayed with 5 buttons.

M42 Tunic The M42 is essentially an M40/41 tunic, but with pleats removed from all the pockets to save on materials and production time.



M43 uniform with SS Sicherheitsdienst insignia

M43 Tunic The M43 saw the removal of all pleats and scalloped flaps from the field tunic, and pockets began to be cut straight rather than with rounded edges. Many M43 tunics were made with a much simplified version of the internal suspension system, or omitted it entirely.

1.2.2 Field Blouse Model 1944



Flakhelfer anti-aircraft gun crew in 1944 pattern uniform

In late 1944, in order to cut down on tailoring and production costs, the *Wehrmacht* introduced the M44 pattern uniform. Similar in appearance to the British Battle Dress or the related US “Ike” jacket, the M44 was unlike

any other German pattern uniform, and the first major deviation in uniform design since 1936. The tunic skirt was shortened to waist length, an internal belt was added, and the tunic could be worn with an open or closed collar. The color was the new “*Feldgrau 44*”, a drab greenish-brown. The rarely used and complicated internal suspension system was finally dropped. German insignia was still worn (breast eagle, collar *Litzen* and shoulder boards).^[3] Except for the elite *Panzer-Lehr-Division*, which field-tested the new uniform in summer 1944 before its approval for general issue, the M44 was usually seen at the front only in the war’s last months and generally on the greenest of troops: new replacements, teenage *Flakhelfer*, and *Hitlerjugend* and *Volkssturm* militia.

1.2.3 Trousers

M22 (M36) Originally the M1936 tunic was worn with the same slate gray (*steingrau*) trousers that the *Reichswehr* had introduced in 1922. These were high-waisted, straight legged, button-fly trousers with suspenders (braces) and three internal pockets plus a watch-pocket; in the field they were worn tucked into *jackboots*.

M40 In 1940 contractors were ordered to discontinue the manufacture of *steingrau* fabric and instead produce trousers from the same *feldgrau* cloth as the tunic; however Army depots continued to issue existing stocks and the older dark trousers were still frequently seen until around 1942.

M43 A new design of field trousers was introduced in 1943, replacing the old World War I style straight legged “*Langhosen*”. New features included tapered ankles (to help fit with new ankle boots and gaiters, which replaced *jackboots* beginning in 1941/42), reinforced seat, and loops to allow a trouser belt to be used. They were the German soldiers’ favorite and most robust trousers, and were produced right up to the end of the war.

1.2.4 Field caps

Side cap (*Feldmütze*) M34/M38/M42 The original soft cover for the *Heer*, introduced in 1934, was a folding garrison or envelope cap in *feldgrau* wool, similar to that worn by American, Soviet and RAF personnel but with a “scoop” in the front; the *Schiffchen* (“little ship”) was popular, convenient, and worn throughout the war. Variants in black wool and olive cotton were issued with the Panzer and tropical uniforms. Insignia consisted of an embroidered national emblem (*Wehrmadsadler*) and red-white-black cockade, and (until 1942) an inverted chevron (*soutache*) in *Waffenfarbe*. Officers’ caps (M38) were piped in silver or aluminum (gold for generals). A variant appeared in 1942 with a two-part “fold” intended to serve as ear flaps in cold weather, secured by two front

buttons: this was rapidly overtaken by the M43 field cap. (*Dienstanzug*)



M43 field cap (SS insignia)

Visored field cap (*Einheitsfeldmütze*) M43 Main article: M43 field cap

Since before World War I German and Austrian mountain troops had worn a visored “ski cap” (*Gebirgsmütze*) with turn-down ear flaps secured in front by two buttons. A version of this cap with longer visor, false turn-down, and slightly lower crown in olive cotton twill had been issued with the tropical uniform. In 1943 a similar cap in field-grey wool with a visor intermediate in length between the mountain and tropical versions was issued to all troops for field wear only; it quickly became the most commonly seen soft headgear at the front. Insignia was similar to that of the side-cap, although the eagle and cockade were both worn above the turn-up. A black version was issued to Panzer crewmen.

Peaked cap (*Schirmmütze*) The dress, service and walking-out cap for all ranks ^[4] was the peaked cap as finalized in 1934. The semi-rigid band was covered in bottle-green fabric, and the stiff visor came in variety of materials and were made of either black vulcanized fiber, fibre, plastic or (occasionally) [patent leather]]. The oval wool crown was stiffened with wire into a curved “saddle-



Field Marshal Fedor von Bock wearing the *Schirmmütze*

back” shape with a lofty front. Insignia consisted of the national cockade surrounded by an oakleaf wreath on the front of the band, with the *Wehrmachtsadler* above; these were stamped aluminum or sometimes embroidered in bullion for officers (silver for company and field-grade officers, and gold for generals). The edges of the band and crown were piped in *Waffenfarbe*. Enlisted men wore the cap with a black leather chinstrap; officers wore a pair of braided silver or aluminum cords (gold for generals). NCOs were authorized to wear the *Schirmmütze* when the uniform of the day prescribed the field cap.

Officers’ caps were frequently private-purchase and had covers of higher-quality fabric; these were often interchangeable and included summer white and tropical olive versions as well as *feldgrau*.

Officers’ “old style” field cap or “crusher” At the same time the M34 side-cap was introduced for enlisted wear, a foldable field cap for officers was authorized. Superficially resembling the *Schirmmütze*, this cap had a crown of significantly smaller diameter without the wire stiffener, a soft band, and a visor of flexible leather or *feldgrau* wool. Insignia were jacquard-woven; although no chinstrap was authorized officers often added the *Schirmmütze* silver cords. This cap was officially replaced by the officers’ *Schiffchen* M38, with a wear-out date of 1 April 1942, but this order was generally ignored and the popular “*Knautschmütze*” was worn throughout the war, coming to be known as the *ältere Art* (old style) field cap.



Oberleutnant on the Eastern Front wears a Schirmmütze without the wire stiffener. This gave it a resemblance to the old style “crusher” cap.



World War II Stahlhelm

Officers and NCOs in the field would sometimes remove the wire stiffener from the *Schirmmütze* to achieve the “crush” look, especially tank crewmen (to facilitate wearing headphones); this unauthorized but widespread practice should not be confused with the true “crusher.”

ual soldiers frequently improvised helmet covers from splinter-pattern *Zeltbahn* (tent/poncho) fabric, or less frequently hand-painted their helmets in camouflage patterns. Soldiers would also cover their helmets with netting or chicken wire into which foliage could be inserted.

1.2.5 Helmets

Main article: [Stahlhelm](#)

In 1935 the Wehrmacht adopted a lower, lighter version of the M1916/18 “coal scuttle” helmet; this became the ubiquitous German helmet of World War II, worn by all branches of the *Wehrmacht* and SS, police, fire brigades and Party organizations. Collectors distinguish slight production variants as the M35, M40 and M42. *Heer* helmets were originally painted “apple green,” a semigloss *feldgrau* somewhat darker than the uniform color; wartime factory and field painting covered a gamut from very dark black-green to slate-grey to olive-green (and sand-yellow in Africa), increasingly in matte or textured paint to eliminate reflections. The Army began issuing camouflage helmet covers in 1942, first in *Splittertarnmuster* (splinter-pattern) and then in *Sumpftarnmuster* (swamp/marsh or “water” pattern); these were never plentiful and individ-



Heer helmet decals

Prewar and early-war Army *Stahlhelme* had shield-shaped decals on either side, black-white-red diagonal stripes on the right and the *Heeresadler* (Army eagle) in silver-grey on the left; in 1940 the national colors and then in 1943 the eagle were discontinued, and existing decals were often covered up during repainting.^[5]

1.2.6 Boots

Jackboots (*Marschstiefel* “marching boots”) The calf-high pull-on jackboot had been the traditional footwear of the German soldier for generations. The *Wehrmacht* boot was little different from that of World War I: made of brown pebbled leather (blackened with polish), with hobnailed leather soles and heel-irons. Trousers were worn tucked inside. Originally 35–39 cm tall, the boots were shortened to 32–35 cm in 1939 in order to save leather. By 1940 leather was becoming more scarce and issue was restricted to combat branches, and in 1941 jackboots were no longer issued to new recruits. By late 1943 production of jackboots had ceased altogether. However, as late as fall 1944 depots were encouraged to issue *Marschstiefel* to infantry and artillery, to the extent they were available.

Officers’ boots were knee-high and more form-fitting, and (as usual) often private purchases of superior quality. They were to be worn with breeches; however, these technically were not “riding” boots, differing somewhat from the *Reüstiefel* worn (with spurs) by regiments with cavalry traditions.^[6] By order dated 31 October 1939 most officers in the front lines wore the shorter EM boots with *Langhosen* or *Keilhosen*, but some ignored regulations and wore their kneeboots anyway.

Ankle boots (*Schnürschuhe* “lace-up shoes”) From 1937 each recruit was issued a pair of ankle-height work boots for basic training, and kept them for fatigue duty and the like. Beginning in 1940 the Army ceased issuing jackboots to rear-area personnel and authorized the wearing of the utility boots with the field uniform; canvas gaiters or *Gamaschen* were issued for this purpose. From 1941 *Schnürschuhe* were authorized for combat units as well, and the only footwear issued to new recruits; by 1943 their wear had become universal.

1.2.7 Officers

Also in 1935 the *Heer* introduced a new service tunic for officers and senior NCOs. This was broadly similar to the other-ranks tunic, but differed in detail: the collar was of a taller, more pointed rise-and-fall type, the shoulders were padded, the sleeves had deep turnback cuffs, there was no internal suspension system or grommets for belt hooks, and there were two ramp-buttons at the back of the waist to support the belt. Since officers had to purchase their own uniforms, many of these tunics were either tailor-made or produced by gentlemen’s clothiers, and if purchased for service dress for the most part used high-quality wool gabardine (*Trikot*), doeskin or whipcord. For this reason the officers’ *Dienstrock* did not undergo the cost-saving changes which affected the enlisted M36, and kept its green collar and scalloped, pleated pockets throughout the war. After the Army authorized wearing the collar open with a necktie in 1943,

some officers’ tunics were made with fixed lapels like the *Luftwaffe Tuchrock*.

Trousers were either slate-grey (later field-grey) *Langhosen*, or breeches worn with high boots. Generals and General Staff officers wore wide trouser-stripes of scarlet or carmine-red, respectively.

Although the M35 remained the regulation service-dress uniform, soon after the outbreak of the war, officers in combat units of the rank of regimental commander or below were ordered to wear the more practical (and less conspicuous) other-ranks uniform for frontline service, and save the “good” uniform for walking-out, office and garrison wear; some of these EM tunics were privately modified with French cuffs and officer-style collars. Nonetheless, many officers ignored regulations and wore the *Dienstrock* at the front, sometimes even with breeches.

1.3 Dress uniforms

1.3.1 *Waffenrock*



Waffenrock

The *Waffenrock* (military coat) was descended from that introduced by the Prussian Army in 1842 and rapidly adopted by the other German states. In its *Wehrma-*

cht form as issued in 1935, it was a formfitting thigh-length eight-button tunic of fine *feldgrau* wool, without external pockets. The collar was taller than the service tunic and bore more elaborate *Litzen*, embroidered all in silver-white and mounted on *Waffenfarbe* backing; smaller *Ärmelpatten*, similar in appearance to *Litzen*, appeared under the buttons on the dark-green Swedish cuffs. *Waffenfarbe* piping also edged the collar, cuffs, front closure, and scalloped rear vent.

Officers wore a formal belt of silver braid. Trousers were *steingrau*, with the outer seams piped in *Waffenfarbe*. In the full-dress uniform (*grosser Gesellschaftanzug*) the *Waffenrock* was worn with medals, *aiguillette* (officers), trousers and shoes, the *Schirmmütze*, gloves, and sword (officers/senior NCOs) or dress bayonet (enlisted). Parade dress substituted the steel helmet and jackboots. Semi-formal (*kleiner Gesellschaftanzug*) and walking-out (*Ausgangsanzug*) uniforms were as full-dress, but without *aiguillette* and with ribbons replacing medals.

Production and issue of the *Waffenrock* was suspended in 1940, and either the service or the officers' ornamental uniform was worn for dress occasions instead. However, the *Waffenrock* remained authorized for walking out for those who had or could purchase it; and it was a widespread if unauthorized practice to loan a soldier a *Waffenrock* from regimental stocks to get married in, as evidenced by many wartime wedding photos.



Summer white tunic (*ältere Art*)

1.3.2 Officers' ornamented uniform (M37)

In 1937 officers were authorized the optional purchase of the "ornamented" (*ornamentierte*) or "piped" (*mit Vorstössen*) uniform, to be worn as a less-formal alternative to the *Waffenrock* for walking-out and some ceremonial occasions. The M37 *Feldbluse* was identical to the M35 service tunic, save that the collar and its *Litzen* were the same as the *Waffenrock*, and collar, closure and cuffs were piped in *Waffenfarbe*. It was worn with the piped dress trousers.

1.3.3 Summer white tunic

Officers and certain senior NCOs had the option of wearing a white cotton tunic from April through September. The Reichswehr "old-style" (*ältere Art*) model had a stand collar, a six-button front, and plain sleeves; it was authorized for barracks wear, supervising training, and attending sporting events. The newer model introduced in 1937 had a rise-and-fall collar, an eight-button front, and French cuffs, and was authorized as a summer walking-out and undress uniform. Both versions had removable buttons, shoulderboards and metal breast eagle in order to permit laundering; collar insignia was not worn.

1.4 Panzer uniform

Panzer uniform (*Sonderbekleidung der Panzertruppen*) consisted of black wool hip-length double-breasted jacket and trousers, with skulls^[8] on the collar patches instead of *Litzen* and, officially until 1942, collar piping in *Waffenfarbe* (usually the rose-pink of the armor branch, but also gold for former cavalry units in the reconnaissance role or black/white twist for combat engineers). The color and *Totenköpfe* (skulls) were chosen due to their similarity to the uniforms of August von Mackensen's Black Hussars, and also for practical reasons: the black color made oil stains less visible and a short jacket was less likely to get caught in the machinery. The trousers had tapered cuffs with drawstrings and tapes in order to fit into lace-up ankle boots. Although the jacket could be buttoned to the neck in cold weather, ordinarily it was worn open-collar with a field grey or mouse grey shirt and (in theory) a black necktie.

The jacket was manufactured in three different patterns between 1934 and 1945. First pattern jackets had deep lapels with square collars. There was also no provision to close the collar. Second pattern (1936–42) added three buttons to close the collar, reduced the size of the lapels and had a more pointed collar. Note that some second pattern jackets were produced without collar piping (possibly for non-panzer personnel entitled to wear the jacket). The third pattern (1942–45) deleted the collar piping for all personnel but was otherwise similar to second pattern.



Oberleutnant Otto Carius in the summer white tunic (neue Art)^[7]

Self-propelled anti-tank artillery (*Panzerjäger*) and assault-gun (*Sturmgeschütz*) crews were issued similar uniforms in field-grey from 1940.

Originally a large black beret was worn over a hardened-felt helmet. This proved cumbersome and unnecessary and on 27 March 1940 a black version of the standard M34/M38 sidecap was authorized; later in the war the M43 field cap in black was worn. Officers frequently wore old-style (*altere Art*) “crusher” peaked caps.^[9]

Vehicle crews in North Africa wore the same olive tropical uniform as the infantry, including collar *Litzen*; many tankers pinned their skull insignia to their lapels.

In 1943 the *Panzertruppe* were issued their own reed-green HBT summer field uniform. This resembled the black uniform but had a single, very large pocket on the left breast and another on the front of the left thigh.

A one-piece denim overall, known as a *Panzerkombi*, was issued to *panzer* (armoured) crews and mechanics for maintenance work and the like; crews sometimes wore it for general field service although the practice was discouraged. Originally issued in blue-grey, the *Waffen-SS* later used camouflage-printed examples. It featured zips running down the inside of dump leg which could be used to zip both legs together to make a sleeping bag and re-



Oberfeldwebel, Panzer troops, 1941



Panzercommandant wearing a beret

mained in service with the postwar German army.

1.5 Winter uniform

Early in the war this consisted of heavy wool greatcoats (a similar pattern was issued to East German border guards until 1989). They had silver dimpled buttons that didn't reflect the light and were sometimes painted green to provide further camouflage. Following Hitler's invasion of the USSR the Germans found themselves ill-equipped to deal with the Russian winter and had to improvise: civilians back home were called upon to donate fur coats for the war effort until enough specialized winter clothing



Uniform of assault gun crew

front and in field grey for mountain troops. In addition to the standard issue snow camouflage the Germans made extensive use of captured Red Army equipment, especially the boots which provided better protection from the sub-zero temperatures. There are reports of Germans sawing the legs off dead Russians then heating them in ovens so they could thaw out and remove the boots.^[10]

1.6 Tropical uniform



Oberst Hans Cramer wearing tropical uniform. Note the combination of green-backed M35-style collar Litzen and Panzer skulls on the lapels.



early improvised Winter camouflage in October 1941



Winter uniform in January 1944



Erwin Rommel and officers, 1942

had been produced. Hooded waterproof parkas were issued later in the war, in white for troops on the eastern

The M40 Tropical tunics of the Afrikakorps, later authorized for summer field wear in Southern Europe, were



Afrika Korps at Tobruk



German pith helmet in olive drab



Rommel's Afrika Korps uniform. Note that the color, originally olive, is faded to greenish khaki.

basically the same cut as the standard army uniform but with open collar and lapels, and made of a medium-weight olive-drab cotton twill which in service faded to khaki. Also olive were the shirt and the seldom-worn necktie. Insignia were embroidered in dull blue-grey on tan backing cloth. This tunic was issued to all Army personnel in North Africa, including officers and Panzer crews. Officers as usual often purchased uniforms privately, and olive, khaki or mustard-yellow cotton versions of the M35 officers' tunic were worn alongside the standard issue, sometimes with green collars. The M40 Tropical breeches were of jodhpur type, to be worn with knee-boots or puttees: these were very unpopular and most were soon cut off to make shorts (captured British/Commonwealth shorts were frequently worn as well). By mid-1941 conventional trousers in olive cotton were being issued, followed soon thereafter by regulation *Heer* shorts; these had a built-in cloth belt. A chocolate brown overcoat in the same pattern as the continental version was issued as protection from the cold desert nights.

Pith helmets, ankle boots with puttees, and lace-up canvas knee-boots were also issued in 1941 as protection from the sand and hot tropical sun; the puttees disappeared quickly and the hated knee-boots were for the most part cut down to ankle length. The pith helmets, although effective against the sun, proved bulky and impractical in front-line service and were usually only worn in rear areas. For combat situations, standard steel helmets field-painted in a tan color were issued, usually vehicle interior sand-yellow (*sandgelb*) or exterior brown-yellow (*gelbbraun*). The Afrikakorps' soft cover was the M40 visored (peaked) cap similar in shape to that of the mountain troops (*Gebirgsjäger*). This extremely popular cap was made of olive-drab cotton twill lined with loosely woven red cotton fabric for protection from the sun and effective heat transfer from the head. It had a long visor, one-piece "false fold" rather than functional earflaps, and two metal ventilation eyelets on each side; for all but the most extreme climate conditions the M40 cap was generally preferred over the pith helmets. Also worn but less popular, except with Panzer personnel, was an olive cotton version of the sidecap.

The *Luftwaffe* tropical uniform differed significantly from the *Army* version. Air force uniforms were made of a yellowish-khaki cotton twill that proved to be a more effective camouflage color in the North African desert than Army olive, although the latter did fade to a sage-tan color with use and sun exposure. Its cut was also considered more practical and suited to the local climate than that of the early Army tropical uniform, with loosely cut trousers, a closed-collar tunic, and tan shirt. Unlike the Army, no special tropical overcoat was issued. Headgear, also in tan, initially consisted of a sidecap, pith helmet, or a unique tropical peaked cap design with detachable neckshade, although the latter was eventually replaced with a version of the Army M40 tropical cap in *Luftwaffe* tan.

When Tobruk was taken in June 1942, over 18,000

British khaki uniforms were captured; the *Panzerarmee Afrika*, perennially short of supplies, issued this store of shirts, shorts and boots to their own troops who wore them with German insignia.

1.7 HBT fatigue and summer uniforms



Kurt Meyer wearing fatigue uniform and crusher cap.

Most recruits previous to 1940 were issued a fatigue uniform (*Drillichanzug*) for basic training which they kept for work details, weapons cleaning and other duties likely to soil clothes. This was an unlined, insignia-less uniform made of linen or cotton herringbone twill (HBT) that typically had two buttonless patch pockets on the skirt; enlisted versions had a standing collar while NCO and officer versions had rise-and-fall collars. The fatigue uniform originally was undyed and therefore a colour that ranged from white to oatmeal to cement grey. On 12 February 1940 the colour was ordered changed to a bluish green called "reed-green."

Since the heavy wool *feldgrau* uniform proved to be oppressively hot in summer weather, especially in southerly latitudes, soldiers took to wearing their lightweight green fatigue uniforms in the heat. In about 1942 the Army regularized the practice: depots began issuing an official hot-weather four-pocket field uniform of *feldbluse* cut but made of the same reed-green HBT material. For the enlisted Heer, these were usually worn with collar insignia and national eagle. NCOs would typically wear the sum-

mer uniform (*Sommerfeldanzug*) with appropriate rank on their shoulder boards, but the collar braid seen on the wool uniforms was typically absent. Two models were approved for use in the Army, the first that was designed after the M40 *feldbluse* and a later model that removed the front pocket pleats and pocket flap scallops similar to the M43. From 1943 a double-breasted version based on the *Panzerjacke* was made for vehicle and assault gun crews. SS units never had an official unique summer uniform, and while some used the Army versions, most used the earlier dyed work fatigues without insignia. While commissioned officers did have bespoke summer uniforms made, there was no regulation summer field uniform.

1.8 Camouflage



Splittermuster (Splinter pattern)

Main article: German World War II camouflage patterns

The Germans were first issued camouflage in 1937. During the war two distinctive patterns were in use: *Splittermuster* (splinter pattern) and its softer-edged variant *Sumpftarnmuster* (swamp pattern), and *Platanenmuster* (plane tree pattern). Splinter Pattern was originally used for tents but was later applied by



Platanenmuster (*Plane tree pattern*)

the *Luftwaffe* to the *knochensack* jump smocks of the *Fallschirmjäger*, and fashioned into camouflage smocks for the infantry, while *Platanenmuster* was worn by snipers, panzer crews and the *Waffen-SS*. *Flecktarn*, an updated version of the earlier plane tree pattern, is still used by the modern German *Bundeswehr*.^[11]

In 1945 a new 6-colour camouflage known as *Leibernmuster*, which inspired the postwar US ERDL pattern, was introduced. The colors were black, tan, olive, pale green, white, and red-brown.^[12]

2 *Luftwaffe*

Main article: Uniforms and insignia of the *Luftwaffe*
The basic uniform of the *Luftwaffe* consisted of a



German pilots in France, 1942



Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring and Luftwaffe Generalmajor Paul Conrath

blue-grey, single-breasted, open-collared jacket with four pockets and flaps; white shirt and black necktie; blue-grey trousers; black leather boots; and a blue-grey peaked cap, side cap or Model 1935 *Stahlhelm*. Ranks were indicated by collar patches, along with Army-style shoulder boards.

The flying suit typically consisted of a beige jumpsuit, leather flying helmet and thick fur-lined boots. Black leather jackets were also worn by fighter pilots. The eagle insignia was different from the rest of the *Wehrmacht*: its wings curved upward and the swastika did not have a circle around it.

3 *Kriegsmarine*

Main article: Uniforms and insignia of the *Kriegsmarine*
The uniform for an enlisted sailor consisted of a jacket, a pair of trousers, a white and a blue shirt, a shirt-collar with three stripes, a silk neckerchief, grey gloves and a cap with two ribbons. An officer wore a midnight-blue^[13] double-breasted reefer coat with ten gilt buttons and a matching peaked cap. U-boat officers could also wear jackets and over-trousers of brown or grey leather. As an unwritten rule, the captain of a U-boat wore a white peaked cap.



Uniforms of the Kriegsmarine

When U-boats put to sea, there were few restrictions on what personnel wore. Full uniforms were typically worn on departure from and return to base. Due to the cramped and humid conditions, U-boat crews often began wearing more comfortable light civilian clothing after they set sail. These included seaman's jumpers and sleeveless shirts. Lookouts would still wear ponchos and sou'westers when on duty. German U-Boat crews were also commonly issued with British Army **Battle Dress** (with German insignia added).^[14] Large stockpiles had been captured by the Germans after the fall of France in 1940.

4 See also

- Wehrmacht ranks and insignia
- Glossary of German World War II military terms
- Comparative officer ranks of World War II

5 External links

6 References

- [1] Because of the large number of suppliers and then wartime shortages, "field gray" in practice covered a wide range of shades. In general, earlier uniforms were greener, with later ones tending toward grey and then brown, but there were at all times many variations
- [2] Lost Battalions - German Feldbluse fitting
- [3] About German uniforms (July 28, 2008)
- [4] Prewar: in October 1939 issuance of the peaked cap to junior enlisted personnel (*Mannschaften*) was suspended; although private purchase was still permitted, wear was only permitted for walking-out.
- [5] Hollywood movies, even those set on the Western front in 1944-45, routinely use reproduction *Stahlhelme* with dual decals; this is an anachronism.
- [6] The *Heer* fielded actual mounted units, both cavalry and horse transport; in addition to these a number of motorized units claimed descent from the horse cavalry, including the entire **24th Panzer Division**.
- [7] Instead of the regulation metal pin-on breast eagle, Carius is wearing an embroidered one, apparently the black-backed type for wear with the Panzer uniform
- [8] The Panzer *Totenkopf* was subtly different from that worn by the SS: the tankers' version had no lower jaw
- [9] Kurowski, Franz (2004). *Panzer Aces: German Tank Commanders of WWII*. Stackpole Books. ISBN 0-8117-3173-1.
- [10] van Creveld, Martin. *Supplying War: Logistics from Walenstein to Patton* Cambridge, 1977. ISBN 978-0-521-29793-6
- [11] Daniel Peterson. (1995), Wehrmacht Camouflage Uniforms & Post-War Derivatives. Printed in the UK by The Crowood Press Ltd: Wiltshire
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- [13] *Kriegsmarine* uniforms were discernibly very dark blue, unlike US and UK "blue" Navy uniforms which are effectively black.
- [14] Williamson, Gordon (1995). *U Boat Crews 1914-45*. Osprey Publishing. ISBN 1-85532-545-4.

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