

Gebirgstruppen Bergkämpfen

Alpine Combat Training for Mountain Infantry



German Mountain Warfare Doctrine

*Specially trained mountain troops may influence decisively
the outcome of a larger campaign,*

*even though the decision is almost always sought and achieved
on the flat by the main forces*

Offensive

- Specialized troops secure the advance of main force through the mountain passes.



Offensive

- Main force reaches terrain of its own choice in the highest state of combat readiness



Defensive

- Wear down enemy power:
Prevent, impede, harass or
channel main enemy force
through the valleys



Defense

- When enemy main force is engaged by friendly main force he is exhausted and forced to fight decisively on unfavorable terms.



Focal Point of Mountain Combat: The Heights

- Mountain troops must gain and maintain control of the mountains



Focal Point of Mountain Combat: The Heights

- Can only be seized
by surprise



Gebirgs-Jäger-Regiment 98
Mittenwald

Focal Point of Mountain Combat: The Heights

- Observation posts
- Gun emplacements



Strategic Differences

- Infantry/artillery is ascendant over armor and air power (opposite on the flats)



Strategic Differences

- Heavy weapons difficult to move, so the brunt of battle falls on infantry



Strategic Differences

- Shock action, close combat and smaller task units become more important



Tactical Differences

- Basics same as on the flat
- Modify to adapt for sudden weather extremes in high terrain:
 - Movement slower
 - Signals unreliable
 - Supply problems acute



Bundesarchiv, Bild 101-031-2424-08
Foto: Maier, K. F. | 1942/1943 Winter

Movement Slower

- Attack proceeds slowly due to rugged terrain.
 - Artillery & heavy weapons cumbersome
 - Good defensive positions with scarcity of roads fosters defense
 - Keep reserves close as a result



Signals Unreliable

- Limited communication once battle engaged.
 - Initial plan must be thoroughly conceived
 - Commander stays close to decisive point.
 - Junior NCOs & Officers must be able to act independently



Supply Problems Acute

- Few routes: limited or no alternatives if blocked
- Food, forage and ammunition on narrow roads and trails
- Motor transport gives way to mules/horses then on the backs of soldiers
- Carry only what is essential
- Cannot live off country in mountains



Implications For Re-enactor Training

- Objectives:
 - Physical fitness adequate to lower Appalachians
 - Movement in steeper, densely covered terrain
 - Executing surprise
 - Securing the heights
 - Observation & FO for Artillery
 - Junior NCO decision-making



“Classic Impression”

- Early War
 - M36 Bottle Green Collar
 - Steingrau Berghosen
 - Short-brimmed Bergmutz
 - Rucksack and belt hooks vs. Y strap and field gear on belt



Impression Variations

- Garrison with M36 Mantel
- Fallschirmjäger in joint mountain operations (Italy, Norway, Crete)
- NCO Unteroffizier



Impression Variations

- NCO with Windjacket
- General with long Wickelgemaschen
- NCO in Mediterranean HBT
- Officer variations



Eastern front, 1942-43
1: Oberfeldwebel



Early War, 1940-42
1: Unterfeldwebel, Gebirgstruppe
2: General der Gebirgstruppe
3: Oberfeldwebel, Crete, 1942

