

**German Military Police Units 1939-45**  
**Osprey Men-at-Arms 213 (1989)**  
Text by Gordon Williamson; colour plates by Ron Volstad

Review by Rob Morgan

Another five pounds bargain, I picked up a few winters back in a model shop in Birmingham, about to bite the dust as they say. This was the third I picked up in the £3-4-£10 deal. At first sight, not a substantial title, but when, reading it on the train home, I came to Plate D3, my mind changed to positive mode. This is a volume with some serious potential, if on a small, limited numbers scale in wargames terms.

I suspect Gordon Williamson was a little concerned at the outset of this project, no one in uniform loves the MPs, and so he starts with a few choice commander's views on the subject of order and military discipline through the ages, and the 'potted history' of MPs in modern armies is, I suppose, to be expected. German soldiers in WWII hated their *Chained Dogs*, as they knew them, their duties at the start of the War being exactly the same as the MP's of other nations, but that changed!

There's a lengthy description of the structure of the *Feldgendarmerie* (which never, contrary to some wargames notes, used armoured vehicles, with one exception, dealt with later), and their uniforms and equipment. The duty gorget or *Ringkragen* is explained, and indeed as far as the wargamer's concerned this item of uniform and status is of importance. More of that later.

There were, of course, other police structures, uniformed and active in the Third Reich, including units like the *Zugwache*, which patrolled the railway system and had an important anti-partisan role.

The *Feldgendarmerie* of the *Waffen SS* is dealt with in similar fashion. There are pen portraits of serving officers or NCOs in each section of the work incidentally, but of course the *SS* actually fielded a Panzer Grenadier Military Police Division, No. 4, raised in late 1939, it fought as a division in northern Russia, Bohemia-Moravia and then in Yugoslavia before being destroyed in the ruins of Berlin.

The *Luftwaffe*, naturally, had its own field police units, and Williamson describes these, their uniforms and insignia, and role, along with the smaller units and more specialised role of the *Kustenzpolizei* of the *Kriegsmarine*.

Here, Williamson moves to the complicated nature of the German Military Police in terms of its combat roles. Police units followed behind the front line soldiers, and quickly found themselves involved, especially on the *Ostfront*, in anti-partisan fighting. Originally battalion strength, later regiments, they were notorious for their savagery, and often fought in the front line most notably at Cholm. Their uniforms and equipment are neatly described, and it was, in fact, a few of these *Feldgendarmerie* combat units which were formed with captured or obsolete light armour, old Polish or Italian tankettes in some cases.

Other military police units of some value in wargames terms, especially in anti-partisan campaigns are described, briefly, including the Italian late-war *SS Feldgendarmerie*, and the Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie. Neither, of course, was intrinsically German; but the latter fielded a strength of some five full divisions, says Williamson, by late 1944. It merits more than the two paragraphs in the text, and as a force founded originally in 1881 in the old Austria-Hungarian Empire, quite probably has a military history well written but little known in English.

The last unit described is also in many ways the most useful as far as a late WWII wargamer is concerned. The *Feldjagerkorps* was established in November 1943, and unlike so many of the ad hoc, and barely controlled forces of the late Reich period, this was a hard outfit well run and lethal in operation. Its recruits were all men with three years front line service and all had won the Iron Cross; they were, as the author suggests, well known, and militarily entitled to settle any dispute at gunpoint. Their power was immense. They operated in three *Kommandos*, two in the East, one in the West, and their uniforms, gorgets, and a special cloth armband are described. They operated, incidentally, in very small units, a *Streife* or patrol of one officer and three NCOs at a distance of 12 miles behind the front line.

The plates are fascinating. Not the early-war examples perhaps, Plates A and B, with standard *Wehrmacht* uniforms, only discernible by insignia, gorget and the ubiquitous traffic wand, but the later varieties of *Feldgendarme*, Plate E 2, the easily converted North Africa policeman, and Plate F of the paratroop and Hermann Goring Division *Feldgendarmes* operating in Normandy. The naval types are of less value I suspect, but there are two at Plate D 3 the Hungarian MP and the Italian at Plate F 3 which cry out for table top action!

Best of all is Volstad's Plate H, the 1945 *SS* and *Feldjager* figures. Easy conversions, of which more in a moment.

I have, of course, seen wargamers who field MPs but in a limited sense. The Germans, however, give the opportunity to create a small but very effective and active unit in support of ( even against?) front line units.

A very good title indeed.

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The creation of a *Feldgendarmerie* unit, and it would need to be only small, a handful of figures and light vehicles, is so easy. A paper punch circle, trimmed to around 1mm curved cemented to the chest of the MP, and the rest's a paint job. There are very suitable figures in several ranges, metal and plastic. Take a look at Peter Pig's 15mm range. Pack LW66 armed with assault rifles with an officer from LW69 will make a decent unit. All you'll need is the paint job, and the sliver of paper circle for a gorget! Pack 480, will give you Italian *SS Feldgendarmerie*, with smg's and for a Naval Police unit late-war, use Pack 582 the German U-Boat shore party.

There are some very useful figures in Mick Yarrow's 15mm range. GER6 is a pack of *Gestapo* and Special Police which would be useful with the *Feldjagers*. If you want armour use a Pig's CV33 tankette.

In 20 or 25mm, the ranges are too many to list; everyone has his own particular favourite. However, it's Plate D3 which started me on this little route. The Royal Hungarian Fieldgendarme. The stance of the figure the simple, neat uniform, reminded me of the figures in the Airfix SdKfz 22 armoured car and Kubelwagen set. The two smg figures and the officer with a map are exactly what you need for the Hungarians, and again a simple paint job! Just the gorget sliver to add. For the larger Hungarian force take a look in the plastic figures of Caesar Miniatures; HO69 German infantry in greatcoats have a Hungarian feel about them, and Italeri's Elite(?) German Infantry pack 6068 will give you a handful of *Feldjagers* to add to the Hungarians in greatcoats. Strelets make a 20mm German Police Battalion pack MO86, which is very *Ostfront*, has some partisan fighting value, but not, I think, as *Feldgendarmes* in the true sense.

That's it!

