

Panther tanks of Panzer-Regiment 3, 2.Panzer-Division
or
PANTHER / PUMA / PRIEN

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2.Panzer-Division lead by Generalmajor Lübbe left the Ostfront after the heavy casualties it suffered from Kursk - Orel battles and subsequent retreat. On December 15, 1943, Hilter ordered the division to move to the OB West. The division arrived in northern France from December 21 on where they were subordinated to 15.Armee. The transportation finished on January 14, 1944. The division was placed under Panzergruppe West

(translation omitted)

I./Pz.Rgt.3 was equipped with Panther tanks. They moved for training to Mailly-le Camp by the end of January 1944 with their brand new weapon. During end of January and end of February, they received 79 Panthers and 2 Bergepanthers. The exact date is not known, but I.Abteilung returned to the division apparently mid-March.

2.Panzer-Division received 98 Panzer IVs between end of January and mid February. Records state that Panthers were sent to "I./3" and Panzer IVs were sent to "2.Pz.Div.", since some Panzer IVs were used to equip regiment HQ while most of the Panzer IVs were used to equip II./Pz.Rgt.3.

Armored elements of 2.Panzer-Division as of June 1, 1944						
	Pz.Kpfw.IV	Pz.Kpfw.Panther	Panzerjäger (Jagdpanzer IV L/48)	SPW Pz.Sp.Wg. Beob.Pz.	Wespe	Hummel
regulation	98	73	45	468	12	6
operational	94	67	16	468	12	5
short maintenance	2	3	3	8	-	1

Panzer elements of Pz.Rgt.3 as of June 1, 1944			
Rgt.Stab	Stabskp.	Nachrichtenzug Panzerzug Flakzug	3 Befehlspanther 5 Pz.Kpfw. IV 12 38(t) Flakpanzer
I.Abt.	Stabskp.	Nachrichtenzug Panzerzug Pionierzug Flakzug	3 Befehlspanther 5 Panther 3 Sd.Kfz.251/7 3 Flakvierling 2cm(Sfl.) (Sd.Kfz.7/2)
	1.Kp. – 4.Kp.		17 Pz.Kpfw. Panther in each company
II.Abt.	Stab	Nachrichtenzug Panzerzug Pionierzug Flakzug	5 Pz.Bef.Wg. IV 5 Pz.Kpfw.IV 3 Sd.Kfz.251/7 2 Flakvierling 2cm(Sfl.) , 1 towed
	5.Kp. – 8.Kp.		21 Pz.Kpfw. IVs in each company (22 for 6.Kp.)

Panzer IV of II./Pz.Rgt.3 have long been known, particularly those from 8.Kompanie, but few photos are known of the Panthers of the regiment, especially those under German administration was not known to

me except one color drawing of a Panther "215". I asked a friend for information, and then he passed me the original photo.



Color drawing of Panther „215“

Source: Pz.Kpfw. V Panther in Attack & Defence (Kagero 15031)



The original PK photo (cropped here) used for the drawing, dated August 2, 1944.

The caption says: "A Panther before a battle. A Panzer battalion is preparing in Normandy"

He sent me another photo of a Panther "335", which shows "Dreizak" (the divisional insignia of 2.Panzer-Division) on the turret. The turret number has a special feature in "3", which is shared with Panther "3x3" (long known photo). Another unidentified Panther "321" shares the same "3".

The upper half of the „3“ was shaped like a „2“. My speculation is that it had a hidden meaning that the tank belonged to the Panzer-Regiment 3 of the 2.Panzer-Division.



Pz.Kpfw.Panther „335“



Summer 1944. Panther of Pz.Rgt.3 „3x3“ is waiting for the transportation to the eastern bank in Rouen
(translation omitted)

Now, another interesting topic of Panzer-Regiment 3.

This is a well known Befehlspanther “R02” which has been known for the long time for its impressive Panther insignia on the turret.



**Panzerbefehlswagen „R02“ being camouflaged by army tankers.
Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-720-0341-14**

An author explained this insignia as „Windhund“ of the famous 116.Panzer-Division (originally 16.Panzer Grenadier-Division), but later it was found that there are at least 2 „LSSAH“ letters on Zimmerit coating, and it became common to attribute this tank as the HQ tank of Pz.Rgt.LSSAH.

But my questioning mind made me to examine the contact prints from original negative at Bundesarchiv in 1986. I found that the soldiers who are camouflaging the tank belonged to Army, not to Waffen SS. I also found that another frame of the negative shows the famous Flakpanzer 38(t) numbered “13” (“Panzers in Normandy” states that it is from SS-Panzer-Regiment 12).



**This Flakpanzer 38(t) is shown in the successive frame of the „R02“ photo.
Apparently it is from Regimental HQ of Pz.Rgt.3. The soldiers wear Panzer jacket over overalls**



**Another frame of the negative strip that contained „R02“ shows a Puma of
1.Kp./Pz.Aufkl.Abt.2Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-738-0287II-27A**

Panzerbefehlswagen Panther “R02” was, to my knowledge, photographed at the same location with 3 films. On one of the films 101I-738-0287II is a long-known photo of Sd.Kfz.234/2 Puma. A few frames later, “R02” appears.

The possibility of “R02” being a 2.Pz.Div. tank is mentioned in Tank Magazine extra “German Army Vol.2” (1994), which I advised to the author. Since then, in some circles of Japan, “R02” being part of LAH was considered suspicious. “Leibstandarte Archives (Heimdal 2008)” by Trang wrote it as a “mystery” because there are army soldiers and LAH’s distinct turret marking system. It drew a good discussion on the related internet forums.

Believing that „R02“ is a Pz.Rgt.3 tank, I paid attention to the jumping officer, not the soldier with Panzer jacket. I found a good candidate from knight’s cross holders – Oblt.d.R Peter Prien who received knight’s cross on May 9, 1945. He was the divisional HQ company leader (Führer, temporary commander, unlike Chef) of 2.Panzer-Division and Nachrichtenoffizier of Pz.Rgt.3. Comparing known photos with the photo... They look alike. I believe that “R02” photo shows Prien. The Heimdal book shows his profile (though a remote view) in page 306.



Oblt.d.R Peter Prien (left, right) and "the man" (middle)

(translation omitted)

The last mystery is „Panther and lightning“ insignia of „R02“. If we consider this tank as Prien’s command tank, his position Nachrichtenoffizier is the key. The lightning is the symbol of “Nachrichten”. And the circles is “O” – Offizier. I consider that this insignia must have been his tank’s private insignia.

Panthers of Pz.Rgt.3 had „Dreizak“ on the tank, but „Panther“ could have been the regimental insignia. Since the regiment carried the emblem of city Wien during the Kursk battle, there must be a preference to draw the emblem of the garrison town, just like other german units.

Pz.Rgt.3 was organized in Dresden in 1935. It moved its garrison town to Kamenz, then to Bamberg. After the annexation of Austria, it moved to Wien and Pz.Rgt.3 stayed in Mödling. The emblem of Dresden and Kamenz contains a lion, and that of Mödling has a Panther under Austrian tri-color. We can speculate it to the “Panther” insignia of the Pz.Rgt.3.



Dresden



Kamenz



Bamberg



Mödling

The next photo shows a Befehlspanther Ausf.G with a flag of „Panther“ which is similar to „R02“. Soldiers wear Panzer jacket over overalls, thus I consider this to be a Pz.Rgt.3 tank. It must be one of the reinforcement that was received in September 1944.



(translation omitted)

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