

2. Kompanie Gebirgsjägerregiment 100 (2./GJR100)



The 100th Mountain Infantry (Gebirgsjäger) Regiment was established on 1, June, 1935 as part of a three regiment Gebirgsjäger Brigade and was garrisoned in Bad Reichenhall, Germany. Formed from remnants of the Great War's Bavarian Alpenkorps, the cadres of mountain trained infantry were expanded by the introduction of general conscription in March of 1935 and by the induction of large numbers of mountain trained Bavarian state policemen. April, 1938 saw the 100th united with the 98th and 99th Gebirgsjäger regiments to form the 1st Gebirgsjäger Division under Major General Kübler, mobilizing for the invasion of Poland on 26, August, 1939. Combining with the 2nd and 3rd Gebirgsjäger divisions to form the 18th Gebirgs Corps, its first war time mission was to cross the High Tatra Mountains from Slovakia and take the Polish plain. The war started for the 100th Gebirgsjäger Regiment (GJR) on 4, September, 1939 as it crossed over the border into Poland and struck east into the area of Dukla Pass, combating elements of the Polish 1st and 2nd Alpine Brigades. Upon reaching the Polish plain the 100th GJR endured an eight day, forced dawn to dusk, 400 km march through hostile territory, to capture the Polish transportation hub of Lemburg, thus cutting off retreating Polish forces. A fierce battle for the city erupted as the Gebirgsjäger, up to 120 km in front of the main German lines, were hit from all sides by retreating Polish military units trying to break through and defend the city. On 21, September, 1939 the campaign ended for the 1st Gebirgsjäger Division when, as the Red Army invaded from the East, the Polish emissary insisted that he would only surrender to the 1st Gebirgs-Div., which had just fought and held out

against assaults from every direction. Ironically, the city was turned over to the Russians and had to be retaken by the 1st Gebirgs-Div. two years later during Operation Barbarossa. The 2nd Company 100th Gebirgsjäger Regiment (2./GJR100) lost 4 Jäger killed and 19 wounded during their introduction to war.

With the conclusion of the Polish campaign, the 1st Gebirgsjäger Division returned to Germany spending the winter of 1939 - 40 training in the Eifel Hills. When the war in the west opened on 10, May, 1940, the Gebirgsjäger began marching west through France not making contact with the enemy until May 18th at the Oisne-Aisne Canal. The French 87th Colonial Division held the south bank in strength and put up a determined resistance with everything they had, including heavy artillery. The 100th GJR was deployed on the division's right, along the canal, conducting an aggressive defense until the order to assault was given. This order was given on 5, June, 1940 and was launched in the face of a fierce artillery barrage. Upon crossing the canal, the 100th Regiment formed up in the dense underbrush and attacked south toward Pont St. Mard. The French launched an immediate counter-attack, first with a heavy barrage blocking the Jäger's advance, followed by a frenzied bayonet charge of colonial troops down the slopes. Holding firm, the Jäger endured multiple assaults, finally regaining the initiative by taking Pont St. Mard and the nearby high ground that evening. This one day battle cost the 1st Gebirgsjäger Division 139 men dead and 430 wounded. Fresh orders advanced the Division to Soissons, then across the Marne River. The end of the campaign found the 100th GJR en route to Lyon where they were to assault the French alpine troops holding the Alp Mountain passes from the Italians. The 2./ GJR 100 lost 16 men killed and 53 wounded in France.

A new chapter opened for the 100th GJR in November 1940 when it was posted to Salzburg and combined with the 85th Regiment of the Austrian 10th Infantry Division to form the 5th Gebirgsjäger Division under Major General Julius "Papa" Ringel. After a short training period the new division was ordered to Romania at the end of February 1941 and shortly after that to southern Bulgaria in preparation for Operation Marita - the invasion of Greece.

On 6, April, 1941, after days of exhausting marching and preparations, the 5th Gebirgsjäger Division began its role in the war as assault groups from both regiments over took the Greek border outposts in the rugged Rodopi Mountains before dawn. Facing the division were the formidable defenses of the Metaxas line, a belt of mutually supporting bunkers manned by the Greek 18th Division, connected by trenches and tunnels, covering bare mountain slopes that were made all the more difficult by the addition of barb wire, backed by strong artillery. The 100th Regiment's mission was to breach a sector of the line, against defenses echeloned in depth, capture the river bridges at Lutra, and finally take the corner stone of the line at Hill 307. For the next four days, Ringel's men, in blizzard conditions and freezing rain, attacked the line, one

pillbox after another, through trench systems and barb wire, fighting to gain a toehold and then to widen the gap. Every movement brought heavy machine gun and artillery fire and every pause to regroup or rest brought a counter attack by the Greeks. First the complex of Kelkaya was taken followed the next day by Istibei and finally, after numerous others, the fortress of Rupesco. The Metaxas Line assault was particularly costly for the 2./GJR100, losing 18 men killed, including the company commander, Lieutenant (Oberleutnant) Fritz Schramm and 39 wounded. After joining with Major General (Generalmajor) Schoerner's 6th Gebirgsjäger Division the 5th proceeded on to capture the Rupel Pass, Salonika, and then began their drive south toward the Corinth Canal. Fighting both the Greek army and troops of the British Expeditionary Force, the Gebirgsjäger ended their campaign in the Oeta Mountains. Athens was occupied by axis forces on 27 April, just 22 days after the start of the campaign.

Following the defeat of mainland Greece, the 5th Gebirgs-Div. took part in the invasion of Crete, code named Operation Mercury (Merkur). Following up what was to be the largest German airborne operation of the war, the mountain troops hurriedly reinforced the beleaguered paratroopers (Fallschirmjäger) by landing under fire on 21, May, 1941 at Maleme airfield. A sea borne invasion, composed of the 100th Regiment's 3rd Battalion, was attempted at the same time, but was intercepted at sea by the Royal Navy and literally destroyed as a fighting force. The timely but costly arrival of the Gebirgsjäger turned the tide of battle against the New Zealand 22nd Battalion defending the airfield and surrounding heights. They pried victory from the jaws of a certain defeat. The 100th GJR then further distinguished themselves during the subsequent fighting for the rugged hills inland from the coast, taking Modion, assaulting entrenched New Zealander "Kiwi" troops on Hill 259, and finally breaking the New Zealander resistance in the small mountain town of Galatas on 25 May. Here, the defending 4th New Zealand Brigade was attacked by detachments (Kampfgruppe) of Fallschirmjäger and the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 100th GJR. In a bloody frontal attack supported by Messerschmitt fighters and Stuka dive-bombers, the 1st Battalion went in covered by machine gun fire from the Fallschirmjäger detachment. The town was penetrated within three hours, but the Gebirgsjäger were then locked in hand to hand combat against the Commonwealth soldiers who were supported by light tanks. Heavy fighting lasted throughout the night and at one point, the "Kiwis" actually drove the 1st Battalion out. However, they quickly rallied and by combining with the 2nd battalion, supported by the timely arrival of Gebirg-Artillery batteries, the New Zealanders were driven out. This crucial battle cost the 2nd company alone, 8 men killed. The Gebirgsstruppen harried the retreating Commonwealth troops for the remainder of the campaign and on 2, June, 1941 accepted the surrender of the remaining Australians and New Zealanders at Sfakia on the southern coast. "The captors with that generosity towards a defeated enemy that is more often found among front line soldiers than anywhere behind the line, shared rations with them and, fantastically enough

played tunes for them on accordions....” (Davin, 1953, Pg 455). Operation Mercury cost the 5th Gebirgsjäger Division 580 killed (many drowned at sea during the initial invasion) and 458 wounded. For his division’s exemplary performance in breaching the Metaxas line and the capture of Crete, Julius “Papa” Ringel was promoted to Lieutenant General (Generalleutnant) and presented with the Knight’s Cross. The 2nd company’s losses for this 13 day operation were 22 killed and 29 wounded. Such losses again included the company commander, Oberleutnant Wilhelm Bauer who was killed near Suda Bay on 27, May, 1941.

After a well deserved period of rest and refitting following the Balkan campaign, the 5th Gebirgsjäger Division was deployed to the Eastern front in early 1942. They were attached to the 18th Army of Army Group North (Nord) in the swampy forests of the Volkhov River region to the south east of Leningrad. Serving as ordinary line infantry in such terrain, the Gebirgsjäger were unable to take advantage of their specialized mountain warfare training and as a result suffered heavy casualties which decimated the Division.

The 5th Gebirgsjäger Division began combat operations in Russia during March 1942 in the midst of the Red Army’s ill-fated Liuban offensive to relieve Leningrad. Its first task was to help close the encirclement of the Soviet 2nd Shock Army and prevent the escape of Red Army units trapped in the Volkov pocket. After the pocket finally collapsed, the Gebirgsjäger spent the next few weeks in pursuit of fragments of Russian divisions hiding in the dense forests trying to escape capture. The 5th Gebirgs-Div. was in the 18th Army’s reserve on 19, August, 1942 preparing for Operation Northern Light (Nordlicht), the 1942 offensive against Leningrad, when the Russians launched a renewed three army offensive for the same region. Quickly ordered to counterattack, the 5th engaged the Russian 3rd Guards Rifle division near Siniavino. Fierce fighting lasted through 20 September as the Russians launched human wave attack upon human wave attack in attempts to gain their objectives. The Gebirgsjäger fought to contain the penetration. In heavy combat through mid October, the 100th Gebirgsjäger Regiment fought many intense battles in the Siniavino-Mga area. Although ultimately successful in repelling this Russian offensive, the German counterattacks had worn out many of the units earmarked for Operation Nordlicht and the operation was never initiated.

12, January, 1943 saw the 5th Gebirgsjäger Division manning defensive positions on the Neva River in the area of Annenskoe. On this date the Russians launched Operation Spark, their third major attempt to lift the siege of Leningrad. With a density of one gun per every 20 feet, the Russians attacked in temperatures of -9 degrees Fahrenheit. The Neva line was quickly breached in the area of the 170th and 227th Infantry Divisions and a battle group of the 5th Gebirgsjäger Division was sent to reinforce the defenses south of Moskovskaia Dubrovka. Counterattacking the next day, elements of the 5th Gebirgs-Div. managed to repel the

Russian 45th Guards Division. Another Kampfgruppe of the 5th Gebirgs-Div. sent to re-enforce defenses at Siniavino became encircled during the desperate fighting and only managed to break out on 18 January after suffering heavy losses. Also on that day, the Russian army finally managed to link up with the defenders of Leningrad, opening a corridor 5-6 miles wide. By 30, January, 1943, due to the exhaustion of both sides, the front stabilized south of Lake Lagoda. For the next five months the situation was one of static warfare with combat of varying intensities along the Volkov front, both sides taking heavy losses in men and material.

During the summer of 1943 the Russians renewed their offensive. The 5th Gebirgs-Div. at the time had been placed in a swampy sector of the front straddling the Mga-Volkhov railroad. The 5th Gebirgs lines were hit in so many places at once that the division became fragmented leaving individual battalions isolated and fighting on their own. The following is an account of Hauptman Helmut Hermann, our battalion commander during this battle:

“Towards the end of June I was commanding the battalion in the absence of our CO, Major Wecker. For several weeks we had had to change position, which meant, in the vast majority of cases, that we had to give up well built trenches and take over less well constructed ones. The reason for this was that our trench line often marked the place which a counter attack had reached when we drove back an enemy penetration. Our final move brought us to a sector of the front on which, only a few weeks later, a terrible battle was to be fought. The swampy ground was dotted with flat, sandy islands few of which were higher than 5 meters in our sector. On the enemy side the ground rose somewhat. There were also dense belts of trees and clumps of birches. Only on the flat “high ground” was it possible to dig in and construct proper defenses. Our companies were positioned in every case with a flank resting on an area of high ground. No. 1 on the right, No. 2 on the left, and No. 3 in the rear. Between the companies as well as between the battalions there were swampy sectors, many of which were under direct enemy observation. No. 2 Company’s positions were the ones in greatest danger. On the enemy side the ground rose and in addition the Russians had worked their way dangerously close to our positions. Practically every night enemy storm troops tried to raid our positions...but were beaten off thanks to one of the guns of our infantry gun platoon. It was clear that the positions which No. 2 Company was holding would be a forlorn hope when the Russian offensive came in. To me it was absurd that the company positions should have at their back a piece of swamp which, as a terrain obstacle, should be in front of the positions. I reached a rapid decision. No. 3 Company which lay in the area was ordered to strengthen their trenches because, when No. 2 Company was pulled back, these would form the front line. No. 2 Company was not only suffering from the nightly activities of the enemy assault groups, but was also under heavy bombardment from Russian artillery and mortars. Because the withdrawal of the front line which I was proposing was about 400 meters this could not be my decision alone. I had to ask Regiment for

permission...who had to receive permission from Division...who had to confer with Corps. Even Army could not give authority ...but reported to Army Group who eventually declared its agreement. To obtain a decision from that most senior authority had taken three weeks during which we had suffered losses particularly in No. 2 Company. The reorganization was completed in good order with No. 2 Company being successful in deceiving the enemy into believing that the positions were still being held. The major offensive which then opened was preceded by a drum fire which lasted for hours and which was of unimaginable ferocity. The date was 22, July, 1943. The old positions which No. 2 Company had just evacuated were plowed up by shells of super heavy caliber. Nobody could have survived that shelling. For more than two weeks three Soviet regiments flung themselves against the battalion's positions. Each attack was preceded by an artillery bombardment and usually came at first light. By the first day of the offensive most of the trees had been reduced to waist high stumps but by the end of the third day nothing at all was standing, the whole landscape was nothing more than a vast cratered area. The enemy was frequently able to get into our trenches and had to be driven out by counter-attack. During the fighting No. 2 Company was particularly badly hit and its commander, Oberleutnant Schnieder was mortally wounded by a shell splinter. When the battalion, now severely reduced in strength, was finally relieved, the front line was still intact and in our hands" (Lucas, 1992, Pg. 137-141).

The Gebirgsjäger were caught in the Russian main axis of assault and despite awesome artillery barrages and concentrations of enemy tanks, managed to put up stiff resistance, halting the Russian advance. By the end of July the situation was looking desperate and only the timely arrival of the 132nd Infantry Division forestalled disaster. The Soviet offensive continued until mid August when, spent by exhaustion and heavy casualties, they were again forced to stop and regroup. The Red Army had made serious inroads into the German lines but was still a long way from seizing the area of the Mga-Siniavino heights.

After a month of stationary war, the Soviets renewed their attack. 15, September, 1943 opened with an even stronger barrage than usual and after a brutal assault by three Red Guard Rifle divisions against the emplacements of the 5th Gebirgs-Div. The front lines of defensive positions were breached. The 5th Gebirgs-Div. was forced back and only managed to rally when the 215th Infantry, 61st Infantry, and 28th Jäger Divisions were committed from other sectors. After a three day onslaught, the Russians were in control of the vital Siniavino Heights. However, they were exhausted and another period of calm descended over the Leningrad Front.

The summer/ fall campaign had cost the Russians over 1,000,000 casualties but also seriously battered the German 18th Army as well. Having no reserves left, Army Group Nord ordered the 18th Army to fall back to the prepared positions of the "Panther" Line.

General Ringel, the 5th GJR Division commander, was ordered to Berlin and awarded Oak Leaves to the Knight's Cross for the division's performance during this crucial period. Shortly after his return the 5th Gebirgsjäger Division was withdrawn from the line and sent to Italy after having spent 20 months in the swamps of the Volkov region.

The 2nd Company's losses during their period of time in Russia were 168 men killed, including two company commanders, Oberleutnant Fleischmann on 16, November, 1942 and Oberleutnant Schneider on 26, July, 1943, along with 472 wounded, and 35 missing in action.

In November 1943, the 5th Gebirgsjäger Division was withdrawn from the Eastern front and sent to Italy. Beginning in December 1943, as elements of the division began to arrive, they were attached to the 14th Panzer Corps of the 10th Army and immediately started taking over the 305th Infantry Division's positions in the "Reinhard" Line. The 5th Gebirgs-Div. sector covered a 20 km front along the Rapido River about 15 km south of Cassino. General Ringel took command of his assigned sector on 22, December, 1943. In conjunction with the adjoining 44th Infantry Division, which had been destroyed at Stalingrad and re-built, and the 29th Panzergrenadier Division, the 5th Gebirgs-Div. was to hold the "Reinhard" Line as long as possible before falling back to the prepared positions on the "Gustav" Line.

Just four days later on 26, December, 1943, the enemy's French Expeditionary Force made up of the Moroccan 2nd Infantry Division and the Algerian 3rd Infantry Division, under cover of a heavy artillery barrage, attacked the entire front line of the Gebirgsjäger position. While defending the approaches to Le Mainard, the 100th GJR was swarmed by the Moroccan 8th Infantry Regiment. Although fighting to the best of their abilities, the Gebirgsjäger were forced into hand to hand combat as the enemy's artillery assets enabled them to gain a foothold in the German trenches. The 100th GJR managed to force the Moroccans back a number of times but after a fourth French attempt it looked as though the lines were stretched to their breaking point between La Mete and Monte Mare. At this point, Generalleutnant Ringel had no choice but to commit his final reserves - Panzergrenadier Regiment 115 (having been placed at his disposal by the 14th Panzer Corps) to launch an immediate counter attack on Le Mainard. Supported by divisional artillery and mortars, the reserves along with the besieged Gebirgsjäger managed, by day's end, to push the Moroccan troops back to their own lines and close the breach. The next day, with the Moroccans in pursuit, the 100th GJR was pulled back to positions on the "Gustav" Line. The rest of the division, also engaged in fighting the French Corps, gave ground grudgingly in a series of defensive actions and were finally forced back over the Rapido River to their "Gustav" Line positions in the Monte Croce - Monte Cifalco sector on 16, January, 1944. The Moroccan troops tried for the next two weeks to storm Monte Croce, even managing to gain a few strong points on the crest for a brief while. However, vigorous counterattacks by the Gebirgsjäger retook the area and forced the Moroccans back to their own lines.

On the evening of 24, January, 1944 the Algerian 3rd Division under the ever present heavy artillery barrage, stormed Hill 470 and routed the 44th Infantry Division but were unable, after multiple attacks, to gain Monte Cifalco from the 100th GJR. However, the 131st Grenadier Regiment had been destroyed, effectively leaving the 5th Gebirgsjäger Division's right flank totally open. The French Expeditionary Corps penetrated deep into the Gustav Line as far as Monte Cairo. Monte Belvedere was taken by the 4th Tunisian Rifle Regiment. The Tunisians were only stopped due to effective artillery fire from the 95th Gebirgsartillery Regiment and a timely counter attack from the 100th GJR. The Gustav Line was stabilized and the front restored due to a timely re-enforcement by the 90th Panzergrenadier Division and the 1st Fallschirmjäger Division. A battle for the Monte Belvedere - Colle Abate raged for days but the Tunisians, although surrounded managed to hold on, General Juin's French Expeditionary Corps finally withdrawing on 4, February, 1944. The first battle for Cassino was over.

On 10, February, 1944 Generalleutnant Ringel was promoted to General der Gebirgstruppen and transferred to command the 69th Gebirgs-Corps. He was replaced by Colonel (Oberst) Max Schrank who previously commanded the 1st Battalion, 100th GJR on Crete. Oberst Schrank was promoted to Generalmajor on 25.May.1944. For the next few months the front was, for the most part, static in the 5th Gebirgs-Div. zone of operations as they maintained their defensive positions on the mountains to the north of Cassino. While the United States Army Air Corps obliterated the abbey on Monte Cassino, the New Zealand, Indian and French divisions all tried to dislodge the 1st Fallschirmjäger-Div. from Cassino, the 5th Gebirgs-Div. tried to recover some of its losses from the previous month's battles. Generalmajor Schrank reported an almost 80% casualty rate in some of his units.

On 24, April, 1944 the 5th Gebirgsjäger Division, in preparation for a renewed British offensive at Cassino, was transferred from the 14th Panzer Corps to the 51st Gebirgs-Corps and, as of 1, May, 1944, was graded as a class II division "fit only for limited offensive tasks" due to casualties and attrition. On 11, May, 1944, when the British began their spring offensive, the 100th GJR was still occupying the Monte Cifalco-S. Biagio area. This offensive, called Operation Diadem, opened with 1700 guns along the front firing a 12 hour bombardment and numbered nearly half a million men. The 100th GJR, holding Monte Castellone, was attacked by elements of the Polish "Kresowa" Division while the rest of the 5th Gebirgs-Div. was used as a fire brigade, often being split into separate battle groups as reinforcements in threatened sections of the line. Timely counter attacks supported by the 95th Gebirgs Artillery Regiment held the Poles at bay until 18 May when the Polish 2nd Corps finally succeeded, after 2 days of hand to hand combat, in taking the heights and breaking the German line. The Fallschirmjäger and their Gebirgsjäger comrades in arms at Cassino had inflicted almost 4,000 casualties on the attacking Polish 2nd Corps.

The Polish breakthrough at Cassino combined with the French breaching the line to the south and the Americans breaking out of the Anzio beachhead on 25 May sent the German forces reeling. The German 10th Army, being pursued by the British 8th Army, was directed to fall back to and man the Cäsar Line. The ensuing retreat saw the German forces become more and more fragmented as they withdrew to the north-west under attack from Allied aircraft as well as Italian partisans. By 30, May, 1944, General der Gebirgstruppen Feuerstein, commander of the 51st Gebirgs-Corps, stated that each of the three divisions he had left were only the equivalent of a regiment. He referred to these regiments as "blocking groups" (Sperrgruppen). The 5th Gebirgs-Div. became Sperrgruppen Schrank were now conducting a fighting retreat against the Italian Corps of Liberation. Sperrgruppen Schrank fell back to Monte Irto and then to Monte Camosciara where they, by the end of May, halted the Italians from breaking into the Sora Valley. As the Italians were replaced by the 2nd New Zealand Division from the British 8th Army, the 51st Gebirgs-Corps fell back to delaying positions on the Cäsar Line where, on 8, June, 1944, the Schrank Group occupied Avezzano-Celano.

Now a delaying strategy began for the Germans. If they could only delay the Allied advance until the autumn rains arrived then they would have the opportunity to turn the defensive line in the northern Apennines Mountains before the Romagna Plain (the Gothic Line), into a truly formidable obstacle. Field Marshal Kesselring, Commander in Chief Southwest, informed the high command that he would be able to delay the American and British armies for three more weeks, Hitler insisted on seven months.

The British, nevertheless, maintained their momentum, and by the 2nd week of June the regrouping 51st Gebirgs-Corps had fallen back to the mountainous areas in front of Terni. Here, the terrain enabled the Germans to make a stand and they slowed the British 6th Armored Division to a 6 mile per day advance. By blowing up a critical bridge the Gebirgs-Corps were able to stop the advancing armor and fall back another 20 miles to Toldi. However, the overall defenses were too patchy to contain the British for long and only heavy rains in late June combined with the rigorous terrain finally managed to slow down the pursuers. The advance resumed in July. By the end of the month, the reconstituted 5th Gebirgs-Div. now combating the 4th Indian Division was pushed back to the entrance of the upper Arno River valley.

Here, on the Arno River Line, the British again halted to regroup, restarting offensive operations on 25 August with a massive assault employing five separate corps containing eleven divisions and nine separate brigades. The 5th Gebirg-Div. mountain positions, defending a sector of the front between Rimini and Cesena, were quickly outflanked and on 1 September the division was pulled back to the Conca River valley to man a section of the "Gothic" Line, now renamed the "Green" Line. On 3, September, 1944, the Canadians breached the Green Line and the 100th GJR, temporarily placed under command of the 71st

Infantry Division, was ordered to hold a sector of the front on Gemmano ridge. From the 4th through the 14th of September the 100th GJR bitterly contested every inch of ground and every building. The key points of Gemmano, Borgo, Monte Gardo, and Zoccara were gained and lost numerous times by each side with the Gebirgsjäger fighting against 3 different Commonwealth Divisions- the 46th British Infantry Div, the 56th British Infantry Division and the 4th Indian Division, supported by armored squadrons of the 8th Royal Tank Regiment. Under heavy downpours, enduring grave casualties, and intense artillery, including naval gunfire from the Adriatic, the 100th held firm until ordered to pull back to Montescudo on the 15th. On 11 September a broadcast from German radio announced: "In the hard defensive fighting on the Adriatic, in the sector of Gemmano, the 100th Gebirgsjäger Regiment, under the orders of Lieutenant Colonel (Oberstleutnant) Ernst together with an artillery group at his orders, with its indestructible firmness and gallant counterattacks has behaved particularly well" (Paesani, 1998, Pg. 3). General of Mountain Infantry (General der Gebirgstruppen) Ringel told his old comrades how proud he was of them: "You know me, my comrades and I know you! We never wasted too many words; I know that you have remained the same old friends. Let come what may.....I salute all of you with our battle cry: Hurrah, die Gams! " (Kurowski, 2003, Pg. 365).

Oberstleutnant Ernst later wrote of this battle; "How much blood this unhappy pile of ruins has drunk!...we fought for every house, for every ruin. And as Cassino was the tomb of the 1st Fallschirmjäger-Div, so was Gemmano the tomb of my Regiment" (Paesani, 1998, Pg. 3).

The 100th GJR won an incredible 5 Knight's Crosses for this heroic action, the recipients' being; Oberstleutnant Richard Ernst - Commander 100 GJR, Captain (Hauptmann) Helmut Hermann -Commander I. Battalion, Hauptmann Fritz Bachmaier - Commander III. Battalion, Ensign (Oberfähnrich) Rappel - Platoon Leader, 14th Company and Lance Corporal (Gefreiter) Schmeid - Squad Leader, 8th Company. In this action alone the 2./GJR 100 lost 22 men killed.

Depleted and exhausted from their hard fought battles on the Gothic line the 5th Gebirgs Division was placed in reserve of the Ligurian Army and ordered to the Western Alps. In September the division was transferred to 75th Army Corps of the Ligurian Army, assigned with securing the Alpine passes between Switzerland and the Ligurian Sea on the French-Italian border against any allied incursions into northern Italy and dealing with the ever increasing partisan attacks on German lines of supply. The 5th Gebirgs-Div. relieved to 90th Panzergrenadier Div. and, along with the Italian "Monte Rosa" Mountain Div, stabilized the border. Throughout the fall and winter of 1944 the 5th Gebirgs-Div., with the 100th GJR on the southern end and the 85th GJR in the north, defended the western Alps from Monte Visto to Mont Blanc, 100 km of rugged mountains. Elements of the 100th GJR were also frequently used as reinforcements for various sectors of the line where needed, engaging units of the

French Chasseurs Alpins, section des Eclaireurs Skieurs, French partisans, and Italian partisans.

By Jan. the supply lines had deteriorated so badly from both air and partisan attack that supplies from Germany had been reduced to a mere trickle and the Ligurian Army was forced to live off of the land. January 18, 1945 saw Generalmajor Hans Steets receive command of the 5th Gebirgs- Div. becoming its last commander. At this point the exhausted division was combined with a battle group from the equally decimated Italian 4th Alpini Division maintaining their defense of the western Alps. Eventually, in April, 1945 the French Army tried to force their way into the Great St. Bernard region and were soundly repulsed. From April 5th through the 12th the 100th GJR in conjunction with elements of the Italian Fascist Folgore Parachute Regiment engaged in the last mountain battle of the war against the 27th French Mountain Division. A battle for the 8,500 foot Mount Froid, the foundation of the German defenses, raged for over a week at heavy cost to both sides. On 25, April, 1945 the 5th Gebirgs-Div. was ordered to fall back to prepared positions on the Ticino and Po Rivers in the area around Turin to combat partisan forces. Finally on 2, May, 1945 the 5th Gebirgsjäger Division assembled for the last time and marched as an undefeated military unit to the town of Fiferoni, near Turin. Here they laid down their weapons and went into captivity as a division.

The strength of 2nd Company Gebirgsjäger Regiment 100 when it marched into the internment camp was 4 Officers, 24 NCOs, and 155 Enlisted. The 2nd Company Gebirgsjäger Regiment 100 suffered heavy losses in Italy with 64 men killed, 166 wounded and 42 missing in action.

Historical Overview

2. Kompanie Gebirgsjägerregiment 100 (2./GJR100)

Company Commanders 1940 to 1945:

June, 1940 to April, 1941.....Oblt. Fritz Schramm (KIA, Hill 307.5, Greece)

April, 1941 to May, 1941.....Oblt. Norbert Stampfer

May, 1941.....Oblt. Wilhelm Bauer (KIA, Suda Bay, Crete)

May, 1941 to Feb., 1942.....Oblt. Hans Rott

April, 1942 to Nov., 1942.....Oblt. Georg Fleischmann (KIA, Babino, Russia)

Nov., 1942 to July, 1943.....Oblt. Albert Schneider (KIA, Russia)

Aug., 1943 to Mar., 1945.....Hptm. Rudolph Heigl

Mar., 1945 to May, 1945.....Oblt. Werner Schmidt

1943 Composition; 2. Kompanie Gebirgsjägerregiment 100

Field Post Office Number (Feldpost) - 24971c

Company Commander: Hauptman Rudolph Heigl

Regimental Commander: Oberstleutnant Richard Ernst

Full Strength Composition: 220 men (2 Officers, 24 NCO's, 194 enlisted)

1 Staff Group

3 Platoons comprised of 42 men each

1 Mortar group comprised of 38 men and two 81mm mortars

1 Pack Train comprised of 38 men and 22 pack horses

	Officers	NCO's	Enlisted	Total
Killed	10	37	245	292
Wounded	18	128	632	778
Captured	0	4	38	42
Missing	2	9	69	80
Total	30	178	984	1192