

90th Light Infantry Division (Germany)

History

The 90th Light Infantry Division was created in August 1941 as **Division z.b.V. Afrika**, from units already in Africa under the control of *Divisions-Kommando z.b.V. Afrika*. The abbreviation z.b.V. stands for "zur besonderen Verwendung", which translates as "for a special use" in English. Through its five-year existence it was redesignated several times, although always known colloquially as the *Africa Division*. This is because it was the only German combat division to have actually been raised in Africa itself. It fought for the remainder of the [North African campaign](#), finally surrendering to the Allies in Tunisia in May 1943. It was regarded apparently^{[[citation needed](#)]} by the [2nd New Zealand Division](#) as their special foe, as the two formations faced each other on several occasions.

As with the other units of the [Afrika Korps](#), replacement units were quickly raised from available troops stationed in Western Europe. As such, the *Africa Division* was reconstituted as the **90th Panzergrenadier Division** in [Sardinia](#) during July 1943. Evacuated from Corsica with the [Sturmbrigade Reichsführer SS](#) to the Italian mainland in October 1943, the division appeared opposite both the Americans and British as they pushed north. It was then very nearly wiped out in the bitter fighting with the [1st Canadian Infantry Division](#) along the [Moro River](#) in late November 1943. A short time later it was withdrawn into reserve at Frosinone and redesignated **90th Grenadier Division (Motorized)**. While still rebuilding, it was deployed piecemeal along the front in response to the Allies spring offensive in 1944 to serve as a rearguard while the balance of the German units in southern Italy fell back to the [Winter Line](#). Shifted southeast from the Franco-Italian border in September 1944, 90th Grenadier was finally listed as destroyed in the fighting south of Bologna. The remainder of its personnel surrendered to the [Brazilian Expeditionary Force \(FEB\)](#) in Italy in April 1945.

Lineage

- Division z.b.V. Africa (August 1941 – November 1941)
- 90th Light Infantry Division (November 1941 – March 1942)
- 90th Light Africa Division (March 1942 – May 1943)
- 90th Panzergrenadier Division (July 1943 – November 1943)
- 90th Grenadier Division (mot.) (November – 1943 May 1945)

Commanders

- *Generalmajor* "Max Sümmerrmann" (July 17, 1941 – December 10, 1941: KIA)
- *Oberst* "[Johann Mickl](#)" (December 11, 1941 – December 27, 1941)
- *Generalmajor* "Richard Veith" (December 28, 1941 – April 28, 1942)
- *Generalmajor* "[Ulrich Kleemann](#)" (April 29, 1942 – June 14, 1942)
- *Oberst* "[Werner Marcks](#)" (June 14, 1942 – June 18, 1942)

- *Oberst* "Erwin Menny" (June 18, 1942 – June 19, 1942)
- *Oberst* "[Werner Marcks](#)" (June 19, 1942 – June 21, 1942)
- *Generalmajor* "Ulrich Kleemann" (June 21, 1942 – September 8, 1942)
- *Generalmajor* "[Hermann-Bernhard Ramcke](#)" (September 8, 1942 – September 17, 1942)
- *Oberst* "Hermann Schulte-Hethaus" (September 17, 1942 – September 22, 1942)
- *Generalleutnant* "Theodor Graf von Sponeck" (September 22, 1942 – May 12, 1943)
- *Generalleutnant* "Carl-Hans Lungershausen" (May 23, 1943 – December 20, 1943)
- *Generalleutnant* "[Ernst-Günther Baade](#)" (December, 1943 – December, 1944)
- *General der Panzertruppe* "[Gerhard von Schwerin](#)" (December, 1944 – April 1, 1945)
- *Generalmajor* "[Heinrich Baron von Behr](#)" (April 1, 1945 – April 28, 1945)

Organization

Division z.b.V. Africa

- Command
- [155th Rifle Regiment](#)
- [361st Infantry Regiment](#)
- 288th Special Purpose Regiment
- 361st Artillery Battalion (motorized)
- 605th Antitank Battalion
- 900th Engineer Battalion

90th Light Infantry Division

- Command
- 155th Rifle Regiment
- [200th Infantry Regiment](#) (motorized)
- [361st Africa Infantry Regiment](#)
- 361st Artillery Battalion
- 190th Antitank Battalion

90th Light Africa Division

- Command
- [155th Panzergrenadier Regiment](#)
- [200th Panzergrenadier Regiment](#)
- [361st Panzergrenadier Regiment](#)
- [288th Africa Panzergrenadier Regiment](#)
- 190th Panzer Battalion (assigned later in [Tunisia](#))
- 190th Artillery Regiment (motorized)
- 580th Panzer Reconnaissance Battalion (later assigned to [21st Panzer](#))
- 90th Panzer Reconnaissance Battalion (assigned in late 1942)
- 190th Antitank Battalion

- 900th Engineer Battalion
- 190th Panzer Signals Battalion
- 190th Field Replacement Battalion

90th Panzergrenadier Division

- Command
- 155th Panzergrenadier Regiment
- 200th Panzergrenadier Regiment
- 361st Panzergrenadier Regiment
- 190th Panzer Battalion
- 190th Artillery Regiment
- 242nd Sturmgeschütz Battalion (retired to the division in October 1943)
- 1st/190th Antitank Company (only a company, from the October 1943 all the battalion)

Heer Units

90. Leichte Afrika-Division was formed as **Afrika-Division z.b.V** Aug 1941 around a cadre from smaller units serving in Africa. It took part in the assault on Tobruk Nov 1941 and later fought at Sidi Rezegh. It was redesignated 90. Leichte Infanterie-Division 27 Nov 1941. It fought at Gazala, Got el Valeb, Bir Macheim and later at El Alamein where it suffered heavy losses. It later continued to suffer heavy losses during the retreat (in Jan 1943 the division was at half strength) and finally surrendered in Tunisia 12 May 1943.

Commanders

Generalmajor Max Sümmermann	(1 Sep 1941 - 10 Dec 1941) (KIA) (1)
Generalleutnant Richard Veith	(10 Dec 1941 - 10 Apr 1942)
General der Panzertruppen Ulrich Kleemann	(10 Apr 1942 - 13 July 1942)
Generalleutnant Carl-Hans Lungershausen	(13 July 1942 - 10 Aug 1942)
General der Panzertruppen Ulrich Kleemann	(10 Aug 1942 - 1 Nov 1942)
Generalleutnant Theodor Graf von Sponeck	(1 Nov 1942 - 12 May 1943)

Area of operations

North Africa (Sep 1941 - May 1943)

Holders of high awards

Holders of the Commendation Certificate of the Commander-in-Chief of the Army (1)
Seidel, Wolfgang, 07.06.1943 (1856), Hauptmann, Kdr. II./Art.Rgt. 190 (mot)

[Holders of the German Cross in Gold](#) (20)

[Holders of the Knight's Cross](#) (8)

Holders of the Romanian Order of Michael the Brave, 3rd Class (Orden "Michael der Tapfere" III. Klasse) (1)

Kayser, Erich, Königlichen Dekrets Nr. 2517 / 13.09.1943, Major d.R., Pz.Gren.Rgt. 155

Order of battle

Stab

Division-Kartenstelle (mot) 259

Infanterie-Regiment (mot) 155
Infanterie-Regiment (mot) 200
Infanterie-Regiment (mot) 361
Panzergrenadier-Regiment (mot) Afrika (aka Sonderverband 288)
Kolbeck-Bataillon
Schwerste Infanteriegeschütz-Kompanie 707
Schwerste Infanteriegeschütz-Kompanie 708
Panzerjäger-Abteilung (mot) 190
Artillerie-Regiment (mot) 190
Aufklärungs-Kompanie (mot) 580
Nachrichten-Abteilung (mot)
Pionier-Bataillon (mot) 900
Feldersatz-Bataillon
Krankenkraftwagen-Zug (mot) 638
Kraftwagenwerkstatt-Zug 566
Munitionsverwaltungs-Kompanie (mot) 540
Bäckerei-Kompanie (mot) 535
Schlächtere-Kompanie (mot) 517
Divisions-Verpflegungsamt (mot)
Feldgendarmerie-Trupp (mot)
Feldpostamt (mot) 190

Footnotes

1. Max Sümmermann was killed 10 December 1941 by a strafing British aircraft.