The German term Wehrmacht generically describes any nation's armed forces; for example, Britishe Wehrmacht means "British Armed Forces." The Frankfurt Constitution of 1848 designated all German military forces as the "German Wehrmacht," consisting of the Seawacht (sea force) and the Landmacht (land force). In 1919, the term Wehrmacht also appears in Article 47 of the Weimar Constitution, establishing that: "The Reich's President holds supreme command of all armed forces [i.e. the Wehrmacht] of the Reich. From 1919, Germany's national defense force was known as the Reichsheer, a name that was dropped in favor of Wehrmacht on 21 May 1935.\[11\]

### Origin and use of the term

The German term Wehrmacht generally encompasses any nation's armed forces; for example, British Wehrmacht means "British Armed Forces." The Frankfurt Constitution of 1848 designated all German military forces as the "German Wehrmacht," consisting of the Seawacht (sea force) and the Landmacht (land force). In 1919, the term Wehrmacht also appears in Article 47 of the Weimar Constitution, establishing that: "The Reich's President holds supreme command of all armed forces [i.e. the Wehrmacht] of the Reich. From 1919, Germany's national defense force was known as the Reichsheer, a name that was dropped in favor of Wehrmacht on 21 May 1935.\[11\]

### Background

In January 1919, after World War I ended with the signing of the armistice of 11 November 1918, the armed forces were disbanded. Friedenstreit (peace army). In March 1919, the national assembly passed a law founding a 420,000-stong preliminary army, the Vorläufige Reichswehr. The terms of the Treaty of Versailles were announced in May, and in June, Germany signed the treaty that, among other terms, imposed severe constraints on the size of Germany's armed forces. The army was limited to one hundred thousand men with an additional fifteen thousand in the navy. The fleet was to consist of at most six battleships, six cruisers, and twelve destroyers. Submarines, tanks and heavy artillery were forbidden and the air force was dissolved. In 1920, a new post-war military, the Reichsheer, was established on 23 March 1921. General conscription was abolished under another mandate of the Versailles treaty.

The Reichsheer was limited to 115,000 men, and the armed forces, under the leadership of Hans von Seeckt, retained only the most capable officers. The American historians Alan Millet and Williamson Murray wrote "In reducing the officers corps, Seeckt chose the leadership from the best men of the general staff with ruthless disregard for other conscripting officers, such as war heroes and the nobility"\[12\]. Seeckt's determination that the Reichsheer be an elite cadre force that would serve as the nucleus of an expanded military when the chance for restoring conscription came essentially led to the creation of a new army, based upon, but very different from, the army that existed in World War I.\[14\]. In the 1920s, Seeckt and his officers developed new doctrines that emphasized speed, aggression, combined arms and initiative on the part of lower officers to take advantage of momentary opportunities.\[15\] Though Seeckt retired in 1926, the army that went to war in 1939 was largely his creation.\[14\]

Germany was forbidden to have an air-force by the Versailles treaty; nonetheless, Seeckt created a clandestine cadre of air-force officers in the early 1920s. Those officers saw the role of an air-force as winning air-supremacy, tactical and strategic bombing and providing ground support. That the Luftwaffe did not develop a strategic bombing force in the 1930s was not due to a lack of interest, but because of economic limitations.\[16\] The leadership of the navy led by Grand Admiral Erich Raeder, a close protege of Albrecht von Tirpitz, was dedicated to the idea of reviving Tirpitz's High Sea Fleet. Officers who believed in submarine warfare led by Admiral Karl Dönitz were in a minority before 1939-17.

By 1922, Germany had begun covertly circumventing the conditions of the Versailles Treaty. A secret collaboration with the Soviet Union began after the treaty of Rapallo. Major-General Otto Hartmann traveled to Moscow in 1923 to further negotiate the terms. Germany's air and Soviet officers were to be trained in Germany. German tank and air-force specialists could exercise in the Soviet Union and German chemical weapons research and manufacture would be carried out there along with other projects.\[18\] In 1924 a training base was established at Lipetsk in central Russia, where several hundred German air force personnel received instruction in operational maintenance, navigation, and aerial combat training over the next decade until the Germans finally left in September 1933.\[19\]

### Nazi rise to power

Further information: Nazism and the Wehrmacht

After the death of President Paul von Hindenburg on 2 August 1934, Adolf Hitler assumed the office of President of Germany, and thus became commander in chief. In February 1934, the Defence Minister Werner von Blomberg, acting on his own initiative, had all of the Jews serving in the Reichswehr given an automatic and immediate dishonorable discharge.\[21\] Again, on his own initiative Blomberg had the armed forces adopt Nazi symbols into their uniforms in May 1934.\[22\] In August of the same year, on Blomberg's initiative and that of the Minister of the Interior General Walther von Reichenau, the entire military took the Hitler oath, an oath of personal loyalty to Hitler. Hitler was most surprised at the offer; the popular view that Hitler imposed the oath on the military is false.\[23\] The oath read: "I swear by God this sacred oath that to the Leader of the German empire and people, Adolf Hitler, supreme commander of the armed forces, I shall render unconditional obedience and that as a brave soldier I shall at all times be prepared to give my life for this oath."\[24\]

By 1935, Germany was openly flouting the military restrictions set forth in the Treaty of Versailles. German re-aramment was announced on 16 March as was the reintroduction of conscription.\[25\] While the size of the standing army was to remain at about 100,000-man mark decreed by the treaty, a new group of conscripts equal to this size would receive training each year. The conscription law introduced the name "Wehrmacht", the Reichswehr was officially renamed the Wehrmacht on 21 May 1935.\[26\] Hitler’s proclamation of the Wehrmacht’s existence included a total of no less than 36 divisions in its original projection, concentrating the Treaty of Versailles in grandiose fashion. In December 1935, General Ludwig Beck added 48 tank battalions to the planned rearmament program.\[27\]

Wehrmacht's armaments received a large boost as a consequence of occupation of Czechoslovakia. In a speech delivered in the Reichstag, Hitler stressed that by occupying Czechoslovakia, Germany gained 2,175 field cannons, 469 tanks, 500 anti-aircraft artillery pieces, 43,000 machine guns, 1,090,000 military rifles, 114,000 pistols, about a billion rounds of ammunition and three million anti-aircraft rounds. This amount of weaponry would be sufficient to arm about half of the then Wehrmacht.\[28\]
Personnel and recruitment
The total number of soldiers who served in the Wehrmacht during its existence from 1935 to 1945 is believed to have approached 18.2 million. The Wehrmacht lost about 10,000,000 soldiers during the period from 1939-1945, a combination of about 2,000,000 KIA, 3,000,000 MIA, and 5,000,000 WIA. Recruitment for the Wehrmacht was accomplished through voluntary enlistment (1933–45) and conscription (1935–45). As World War II intensified, Naval and Luftwaffe personnel were increasingly transferred to the army, for the most part. The “defensive” enlistments in the SS were stepped up as well. Following the Battle of Stalingrad in 1943, fitness standards for Wehrmacht recruits were drastically lowered, with the regime going so far as to create “special diet” battalions for men with severe stomach ailments. Rear-echelon personnel were sent to front-line duty wherever possible, especially during the last two years of the war.[30]

Prior to World War II, the Wehrmacht strove to remain a purely German force; as such, minorities, such as the Czechs in annexed Czechoslovakia, were exempted from military service after Hitler’s takeover in 1938. Foreign volunteers were generally not accepted in the German armed forces prior to 1941. With the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, the government’s positions changed. German propagandists wanted to present the war not as a purely German concern, but as a multi-national crusade against the so-called Jewish bolshevism. Hence, the Wehrmacht and SS began to seek out recruits from occupied and neutral countries across Europe; the Germanic populations of the Netherlands and Norway were recruited largely into the SS, while “non-Germanic” people were recruited into the Wehrmacht. The “voluntary” nature of such recruitment was often dubious, especially in the later years of the war, when even Poles living in the Polish Corridor were declared “ethnic Germans” and drafted.[32]

After Germany’s defeat in the Battle of Stalingrad, the Wehrmacht also made substantial use of personnel from the Soviet Union, including the Caucasian Muslim Legion, Turkistan Legion, Crimean Tatars, ethnic Ukrainians and Russians, Cossacks, and others who wished to fight against the Soviet regime or who were otherwise induced to join.[29] A few thousand White émigrés joined the ranks of the Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS, often acting as interpreters.[31]

Command structure
Legally, the Commander-in-Chief of the Wehrmacht was Adolph Hitler in his capacity as Germany’s head of state; a position he gained after the death of President Paul von Hindenburg in August 1934. In the reshuffle in 1938, Hitler became the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and retained that position until his suicide on 30 April 1945.[33] Administration and military authority initially lay with the war ministry under Field Marshal Werner von Blomberg. After Blomberg resigned in the course of the 1938 Blomberg-Fritsch Affair, the ministry was dissolved and the Armed Forces High Command (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht or OKW) under Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel was put in its place.[34] Army work was also coordinated by the German General Staff.

The OKW coordinated all military activities but Keitel’s sway over the three branches of service (army, air force, and navy) was limited. Each had its own High Command, known as Oberkommando des Marine (OKM, navy), Oberkommando der Marine (OKM, navy), and Oberkommando der Luftwaffe (OKL, air force). Each of these high commands had its own general staff. In practice the OKW had operational authority over the Western Front whereas the Eastern Front was under the operational authority of the OKH.

Supreme High Command of the Armed Forces (OKW)
- Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces
  - Hitler and Chancellor of Germany
  - Adolf Hitler (1935–1945)
  - Generaloberst Karl Dönhoff (1945)
- Commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces
  - Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg (1933–1934), President of the Reich
  - Field Marshal Werner von Blomberg (1935–1938)
  - Field Marshal Hans Krebs (1938–1945)
  - Field Marshal Walther von Brauchitsch (1938–1941)
  - Field Marshal Adam Crandall (1941–1945)
- Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces
  - General Ludwig Beck (1935–1938)
  - General Franz Halder (1938–1942)
  - General Kurt Zeitzler (1942–1944)
  - General Hans Krebs (1945)

Supreme High Command of the Army (OKH)
- Army Commanders-in-Chief
  - Generaloberst Werner von Fritsch (1935–1938)
  - Field Marshal Walther von Brauchitsch (1938–1941)
  - Field Marshal Hermann Göring (1935–1945)
  - Field Marshal Ferdinand Schörner (1945)
  - Chief of Staff of the German Army
  - General Ludwig Beck (1935–1938)
  - General Franz Halder (1938–1942)
  - General Kurt Zeitzler (1942–1944)
  - General Hans Krebs (1945)
  - General Hans Krebs (1945)

Supreme High Command of the Navy (OKM)
- Navy Commanders-in-Chief
  - Grand Admiral Erich Raeder (1938–1943)
  - Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz (1943–1945)
  - Admiral Hans-Georg von Friedeburg (1945)

Supreme High Command of the Air Force (OKL)
- Air Force Commanders-in-Chief
  - Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring (1935–1945)
  - Field Marshal Robert Ritter von Greim (1945)

The OKW was also given the task of central economic planning and procurement, but the authority and influence of the OKW’s war economy office was challenged by the procurement offices of the single branches of service as well as by the Ministry for Armament and Munitions, into which it was merged after the ministry was taken over by Albert Speer in early 1942.

War years
Army
Main article: German Army (Wehrmacht)
The German Army furthered concepts pioneered during World War I, combining ground (Heer) and Air Force (Luftwaffe) assets into combined arms teams.[35] Coupled with traditional war-fighting methods such as encirclements and the “battle of annihilation”, the German military managed many lighting quick victories in the first year of World War II, prompting foreign journalists to create a new word for what they witnessed: Blitzkrieg. Germany’s immediate military successes on the field at the start of the Second World War coincides the favorable beginning they achieved during the First World War, a fact which some attribute to their superior officer corps.[36]

The Heer entered the war with a minority of its formations motorized, infantry remained approximately 80% foot-borne throughout the war, and artillery was primarily horse-drawn. The motorized formations received much attention in the world press in the opening years of the war, and were cited as the reason for the success of the invasions of Poland (September 1939), Norway and Denmark (April 1940), Belgium, France, and Netherlands (May 1940), Yugoslavia and Greece (April 1941) and the early stage of Operation Barbarossa in the Soviet Union (June 1941).

After Hitler declared war on the United States on December 1941, the Axis powers found themselves engaged in campaigns against several major industrial powers while Germany was still in transition to a war economy. German units were then to be used for decisive battles against Hitler from 1942, 1943 and 1943 at Battle of Moscow, Siege of Leningrad, Stalingrad, Turkey in North Africa, and Battle of Kursk.

The Germans’ army military was managed through mission-based tactics (rather than order-based tactics) which was intended to give commanders greater freedom to act on events and exploit opportunities. In public opinion, the German Army was, and sometimes still is, seen as a high-tech army. However, such modern equipment, while featured much in propaganda, was often only available in relatively small numbers. This was probably because the country was not run as a war economy until 1942–1943. Only 40% to 60% of all units in the Eastern Front were motorized; baggage trains often relied on horse-drawn trailers due to poor roads and weather conditions in the Soviet Union, and for the same reasons many soldiers marched on foot or used bicycles as “bicycle infantry. As the fortunes of war turned against them, the Germans were in constant retreat from the Battle of Stalingrad, including the Caucasian Muslim Legion, Turkistan Legion, Crimean Tatars, ethnic Ukrainians and Russians, Cossacks, and others who wished to fight against the Soviet regime or who were otherwise induced to join.[29] A few thousand White émigrés joined the ranks of the Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS, often acting as interpreters.[31]

Air Force
Main article: Luftwaffe
The Luftwaffe (German Air Force), led by Hermann Göring, was a key element in the early blitzkrieg campaigns (Poland, France 1940, USSR 1941). The Luftwaffe concentrated production on fighters and (small)
tactical bomber, like the Messerschmitt BF 109 fighter and the Junkers Ju 87 (Stuka) dive bomber.[46]

The planes cooperated closely with the ground forces. Overwhelming numbers of fighters assured air-supremacy, and the bombers would attack command- and supply-lines, depots, and other support targets close to the front. As the war progressed, Germany’s opponents drastically increased their aircraft production and quality, improved pilot training, and gradually gained air superiority. As the Western Allies started a strategic bombing campaign against German industrial targets, they established air supremacy over Germany deliberately turning the Luftwaffe into a war of attrition, denying support to German forces on the ground.

Navy

Main article: Kriegsmarine

See also: Blockade of Norway (1939–45)

The Kriegsmarine (navy) played a major role in World War II as control over the commerce routes in the Atlantic was crucial for Germany, Britain and later the Soviet Union. In the Battle of the Atlantic, the initially successful German U-boat fleet arm was eventually defeated due to Allied technological innovations like sonar, radar, and the breaking of the Enigma code. Large surface vessels were few in number due to construction limitations by international treaties prior to 1935. The “pocket battleships” Admiral Graf Spee and Admiral Scheer were important as commerce raiders only in the opening year of the war. No aircraft carrier was operational, as German leadership lost interest in the Graf Zeppelin which had been launched in 1935. Following the loss of the German battlecruiser Bismarck in 1941, with Allied air-superiority threatening the remaining battlecruisers in French Atlantic harbors, the ships were ordered to make the Channel Dash back to German ports. Operating from fjords of Norway, which had been occupied in 1940, convoys from North America to the Soviet port of Murmansk could be intercepted though the Typo spent most of her career as fuel in being. After the appointment of Karl Dönitz as Grand Admiral of the Kriegsmarine (in the aftermath of the Battle of the Barents Sea), Germany stopped constructing battlehips and cruisers in favor of U-boats.[47]

U-boats were one of Germany’s greatest weapons against the Allies at sea which were employed to strike at Allied Convoy.[48] The German naval strategy was to attack the convoy in an attempt to starve Britain of supplies which would disable the ability of the British army to continue fighting the war. Karl Dönitz, the U-Boat Chief, began unrestricted submarine warfare which cost the Allies 22,898 men and 1,315 ships.[49] The U-boat war remained costly for the Allies until early spring of 1943 when the Allies began to use countermeasures against U-Boats such as the use of Hunter-Killer groups, airborne radar, mines and torpedoes like the FIDO.[50]

Coexistence with Waffen-SS

The Waffen-SS, the combat branch of the SS (the Nazi Party’s paramilitary organization), became a significant fighting force of Nazi Germany as it expanded from three regiments to 38 divisions by 1945. Although the SS was autonomous and existed in parallel to the Wehrmacht, the Waffen-SS field units were placed under the operational control of the Supreme High Command of the Armed Forces (the OKH) or the Supreme High Command of the Army (the OKH). Interservice rivalry hampered organization in the German armed forces, as the OKW, OKH, OKL and the Waffen-SS often worked concurrently and not as a joint command.

Theatres and campaigns

The Wehrmacht directed combat operations during World War II (from 1 September 1939 – 8 May 1945) as the German Reich’s Armed Forces umbrella command organization. After 1941 the OKH became the de facto Eastern Theatre higher echelon command organization for the Wehrmacht, excluding Waffen-SS except for its special and tactical combat purposes. The OKW conducted operations in the Western Theatre. The operations by the Kriegsmarine in the North and Mid-Atlantic can also be considered as separate theatres considering the size of the area of operations and their remoteness from other theatres.

Wehrmacht fought on other fronts, sometimes three simultaneously; redeploying troops from the intensifying theatre in the East to the West after D-Day created tensions between the General Staff of both the OKW and the OKH as Germany lacked sufficient material and manpower for a two-front war of such magnitude.[51]

Eastern theatre

Main article: Eastern Front (World War II)

The Eastern Wehrmacht campaigns included:

- Czechoslovakian campaign (1938–1945)
- Finnish Anschluss campaign (1939)
- Battle of Poland campaign (Fall Weiss)
- Balkans and Greece (Operation Marita) (1940–1941)
- Operation Barbarossa (1941), conducted by Army Group North, Army Group Centre, and Army Group South
- Battle of Stalingrad (1942–1943)
- Battle of the Caucasus (1942–1944)
- Battle of Kursk (Operation Citadel) (1943)
- Part of the Eastern Front involved anti-partisan operations against Soviet partisan units and counter-insurgency operations – largely carried out by security divisions of the Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS units in the occupied territories behind Axis front lines.

Western theatre

Main article: Western Front (World War II)

- Phoney War (Silkbogen)
- The Norwegian Campaign as Operation Weserübung
- The Norwegian Campaign
- Combined Western campaign (1940): Battle of the Netherlands and Battle of France (Fall Gelb) in 1940.
- Battle of Britain (1940)
- Battle of the Atlantic
- Battle of Normandy (1944)
- Ardennes Offensive (1944–1945)
- Defense of the Reich air campaign

Mediterranean theatre

Main article: Mediterranean Theatre of World War II

For a time, the Axis Mediterranean Theatre and the North African Campaign was conducted as a joint campaign with the Italian Army, and may have been a separate theatre.

- North African Campaign in Libya, Tunisia and Egypt between the UK and Commonwealth (and later, U.S.) forces and the Axis forces.
- The Italian “Theatre” (1943–45) was a continuation of the Axis defeat in North Africa, and was a Campaign for defence of Italy.

Casualties

Main article: German casualties in World War II

More than 6,000,000 soldiers were wounded during the conflict, while more than 11,000,000 became prisoners. In all, approximately 5,318,000 soldiers from Germany and other nationalities fighting for the German armed forces—including the Waffen-SS—are estimated to have been killed in action, died of wounds, died in custody or gone missing in World War II. Included in this number are 215,000 Soviet citizens conscripted by Germany.[52]

According to Frank Beis,

German casualties took a sudden jump with the defeat of the Sixth Army at Stalingrad in January 1943, when 180,310 soldiers were killed in one month. Among the 5.3 million Wehrmacht casualties during the Second World War, more than 80 percent died during the last two years of the war. Approximately three-quarters of these losses occurred on the Eastern front (2.7 million) and during the final stages of the war between January and May 1945 (1.2 million).[53]

Jeffrey Herf wrote that:

“While official German deaths between 1941 and 1943 on the western front had not exceeded 3 percent of the total from all fronts, in 1944 the figure jumped to about 14 percent. Yet even in the months following D-day, about 68.5 percent of all German battlefield deaths occurred on the eastern front, as a Soviet bitter leg in response devastated the retreating Wehrmacht.”[54]

War crimes

Main articles: War crimes of the Wehrmacht, Consequences of German Nazism and Myth of the clean Wehrmacht

During World War II, the Wehrmacht perpetrated numerous war crimes.[55] Nazi propaganda had told Wehrmacht soldiers to wipe out what were variously called Jewish Bolshevik subhumans, the Mongol hordes, the Asiatic flood and the red beast.[56] While the principal perpetrators of the civil suppression behind the front lines amongst German armed forces were the Nazi German “political” arm (the SS Totenkopfverbände, the Waffen-SS, and particularly the Einsatzgruppen), the paramilitary death squads of Nazi Germany that were responsible for mass killings, primarily by shooting and the implementation of the so-called Final Solution of the Jewish Question in territories occupied by Nazi Germany, the traditional armed forces represented by the Wehrmacht committed and ordered (e.g. the Commissar Order) war crimes of their own, particularly during the invasion of Poland in 1939[57] and later in the war against the Soviet Union.

Cooperation with the SS

The Army’s Chief of Staff General Franz Halder in a directive declared that in the event of guerrilla attacks, German troops were to impose “collective measures of force” by massacring entire villages. Cooperation between the SS Einsatzgruppen and the Wehrmacht involved supplying the killing squads with weapons, ammunition, equipment, transport, and even housing. Partisan fighters, Jews, and Communists became
signs of the Nazi regime and were hunted down and exterminated by the Einsatzgruppen and Wehrmacht alike, something revealed in numerous field journal entries from German soldiers. [54] Hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of Soviet civilians from cities of the Eastern Front were fed to them and many thousands more were killed during the Wehrmacht's anti-partisan war in the Soviet Union. [49] While secretly listening to conversations of captured German generals, British officials became aware that the German army had taken part in the atrocities and mass killing of Jews and were guilty of war crimes. [57] American officials learned of Wehrmacht atrocities in much the same way. Taped conversations of soldiers detained as POWs revealed some of them voluntarily participated in mass executions. [56]

**Crimes against civilians**

**Main article: Krajgajecz massacre**

The Krajgajecz massacre was the mass murder of 2,778–2,794 mostly Serb men and boys in the city of Krajgajecz by German soldiers on 21 October 1941. It occurred in the German-occupied territory of Serbia during World War II, and came in reprisal for insurgent attacks in the Comit Milanovac district that resulted in the deaths of 10 German soldiers and the wounding of 26 others. The number of hostages to be shot was calculated based on a ratio of 100 hostages executed for every German soldier killed and 50 hostages executed for every German soldier wounded. After a punitive operation was conducted in the surrounding villages, during which 422 males were shot and four villages burned down, another 70 male Jews and communists who had been arrested in Krajgajecz were shot. Simultaneously, males between the ages of 16 and 18, including high school students, were assembled by German troops and local collaborators, and the victims were selected from amongst them. The selected males were then marched to fields outside the city, shot with heavy machine guns, and their bodies buried in mass graves.

**Crimes against POWs**

While the Wehrmacht's prisoner-of-war camps for inmates from the west generally satisfied the humanitarian requirement prescribed by international law, prisoners from Poland (which never capitulated) and the USSR were incarcerated under significantly worse conditions. Between the launching of Operation Barbarossa in the summer of 1941 and the following spring, 2.8 million of the 3.2 million Soviet prisoners taken died while in German hands. [55]

**Nuremberg and subsequent trials**

The Nuremberg Trials of the major war criminals at the end of World War II found that the Wehrmacht was not an inherently criminal organization, but that it had committed crimes in the course of the war. Several high-ranked members of the Wehrmacht like Hermann Hoth, Hermann Göring, Wilhem Keitel and Alfred Jodl lost their rank and/or position due to their involvement in war crimes. Among German historians, the view that the Wehrmacht had participated in war time atrocities, particularly on the Eastern Front, grew in the late 1970s and the 1980s. In the 1990s, public conception in Germany was influenced by controversial reactions and debates about the exhibition of war crime issues. [59]

More recently, the judgement of Nuremberg has come under question. The Israeli historian Ian Kershaw concludes that the Wehrmacht's duty was to ensure the survival of the Herrenvolk against the Aryan invasion. ... German soldiers' letters and memoirs reveal their terrible reasoning: Slavs were "useless vermin," and their elimination was "inevitable." [65]

**Resistance to the Nazi regime**

There were several attempts by resistance members within the military like Hans von Dette, Erich Hoepner or Friedrich Olbricht to assassinate Adolf Hitler as an igniter of a coup d'etat, culminating in the 20 July plot (1944), when a group of officers led by Claus von Stauffenberg tried to assassinate Hitler. German military personnel were ordered to replace the standard military salute with the Hitler salute from this date (see Hitler salute). [56] Some members of the Wehrmacht did save Jews and non-Jews from the concentration camps and/or mass-executions. Arthur Schmidt—a sergeant in the army—helped 250 Jewish men, women, and children escape from the Vinkovci ghetto and provided them with forged passports so that they could get to safety. He was court-martialed and executed as a consequence. Albert Batra, a reserve officer stationed near the Pozrenjay ghetto, blocked an SS detachment from entering it. He then evacuated up to 100 Jews and their families from the local military command, and placed them under his protection. Wilh Hossenfelder—an army captain in Warsaw—helped, hid, or rescued several Polish Jews, including Jews, in occupied Poland. He helped the Polish Jewish composer Władysław Szpilman, who was hiding among the city's ruins, by supplying him with food and water. [57]

**Top ranks**

**Main article: World War II German army ranks and insignia § Rank tables**

- **Reichsmarschall**: The post of the Reichsmarschall was the highest military ranking that a German soldier could reach. The post was held solely by Hermann Göring (9 July 1940), the most powerful Nazi leader in Germany next to Hitler, who designated him as his successor on 29 June 1941. [67] Göring also served as the Minister of Armament and War Production.

- **Generalfeldmarschall**: In 1938, Hitler revisited the rank of feldmarschall, originally only for the Minister of War and Commander-in-chief of the Wehrmacht. Most of Germany's field marshall's were promoted during the 1940 Field Marshal Ceremony; see List of German field marshals/Nazi Germany (1933–45) for the full listing.

- **Generalleutnant**: The rank of Generalleutnant, usually translated as "colonel general", was equivalent to a four-star rank.

- **General**: This three-star rank was formally linked to the branch of the army or air-force, in which the officer served, such as General of the Infantry, General of the Artillery and General of Armoured Troops (Panzertruppe).

- **Generalmajor**: The German Generalmajor—the one-star rank was usually a division commander.

**After World War II**

The following unconditional surrender of the Wehrmacht, which went into effect on 8 May 1945, some Wehrmacht units remained active, either independently (e.g. in Norway), or under Allied command as police forces. [58] The last Wehrmacht unit to come under Allied control was an isolated weather station in the Netherlands. The West German military, officially created in 1956, took the name Bundeswehr (national forces). The East German counterpart—created on 1 March 1956—took the name National People's Army (Nationale Volksarmee). Both organizations employed many former Wehrmacht members, particularly in their formative years, though neither organization considered themselves to be successors to the Wehrmacht.
See also
- Corruption within the Wehrmacht
- German Resistance
- Glossary of German military terms
- Glossary of Nazi Germany
- History of Germany during World War II
- Myth of the clean Wehrmacht

Notes
1. "From German: wahren, "to defend" and Macht, "power, force." See the Wiktionary article for more information.

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Discover here the answer of CodyCross Armed forces of Nazi Germany English Version. I have found all the answers of the game and sharing them with you. All the available groups have been solved and all you have to do is to read the answers in this subject. ... Hi everyone, I will give you in this subject: the answers of CodyCross Armed forces of Nazi Germany. This game developed Fanatee Games, contains many puzzles. This is the English version of the game. We must find words in the crosswords using the clue. The game contains different levels of challenge that require a good general knowledge of these topics: politics, literature, mathematics, science, history and various other categories of general culture.