

THE USE OF COMBAT ANTI-TANK DOGS IN THE RED ARMY IN LIGHT OF GERMAN RECOUNTS AND SOVIET MILITARY DOCUMENTS - PROBLEM SYNOPSIS

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Anti-tank dogs employed by the Red Army during World War II are often credited in Soviet and contemporary Russian narratives with the destruction of more than 300 German tanks. This figure has become a persistent wartime myth, frequently reproduced without critical verification. This article examines the actual operational use and effectiveness of Soviet anti-tank dogs based on German combat reports, memoirs, and previously unpublished Soviet archival documents, including award applications and unit records. The analysis demonstrates that many of the vehicles attributed to dog attacks were not tanks but armoured personnel carriers and reconnaissance vehicles. Moreover, anti-tank dog units frequently employed additional weapons, such as grenades, anti-tank rifles, and incendiary bottles, which were often collectively recorded as dog-related successes.

Keywords: anti-tank dogs, World War II, Red Army, tanks, armored vehicles.

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During World War II, following the Third Reich's invasion of the Soviet Union, the world learned of the new and secret Soviet weapon. These animals were known as anti-tank dogs, or colloquially as mine-dogs¹. This inhumane combat tactic relied specially trained dogs equipped with saddlebags with explosives (TNT). The animals were trained to run beneath enemy tank, positioning themselves between the tracks. Above the explosive charges, a spring-loaded wooden lever was mounted. When the dog crawled beneath an armoured vehicle, the lever was pushed backward. This action triggered the detonator and caused the explosion. A Pavlovian conditioning method was employed to instill the desired behavior. During training, dogs were fed exclusively underneath tanks or tracked tractors. Pushed by hunger, in battle they'd instinctively throw themselves under armed vehicles in search of food. That particular weapon type had already gotten mythologized during the war by German and Soviet propagandistic publications alike.

Despite the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian sources continue to claim that anti-tank dogs destroyed more than 300 enemy tanks during the war. Such a figure would correspond to the strength of approximately two armored divisions. On 28 May 2011 in Volgograd's Chekhists' Square unveiled the first and only Russian monument dedicated to anti-tank dogs².

In the present article, based on available German and Soviet military memoirs, documents and award applications, the author attempts to identify and verify cases in which such weapon

¹ Russian: собаки-истребители танков (tank destroyers dogs) or противотанковые собаки (anti-tank dogs). German: Hundeminen (dog-mines) or Panzerabwehrhunde [Panzerhunde] (anti-tank dogs).

² <http://vetert.ru/rossiya/volgograd/sights/328-pamyatnik-sobakam-istrebityam-tankov.php> / [accessed 1 XII 2025].

were used and its effectiveness. Although during World War II in the Red Army around 68 thousand dogs³ were used, the present text refers only to their role as tank destroyers - "live mines".

The topic of consideration isn't using the animals in acts of destroying enemy dugouts and resistance points. Neither are the issues of utilization of the dogs in other roles, such as evacuation and sanitary aspects, acting as liaisons, working as transport, guard or mine detecting units⁴. Awareness of this topic remains limited outside Russia and Eastern Europe. Moreover, many of the documents referenced in this article have not been previously published. For this reason, the author has chosen to include extensive excerpts from primary sources, even though the material could have been presented in a more concise form.

Authors of Soviet and Russian publications⁵, both academic and popular in nature, generally avoid providing archival signatures for documents concerning anti-tank dogs. This practice significantly limits source verification. And if the archival signatures are indeed included they refer to document sets, which are unavailable to western researchers. On the other hand in a majority of the books referencing confrontations in which "live mines" contribution can be proved, there is no mention of them⁶.

A few years ago the tendency to unmask the established in Russia myth about the anti-tank dogs could've been observed. It is also in big part thanks to websites bringing forward findings of an Ukrainian historian Juri Vierieminiev⁷ that are currently available, as well as to a domain containing Vladimir Leonidovich's Swabians' book titled *Myths and Truths about Military Dog Breeding*⁸. Among the latter's published documents, those originating from the Museum of the History of Military Dog Breeding can be found, although because of the lack of access, those cannot be decisively verified.

On the other hand most Western publications are limited to a few-sentence long mention about the phenomenon such as:

During the desperate days of 1941, the Red Army trained special anti-tank mine dogs. The dogs were fitted with a saddle which included two packets of high-explosive on either side, and a triggering mechanism on the top which set off the charges when the dog ran under the tank. The dogs were trained by feeding them only under tanks. A total of thirteen dog tank-destroyer units were formed and Russian accounts claim they destroyed

³ <https://rkf.org.ru/sobaki-v-vov/sobaki-na-frontah-velikoj-otechestvennoj-vojny/> [accessed 1 XII 2025]. СУХОМЛИН Иван Михайлович, Служебные собаки на войне. In Военно-исторический журнал, 1971, no. 8, p. 93 states, that it was 60 thousand of them.

⁴ More about the remaining roles fulfilled by dogs in the Red Army ПЕТРОВ Б. Боевые помощники, In Военно-исторический журнал, 1981, no. 06, p. 88-89; СУХОМЛИН И. М, Служебные с. д., p. 93-98.

⁵ ЛЕДОВСКИЙ, Василий. «Четвероногие камикадзе», In *Война и отечество*, 2016, no. 10, p. 16-17; <https://bloknot-volgograd.ru/news/sluzhebnye-dvornyazhki-shli-pod-tanki-v-boyu-za-st-958758>; https://www.simvolika.org/mars_010.htm

⁶ For example publications describing fight of the 10th Rifle Division of the Internal Troops of the NKVD in defense of Stalingrad, the fact that it was aided by anti-tank destroyer dogs usually goes unmentioned, like in the 2nd tome of 3-volume work of Войска НКВД в Великой Отечественной войне: Военноисторический труд: в 3 т. Т. II. Войска НКВД в первый и второй периоды Великой Отечественной войны (1941–1943)/ под общ. ред. ЗОЛотова, В. В., Москва: На боевом посту, 2015. It is however mentioned in the doctorate written by СТРЕЛЬНИКОВ Максим Александрович, Особенности деятельности войск НКВД СССР в Сталинградской битве, Диссертация на соискание учёной степени кандидата исторических наук, Волгоград 2025, p. 126-127.

⁷ ВЕРЕМЕЕВ, Юрий, Противотанковая собака (подвижные мины), <https://army.armor.photos/engeneer/sobaka-mina.php> [accessed 1 XI 2025].

⁸ <https://www.voennoe-sobakovodstvo.ru/kniga.html> [accessed 1 XI 2025].

300 German armored vehicles. German accounts dispute their effectiveness and the practice was quickly abandoned in favour of using dogs for more suitable roles, including mine detection⁹.

However in general the only mention that can be found in books published in the West is a picture showing the dog that was shot down, still wearing the saddlebags containing undetonated explosives. The caption that follows states that such a weapon was used on eastern front, however there is no reference to its application¹⁰. For more information one would have to refer to recounts of the German officers¹¹, the monographs of particular armored divisions¹² or in some popular science articles¹³.

According to Russian websites the first German tank to be destroyed by a dog carrying explosives was said to have happened at Rogaczewo (Rogaczowo) on July 27th 1941¹⁴. It was a mongrel by the name of Irma¹⁵. Despite Vladimir Swabian placing this event on June 27th 1941¹⁶, the date is believed to be incorrect, since there were no documents found that could support that claim.

In said German accounts as well as elaborations¹⁷ focused on this time period, there is only one example given in relation to the eastern front. In accordance to then acting captain of 7th Panzerdivision, Hans von Luck's words:

They fought with what they had. Once, we came to an abandoned village. A dog ran up to us. He wagged his tail and whimpered. When we tried to stroke him, he crawled under an armored vehicle. Suddenly we heard a bang, an explosion. The vehicle was damaged, but luckily failed to catch fire. We ran up to it and discovered that the dead dog had had an explosive charge concealed in the fur of its back with a movable pin as detonator. When the dog crawled, the detonator tipped over and triggered off the explosion. The dog had

⁹ ZALOGA, Steven J. - NESS Leland S. *Red Army Handbook 1939-1945*, Sutton Publishing, 1998, p. 196; Sowjetischer Tankhund mit Panzersprengladung, In *Waffen-Revue*, 1980, no. 37, p. 5967-5969.

¹⁰ SCHEIBERT, Horst. *Kampf und Untergang der Deutschen Panzertruppe 1939-1945*, Friedberg: Podzun-Pallas-Verlag, 1992, p. 75; SCHNEIDER, Wolfgang. *Panzer Tactics German small unit armor tactics*, Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2005, p. 268.

¹¹ For example: *Panzer Commander: The Memoirs of Hans von Luck*, Barnsley: Frontline Books, 2013; LUTHER Craig W.H. - STAHEL, David. *Soldiers of Barbarossa, Combat, genocide and everyday experiences on the Eastern Front, June-December 1941*, Lanham: Stackpole Books, 2020, p. 291; RAUS, Erhard. *Panzer Operations. The Eastern Front Memoir of General Raus, 1941-1945*, Steven H. Newton (ed.), Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2005.

¹² For example: *Armored bears, vol. I, The German 3rd Panzer Division In World War II, Veterans of the 3rd Panzer Division*, Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2012; KLAPDOR, Ewald. *Viking Panzers The German 5th SS Tank Regiment in the East in World War II*, Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2011; MARK, Jason D. *Death of the leaping horseman : the 24. Panzer-Division in Stalingrad, 12th August-20th November 1942*, Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books 2002; REBENTISCH, Ernst. *The Combat History of the 23rd Panzer Division In World War II*, Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2012.

¹³ KACZYŃSKI, Adam. Psy niszczyciele czołgów, In *Militaria XX wieku*, 2010, no. 4, p. 4-10; SZEWCZYK, Radosław. Psy przeciw czołgom, In *Żołnierz Polski*, 2001, no. 5, p. 60-61; ZALOGA, Steven J. Czerwone psy wojny, In *Historia Wojsko i Technika*, 2016, no. 4, p. 94-97;

¹⁴ <https://rkf.org.ru/sobaki-v-vov/sobaki-na-frontah-velikoj-otechestvennoj-vojny/> [accessed 1 XI 2025].

¹⁵ <https://www.voennoe-sobakovodstvo.ru/kniga.html> [accessed 1 XI 2025].

¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁷ KACZYŃSKI, A. Psy. c. d., p. 7; KOWALIK, Teresa – SŁOWIŃSKI, Przemysław. *Zwierzęta na wojnie*, Warszawa: Fronda PL, 2023, p. 221-222; SZEWCZYK, R. Psy. c. d., p. 60-61.

*been trained to find meat under armored vehicles. Unfortunately, from then on we had to shoot all dogs that approached us*¹⁸.

Von Luck does not specify when that particular occurrence took place, although the referenced fragment spans the period from the end of July to the beginning of August 1941. The officer recalls there his journey to Smolensk, which was conquered by German troops on the 5th of August in 1941. According to von Luck's recollection, the target was not a tank but an armored vehicles. It was most likely an armored reconnaissance car (four-wheeled SdKfz 222, SdKfz 223 or eight-wheeled SdKfz. 234) or a half-track armored personnel carrier (SdKfz 250 or SdKfz 251). The vehicle sustained damage but was not completely destroyed.

There is also a gefreiters' Hans Roth from 299 Infantry Division of 6th Army of the Army Group South recollection of the offensive usage of dogs as tank destroyers in a fight which took place from September 17th to September 19th 1941 around the region near Schuljany¹⁹.

On September 30th 1941 probably the most known episode involving anti-tank dogs and the 3rd German Panzerdivision. It was described by Paul Carell²⁰ in his book published in 1964:

The infantrymen of 3rd Company, brought right up to the front as reinforcements, were riding on top of the armored troop carriers of 1st Company, 3rd Rifle Regiment, commanded by Colonel von Manteuffel. Why walk if you could ride?

Second Lieutenant Lohse was in front, in the command car of 1st Company. "Watch out for dogs, Eikmeier," he said to his driver. "Dogs, sir?" the lance-corporal asked in surprise. "Why dogs, Herr Leutnant?" Corporal Ostarek, the machine-gunner, also regarded the lieutenant doubtfully. Lohse shrugged his shoulders, "Three Russian prisoners were brought in at Regiment yesterday, each with a dog. Under interrogation they said they belonged to a special Moscow unit which used dogs with primed demolition charges against tanks." Ostarek giggled. "That's the craziest story I've heard for a long time." Lohse raised his hands apologetically. "I wouldn't have mentioned it if the regimental commander had not personally warned Captain Peschke and myself. Anyway, don't say I didn't tell you".

(...) They advanced cautiously. Sergeant Dreger with his machine-gun made the Russians in their dug-out keep their heads down. Suddenly Eikmeier shouted: "A dog!" A Dobermann came loping up. On its back was a curious saddle. Before Ostarek could even swing his machine-gun round Captain Peschke in a vehicle 30 yards away had snatched up his carbine. The dog made another leap and then collapsed. Just then Corporal Muller shouted: "Watch out, there's another! A sheepdog, a beautiful animal, was approaching at a careful trot. Ostarek fired. Too high. The dog pulled in its tail and was about to turn back. Russian Voices were heard shouting AT it, and the Animals once more headed straight for Lohse's vehicles. Everybody fired, but the only one to hit the Animals was Corporal Seidinger with his captured Russian rapid-fire rifle, an automatic operated by gas pressure.

*"Put out a warning over the radio telephone, Müller, about those dogs," Lohse commanded. And now they heard it in all the vehicles: "Dora 101 to all: Watch out for mine-dogs..." Mine-dogs - a term coined on the spur of the moment. A new term for a new and much disputed Soviet weapon*²¹.

In turn the report of veterans from 3rd Panzerdivision that was published in first volume of *Armored bears* in 1967 paints the picture in a slightly different way:

¹⁸ Panzer Commander. c. d., p. 105-106.

¹⁹ LUTHER C, W.H. - STAHEL, D. *Soldiers*. c. d., p. 291.

²⁰ His actual name was Paul Karl Schmidt.

²¹ CARELL, Paul. *Hitler moves east 1941-1943*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1964, p. 132-133.

Kampfgruppe von Manteuffel was employed along the right wing to protect the flank of the division through offensive operations and maintaining contact with the XXVIII. Armee-Korps on the right. In executing that mission, the battle group attacked Sawarkow. In the lead were the remaining armored personnel carriers of the 1st Company (Leutnant Lohse), on which the riflemen of the 3rd Company (Hauptmann Peschke) were riding. The attack took place across an open field. There were Russian positions in front of the village outskirts, which were quickly overrun. The riflemen were then among the wooden cottages, which were stubbornly defended by individual Russians. The lead elements of the SPW company made it to the center of the village, where they stopped at a church with a dilapidated cemetery. All of a sudden, a few dogs sprang out of the second line of the enemy's defences, about forty meters away. The animals ran quickly toward the SPW's and were not distracted by the machine-gun firing. Obergefreiter Müller cried out: "It's got something on its back!" His comrades identified a wooden lever, about twenty-five centimeters long. It rose vertically from a rack on the dog's body. A few of the Russians had jumped up from their positions in the trenches, encouraging the dogs. Instinctively, the machine gunner on the first vehicle, Obergefreiter Ostarek, took the animals under aimed fire. The lead dog continued racing. Oberfeldwebel Kretschmar brought his submachine gun into firing position and fired until the Animals collapsed. At the same time, Hauptmann Peschke had finished off a dog with a carbine, and the third animal was shot by Feldwebel Hoffmann's machine gun. Another four dogs followed with attached two-kilogram charges, but they were also killed. Leutnant Lohse radioed out the new danger: "Mine-dogs!" When the Russians saw that their dogs were unable to deliver their deadly charges anywhere, they evacuated their positions behind the church and pulled completely out of Sawarkow²².

In line with Vladimir Swabian's²³ words, the Germans encountered 1st Independent Special Service Battalion²⁴ commanded by Captain Novikov, factored as a part of Western Front. From accounts it can be inferred that the targets were half-tracks armored personnel carriers Sd. Kfz 251 rather than tanks, and that the dogs did not succeed in destroying any of them this time around.

According to Carell's book the first significant loss affected 18th Panzerdivision two days later on October 2nd 1941:

²² *Armored*. c. d., p. 407-408.

²³ <https://www.voennoe-sobakovodstvo.ru/kniga.html> [accessed 1 XI 2025].

²⁴ The detailed organization of Soviet anti-tank dog units does not constitute the principal focus of the present study. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the information available in the historiography regarding their internal structure remains inconsistent and, in several respects, requires further archival verification. On 2 June 1941, the 1st Independent Special Service Battalion was formed, comprising 199 personnel and 212 dogs. At the turn of July and August 1941, the formation of eight independent tank destroyer dogs units was initiated. These units subsequently served as the basis for larger formations assigned to individual field armies (Army Tank Destroyer Dogs Units). Each unit consisted of four companies, with 126 dogs per company. This organizational model, however, proved ineffective under operational conditions. Beginning in July 1942, two companies were disbanded within each unit, reducing the total number of dogs from 504 to 216. In 1942, thirteen independent tank destroyer dogs units (at battalion strength) were organized. Their number was gradually reduced as operational priorities shifted. Increasing emphasis was placed on the formation of mine-detection dog units. In June 1943, the existing formations were reorganized into independent mine-detection and tank destroyer dogs battalions, each composed of two companies: one anti-tank company and one mine-detection company. In 1943, two independent special service regiments (the 1st and 2nd) were established. From October 1943 onward, tank destroyer dogs companies were progressively dissolved, and both the dogs and their handlers were retrained for mine-detection duties. Despite this retraining, some animals reportedly retained conditioned anti-tank behavior until the end of the war. More on the topic: Adam Kaczyński, *Psy*, c. d., p. 6-7; Steven J. Zaloga, *Czerwone*, c. d., p. 95-97; СУХОМЛИН Иван Михайлович, c. d., p. 93; <https://www.voennoe-sobakovodstvo.ru/kniga.html> [accessed 1 November 2025].

(...) General Nehring's 18th Panzer Division was less fortunate. Tanks had over-run Soviet field positions and anti-tank strongpoints on the eastern edge of Karachev. The motorized infantry units broke into the town. The 9th Company, 18th Panzer Regiment, pushed through to the northern edge and then traversed a huge field of maize. A few more anti-tank guns were silenced. There was no more firing.

The tank commanders were leaning in their turrets. The company commander had just given the signal: "Close up on me on the right. Halt. Switch off engines." Hatches were flung open. At that same moment two sheepdogs came racing through the maize. The flat saddles on their backs were plainly visible. "What on earth is that?" the radio operator asked in amazement. "Messenger dogs, I suppose; or maybe medical-corps dogs," suggested the gunner.

The first dog headed straight for the leading tank. It dived under its tracks. A flash of lightning, a deafening crash, fountains of dirt, clouds of smoke, a blinding blaze. Sergeant Vogel was the first to understand. "The dog," he shouted; "the dog!" Already the gunner had whipped out his 8-mm. pistol. He fired at the second dog. He missed. He fired again. Another miss. A machine pistol spluttered from tank No. 914. Now the animal stumbled and its forelegs folded up. When the men reached it the dog was still alive. A pistol bullet put an end to its sufferings²⁵.

Based on this relation the blast brought by the explosives carried by the animal happened under the German tank of unknown type. It also remains unknown if the tank had been irrevocably lost, or if it was renovated and brought back to working condition. When referring to 18th Panzerdivision's combat journal, Stahel²⁶ states that the unit faced the anti-tank dogs not sooner than on October 5th 1941.

General Erhard Raus describing the clashes involving subordinated to him 6th, 7th and 10th Panzerdivisions that took place in the first decade of October 1941 writes:

During these operations the Red Army employed so-called mine-dogs for destroying our tanks. (...) News of this insidious tactic caused some alarm among our panzer units and made them fire at all approaching dogs on sight. There is no evidence of any case where a German tank was destroyed by a mine-dog. On the other hand, it has been reported that several times mine-dogs fleeing from the fire of our panzers sought protection underneath Russian tanks, which promptly blew up. One thing is certain: The specter of the mine-dogs ceased just as abruptly as it had begun²⁷.

The use of anti-tank dogs during the first months of fighting on the Eastern Front is poorly documented in Soviet sources. This scarcity of documentation can be attributed in part to organizational chaos and declining morale within the Red Army. Many units were destroyed early in the campaign, while other lost records during retreats or encirclements.

Some publications²⁸ and websites offer a report, handwritten by one captain Vinogradsky describing operations of one of the anti-tank units that utilized dogs, dated for October 16th 1941. This record has been found in an archive by Juri Viereminiev, who later put selected fragments on his website:

²⁵ CARELL, P. *Hitler*. c. d., p. 133.

²⁶ STAHEL, David. *Operation Typhoon Hitler's march on Moscow, October 1941*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 67-68.

²⁷ RAUS, Erhard. *Panzer*. c. d., p. 87.

²⁸ LASOTA, Jacek. Wybrana problematyka użycia psów w Armii Czerwonej. In *Animus Belli 2017 Duch Wojny Tom II: Historia sztuki wojennej zwierzęta na polu walki*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademii Sztuki Wojennej, 2017, p. 116; KOWALIK, Teresa – SŁOWIŃSKI, Przemysław. *Zwierzęta*. c. d., p. 220-221.

1. *Most of the dogs don't want to cooperate, right after being released they came back and tried to jump inside our trenches, simultaneously endangering the infantry (there were six unfortunate accidents)*

2. *Nine dogs began to run erratically across the field shortly after being released. Frightened by artillery and mortar fire, they attempted to seek shelter in shell craters, gullies, and other depressions. Three of the animals were killed by explosion, while two were never recovered. The remaining [dogs] attempting to return in our[Soviet] position, were shot by rifle and machine-gun fire*

3. *Three dogs were shot by fascists and taken from the battlefield. There were no attempts at rescuing the dogs.*

4. *Probably four of the dogs exploded near German tanks, although there is no proof of destruction²⁹.*

Verieminev hasn't specified any discernible signature of this document.

Soviets treated anti-tank dogs like a secret weapon, which is supported by award applications regarding battles under Kokkolowo village near Leningrad (now Sankt Petersburg) of that time which took place on October 22nd 1941. It was on this day that the 5th Army Tank Destroyer Dogs Unit assigned to the 269th Rifle Regiment from the 13th Guards Rifle Division subordinate to the 42nd Army. The unit was tasked with conducting combat reconnaissance of Kokkolowo. In the application for the "For Combat Merit" award to Red Army soldier and dog handler from the 2nd Company of the 5th Tank Destroyer Dog Squadron, Ivan Semyonovich Kashin, the use of this type of weapon was recorded as follows:

October 22nd 1941 in the squad platoon of 2nd company Unit assigned to 296th Rifle Regiment from 13th Guards Rifle Division - took part in battle reconnaissance of village Kokkolowo. Advancing on the village under heavy enemy gunfire, where the platoon took cover, the Red Army soldier I. S. Kashin received an order to proceed to the battalion commander of 296th Rifle Regiment for further orders for the squad. He carried out the order thoroughly and quickly under enemy fire, and its intensity during the whole operation was so great that 50% of the platoon ended up either injured or dead.

Under [enemy] assault he administered first help to two of his injured companions. Carrying out the order to retreat from Kokkolowo, he walked last in line. En route he took up and guided out three mine-dogs, left behind by their injured overseers, each of them with saddles full of explosive material, which prevented the secret technique from being intercepted by the enemy. He displayed exceptional capability and courage, finding ways to control those animals, left without their guardians, animals which shouldn't be approached even outside of combat situation; regardless of the tangible threat of instantaneous death by the blast of explosives located in dog's saddlebags (12 kilos of TNT) which could happen at any given moment if the enemy bullet made contact with it, he followed instructions: under no circumstances let the enemy get in possession of the mine-dogs' technical equipment.³⁰

On the other hand deputy political instructor (politruk) Vladimir Pertovich Smirnov squad commander of the 1st company of the 5th Army Tank Destroyer Dogs Unit taking part in the same fight was appointed to get the award for:

Saving confidential techniques and injured soldiers of the unit during 13th Guard Rifle Division units' operation under Kokkolowo, while assigned to the rifle battalion platoon

²⁹ ВЕРЕМЕЕВ, Юрий. Противотанковая собака (подвижные мины), <https://army.armor.photos/engeneer/sobaka-mina.php> [accessed 1 XI 2025].

³⁰ CAMO, f. 33, op. 682524, jed. chr. 761, k. 30.

of the 2nd company of the Division lost 50% of its members. He volunteered for the task given by the commander of the 1st company, broke through the enemy cluster, under heavy enemy fire accompanied by the company commander, and efficiently carried out the evacuation of injured troops from the 2nd company and confidential load of the dogs³¹.

Usage of dogs in this particular fight is puzzling, when the German 1st Panzerdivision got pulled back from their position in the region a few days earlier. There is a possibility of the dogs intended use being the destruction of German combat posts.

Morally unethical and inhumane treatment of animals sent on suicide missions was noted and used by the Third Reich propagandistic publications as well. The following article by German war correspondent Fritz Lucke, reporting from German headquarters (probably divisional) east of Bryansk, appeared in the 1 November 1941 issue of the Berlin newspaper the *Berliner Lokalanzeiger*.

Even our chief divisional officer could not believe the report. At the crack of dawn he rang up the orderly on duty, getting him out of bed to ask whether we thought this was April Fool's Day: After all he said, he should understand a soldier's joke as well as the next man, but really, this was supposed to be a military report.

The incredible news was true word for word: Suddenly a number of dogs had come running along the narrow field path toward the foremost of our vehicles. A few yards away they veered off, ran back the way they had come, wagging their tails, then returned towards us. On their backs they were carrying jutting cases fastened on with a harness. This was a strange and suspicious business and our soldiers did not know what to make of it. The Company leader made the only decision he could. The men took tommy guns, rifles and pistols and shot the animals. When the corpses were examined - the dogs were grey Shepherds and brown Dobermans - it turned out that the boxes on their backs contained two explosive charges each but the mines had not been primed, the pins had not been pulled...

(...) But they failed to reckon on the honest soul of a dog, who, like any other animal, will run away from a tank in a serious battle. The behaviour of the mine-dogs proved it, and our Soviet prisoners confirmed it too. Two of the three companies in their detachment were to be deployed for the first time along our sector of the river. But most of the dogs had not been properly trained and only a very few crawled under the moving tanks. On top of that, many dogs were gun-shy and ran away from the exploding firecrackers. The breeds were all mixed: any breed that could be confiscated was used.

Three beautiful canine specimens are now lying peacefully at our feet, accepting every morsel of bread with a wag of the tail. They have no notion what fate their "dear masters" had in mind for them. We asked which of the three had been the aptest pupil. One of our prisoners pointed to the German Shepherd in the middle, a light-grey male. We are taking him along - he'll make a fine divisional mascot!³².

Both in the German press, as well as the one issued in occupied countries under Germany aegis more information on the topic began to appear. For example in occupied Poland on November 11th 1941 there was a stage photo, published in tabloid press (in Polish reptile press), that depicted an eight-wheeled armored communication vehicle Sd. Kfz. 263 marked with Panzergruppe Guderian symbols, two crew members and a dog running in a front of the vehicle with a following caption:

³¹ CAMO, f. 33, op. 682524, jed. chr. 762, k. 150.

³² PIEKALKIEWICZ, Janusz. *Tank war 1939-1945*, Harrisburg: Historical Times, 1986, p. 122-123.

Mine-dogs.

*Bolsheviks came up with a new mode of combat. Trained dogs, laden with loads of explosive material are sent against German armored vehicles, where they are supposed to get in between the wheels and cause an explosion*³³.

The new Soviet weapon was taken seriously by the Germans. Warnings about such an unusual usage of dogs were sent out to various military units. As a precaution Germans started shooting all the dogs they came across. At the end of November 1941 it was probably the 7th Panzerdivision encountered this threat again:

*Towards the end of November the division's Panzergrenadiers observed Alsatian dogs loping toward their armored half-tracks with strange packages attached to their flanks and back, secured by wide leather girths. They opened fire immediately. Each dog appeared to trail a wire like an extended leash. These lines ran to Russian foxholes. The animals were trained to duck under vehicles or jump inside the fighting compartments. The Red Army soldiers looking on would yank the line to arm the detonator mechanically which would then explode on contact with a surface. The German regimental commander had briefed his men to be wary of such tactics but in reality had already dismissed the bizarre warning as 'the usual latrine rumours'. He commented, 'One could never know or indeed imagine what new bestial methods the Russians would dream up next. A virtual 'hare-shoot' followed, reported another witness, 'there were no checks on opening fire and a great many dogs were shot'. When the advance continued, the regimental commander's radio operator counted 42 'mine- dogs' pathetically scattered about in the snow. 'I did not hear of a single case in our attack area when this the Red Army trick worked,' added the regimental commander*³⁴.

William Lubebeck, who fought under Leningrad talked about the aversion to the imposed execution of the animals:

About this time, our intelligence learned that the Red Army was infiltrating dogs across the lines. These poor animals had been strapped with dynamite around their bodies and trained to run under our vehicles. When they did so, the triggering antennas on their backs would bend and detonate the explosive.

*Though there were probably few dogs actually armed this way, the army directed us to shoot all dogs as a precautionary measure. Carrying out these orders was especially painful for us, but we obeyed. Over time, war hardens your heart and leads you to do brutal things that you could never have imagined yourself doing in civilian life*³⁵.

Mass extermination of the dogs found itself mirrored in informal, illegal publications created and disseminated among the soldiers. One of them was a facetious instruction regarding appropriate conduct during leave spent in homeland developed by the interested parties themselves, which revealed a multitude of information in terms of brutality of service on the eastern front. 15th point of said guide stated:

Defence against Animals:

*Dogs with mines attached to them are a special feature of the Soviet Union. German dogs in the worst cases bite, but they do not explode. Shooting every dog you see, although recommended in the Soviet Union, might create a bad impression*³⁶.

³³ "Psy minowe", "Ilustrowany Kurjer Polski" nr 46, R. 2, Kraków 16 XI 1941 r., p. 9.

³⁴ KERSHAW, Robert. *War Without Garlands Operation Barbarossa 1941-1942*, Hersham: Ian Allan Publishing, 2010, p. 422.

³⁵ LUBBECK, William – HURT, David B. *At Leningrad's Gates. The Story of a Soldier with Army Group North*, Haverton: CASEMATE PUBLISHERS, 2010, p. 131.

³⁶ BEEVOR, Antony. *Stalingrad*, London: Penguin Books 2007, p. 46.

On the other hand anti-tank dogs were put, in all seriousness, in military guidebooks about enemy mines. Volume published at the beginning of 1942 describes them like this:

Origin: Captured equipment – prisoner's testimony.

The Russians have recently trained dogs to use as weapons against tanks. These are dogs that do not quite reach the size of a German Shepherd. The explosive kit (...) with two carrying cases is strapped to the dogs so that the wooden lever of the detonator points diagonally upwards. The carrying cases are filled with two 6 kg explosive charges each (...). The top layer of charge in the side cases is fitted with a detonating cap on both sides. The opening must point upwards. The detonator (a 200 g explosive charge with a detonator) is installed in the metal box of the detonator. The detonator is then attached so that the opening of the safety pin is slid over the lever-like, iron extension of the Wooden lever. (...). The dog runs under the armored vehicle (...). The approximately 20 cm long lever hits the low-lying parts of the chassis and is pushed backward. This pulls out the safety pin, releases the firing pin, and detonates the detonator, the primer, and the primer, in turn, detonates the explosive charge in the side pockets. Tank dogs are eliminated by shooting them³⁷.

Just next year the Soviets gave up on this type of weapon. However anti-tank dogs appeared again in combat during the battle of Charkow in 1942. According to Soviet award applications, Sergeant Major Aleksiej Ivanovich Zubko, commander of the 2nd platoon of the 4th Tank Destroyer Dog Company of the 8th Army Tank Destroyer Dog Unit of the Southern Front had been nominated for the Order of the Red Banner for his contribution in battles near the Kujbyszew-Warionkowo sovkhos located in Kharkov region:

Having been assigned to 1118th Rifle Regiment of the 333rd Rifle Division, on May 17th 1942 while occupying the defence in an area of Kuybyshev, Bogodarovo and Warienkowo's sovkhos he made a decision to answer enemy's tanks counterattacks with his own offensive, coming at them head on. Despite the fact that our previous line of defence was breached by the enemy, and having our infantry move on to the outskirts, Zubko stayed put with his squad in the trenches. Deploying anti-tank dogs from a distance of approximately 20-40 meters he managed to wreck seven of the enemy tanks, which cost him the lives of three men. He then successfully led the rest of his troops out of the encirclement. By occupying the north fringe of Warienkowo the enemy made the retreat of our units difficult by deploying tanks and armored vehicles. Comrade Zubko utilized the mine-dogs again, destroying one more tank and armored vehicle each, which opened a path for the troops left on the north fringe to withdraw. It meant that on May 17th 1942 in a single battle with the help of the anti-tank dogs unit comrade Zubko contributed to the destruction of eight enemy tanks and one armored vehicle. Characteristic for the platoon commander naming Zubko issued by the 1118th Rifle Regiment and attestation from 333rd Rifle Division specifying the number of tanks destroyed are attached³⁸.

In conformity with the characteristic formulated by the commander of the 1118th Rifle Regiment:

On May 17th 1942 during the battle in sovkhos region (...) he destroyed 7 enemy tanks, lost 15 dogs and 8 soldiers, of which four killed, and for more missing in action³⁹.

One of the Sergeant Major Zubko's subordinates, one Sergeant Major Maksim Timofiejewicz Pietrov a deputy platoon commander of the 8th Army Tank Destroyer Dog Unit was appointed to receive the Order of the Red Star for the battles in the area

³⁷ Merkblatt über Russische Spreng- und Zündmittel, Minen und Zünder, Ihr Einsatz beim Feind Und Imre Beseitigung Vom 1.1.1942, Dessau: C. Dünnhaupt, p. 68-69.

³⁸ CAMO, f. 33, op. 682524, jed. chr. 534, k. 32.

³⁹ Ibidem, k. 35.

of Kuybyshev-Warionowo sovkhos in Kharkov region on May 17th 1942. His award application stated:

Being located on the front line of Kuybyshev-Warionowo sovkhos defence in Kharkov region, he inspired troops to follow commander's combat orders, leading by example. By letting the enemy tank come 40 meters away from his position, he used his anti-tank dog to destroy the vehicle. Continually engaging in a struggle with the German grenadiers he skillfully came out of the encirclement and reconnected with his platoon⁴⁰.

On the German side Carell takes note of the events of May 17th 1942 on the Donets River:

Farther to the left the 101st Light Division also reached the Donets by the evening of 18th May. (...) For the first time since the previous summer's offensive mine-dogs were encountered again—Alsations and Doberman Pinschers with primed anti-tank mines on their backs. The dog-handlers, crouching in well-camouflaged positions, ordered the animals time and again to the advancing German formations. In a sickening kind of dog-hunt the animals were picked off and killed. But more and more of them came, entire packs of them, attempting, as they had been drilled, to get under the vehicles and gun-limbers. Wherever they succeeded and the projecting trigger-rod of the mine met with resistance the heavy charge exploded, together with the dog, and everything over an area of several yards was blown to pieces⁴¹.

However Carell doesn't specify eventual, specific losses on the German's side.

The topic of anti-tank dogs was continuously used in Third Reich propagandistic publications at this point in time. On December 13th 1941 an exhibition called "Das Sowjet-Paradies" (The Soviet Paradise) was opened in Vienna. One of the most prominent parts of the display was the stuffed dog fitted with the saddle on his back and a distinctive antenna. Subsequently the exposition has been moved to the capital of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia - Prague, where it has been open to the public starting on February 1st 1942⁴². On May 8th 1942 "Das Sowjet-Paradies" debuted in Berlin. The description published in reptile press said:

Accompanied by a great number of participants the exhibition titled "The Soviet Paradise" has been opened in Berlin. The display attempts to lift a veil before the eyes of thrilled to their core viewers in regard to social relations in Soviet Russia. Testaments it provides are unshakeable, portraying in a tangible way Bolshevik dealings. Most of the show pieces were brought to Berlin from the Soviet territories conquered by the Germans.

MINE-DOG. Similarly to other exhibits this vile Soviet battle method couldn't be missing from the display. Mine-dogs, carriers of explosive charges, were trained specifically as a countermeasure against German tanks. Explosives coming in contact with the vehicles were supposed to trigger a blast⁴³.

In the following years the exhibit was presented in other German cities and those across occupied Europe⁴⁴.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, k. 73.

⁴¹ CARELL, P. c. d., p. 460-461.

⁴² KALINA, Pavel. Výstava ukořistěných zbraní: Sovětský ráj. In *Historie a plastikové modelářství*, 2005, no. 5, p. 29-31.

⁴³ *Wystawa w Berlinie "Raj Bolszewicki"*, "Ilustrowany Kurier Polski" nr 20, R. 3, Kraków 17 V 1942 r., p. 11.

⁴⁴ It was presented in different German (some of them at that time) cities, such as: Hamburgu, Essen, Hannover, Mannheim, Stuttgart, Leipzig, Danzig (currently Gdańsk), Dresden, Kassel, Chemnitz, Stettin (currently Szczecin) i Königsberg (currently Królewiec), as well as in the satellite and occupied states, like in Mulhouse, Oslo, Strasbourg, Milan, Copenhagen and Brussels. (see LORENZ, Oliver. Die Ausstellung "Das Sowjetparadies": nationalsozialistische Propaganda und kolonialer Diskurs. In: *Revue d'Allemagne et des pays de langue allemande*. 2016 no. 1, p. 7).

In the context of the battle of Kharkhov during spring 1942 the usage of battle dogs was the topic of yet another propagandist article that appeared in the reptile press:

Mine-dogs failed.

Berlin, June 5th. Certain carefully developed battle measure gravely disappointed us during the battle of Kharkhov - said a the Red Army Sergeant Vladimirovich taken hostage by the Germans. I'm thinking about the mine-dogs. They were supposed to be used en masse. On the narrow strip 800 of them would have been let loose. They were going to explode there and break the lines of German troops, so that we could go back east. They had been equipped with vests which contained explosives on both sides of the animal's torso. They were trained to get under tanks and other vehicles. The charges were supposed to go off on contact.

We regarded them as highly dangerous weapons.

But just as they started running, Germans opened fire from guns of all calibers. One of the dogs got hit with a round from a machine gun. Mines went off. Dogs running in a compacted cluster were torn to pieces. Germans kept hurling bullets and that was the moment the dogs backtracked coming at our positions. They jumped on us. At the center of our component the explosives carried by the animals were going off one by one. It caused a horrific amount of bloodshed among our numbers⁴⁵.

On June 28th 1942 Germans began Operation Blau. One of the main objectives was Rostov-on-Don which acted as an important communication hub. On July 22nd 1942 in the general area of the city dogs were deployed again acting as "live bombs". According to Soviet document originating from the 30th Guard Rifle Division:

Battles in the Rostov area from July 21st to 29th 1942 (...)

[July 22nd 1942] At 11:40 a.m the offensive of over 50 tanks and grenadiers, encircling the right flank of the 256th Rifle Regiment. A fierce battle erupted. Enemy attacks were repelled. On the battlefield remained up to 15 [destroyed] tanks and around 600 [killed] soldiers. After a failed strike, the regiment area was subjected to brutal aerial bombardment - with almost 60 planes partaking in the attack. During the raid one of the enemy aircraft got shot down.

By the order of division commander both the mobile anti-tank reserve and the company under the leadership of major Maloletko, the division chief of staff were moved forward along the right flank of the 256th Rifle Regiment with a single aim of preventing division from being encircled from the Ssulfan Ssaly side. The tanks' advance collapsed there. At this breakthrough 24 tanks were destroyed by the dogs alone (...)⁴⁶.

The use of anti-tank dogs by the Soviets was confirmed by German sources. In the book dedicated to movements of the 5th SS Panzer Battalion of the SS Division "Wiking" it noted that:

That same Wight [on 20 July – RS], both the 13. Panzer-Division and the armored group, The "Wiking" Division linked up in the area southeast of Alexandrowka to attack Ssulfan Ssaly and the enemy to the southwest of it. On the first day of operations, the tanks were able to advance more than 30 kilometers. Only 15 kilometers separated them from the western edge of the city of Rostow.

After hard fighting, the 13. Panzer-Division succeeded in taking Ssulfan Ssaly and Krassny Krym on the road leading into Rostow from the northwest at noon on 22 July. The

⁴⁵ *Minowe psy zawiodły*, "Nowy Czas" nr 65, R.4, Jędrzejów 6/7 VI 1942, p. 2. Piece with the same contents later appeared on the pages of the "Goniec Krakowski" (*Minowe psy zawiodły*, "Goniec krakowski" Nr 129, 6 VI, p. 2).

⁴⁶ САМО, ф. 47, оп. 1063, д. 429, Боевая характеристика 30 сд 56 А ЧГВ ЗакФ, р. 41.

tanks of SS-Panzer-Bataillon 5 were held up by mines and difficult terrain: "Moving through the deeply cut Balka is only possible in a few places, even for tanks."

In the course of the afternoon, the battalion succeeded in crossing the tank ditch in the Tschaltyrskaja Balka southwest of Krassny Krym. By evening, it had broken through two of the three defensive belts around the city of Rostow. The defensive belts consisted of tank ditches, belts of mines, mine-dogs and antitank defences. The tanks reached a line northwest of Sapadny, from which the attack objective, Rostow, appeared to be within reach the next day⁴⁷.

Germans don't disclose any information about any potential losses in their armoured vehicle count caused by the "live mines".

Anti-tank dogs took part in the Stalingrad battle as well. One of the city defendants was the 62nd Army included in 28th Independent Tank Destroyer Dog Unit under the command of senior lieutenant Anatolij Siemionowich Kunin. This unit became part of the Stalingrad Front on August 23rd 1942, and it answered directly to the 10th Rifle Division of the NKVD established specifically for defending the town. In the Stalingrad battle dogs were first used in August 1942 in the cities' north suburbs where they took action against the German tanks advancement especially on the stretch defended by 282nd Rifle Regiment of the 10th Rifle Division of the NKVD. There are however no details provided on the topic.

In reference to the information included on Swabians' website, tank destroyers worked in individual units. On September 13th 1942 during the German offensive on the airfield area, a platoon under the command of Sergeant Major Fiodor Kriuczkov was said to have destroyed 13 German tanks. No one survived the fight.

On September 15th 1942 tank destroyer platoon led by a junior lieutenant Anatoli Ivanowich Warlamov took on paramount enemy forces near the Woroponovs' railway turnout. It's presumed that the group fought off three rounds of attacks and annihilated 6 tanks with landing. They were all killed.

According to Soviet data describing the period of the fights for Stalingrad, 28th Independent Tank Destroyer Dog Unit is said to have destroyed 42 tanks, 2 armored vehicles, 4 cars, 2 firing points and killed 578 enemy soldiers and officers in total.

The analysis of available award requests points to the conclusion that not all of the tanks mentioned were eliminated by using dogs carrying explosive charges. In a posthumous reward application for private Aleksiej Aleksandrevich Kuzjakin there was a mention:

He prepared his dog well for the task of blowing up enemy tanks. On September 13th 1942 in the airfield area he destroyed one medium tank⁴⁸.

On the other hand in private Iwan Aleksandrovich Losiews' award letter it was noted:

On September 20th 1942 in the area of the railway bridge near the Stalingrad station, while trapped in an ambush he sent his dog out and managed to take out an enemy tank. When a second vehicle appeared - he aimed a bundle of grenades at the track and hit his mark. He was killed by the enemy grenadiers when he attempted to finish off the tank⁴⁹.

What we can infer from this is that anti-tank dog units were using more weapon types than just dogs. It was precisely during the Stalingrad battles when anti-tank rifle squads⁵⁰ were incorporated into the 28th Independent Tank Destroyer Dog Unit, with 3 to 4 rifles per squad. It supplemented previously used types of equipment, which included anti-tank grenades, bottles with flammable liquid and anti-tank dogs.

⁴⁷ KLAPDOR, E. *Viking*. c. d., p. 13.

⁴⁸ CAMO, f. 33, op. 682525, jed. chr. 161, k. 19.

⁴⁹ Ibidem, k. 21.

⁵⁰ During World War II, the Red Army used two different types of anti-tank rifles: S.G. Simonow system (PTRS-41) and W.A. Diegtiarow system (PTRD-41).

Meanwhile such generalizations used in recording results of the unit's combat operations are actively contributing to the misconception about the manner in which all of those hits on armored vehicles were carried out.

In contrast the German sources on the topic of the Stalingrad fights mention only the usage of the anti-tank dogs during the battles that the 24th Panzerdivision took part in around the city on September 28th 1942:

During the day, the Division [24 Panzerdivision] captured 280 prisoners and destroyed or captured 5 tanks, 9 anti-tanks guns, 32 antitank rifles, 7 mortars, 2 flamethrowers and 4 mine-dogs⁵¹.

January 29th 1943 was the day when the 23rd Panzerdivision had a run in with a unit of anti-tank dogs:

It was intended by the corps for the division to clear Terjajew-Andropow on 29 January and then take Kagalnitschek with Kampfgruppe Sander and Kampfgruppe von Low. At the same time, the recently introduced 11. Panzer-Division was intended to attack Pischwanow. SS Panzer-Grenadier Division "Wiking" and five tanks from the 17. Panzer-Division were supposed to support the attack of the 23. Panzer-Division. Kampfgruppe von Einem was pulled back to Donskoj, while Kampfgruppe von Winning to Nowo Kusnezowka. Starting at 0530 hours, Kampfgruppe Sander cleared the eastern portion of the defiles west of Donskoj and forced an entrance into Terjajew-Andropow, fighting against mortars, antitank guns and antitank rifles. The weak 3rd Company of tankers attacked the village at the same time from Beswodnyj; it was supported by two tanks in its efforts. In a hard fight, the supply route of the division was cleared of the enemy. At 0855 hours, both groups linked up in Terjajew-Andropow, with Kampfgruppe Sander taking in 150 prisoners and destroying 7 antitank rifles, 3 antitank guns, 17.62cm infantry gun and 30 train vehicles. The soldiers counted 40 enemy dead. The enemy had employed "mine-dogs" against the division for the first time, but they were ineffective, since they were killed before they could close on the vehicles"⁵².

Around March 1943 the Red Army was created a summary document in which actions taken by the dogs of the 2nd Independent Regiment of Special Service Dog Trainers up to this point were outlined. It also addressed various aspects of the service of the anti-tank dogs of the 3rd Guards Army. This document defined the weapon's purpose and its primary applications:

Anti-tank dogs are meant for destroying enemy tanks that tore through the front and into a tactical depth during the offensive.

Anti-tank dogs should be used as platoons, assigning them to division and regiment commander's disposal.

Tank destroyer Dog Platoons are not to be separated and are supposed to work integrally in executing their appointed combat task. All actions subdivision should be coordinated in close cooperation with Anti-Tank Rifle units and anti-tank artilleries⁵³.

In the same document it is pointed out that the commanders in charge of the anti-tank defence on certain stretches assigned combat positions and tasks to the destroyer dogs squads. It defined in more detail dogs' role in defensive operations:

1. In defensive situations the main focus of anti-tank dogs units is eliminating tanks located on climbs and in deep defensive positions with the usage of the animals. Moreover dogs' guides armed with machinegun pistols, bottles with flammable liquid and grenades,

⁵¹ MARK, J. D. *Death*. c. d., p. 232.

⁵² REBENTISCH, E. *The Combat*. c. d., p. 587-588.

⁵³ CAMO, f. 312, op. 4245, d. 160, Опыта применения военно-служебных собак в 3 гв. армии и краткие инструктивные указания по использованию и уходу, к. 11.

will be fighting against the tanks and enemy infantry disposing of the destroyed tank's crew. By commander orders tank destroyer units will extend into battle formation in advance, steering in the directions where the enemy tank attacks are most likely to occur or depending on the situation, they might occupy anti-tank resistance points in the defensive depth.

In both cases subdivisions must be at full attention and ready to maneuver.

Exemplifying distribution of anti-tank dogs units would be as follows:

On the front defence edge - 30-40% [of the unit]

In deep defence zone- 20-25%

In reserve for maneuver - 35-50%.

[Constant] Combat disposition is ensured by intermittent resting of a certain number of unit troops and their dogs.

For every guide and his animal there should be prepared, equipped and masked basic and additional positions. Locations are chosen with taking into account:

- a) convenient and hidden path leading to them;*
- b) feasibility for observation surrounding terrain and commencing fire;*
- c) presence of opportune passages allowing a dog to get to the [enemy] tank;*
- d) blocking most likely directions and traffic sections of enemy vehicles, which opponent wouldn't be able to skip⁵⁴.*

In addition this record contains information about using dogs in offensive plays:

2. During the assault anti-tank dogs units were used to repel enemy armoured counterattacks, which is the reason for constant assessment and fortifying positions on the fringes occupied by our troops. The job of the subdivision included in anti-tank reserve is to safeguard the main force from opposing armored counterattacks from possible angles, eliminate retaliating enemy tanks, first and foremost those posing a direct threat to the flanks and the rear of advancing forces, as well as to fortify positions, points and boundaries seized by our squads in terms of anti-tank defensive measures.

Anti-tank dogs units working on the offensive must maintain close cooperation with infantry, artillery and armored units⁵⁵.

In addition that same form regulated unit's tasks during marches and layovers:

3. During marching of the subdivision, included units are divided into 4 groups, one of which is located at the front of the column /two of them in the middle, at the right and left side/ and one at the end of the formation. /25-30% dogs are in reserve/. Anti-tank dogs' branches' job during move is to destroy rapidly incoming enemy tank columns.

4. During units placement for layover, a section of the subdivisions is used, mostly on roads with a possible enemy tank activity with a priority being ravines, forest thinnings and exits. Independent parts of the subdivisions are distributed with the main directions of the enemy tanks advance in mind. To prevent a sudden attack observation, surveillance and notification are set in place⁵⁶.

Direct approach to eliminating opposing armored vehicles by the dogs is also discussed here:

In subdivisions basic weapons for destroying rival tanks are dogs trained specifically for this task.

Guides will let their dogs out when an adversary vehicle's approach is at around 50-100 meters from units' position.

⁵⁴CAMO, f. 312, op. 4245, d. 160, Опыта применения военно-служебных собак в 3 гв. армии и краткие инструктивные указания по использованию и уходу, к. 11.

⁵⁵Ibidem, k. 12.

⁵⁶Ibidem.

The technique of tank elimination itself relies on the dogs being trained to get under the vehicle while being strapped with explosives, which will explode on contact with the most fragile part of the construction - the underbelly.

What's more dogs' guardians will use anti-tank grenades and bottles with flammable liquid to destroy the machines.

While utilizing mine-dogs, it should be kept in mind that they are a danger to allied armored units as well. That's why deployment of anti-tank dog units is entirely prohibited in joint operations involving allied machines⁵⁷.

Animals' training and living conditions were also taken under consideration:

To make sure that anti-tank dogs are always ready for deployment, systematic training is non-negotiable, which is why not less than two times a week they have to be released under a moving vehicle.

In general, animals retain their combat capacity for 3-4 weeks after sufficient training sessions.

As a rule mine-dogs should occupy open combat positions for no longer than 24 hours.

They should be fed twice per day and no less than 2-3 hours before taking up designated combat positions.

The key to successful application of anti-tank dogs units heavily relies on tactical and technically correct way of their implementation⁵⁸.

The document takes under consideration shortcomings and flaws observed during the service period falling under the headship of 3rd Guards Army. The most important of them being:

1. Anti-tank dogs units do not always get presented with clear objectives and have no specific place in the anti-tank defence system.

2. There have been instances of mine-dogs guides being used as riflemen rather than as a specialized unit, which led to substantial losses among both men and animals.

3. Sometimes anti-tank dogs were used not in the form of platoons, but rather separated them between battalions in teams, which weakened them and decentralized the command chain.

4. There were also cases of impossible feats expected of those units like for example eliminating enemy tanks that were 300-1500 meters away.

5. The need for systematic training was ignored which in time led to dogs losing their habits. With avoiding indicated drawbacks and correct exploiting of the anti-tank dogs, they are a foolproof method of dealing with enemy vehicles⁵⁹.

On the 8th of May 1943 there was another recorded case of "live mines" usage on the eastern front. In relation to a battle report number 107 from a platoon serving under lieutenant Nikolaj Matwiejewich Konjajev from the 2nd Independent Regiment of Special Service Dog Trainers being a part of the 3rd Guards Army,:

On May 8th [1943] during battle of Priwolnoye [Привольное] privates Popow and Ducznik took out two medium tanks by utilizing their dogs⁶⁰.

Award request for private Iwan Makarowicz Popow's 2nd degree Order of the Patriotic War goes into more details:

⁵⁷ Ibidem.

⁵⁸ Ibidem, k. 12-13.

⁵⁹ Ibidem, k. 13.

⁶⁰ CAMO, f. 312, op. 4245, d. 122, Боевое донесение 2 отдельного полка дрессировщиков собак специальных служб за период с 09.05.1943 по 19.05.1943 г., р. 454.

On May 8th 1943 during combat maneuvers near the Priwolnoye village, the opponent turned to offense and pushed our squadrons back in the direction of a river - Siewierski Donets. (...) Seeing the persistent resistance of our troops, the enemy have deployed their tanks.

After the emergence of a few opposing tanks the Red Army soldier Popow quickly prepared his anti-tank dog and when the vehicle was at around 80-100 meters away from them, he let the animal loose. The tank was blown up thanks to the dog⁶¹.

On the other hand private Dimitrij Jakowlewicz Ducznik during this particular struggle unleashed his dog when he spotted an enemy squad attempting to encircle their battalion. He released the animal from around 100-150 meters away from their opponent. Explosive charges carried by the dog blew the tank up⁶². The German unit, to which the vehicles belonged, couldn't have been discerned.

The best example of anti-tank dog deployment in Soviet documentation is the one partaking in the battle of Kursk in 1943. Partially the exploits of the 27th Tank Destroyer Dog Unit⁶³ were described by the general Jerzy Bordziłowski⁶⁴, who during the Kursk battle were the chief of the engineering troops of the Voronezh Front and in the book dedicated to engineering troops on the battlefield, and in his recollections published in Poland:

Anti-tank destroyer dogs activity

The essence of those actions entailed particularly trained animals, where each of them carried on its back a 4-6 kilos of TNT charges, and leaped underneath tanks (in between the tracks). Special antennae caused an igniter explosion and the rest of the load. Dogs alongside their guides were organized and divided into platoons each of them consisting of 15-25 dogs. During combat those platoons were operating in a tirailleur formation.

General Bordziłowski also described detailed procedure of using the animals in battle:

Each of the guides got allotted a stretch of terrain about 100-120 meters wide in which they were supposed to destroy enemy tanks. Every guardian and his dog were provided a special trench connected to the general system of canals. The basic equipment of those units were machine gun pistols and grenades. Apart from the fact if the platoon had its anti-tank rifles or not⁶⁵. Bottles with flammable liquid counted as additional equipment. After the signal "enemy tanks" given by the team leader each of the instructors put the vest with explosives on the animal and holding it on a leash got ready to strike. When the attacking vehicle was not further than 75-100 meters from their positions, on superior's signal, or "get them" said by the guide, they took the safeties out and released the dogs⁶⁶.

Above excerpt taken out of Bordziłowski's book is a word for word citation from 27th Independent Mine Detector and Tank Destroyer Dog Battalion's chronicle⁶⁷. In later part the text also states that:

⁶¹ Ibidem.

⁶² CAMO, f. 33, op. 682526, jed. chr. 909, k. 18.

⁶³ It's the name used in the recounts. In official documentation the unit is referred to as 27th Independent Mine Detector and Tank Destroyer Dog Battalion.

⁶⁴ BORDZIŁOWSKI, Jerzy. *Wojska inżynieryjne na polu walki*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo MON, 1977, p. 113.

⁶⁵ 27th Anti-tank Destroyer Dog Unit had in its possession 19 anti-tank rifles. Ibidem, p. 115.

⁶⁶ BORDZIŁOWSKI, J. *Wojska*. c. d., p. 132-133.

⁶⁷ CAMO, f. 236, op. 0002698, d. 1165, Отчет о боевой деятельности 27 отд. б-на собак миноискателей и истребителей танков Описывает период с 01.01.1943 по 31.12.1943 г., p. 11-12.

The 1st platoon, with 23 dogs, was assigned to the 1245th Regiment of the 375th Infantry Division⁶⁸, 2nd platoon (14 dogs) - to 151st Guards Regiment of the 52nd Guards Infantry Division and 3rd platoon (15 dogs) - to 196th Regiment of the 67th Guards Infantry Division. Dogs have destroyed 15 tanks, and their keepers firing from anti-tank rifles damaged another 6. The number of mine-dogs' eliminated vehicles was usually lower than the amount of the animals sent out, not only because a certain number of them were killed by the heavy machine gun fire, but also stemmed from the fact that the amount of dogs sent out per tank usually was around 2-3⁶⁹.

Bordziłowski classified anti-tank dogs as maneuvering mines⁷⁰. This particular technique is all about creating mine fields during the course of the battle, especially on the fringes of the battlefield and directions that are not included in the mine laying plan. Explosives are usually laid out directly on the ground without masking them⁷¹. In this case they were "live mines".

Chronicle supplies us with a multitude of valuable information about anti-tank dogs and their contribution to the defence of a fragment of the 6th Guards Army:

If the opponent managed to push out of the general defence line and scatter the anti-tank dogs units soldiers were forced to fend for themselves. In those instances to allow the dogs a chance of reaching enemy vehicles they used various things like roadside ditches, pits left after bullet rounds and aviation bombs, lone bushes and if they were in a city - buildings (...). It's important to note that opponents' tanks aren't always going straight at the trenches but rather try to encircle and flank them. That's why the dogs were set off not only in a straight line but also at a certain angle (guide Smirnow let the dogs loose at a 25-30 degrees angle). The soldier that was freed from the dog regrouped with his squadmates from his platoon, maintaining infantry battle formations, repelling enemy attacks with gunfire and destroying armored enemy landings.

During the fights that had taken place on the first day of German Offensive, the advancing on the region 11th Panzerdivision was said to have sustained massive losses, while Soviet defenders were on a success streak:

With the help of the anti-tank dogs 12 tanks were destroyed and with anti-tank rifles - 3 more. Engineers serving under lieutenant Lisyczyn were stuck in a heat of battle in the village Butowo region occupying the regiment commander's command post. Germans carried out 4 attacks on their position and every time they were repelled by the sappers, although each time was paid for in blood. It was at this time that the enemy decided to break through the resistance with tanks. A group of medium German machines advanced on the soldiers, but they kept their heads on their shoulders. They had their loyal fourlegged "soldiers"- anti-tank dogs. Animals were let off the leash and all but sprinted under the tanks... Four explosions shook the air and consecutively 4 enemy tanks were damaged. When the enemy managed to break through our first line of defence on the stretches occupied by the 52nd and 67th Guards Rifle Divisions and so their tanks got deep into our positions. The mobile anti-tank circuit (dogs and anti-tank rifles), placed in the command disposition.(...)

⁶⁸ Bordziłowski in his recollections used polish military nomenclature – infantry division. Its equivalent in the Red Army was the Rifle Division.

⁶⁹ BORDZIŁOWSKI, J. *Wojska*. c. d., p. 132-133.

⁷⁰ Ibidem, p. 127

⁷¹ *Encyklopedia techniki wojskowej*, (ed. MODRZEWSKI Jerzy), Warszawa: Wydawnictwo MON, 1987, p. 385.

*As a result of correct placement and usage of anti-tank destroyer dogs on 52nd and 67th Guards Rifle Divisions, the dogs blew up 12 enemy tanks (...)*⁷².

A key aspect of the chronicle is that an even more detailed description of consequences of the dog attacks on the German vehicles, and an explanation why it usually didn't work:

Types of tank hit and destroyed - light⁷³ and medium⁷⁴. Tanks that got blown up by the dogs had damage such as:

a/split bottom

b/destruction of the driving system

c/or both of them together.

(...) To present in detail the character and scale of the damage in conquered and planted vehicles is virtually impossible, on one hand, there was no chance to take a look at enemy machines, as they remained on the territory belonging to them. On the other hand, part of the combat squad, after blowing the tanks by deploying their dogs, got incinerated with enemy flamethrowers⁷⁵, and remaining one were killed⁷⁶.

The causes of the unsuccessful attempts at destroying enemy machinery with the dog units were also included in the chronicle:

Force placement and arrangement as well as means of movable anti-tank reserve - dogs in the 1245th Rifle Regiment and 375th Rifle Division can be viewed as an unsuccessful example. It's here that the whole platoon was situated on the front edge of defence in the region at the altitude of 211,6. After our line was broken in this area, enemy tanks positioned in the valleys, they descended to the 211,6 altitude, from west and east, they encircled us and emerged at the rear of our subdivisions - the Anti-Tank Dog platoon found itself outside the enemy tanks area of operation. If the commander of the 1245th Rifle Regiment had the dogs as his rearguard, there could've been a way to block the tanks' way out of the valleys. In the case of the 375th Rifle Division, main points of contention in the use of combat anti-tank dogs are:

I. Choosing an incorrect direction in danger of being attacked by the tank divisions (dogs should've covered both valleys).

II. Lack of the 1245th Rifle Regiment commander's mobile anti-tank reserve, for it to in time hold off the enemy machinery, which emerged from the valleys⁷⁷.

As was mentioned earlier, from the western essays we can infer that anti-tank dogs were used in the offence strip of 11th Panzerdivision as well. Germans were aware of the unit's presence before the battle because of the captives' testimonies. The "*Minenhundebatalion*" was to be stationed one kilometer east of Cherkasskoye⁷⁸. There is however a notable lack of

⁷² CAMO, f. 236, op. 0002698, d. 1165, Отчет о боевой деятельности 27 отд. б-на собак миноискателей и истребителей танков Описывает период с 01.01.1943 по 31.12.1943 г., p. 16-21.

⁷³ On 1th of July 1943 German 11th Panzerdivision was equipped with eight light tanks PzKpfw II. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) T315/599/000985, Meldung über Panzer- u. Stu.Geschützlage, Stand 1.7.43.

⁷⁴ Probably medium type tanks of the PzKpfw III of which 11th Panzerdivision had 62. Ibidem.

⁷⁵ When advancing on this territory German 11th Panzerdivision was armed with eight tanks which were equipped with flamethrowers of the PzKpfw III Flamm referred to as Flammpanzer III. GANZ, A. H. *Ghost*. c. d., p. 229.

⁷⁶ CAMO, f. 236, op. 0002698, d. 1165, Отчет о боевой деятельности 27 отд. б-на собак миноискателей и истребителей танков Описывает период с 01.01.1943 по 31.12.1943 г., p. 16-21.

⁷⁷ Ibidem.

⁷⁸ GANZ, A. H. *Ghost*. c. d., p. 218.

information on the German side about the number of losses caused by the animals carrying explosives. It's possible that the explosions were attributed to regular antitank landmines.

Due to the Red Army's growth and rise in saturating units with anti-tank equipment, demand for anti-tank dog units plummeted. They began to train some of the animals as mine detection dogs. Using dogs as an anti-tank measure between 1944-1945 was scarce but not unheard of. On account of several internal reorganizations, anti-tank destroyer dogs units found themselves as a part of special services regiments or special purpose. (both terms can be found in the documents).

At the time as a branch of the 2nd Baltic Front included in the 10th Guard Army operated 1st Independent Special Purpose Regiment. In was noted in the report put together by this unit that:

The Tank Destroyer Company was divided into platoons in 65th and 22nd Guard Rifle Divisions, where they fulfilled the function of anti-tank reserve units, as well as being deployed to cover command points in the line of march exposed to attacks. On September 6th 1944 2nd Tank Destroyer Company led by senior lieutenant Karamyshev, assigned to 27th Anti-tank Squadron of the 22nd Guard Rifle Division, was covering the direction of a potential attack along the road (hamlet Ilzites).

In the early morning hours from the opposing side armored vehicle on a tracked chassis emerged on the road. Private Kostjuk hidden at his post near the roadside, waited out as the truck⁷⁹ got closer to about 150 meters away and deployed his dog, which resulted in the armored vehicle being blown up⁸⁰.

Anti-tank dogs from this particular unit were also utilized in combat situations at the end of the year. On December 29th 1944 close to the Muzikas village (present Latvia territory) during German counterattack supported by tanks and self-propelled artilleries private Grigorij Stiepanowicz Magaljas responded with fire till his last bullet run out and let the machine come near, about 30 meters away from him, and dispatched his dog at it, destroying the machine. It was thanks to this action that the counterattack was repelled. For this act he was awarded with the "1st degree Order of Patriotic War"⁸¹.

In summer 1944 after crushing German groups on Belarus territory and western Ukraine, troops under marshal Konstanty K. Rokossowski (1st Baltic Front) and marshal's Iwan S. Koniew (1st Ukrainian Front) command reached Vistula and conquered many bridgeheads along its western bank⁸². One of them was founded at the beginning of September and was located near Dorotka and Tarlowo towns. According to 120th Rifle Corps report addressed to Chief of Staff of the 3rd Guards Army there was a 1st Tank Destroyer Dogs Unit form 2nd Independent Special Purpose Regiment (ISPR):

From September 1st Tank Destroyer Dogs Unit of the 2nd ISPR were assigned to serve under the 2nd 1944 the 862nd Rifle Regiment of the 197th Rifle Division that was stationed at the bridgehead near the Dorotka town along the western edge of Ciszyca in the combat group of the regiment. Involved in strengthening of defences they dug up: 340 linear meters of trenches, 4 dugouts and 18 posts for dogs.

On September 11th 1944 as a result of a massive enemy artillery bombardment, trenches

⁷⁹ Probably semi tracked truck Opel Maultier or semi tracked prime mover Sd.Kfz. 6-11.

⁸⁰ CAMO, f. 354, op. 5806, d. 656_T2, Отчет о боевой деятельности 1 опсс за сентябрь месяц 1944 года, к. 328.

⁸¹ CAMO, f. 33, op. 686196, jed. chr. 7130, k. 14.

⁸² Finally 1st Belarus Front was strengthened in both Puławski and Magnuszewski bridgeheads, and 1st Ukrainian Front – in Sandomierski. It's those bridgehead from which in 1945 operation Vistula-Oder started.

*and all of the bunkers on the front line were destroyed, part of the personnel and the dogs were eliminated, and the explosives carried by the animals exploded. At the time of fending off the tank offensive there was only one combat dog left in a whole squad (the rest wasn't equipped with the explosive saddlebags), which when the enemy machinery was 100-200 meters away was sent out at them and managed to destroy one medium enemy tank*⁸³.

Soviets at the settlement were fighting against the 253rd Infantry Division, which was assisted by an unidentified unit of Sturmgeschütz III assault guns.

Swabian also mentions, that during the battle of the village Priwolnoye in Czechoslovakia on the 8th of May 1945 to of the guides, Pawlow and Dunnikow, belonging to the 2nd Independent Special Purpose Regiment, managed to destroy 2 medium tanks with the help of their dogs⁸⁴. This combat episode appears to be a distortion of the event discussed earlier. According to available evidence, it occurred on 8 May 1943, rather than in 1945. The village of Privolnoye cannot be identified within the territory of former Czechoslovakia. Instead, it is located in present-day Ukraine.

Swabian also describes that during the fights for the Mirkow village, also located in Czechoslovakia, Corporal Prołowoby and Sergeant Boczapowy, during enemy counterattack damaged two German Tiger tanks with the use of their anti-tank dogs, which made the rest of the vehicles turn back. It is said to be last instance during World War II when anti-tank destroyer dogs were used⁸⁵. No further information could be found on the topic of this particular run-in, there are no documents to trace which unit the soldiers served in nor are there any award applications for any of them. Several Mířkov villages can be found in the Czech Republic, one of them in the Domažlice district, second Mirkov village, which is part of the village of Povří in the Ústí nad Labem district, and there is also Mírov in the Šumperk district. The first location was liberated by the US Army in early May. The other two are located in the northern part of what was then Czechoslovakia. As for German losses, we don't know whether they were PzKpfw. VI Tiger tanks or PzKpfw. VI Tiger II Königstiger (King Tiger). It is known that units equipped with the latter type of combat vehicles operated towards the end of World War II, but in southern Czechoslovakia⁸⁶.

Russians officially state that between 1941 and 1942, based on reports from the commanding officers of the units of destroyer dogs 192 enemy machines were either damaged or destroyed. With their help 18 armored assaults were successfully repelled. In 1943 48 enemy tanks were eliminated, and during the 1941-1943 period as well as in the first five months of 1944 anti-tank destroyer dog units the compromised enemy armored vehicles came up to a total of 230.

⁸³ CAMO, f. 1012, op. 1, d. 118, Справка-доклад о боевой деятельности взвода СИТ 1/2 ОПСС за время его пребывания в составе корпуса, к. 103.

⁸⁴ <https://www.voennoe-sobakovodstvo.ru/kniga.html> [accessed 1 XI 2025].

⁸⁵ <https://www.voennoe-sobakovodstvo.ru/kniga.html> [accessed 12 XII 2025].

⁸⁶ More on the topic: JAKL, Tomáš. Květen 1945 v českých zemích. Pozemní operace vojsk Osy a Spojenců, Praha: MBI, 2004; JAKL, Tomáš. Květnové vítězství. Konec skupiny armád Střed, Praha: Mladá fronta, 2015; JAKL, Tomáš. Konec Wehrmachtu v Čechách. In *Historie a plastikové modelářství*, 1999, no. 9, p. 2-7; KOS, Vladimír. Tygři (královští) v jižních Čechách. In *Historie a plastikové modelářství*, 2001, no. 9, p. 24-26; JAKL, Tomáš. Po stopách Tygrů v Československu – podruhé. In *Historie a plastikové modelářství*, 2002, no. 4, p. 13-15; LUDVÍK, Miloš. Tanky na Dyji I. Tanky a tankové jednoty v dubnu – květnu 1945. In *Historie a plastikové modelářství*, 2006, no. 2, p. 22-31; LUDVÍK, Miloš – NEJEDLY, Pavel – ŠPINAR, Jiří. Tanky na Dyji II. Tanky na znojenském nádraží v květnu 1945. In *Historie a plastikové modelářství*, 2006, no. 3, p. 29-35; SCHILDBERGER, Vlastimil. Tanky na Dyji III. In *Historie a plastikové modelářství*, 2007, no. 10, p. 38-41; SCHNEIDER, Wolfgang. *Tigers in combat II*, Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2004, p. 140-141.

According to original Soviet statistic, a total of 304 enemy tanks were reported as destroyed during World War II. According to Soviet and Russian calculations to destroy one enemy tank it took 13 dogs on average⁸⁷. However, an analysis of surviving documents that the effectiveness of anti-tank dog units was overstated. In records other armored vehicles for example half-tracked armored personnel carriers are also counted as tanks. Beside dogs Soviets used a wide array of antitank equipment and methods to neutralize threats - grenades, anti-tank rifles and bottle with flammable liquid to name a few. Those successes were also counted toward the tally of those units suggesting that "live mines" had contributed to them.

The operational employment of anti-tank dogs proved to be of limited effectiveness. By the end of 1942, their large-scale deployment had been formally discontinued. In the later stages of the war, anti-tank dogs were used only sporadically.

Their effectiveness against moving armoured vehicles was minimal; documented cases of successful damage typically involved stationary targets. The animals demonstrated limited tolerance to battlefield conditions, particularly exposure to explosions and sustained combat noise. Many exhibited acute stress responses under such circumstances. Disoriented by intense acoustic stimuli, some anti-tank dogs returned to their handlers while still carrying armed explosive charges affixed to their backs, thereby creating a significant risk for personnel positioned in defensive trenches. Moreover, anti-tank dogs posed a potential hazard to friendly armored units. Consequently, their deployment was restricted to sectors of the Eastern Front where no Soviet armored forces were operating.

Available materials cannot possibly paint a full picture of the scope in which this weapon was used during World War II. They do however shine some light on the soldiers' behaviors, like for example those daring decisions to significantly shorten the distance needed for the dog to reach the vehicle to 20 meters, instead of statutory 100-150 meters.

This topic is in need of further study, verification of recorded numbers of destroyed machines as well as confronting them with German registers of armoured equipment losses.

R. SZEWCZYK: DER EINSATZ VON PANZERABWEHRHUNDEN IN DER ROTEN ARMEE IM LICHT DEUTSCHER AUFZEICHNUNGEN UND SOWJETISCHER MILITÄRDOKUMENTE – EIN PROBLEMAUFRISS

In sowjetischen und gegenwärtigen russischen Narrativen wird den sogenannten Panzerabwehrhunden, die während des Zweiten Weltkriegs von der Roten Armee eingesetzt wurden, oft die Vernichtung von mehr als 300 deutschen Panzern zugeschrieben. Diese Zahl entwickelte sich zu einem anhaltenden Kriegsmythos, der bis heute vielfach ohne kritische Überprüfung reproduziert wird. Der vorliegende Beitrag untersucht den tatsächlichen Einsatz und die Wirksamkeit sowjetischer Panzerabwehrhunde auf der Grundlage deutscher Gefechtsberichte, Memoiren sowie bislang unveröffentlichter sowjetischer Archivadokumente, darunter Auszeichnungsanträge und einschlägige Unterlagen der Einheiten. Die Analyse zeigt, dass viele der Fahrzeuge, die angeblich von Panzerabwehrhunden zerstört wurden, keine Panzer, sondern gepanzerte Transportfahrzeuge oder Aufklärungsfahrzeuge waren. Darüber hinaus setzten die Einheiten der Panzerabwehrhunde gegen deutsche Technik häufig auch andere Waffen ein, darunter Handgranaten, Panzerbüchsen und Brandflaschen, wobei derart zerstörte Fahrzeuge summarisch als Erfolge erfasst wurden, die ausschließlich den Hunden zugeschrieben wurden.

⁸⁷ <https://www.voennoe-sobakovodstvo.ru/kniga.html> [accessed 12 XII 2025].



The Red Army used various dog breeds as anti-tank dogs. The photograph shows an exhibit from the Military History Museum of the German Armed Forces (Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr) in Dresden.

R. SZEWCZYK: POUŽITIE BOJOVÝCH PROTITANKOVÝCH PSOV V ČERVENEJ ARMÁDE VO SVETLE NEMECKÝCH ZÁZNAMOV A SOVIETSKÝCH VOJENSKÝCH DOKUMENTOV – NÁČRT PROBLÉMU

Tzv. protitankovým psom, ktoré používala počas druhej svetovej vojny Červená armáda, je v sovietskych a súčasných ruských naratívach často pripisované zničenie viac ako 300 nemeckých tankov. Toto číslo sa stalo pretrvávajúcim vojnovým mýtom, ktorý sa často reprodukuje bez kritického overenia. Predložený článok skúma skutočné operačné využitie a účinnosť sovietskych protitankových psov na základe nemeckých bojových správ, memoárov a doteraz nepublikovaných sovietskych archívnych dokumentov vrátane žiadostí o vyznamenania a relevantných záznamov jednotiek. Analýza ukazuje, že mnohé z vozidiel, ktoré mali byť zničené protitankovým psom neboli tanky, ale obrnené transportéry alebo prieskumné vozidlá. Jednotky protitankových psov navyše proti nemeckej technike často používali ďalšie zbrane, ako sú granáty, protitankové pušky a zápalné fľaše, pričom takto zničená technika sa súhrnne zaznamenávala ako úspechy súvisiace výlučne so psami.

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