

Hungarian Gendarmerie

Introduction

Although my interest in Hungarian units is primarily directed at actual military units, a detour to the Ministry of the Interior's area of responsibility is necessary, as I seek to shed light on the background of, among other things, the military police units that were part of the Hungarian army.

The story

The Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie was established in 1881, as part of the then Austro-Hungarian police units. The corps' original function was to maintain peace and order in the countryside.

After the collapse of the dual monarchy, the gendarmerie and the police corps in the cities were merged in 1919 into a joint corps. The corps belonged to the Ministry of the Interior, but was militarily organized and uniformed.

As far as I have been able to determine, the corps provided the military police units that were part of the army, but also solved tasks in the security of the hinterland, including combating partisans.

During the fighting for Budapest from December 1944 to February 1945, the Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie fielded five infantry battalions - Galánta [1](#)), Zilahy, [Székelyudvarhely](#), Beszterc and Pécs.

The battalions were between 150 and 700 men, but on average just over 300 men each. Furthermore, a battalion of gendarmes was included in the Szent-László Division (see my article [Hungarian Paratroopers](#))



The corps gained an unflattering reputation for its often heavy-handed action in connection with actions against the Hungarian Jews, and was disbanded by a decree of 9 June 1945.

Pictures

Hungarian gendarme checks papers, in collaboration with a non-commissioned officer from the Luftwaffe.

The gendarme wears above the right breast pocket the badge - see below under uniforms - that shows his function as leader of a gendarmerie patrol.

The image comes from Source 4.

The gendarme wears a distinctive black felt hat whose history - like the corps itself - dates back to the days of the dual monarchy.



Two gendarmes wearing the corps' special felt hats with the characteristic blue-green feathers.

The gendarme on the left in the picture wears on the right side of his chest the badge - see below under uniforms - that shows his function as leader of a gendarmerie patrol.

The image comes from: <http://www.skalman.nu/third-reich/axis-hu-gallery-army.htm>



Light tanks of the type Ansaldo 35.M with crew from the gendarmerie.

The image comes from the website of the Hungarian company PHG Models, which is unfortunately not currently available.

The tank is discussed in more detail in my article [35.M Ansaldo – Hungarian light tank from SSP](#).

Uniforms



Sergeant, 1941.
(Source 2)



Gendarme, 1941.
(Source 2)

As mentioned, the Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie was uniformed like the army; the color of the weapon was red with a green border, which is shown in the drawings by the gendarmes' collar mirrors.

The black felt hat was rarely used in the field, where it was replaced by a field hat or steel helmet, the former with the felt hat's blue-green feather decoration. The German soldiers were not aware of the special status of the gendarmes, which is why it became necessary to introduce breastplates in the style of the German field gendarmes (see below).

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Special marking



In line with German field gendarmes, the Hungarians also wore a breastplate. As is well known, the sign gave German field gendarmes the nickname chain dogs, but it is not known whether Hungarian field gendarmes had a similar nickname.

The picture comes from Source 1, which mentions that it is made in Germany. The breastplate is made of pressed aluminium. Unlike German breastplates, the Hungarian ones did not have a luminous effect.

The sign was found with two different inscriptions:

1. *TáboriBóngásica* (= field security service)
2. *Csendjyr* (= gendarme)

The sign was worn on a chain around the neck - see the drawing of the sergeant from 1944 - and was also attached to one of the uniform buttons.

The back of the sign shows its serial number.



The functional marking for a driver of a gendarmerie patrol

The mark, made in brass and red enamel, was introduced in 1895 and carried until 1944.

The motif is the Hungarian crown.

Sources

1. *German Military Police Units 1939-45* by Gordon Williamson, Osprey Men-at-Arms No. 213, London 1989, ISBN 0-85045-902-8.
2. *The Armed Forces of World War II - Uniforms, Insignia and Organization* by Andrew Mollo, Military Press, New York 1987, ISBN 0-517-54478-4.
3. *The Royal Hungarian Army, 1920 – 1945* by Leo WG Niehorster, Axis Europa Books, New York 1998, ISBN 1-891227-19-X.
4. *The Hungarian Army and Its Military Leadership in World War II* by Andris J. Kursietis, Axis Europa Books, New York 1999 (third revised and expanded edition), ISBN 1-891227-28-9. (<http://www.axiseuropa.com>)
5. *The Royal Hungarian Army 1920-1945, Volume II, Hungarian Mobile Forces* by Peter Mujzer, Axis Europa Books, New York 2000, ISBN 1-891227-35-1.
6. *Axis Allies on the Eastern Front* by Bob Mackenzie, Tac Publications, Oxford 2001.

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1) *The Galánta battalion also contained a tank company consisting of 10 units. Ansaldo 35.M light tanks, 10 pcs. Toldi 38.M light tanks and 10 pcs. Csaba 39.M armored vehicles. The battalion commander was a major named István Szili.*

2) *On the rendering of the sergeant from 1944, most of his right arm is missing, as another figure in the drawing shadowed the Hungarian gendarme.*