

The Hungarian Cavalry Division

The Hungarian 1st Cavalry Division was raised October 1942.

The fact that the Hungarians raised a cavalry division was partly a question of economy, but also due to the long and glorious cavalry tradition of Hungary.

The defence minister had proposed to convert existing cavalry formations to bicycle troops based on the experiences of the campaign of 1941, but Admiral Horthy had vetoed that and instead ordered the formation of a cavalry division.

The cavalry division was raised in October 1942 and was meant to act as a mobile reserve for the defence of Hungary. As such, it was not to be used outside of the homeland.

Besides the cavalry, the division had a tank battalion, motorised and bicycle formations as well as 10 artillery batteries of which none however was equipped with heavy, long range weapons.

At the time of mobilisation on April 25th 1944 the organisation was:

Divisional headquarters

- Divisional Artillery Commander
- Divisional Cavalry Commander
- Motorised Field Post Unit

3 Huszar Regiments *) each

- Mounted Engineer Platoon
- Mounted Field Telephone Platoon
- Mounted Heavy Mortar Company (12 120-mm mortars)
- Motorised Anti-Tank Company (9 75-mm antitank guns)

2 Cavalry battalions each

- Mounted Field Telephone Platoon
- Mounted Assault Platoon
- 3 Cavalry Companies (9 light and 2 heavy machine guns, 2 50-mm mortars and 2 antitank rifles)

- Heavy Company
 - Mounted heavy machine guns Platoon (12 heavy machine guns)
 - Mounted Medium Mortar Platoon (8 81-mm mortars)
 - Motorised Heavy Anti-Tank Platoon (3 75-mm antitank guns)

Armoured Reconnaissance Battalion

- Headquarters Company
 - Motorised Engineer Platoon
 - Motorised Field Telephone Platoon
 - Motorised Heavy Anti-Tank Platoon (3 75-mm antitank guns)
 - Motorised Maintenance Platoon

Motorised Mortar Company (8 81-mm and 4 120-mm mortars)

2 Armoured Car Companies (13 Csaba armoured cars)
Light Tank Company (18 Toldi (20-mm) tanks)
2 Motorcycle Infantry Companies (12 light and 6 heavy machine guns)
Motorised Infantry Company (12 light and 6 heavy machine guns)

Cavalry Tank Battalion

Headquarters Company

Motorised Engineer Platoon (3 light machine guns)

Motorised Traffic Control Platoon

Signal Platoon (3 Turan command tanks (40-mm))

Light Tank Platoon (5 Toldi tanks (20-mm))

Motorised Supply Company

Motorised Maintenance Platoon

Heavy Tank Company (2 Turan command tanks, 15 Turan tanks (75-mm))

3 Medium Tank Companies (2 Turan command tanks, 25 Turan tanks (40-mm))

Motorised Signal Battalion

Motorised Telephone Company (5 light machine guns)

Motorised Radio Company (4 light machine guns)

2 Horse Artillery Battalions each

3 Horse Artillery Batteries (4 horsedrawn guns (76.5-mm))

Motorised Artillery Battalion

3 Motorised Light Artillery Batteries (4 towed field howitzers (105-mm))

Anti-Aircraft Battalion

Motorised Anti-Aircraft Battery (4 anti aircraftguns (80-mm))

2 Motorised Anti-Aircraft Batteries (6 anti aircraftguns (40-mm))

Bicycle Infantry Battalion

Headquarters Company

Bicycle Engineer Platoon

Bicycle Field Telephone Platoon

Motorised Anti-Tank Platoon (3 antitank guns (75-mm) and 3 light machine guns)

Motorcycle Platoon (3 light and 3 heavy machine guns)

Motorised Artillery Battery (4 field howitzers (105-mm))

2 Bicycle Infantry Companies (12 light and 6 heavy machine guns)

Motorcycle Infantry Company (12 light and 6 heavy machine guns)

Motorised Heavy Company (6 heavy machine guns and 8 mortars (81-mm))

Motorised Combat Engineer Company (4 light and 2 heavy machine guns)

Motorised Divisional Supply and Support Services Headquarters

2 Anti-Aircraft Companies (6 anti aircraft machineguns (motorised))

2 Supply Commands (motorised)

3 Supply Columns, ammunition (motorised)

Supply Column (motorised)
Supply Column, rations (motorised)
Supply Columns, P.O.L. (motorised)
Motorised Maintenance Company
2 Heavy Combat Bridge Columns (motorised)
Supply Administration Unit, rations (motorised)
Supply Administration Unit, ammunition (motorised)
2 Field Bakeries (motorised)
Veterinary Company
Engineer Equipment Company
Medical Company (motorised)
2 Ambulance Columns (motorised)
Bicycle Guard Company

Source: The Royal Hungarian Army 1920 - 1945, Leo W. G. Niehorster

**) The regiments were: 2nd Hussar Regiment "Prince Arpad", 3rd Hussar Regiment "Count Nadasdy Ferenc" and 4th Hussar Regiment "Count Hadik Andras".*

This division was at least on paper a strong unit and the Hungarians had wanted to keep the cavalry division in Hungary, but they were forced to comply, when the Germans ordered its mobilisation in April 1944.

The division left Hungary on June 10th with a strength of 84 tanks, 23 armoured cars and 7 anti aircraft tanks.

The Hungarians had demanded that the cavalry division should be used only on the left wing of the Hungarian 1st Army, but although the Germans had promised this, they were not to keep it.

As soon as the division had left Hungary it was ordered to the Pripjet Marshes to be attached to the German 1st Cavalry Corps.

The cavalry division had barely reached the marshes, when it became engaged in heavy fighting against Russian partisans, before the Soviet summer offensive "Operation Bagration" tore through the front of Army Group Center 110 miles to the east.

As a result the division was immediately ordered east in an attempt to stem the tide.

Before the front was reached Sluzk had fallen to the advancing Soviet forces and the cavalry was diverted northwards where it ended facing four Soviet tank units.

The Germans had also promised not to use the cavalry division in face of enemy armour.

However, they broke their promises again and the division was ordered into battle with the advancing Soviet forces.

The divisions armoured strength was no match at all to the Russians, due to the mediocre quality of the Hungarian tanks.

To compensate the lack of efficient armour the division was supported by the 507. Heavy Tank Battalion (Schwere Panzer-Abteilung 507) (Tiger tanks), which had joined the cavalry corps.



The division was not able to stop the enemy's advance and on two occasions the division broke off fighting and withdrew in an orderly fashion after the first clash with the enemy.

The last time surrendering its heavy support to the 4th German Cavalry Brigade.

After a fortnight, the cavalry division had ended up fighting as infantry due to exhaustion of the horses and with virtually no armour left (On July 15th the division was left with 6 armoured cars).

In August 1944 the depleted division was withdrawn from the front and sent to reequip in Poland near Warsaw.

An attempt from German side to persuade the division to fight against the Polish partisans in the Warsaw uprising was met with firm resistance from the commander and finally the division ended up defending Warsaw against the Soviet advance until it finally was released and returned to Hungary on September 23rd 1944.

The Hungarian Cavalry Division did not perform very well.

The reason for this should be found not only in its mediocre equipment, but also in the fact, that the Hungarians at this time of the war sought only to protect Hungary from the repercussions of the war - not as a wholehearted ally of Germany.

On this site, you can find an article on the [uniforms of the Hungarian cavalry](#).

It's in Danish, but most of the picture captions are in English.

Sources

1. *The Royal Hungarian Army 1920 - 1945*, Leo W. G. Niehorster, Axis Europa Books, 1998, ISBN 1-891227-19-X
2. *Die Geschichte der deutschen Kavallerie*, Klaus Christian Richter, Motorbuch Verlag Stuttgart, 1982, ISBN 3-87943-603-7