

Sdkfz 615 'Jaguar'

A 1946 Storm of Eagles© Article

By S. Pearson

"The FeldArmee is Germany's shield, the SturmArmee our sword, the Neu-Luftwaffe our eagles of victory!"

Field Marshal Model - Speech to Neu-Heer officer cadet's winter 1945

Despite success of the Sdkfz 610 'fuchs' the Neu-Heer Waffenamt, (Wa Pruf 6) were still unhappy with its high silhouette and the production problems caused by allied bombing of the DEMAG factory in Germany. The scarcity of rubber was resulting in problems supplying tyres, so a fully tracked armoured personnel carrier was desired.

Unable to re-tool factories in Bohemia and Slovakia Wa Pruf 6 (weapons design office) proposed a new medium armoured personnel carrier design based on the successful 38t chassis to be ideally built at the SKODA Werke factory.

Designers at Wa Pruf 6 began to design a new carrier during the summer of 1945, by September the same year a mock up of the *Mittlerer schutzenwagen neuer art* 38t, (not to be confused with the Automobile-Union light 38t 'Katchen') was produced, the new all tracked vehicle would be built on a 'stretched' 38t chassis, transport 10 men, weighing no more than 19 tons with 60mm thick sloped armour with nerve gas protection capability.

The new APC was only 2.4 metres in height with 2 *Rundumsfeuer* remote control machine guns, (MG42v's) in the front left hand side and rear right hand side respectively. Though cramped the APC had a double rear door, top deck exit hatch and an emergency exit hatch on the chassis.

Vision devices consist of three periscopes for the driver, a periscopic sight for each of the MG and a fixed periscope on either side of the superstructure. A vision port is fixed to the left hand rear door. Smoke ejectors are fixed on both sides to the front of the side superstructure, three ejectors per side.

The Tatra 110 six-cylinder 7.7 Diesel engine with 5 speed transmission is located on the left hand side of the vehicle. With a 330 litre fuel tank, the vehicle had a range of 112 Miles on road and 45Km cross country with a top speed of 25 miles per hour.

The design was put out to tender and *Boemisch-Marische Machinefabrik*, (BMM) and *Linke Hoffmann* jointly in Breslau won the right to produce the 300 new tracked armoured personnel carriers per month. All automotive components would be taken from the existing and highly efficient 'Hetzer' and 'Maresal' designs.

Test vehicles were produced for field trials during January 1946, the simplicity of the design and the using tried and tested engines and track systems ensured as smooth pre-production period.

The five test vehicles were sent to the 130th *PanzerlehrKompanie* at Boblingen panzer *Truppenbauplatz* for field trials, the three week trial was most favourable, the vehicles ability to negotiate obstacles and cross rough terrain earned it the nickname 'Jaguar'.

Passing ballistic tests by Wa Pruf 1, (ballistics) the test vehicles were sent to the Minsk front for combat evaluation. No major cause for concern was reported by the *Panzerlehr* test unit during the two weeks of trials at the front.

Wa Pruf 6 gave the green light for the 'Jaguar' to go in to production on the 12th of February 1946. The first full production vehicles began to roll off the BMM assembly lines at the Milowitz factory during mid-may 1946.

All tools and equipment are stored externally, including a jack, wooden jack block, wire cutters, wrecking bar and spare track links, (between 8 and 12). Two spare riveted steel road wheels are also carried, one on each side of the superstructure.

Short *Schurtzen* side plates are bolted to the side of the superstructure to protect the track assembly. All vehicles are fitted with the *Flamm-vernichter* exhaust fitted on the left hand side of the superstructure. Steel camouflage rings are welded to the superstructure.

Command vehicles 'Jaguar' *Befehlswagen* are equipped with the PUMA 2000 infra red communicator and GG410 electric generator. All vehicles are equipped to support IR technology.

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Sdkfz 615/1 Two *Rundumsfeuer* remote control machine guns, (MG42v's)
Sdkfz 615/2 *Befehlswagen* with IR radio, only one *Rundumsfeuer* remote control
MG, (rear)
Sdkfz 615/3 *Pz-Jg* PAW1200 or PAW600 in *Kugelblitz* style turret
Sdkfz 615/4 Pioneer vehicle with flamethrower and *Rundumsfeuer* remote
control MG, (rear) 14 mm *Flammenwerfer*.
Sdkfz 615/5 *KrankenWagen* with side doors, one each side
Sdkfz 615/6 FlaK 30mm KWK103 Cannon in *Hängelafette* 38 turret codenamed
'Luki'

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