

Narva July 1944 - Soviet Impression Guidelines



Soviet forces will be portraying troops of the 229th Sapper Battalion, 109th Rifle Division, 109th Rifle Corps, 8th Army, Leningrad Front.

Order of battle for the Leningrad Front is extremely challenging to research. Units are frequently combined, consolidated, renamed/renumbered, or shifted to other formations. We know the 8th Army was engaged at Narva and that the 229th Sappers supported elements of the 2nd Shock Army on the Tannenberg Line and that is why this unit was chosen.

Over the course of the Great Patriotic War, the 109th Rifle Division took extremely heavy casualties being effectively wiped out twice. On 6 August 1942, the Division was reformed for the third time at Pulkovo in the Leningrad Front. The division was rebuilt around the survivors of the 21st NKVD Rifle Division who had been aiding in the defense of Leningrad for the previous 12 months. At that time, the reconstituted division was composed of three rifle regiments, an artillery regiment, an anti-tank battalion, and a sapper battalion.

In January 1944, the Division took part in the offensive that finally drove the German forces away from Leningrad. In May, the 109th was transferred north to the 21st Army facing the Finnish forces in Karelia. The division helped to penetrate the second Finnish defensive belt on 14 June, capturing several strongpoints.

With Finland out of the war, the 109th made its final transfer, to the 8th Army in Estonia, near Narva. The 8th Army participated in the Narva Offensive (July 1944) and the Battle of Tannenberg Line, 25 July to 10 August 1944.

The division ended the war as the 109th Rifle Leningrad, Order of the Red Banner Division.

Sappers in the Red Army



Units like the 229th performed three basic roles:

1. Laying and clearing landmines. For this event, we plan to do both.
2. Creating and breaching obstacles. In addition to minefields, this includes barbed wire entanglements, anti-tank and anti-personal obstacles, entrenchments, and fixed fortifications.
3. Assault troops. After punching a hole in the enemy defenses, Sappers typically functioned as assault infantry. With their body armor, explosives, and submachineguns, they were a formidable force.

Sappers were also general engineers and could assist with the construction of fortifications, bridging operations, and general demolition.

Mindset, Morale, and Supply

Soviet strategic doctrine dictated that the most effective units got the vast majority of support, supplies, and replacements. By July 1944, the Leningrad Front had been involved in a see-saw battle for nearly seven months. Since other Fronts further to the south were making tremendous gains, only a trickle of supplies were getting to the troops of the Leningrad Front. Supplies would have been adequate but certainly not plentiful. Spare parts hard to get items would have been in short supply.

Given the supply situation, well-worn uniforms would be appropriate. "Luxury items" like flashlights would have been hard to come by. However, veteran troops would have had opportunities to resupply themselves from casualties so an extra plasch or something like that would be appropriate. Soldiers would have had the basics they needed to live and fight but not much in the way of comfort items.

As mentioned previously, units in this region had taken heavy casualties and replacements were hard to come by. As a result, Front and Army commanders frequently drew replacements from other units under their command. In the case of a sapper battalion, replacements were likely drawn from neighboring rifle units with sapper training conducted in the field.

Impression Guidelines

General Rules

1. The goal is simple - to look like typical Red Army soldiers on the Narva campaign in July of 1944. Please keep that in mind when putting together your impression.
2. Take a "Less is more" approach. The Red Army was travelling pretty light at this point in the war and supplies in the Leningrad Front would harder to come by than in other Fronts.
3. The Command Staff will be inspecting all attendees. If the Commander suggests you remove or switch something, don't get upset. (See Rule #1)
4. Loaner gear is available so if you need something, contact the Commander. We are happy to help.

Uniform

I. Headgear

Preferred - Pilotka with wartime-style cap star. Cap may be wool, cotton, or wool/cotton blend. Cap star can be large or small, painted or enameled.

Not allowed - Repro or postwar "Staybright" type stars.

II. Gynmastiorka (Tunic)

Preferred – Obr43 pattern without pockets.

Accepted – Obr43 pattern with pockets or Obr35 pattern converted to 1943 regulations.

IV. Sharovari (Breeches)

Preferred - Obr43 pattern.

Accepted - Obr35 pattern.

V. Footwear

Sapogi (high boots) or botinki (low boots) with proper puttees. Soviet and Lend-Lease styles are acceptable.

VI. Undergarments

Preferred – Soviet-issue underwear

Acceptable – Lend-Lease underwear or “tank top” without tags or printing.

Not allowed – Modern tshirts and underwear

VII. Medals

Older men are authorized to wear the Defense of Leningrad Medal.

Guards Badges, Defense of Stalingrad and Defense of the Caucasus medals are not authorized.

Equipment

I. Kaska (Helmet) – Every soldier will have a helmet.

Preferred – standard wartime style SSh-40

Accepted – SSh-39.

Reluctantly Accepted - “Converted” Czech or other postwar Communist helmets must be approved by the commander.

Not allowed – M-36 helmets.

II. Remyen (Belt)

Preferred – Leather belt. US-made “Garrison” belts would be appropriate.

Accepted – Canvas/leather belt

III. Ammunition Pouch – Please wear one pouch on your right side.

Preferred – “Reparations” or reproduction leather/pigskin pouches for rifles. Three-cell canvas pouches for submachine gun. Leather/pigskin/synthetic pouches for SVT-40.

Not allowed – Kirza rifle pouches. Postwar Polish submachine gun pouches with nylon belt loops.

IV. Lopata (Shovel) – Shovel should have appropriate carrier.

Preferred – Soviet-style riveted or stamped shovels are accepted.

Accepted – German shovels

Not allowed – Chinese or “Spetsnaz” shovels.

V. Flyaga (Canteen) – Canteen should have appropriate carrier.

Preferred – Wartime style with small threads, glass canteens, or postwar (large threads) that have been repainted or stripped to bare aluminum.

Accepted – Prewar canteen (cork stopper) and German canteens in Soviet carriers.

Reluctantly accepted – Unmodified postwar canteens.

VI. Plasch-Palatka (Rain Cape)

Preferred – Wartime style with leather or handsewn grommets.

Accepted – “Defarbed” postwar type with handsewn grommets.

Not allowed – Postwar style with brass grommets.

VII. Myeshok (Knapsack)

Preferred – Soviet-made wartime style.

Accepted – Reproduction wartime style.

Not allowed – Postwar style with pockets.

VIII. Soomka Protivogaznaya (Gas Mask Bag) – Optional. Limited numbers.

Preferred – Leningrad pattern or other wartime styles.

Accepted – Correctly converted postwar Soviet.

IX. Knives – See Sapper equipment section.

X. Grenade Pouch – Optional. Very limited numbers.

Preferred – Nothing.

Accepted – Three cell pouch for F-1 or RG-42 grenades.

Not allowed – RG-33 pouches, shovel pouches, etc...

XI. Koteluk (Mess kit)

Preferred – pot type.

Accepted – Two-piece style. Should be repainted or stripped to bare aluminum.

Reluctantly accepted – Unmodified postwar mess kits.

XII. Medical Equipment

All medical equipment will be approved by the Senior Sanitar prior to being fielded.

Sapper Equipment (Optional)

NOTE – YOU DO NOT NEED A SAPPER IMPRESSION TO ATTEND THIS EVENT.

1. Sapper equipment was issued on an “as needed basis.” This includes camo suits. Not everyone in a Sapper unit would have full equipment especially for this scenario.

2. As mentioned previously, the 229th Sapper Battalion, as well as other Red Army units in the preceding actions, had taken heavy casualties and, as results, there was extensive combining of units. So, having infantry replacements in a sapper unit would not be out of the ordinary for this scenario.

3. Engineer shoulder boards are strongly encouraged but not required.

I. Camouflage suit (Optional)

Preferred – Spring (Green) Amoeba Pattern

Accepted – Fall (Brown) Amoeba, Falling Leaf

Not allowed – Captured German camo smocks or uniforms.

II. Engineer knife (Optional)

Preferred – Pocket knife, NR-40 (including locally produced variants), or SVT-40 bayonet.
Accepted (with approval) – Finnish puukko-style knives.

III. Armor (Optional)

Preferred – SN-42 Body Armor

IV. Implements

Preferred – Shovels, axes, mine probes, mine flags, etc... are highly encouraged.