

External Commandos

Several smaller work commandos worked in the immediate vicinity of the camp, but outside of its confines. Prisoners had to work on local farms or at companies supplying the concentration camp. The SS would often use Jehovah's Witnesses for such work, because they rejected escape attempts on religious grounds.

Prisoners also worked in Hamburg itself. In 1941, for example, prisoners were used for maintenance work at the municipal park and later at the "Planten un Blomen" botanical gardens. Prisoners were also forced to clear rubble and unexploded bombs after Allied air-raids. Prisoners were occasionally able to find some extra food on these missions, and with the civilian population looking on, their guards would beat them less often. Prisoners on clearance detail were regularly killed by exploding duds. In the autumn of 1944, 1,000 prisoners had to dig anti-tank trenches in Hamburg-Oortkaten under dreadful conditions.