HISTORICAL CORNER



AUGUST 2015

WAR THUNDER

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Supermarine Spitfire Mk.Vb (for the Mk.IIb ingame) that served in the Royal Air Force in July 1941. Camouflage created by Luckyleprechaun | Download here

[ACE OF THE MONTH] Flight Lieutenant Eric Lock

3 August 2015 - Author: Mark Barber, War Thunder Historical Consultant

This year sees the 75th Anniversary of one of the largest, critical and iconic air battles ever fought: the Battle of Britain. August 18th – 'The Hardest Day' – saw both sides suffering the most losses in a single day throughout the campaign whilst September 15th is acknowledged as the climax of the battle. With this in mind, Ace of the Month will celebrate two of the greatest aces of one of history's greatest air battles in the months of August and September…

Eric Lock was born in April 1919 in rural Shropshire in the West Midlands of England, in the village of Bayston Hill near Shrewsbury. The family business was farming and quarrying; Lock was privately educated but also spent much of his childhood immersed in country pursuits such as horse riding.



Eric Lock in his Spitfire

As an adolescent he experienced his first taste of aviation when his father paid for a brief flight with a travelling air circus; reputedly the young Lock

was not particularly impressed and continued with aspirations to follow his father's footsteps in farming.

However, events were to have a profound effect on Lock's future – with political tension turning more and more towards overt hostility throughout the late 1930s, it was evident to all that a war was not far away. Lock figured that if he had to go to war then aviation was the best way to fight and so enlisted within the ranks of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, an organization which had been established in 1936 to supplement the number of aircrew in the event of war. When war broke out in September 1939 Lock was called up. He excelled during flying training and was streamed onto single seat fighters, being commissioned as a Pilot Officer before his posting to his first front line squadron in May 1940: No.41 Squadron flying Supermarine Spitfires from RAF Catterick in Yorkshire.

Shortly after beginning his first front line tour, 'Sawn-off Lockie' – a nicknamed derived from his short stature – returned home briefly to marry. After returning to No.41, he continued with the squadron routine of long days on standby awaiting German raiders. This was particularly frustrating for the pilots of No.41 Squadron as for them, isolated up in the north as part of 13 Group, they could only watch from afar as the Battle of Britain was fought off in the south of England. However, Lock was still able to shoot down his first enemy aircraft on August 15th – a Bf110 over the North Sea.



A road which was named after Lock in commemoration for his service

Lock had not lost his touch – he shot down three Bf109s in his first few weeks back in action. On August 3rd he led his flight over France during an offensive fighter sweep. Whilst returning to England he called his flight to let them know he had sighted a concentration of enemy soldiers on a road near Calais. The last time Lock was ever seen was as he dropped a wing to break formation and dive down to attack. His comrades lost sight of his Spitfire – he did not rejoin formation or respond to radio calls. No wreckage or body was ever found.

A charismatic flyer, Lock flew with a 'V' for Victory painted on his Spitfire and wore a captured German life jacket in combat; a fellow wounded pilot remembered him for his flirtatious nature with nurses during his time in hospital. Few have equaled Lock's outstanding success in combat in such a short period of time. Today, Shropshire Aero Club at Sleap airfield has named its bar in honour of their local hero: the various pictures of Flight Lieutenant Eric Lock now look over the aerodrome which is used almost daily by neighboring RAF Shawbury to train helicopter pilots of another generation of the RAF, Fleet Air Arm and British Army Air Corps.



Camuflaje creado por Luckyleprechaun | Hier herunterladen



In one of the following Updates, we will include "Victory" decal, hand sign painted on Eric Lock's Spitfire. Decal made by Jej 'CharlieFoxtrot' Ortiz



P-26 Philippine Air Force, camouflage created by BaronDonGiggles | download here

[NATIONAL FORCES] Philippine Air Force

4 August 2015 : Author: Adam "BONKERS" Lisiewicz

The history of the Philippine Air Force started in March 1937. It was then that the Philippine National Guard was created via the Militia Act 2715.

Outside of ground troops, the new formation was to have an air detachment, consisting of 15 officers and 135 soldiers. The newly formed units were too late to participate in World War I, however the end of the war meant that acquisition of surplus aircraft was possible. Still, there were no trained pilots to fly them. The Philippine government enlisted the help of the Curtiss School of Aviation to train the first batch of pilots. The training base was set in Camp Claudio, and in 1920 the first Filipino pilot - Lt. Leoncio Malinao - took to the skies in the first solo flight in the history of the Philippine military. The training of the first cadets ended in December 1920 - 25 of the 33 participants of the training course earned their wings and became first officially trained Filipino pilots. The main problem now, though, was a lack of proper equipment, especially airplanes.

This situation changed in 1935, when the Philippine Constabulary Air Corps was established. A year later, its name was changed to the Philippine Army Air Corps (PAAC). Three Sterman 73L-3 trainer aircraft formed the beginnings of the new force. By the time of the Japanese invasion in December 1941, the force grew to 54 aircraft, including fighters (mainly Boeing P-26A "Peashooters"), as well as light bombers and trainers. The Japanese onslaught was relentless, and the

obsolete Peashooters were no match for japanese “Zeroes”. Regardless, the pilots of the PAAC fought valiantly against the odds and even scored some kills against the Japanese. The downfall of Corregidor in May 1942 marked the end of the Japanese conquest of the Philippines. The PAAC dissolved.



P-51 Mustangs of the Philippine Air Force circa 1950's

After the liberation of the Philippines from Japanese rule in 1945, the new government began to reorganize the air forces. One step of that plan was the Executive Order 94, which separated the Air Force from the Army, making it a fully separate entity with its own chain of command. Another repercussion of that order was the creation of the Philippine Air Patrol. The new force was quickly supplied with new aircraft - mainly the American P-51 Mustangs. These aircraft were then used in combat in close-air support sorties against Kamlon and HUK rebels in the 50s. The PAF moved into the jet age in 1955, with the acquisition of Lockheed T-33 trainer aircraft and F-86 Sabre fighters in 1956. The Filipino pilots then took part in the UN peacekeeping mission in Congo in 1963, with sorties aimed against secessionist rebels. In the 1970s, the Air Force was called upon again - this time in combat against both the Moro National Liberation Front and the New People’s Army.



Captain Antonio Bautista, striding his F-86 Sabre Jet Fighter

Currently, the main aircraft used by the PAF are the Rockwell OV-10 Bronco and the Marchetti S.211 trainer. The situation is about to change, however, as the deliveries of the South Korean KAI FA-50 light fighter are to commence. Other machines in use by the Philippine Air Force include the C-130 transport plane or the W-3 Sokół helicopter.



In one of the following Updates, we will include roundel of the Philippines Air Force. Decal made by Colin 'Fenris' Muir



RCAF Canadair Sabre CL-13 Mk.4, aparato 19627 (XB753) del 422º escuadrón "Tomahawk", Baden (septiembre de 1953), camuflaje creado por MightyArrow | descárgalo aquí

[VEHICLE PROFILE] Canadair CL-13 Mk 5 Sabre

5 August 2015 : Author: Scott "Smin1080p" Maynard

The Canadair CL-13 Mk 5 is one of the two German top tier jet-fighter aircraft alongside the MiG-15Bis. Whilst the MiG is a popular choice among many players, the CL-13 is an extremely high performance aircraft boasting one of the fastest top speeds in game. Placed within Tier 5 at the end of the iconic Messerschmitt tree, the CL-13 rounds off a trio of Me 262's that follow on from the legendary Bf 109 series.

Offensively the CL-13 is equipped with 6 x 12.7mm(.50 cal) Browning M3 machine guns with a total ammunition load of 1800 rounds. Whilst these may not pack the devastating punch of the MiG's 37 and 23mm combination, the six nose mounted machine guns will be more than sufficient for jet combat, with the M20 Armour-Piercing Incendiary Tracer rounds being a popular choice of ammunition belt. As a result of the smaller calibre, the CL-13 has a larger ammunition capacity than the MiG-15 or Sabre F-2, meaning a longer combat endurance and more room for error in engagements. This provides pilots more breathing space for tight situations and, with good trigger discipline and aim, means fewer trips back to the airfield to re-arm. As well as this the CL-13 Mk 5 has an array of external stores to allow for the ground attack role, should this be required. 16 x 127mm HVAR rockets or 2 x 1000lb AN-M65 bombs can be loaded under the wings to assist in attacks on larger and heavier targets. This will of course result in a massive performan-

ce drop due to the extra parasite drag presented by the external stores.



X-ray view of the CL-13 Mk 5

Like many of the top jets, energy is key for survival. Altitude and speed is essential to the CL-13's success or failure in combat, as it cannot turn with its American counterparts or maneuver with many of the British jets. Whilst the Sabre does have air brakes these should only be deployed in extreme situations or on landing approaches. Bleeding off speed or having a lack of energy at lower altitudes will simply make the CL-13 easy prey for opposing aircraft. Due to its power assisted controls, the Canadair Sabre has a fantastic rate of roll that is unmatched by the other top tier jets; only in the other Sabre F models. In a dive the CL-13 can quickly break off from many of the aircraft it faces in combat and provides pilots with the means to dictate engagements when played to its strengths. As with most jet aircraft, the Canadair Sabre works best as part of a squad or as part of an organised and coordinated team. Keeping friendly pilots in close proximity and having good situational awareness will ensure the most efficient performance from the CL-13.

The Canadair CL-13 was essentially a licence built version of the successful North American F-86 Sabre. Initial orders were escalated due to the developments of the conflict in Korea and many nations adopted the aircraft after seeing the performance of both the MiG-15 and F-86 over existing aircraft in service.



Canadair CL-13 con las marcas de la Luftwaffe

The Mk 5 included many modern features taken from the later F-86 F models such as power assisted control surfaces and the "all-flying tailplane". One major difference, however, was the inclusion of the Avro Canada Orenda engine which provided greater output and rate of climb over the CL-13's American counterparts. The CL-13 provided the backbone for many NATO forces in Europe during the 1950s and 1960s whilst other nations still had their own indigenous swept wing jet-fighter designs in development or limited availability. Production of the aircraft took place

at Montreal, with many later handed to the US for refurbishment and re-deployment after being replaced in service with their respective operators.

As well as the Royal Canadian Air Force who the aircraft was originally intended for, other operators were the British Royal Air Force and the Italian Air Force as well as several other nations. After joining NATO, West Germany was rearmed with many western types including the CL-13. The Luftwaffe received 75 CL-13 Mk 5s in 1957 followed by over 200 Mk 6s that were operated well into the mid 1960s. The CL-13 was eventually replaced in service with the F-104 Starfighter, followed later on by the F-4 Phantom and more recently the Panavia Tornado.



In one of the following Updates, we will include emblem of RCAF No. 439 Squadron to War Thunder. Decal made by Colin 'Fenris' Muir



The T-50 in a standard Soviet camouflage

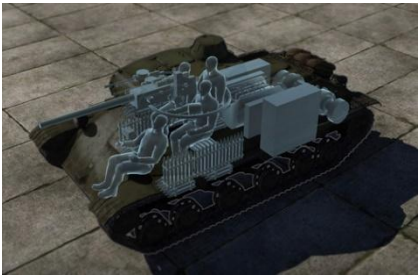
[VEHICLE PROFILE] T-50

6 August 2015 : Author: Jan "RayPall" Kozák

In War Thunder, the T-50 is a Soviet rank II light tank with BR value of 2.7, and in the Soviet tech tree, it is a direct successor to the BT-7 tank. It is armed with a single 45 mm (1.77'') 20-K main gun and a coaxially mounted 7.62 mm (0.3'') DT machine gun. Top speed of the tank is 44 km/h (27.3 mph), which it can reach in 19.5 seconds. A time needed for full 360° hull traverse is 12.5 seconds on the 2nd gear, giving the tank hull traverse of 4.8° per second. The turret completes the full 360° circle in 45.3 seconds, meaning the turret traverse value is 8° per second. The reload time with fully trained loader is then 3.5 seconds, giving the tank the rate of fire of roughly 17 rounds per minute

As to armour protection, the 40 mm (1.57'') thick frontal glacis is sloped under the angle of 52°, the frontal side "cheeks" has the same thickness and 54° slope, and the lower frontal glacis is 45 mm (1.77'') thick with a slope of 55°. Both upper and lower side armour is 40 mm (1.57'') thick, with the upper side armour being sloped under 40° degrees. Upper rear armour is then 25 mm (0.98'') thick with a slope of 61°, while the unsloped lower rear plate has again the thickness of 40 mm (1.77''). Turret's front and sides are then protected by 40 mm (1.77'') of armour as well, with the gun mantlet's slope varying between 7-52°. Commander's cupola is 40 mm (1.77'') thick as well, and the top armour, both on the turret and on

the hull, has thickness of 15 mm (0.59’’).



An X-Ray View of the T-50

Regarding firepower, the T-50 can utilize three armour-piercing round types. At the point blank range an depending on the angle of attack (AOA), the default BR-240 APHEBC round is able to penetrate up to 62 mm (2.44’’) of armour against the flat armour, 55 mm (2.16’’) while faced by an armour sloped under 30°, and 25 mm (0.98’’) at 60° AOA. At the maximum range of 2 km (6562 feet), the default round’s penetration values then decrease to 26/23/10 mm (1.02/0.91/0.39’’). The first unlockable round, BR-240P AP round is able to penetrate up to 73/65/26 mm (2.87/2.56/1.02’’) of armour at the point blank range, and 17/15/6 mm (0.67/0.59/0.24’’) of armour at the range of 2 km (6562 feet), giving you better short range penetration in exchange for worse long range performance and a lack of explosive filling. The second unlockable round is then BR-243P APCR round, which is able to penetrate up to 103/79/23 mm (4.1/3.11/0.91’’) at the point blank range, and 17/13/3 mm (0.67/0.51/0.12’’) at the range of 2 km (6562 feet).

Coming as a successor of the BT-7, the T-50 retains excellent speed and agility, but with much better armour protection. The frontal glacis is virtually immune to autocannons and smaller caliber rounds of other light tanks, and at the long range, it can deflect even larger projectiles. However, the tank has two major disadvantages. The first one is extremely slow turret traverse, which will hamper your attempts to lead fast targets (such as other light tanks) and will significantly lower your response time. The second weakness is the gun. While adequate against reserve vehicles and low tier light tanks, the 45 mm gun will struggle against medium tanks such as M4 Sherman or PzKpfw IV Ausf.F2, which you can penetrate frontally only at short range, thus forcing you to rely on flank shots. And due to BR 2.7, you will face both tanks that you can destroy easily, and tanks that have significantly better armour and firepower. That said, a good T-50 driver must be very adaptable, as he needs to adjust his play style according to which opponent he faces.

With high mobility, strong frontal armour, but rather weak armament, the T-50 can be challenging experience, but in a hands of determined player skilled in improvisation, it can do wonders. It will also serve you as a

last vehicle from the tech tree before entering the legendary T-34 medium tank series.

In 1939, the development of the replacement for already obsolete T-26 light tank was issued to OKMO design bureau, attached to Factory No.185 in Leningrad. Technical specification called for weight of 14 tonnes (30 865 lb), main armament consisting from 45 mm (1.77'') gun and 45 mm (1.77'') thick sloped armour. First prototype of the tank, designated T-126SP (abbreviation for Soprovzdheniya Pekhoty, "Infantry Support), was completed in the summer of 1940. The vehicle possessed excellent frontal armour protection for a light tank, and other advanced features compared to earlier Soviet designs, such as a five-man crew, commander's cupola, radio as a standard equipment, or a three-man turret. It was armed by a single 45 mm (1.77'') main gun and two 7.62 mm (0.3'') machine guns, and it was propelled by the inline 6 cylinder V-4 engine, producing 250 horsepower.

Trials however discovered multiple issues, such as extremely cramped crew compartment and poor power-to-weight ratio. Based on trial results, the frontal armour thickness was reduced to 37 mm (1.46'') in order to reduce weight, the number of crewmen was reduced to four, a more powerful V-4 diesel powerplant was installed, and other small modifications were made. Modified tank was designated as the T-127SP, and after successful trials and some other modifications, it was approved for serial production as the T-50, with the production starting in April 1941.



However, in time of the German offensive in June 1941, only approximately 50 T-50 tanks were produced. The production was extremely slow not only because of high costs, but mainly because of issues with the V-4 engine. The powerplant, designed specifically for the tank, suffered from extremely low reliability, and all attempts to improve it failed. Furthemore, a British Valentine infantry tank was supplied to Soviet Union via Lend-Lease from autumn 1941 on, and proved itself to be a better infantry tank than the T-50. Soviet officials thus decided to discontinue the T-50 production, and focused on the mass production of other tanks.



T-50 at Tank Museum in Kubinka

Only 69 T-50 tanks were manufactured, including a small number of T-50s with applique armour bolted onto the frontal glacis. The vehicle was used operationally, but details about its service are not known. It was supposedly deployed in defence of Leningrad, and most of them were most likely lost quickly, either due to enemy action, or because of mechanical issues.

Would you like to find out more about the T-50? Be sure to view the War Thunder Wiki article!



With one of the upcoming Updates, we will include the Soviet tactical number P-87 in War Thunder. Decal by Branislav "InkaL" Mirkov



Early jet-engined aircraft: The Me 262, and the Yak-15

[HISTORICAL] Jet Engines of the Air

11 August 2015 : Author: Joe "Pony51" Kudrna

The concept of the "jet" (stream of liquid or gas propelled through a small area) engine has its origins from two millennia ago, with the first known jet device being the "Hero Engine" - also called aeolipile. Expanding gases from a particular source (in this case boiling water) would be ejected from an angled nozzle, spinning it rapidly and demonstrating an action (gas flow) and a reaction (movement), Newton's 2nd and 3rd laws of motion. The idea of a contemporary jet engine were in the minds of designers long before the start of World War 2. A jet powered reaction turbine was proposed and patented by John Barber as early as 1791. Turbine machinery that could extract mechanical energy from a gas jet more efficiently was invented 100 years later.

History can exemplify endless examples in which objects have been moved by jets, and by its "reaction engine" cousin, the rocket, as evidenced in ancient Chinese rocket spears, rocket vehicles and yes, even rocket aircraft - examples being the 1929 Opel RAK.1 and the 1944 Messerschmitt Me 163. In 1910 the Romanian inventor Henri Coandă filed a patent on an aircraft jet propulsion

system which consisted of a piston engine driving ducted fan blades: a “motorjet”. The Italian Caproni Campini N.1. was similar, with the addition of an “afterburner” combustion chamber.



Napier NA357 Compressor wheel

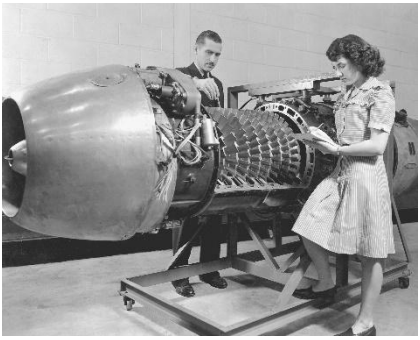
The turbo jet engine that we commonly think of today is, in essence, a very simple device. Like a piston engine (Otto cycle), it has a compression, ignition, and expansion stage, the difference being a “continuous open system” allowing a constant flow of matter to travel through it. Thus, all 3 stages run simultaneously, known as the Brayton cycle. Although finding the right air flow and pressure balance was important, the primary reason why it was not applicative until World War 2 was due to a lack of advancement in metallurgy, science, and technology regarding the properties of metal. The exceedingly high centrifugal forces and temperature demands of a turbo jet were at the limits of material engineering of those times, but to some, it was seen as a challenge to be surmounted.

Frank Whittle and Hans von Ohain simultaneously and unbeknownst to each other took on the engineering challenge and skepticism of their peers to build working turbojet engines. Although Whittle started tinkering with concepts much earlier and was able to get a working “Whittle Unit” engine 6 months ahead of von Ohain, the latter found more peer support and soon Heinkel was fully funding the development of jet engines for aircraft with the company's top engineers and test equipment, eventually producing the “HeS 3”, which powered the world's first jet aircraft, the He-178. After its first flight on the 27th of August 1939 (4 days before the start of World War 2) official attitudes began to change.



Whittle W.1/W.2B turbojet. Note the large intake impeller on the right

Both Whittle and von Ohain used an "impeller" compressor for the intake air because of its well known and commonplace technology which was used in engine superchargers. Engine turbochargers also existed but were not as common; as did high flow air heaters - in short, their designs used existing concepts in new ways. Both of these designs' major drawback was their large diameter, which was similar to a radial engine, but while Whittle's Power Jets W.1 went on to be widely used in numerous variants, the HeS series did not.



Post-war captured Jumo 004

Hearing about the new engine, the Junkers company, wanting to make a competing jet, chose Dr. Anselm Franz as chief engineer due to his experience with engine turbochargers and superchargers. Although not very ambitious, his design had a key difference: instead of a large disk impeller, it had multiple rows of fans which forced more air into the combustion chamber. The purpose was to achieve a smaller frontal area, but much more importantly, the engine benefited from an increased airflow through the inlet, resulting in a thrust boost over impeller designs. The resulting Jumo 004 engine powered most early German jet aircraft and pushed the Me-262 faster than early Gloster Meteors, P-80's, and Soviet jets. The limitations of the new technology, and material shortages, resulted in a relatively short 25 hour lifespan (much like early piston engines) and less thrust than it had the potential to produce. Still, the Jumo 004 gained legendary status and its "axial" design became the foundation of all aircraft jet engines today.

After the war, Dr. Franz travelled to the USA where he eventually settled down and worked for the Lycoming Aircraft Engine department. From his Jumo 004 experience he developed the most popular turboshaft engine in history, the T53 (used in the Bell UH-1 Huey for example). From it came the enlarged T55 and later AGT-1500, the engine that powers the M1 Abrams battle tank!



Light Tank M2A4 in summer camouflage from 1st Armored Division in War Thunder

[GROUND FORCES] 1st Armored Division (US Army)

12 August 2015 : Author: Adam "BONKERS" Lisiewicz

The origins of the 1st Armored Division of the US Army can be traced back to two Cavalry units - the 1st Cavalry Regiment and the 7th Cavalry Brigade. In the 1930s, both those units were slowly changing their horses for trucks, jeeps and armored cars. The experiences of World War I also played a part in the growth of both units, as the US Army was experimenting with tactics that would enable them to avoid engaging in static trench warfare. The German offensives on Poland in September 1939 and in France in May 1940 highlighted the importance of a new type of unit - the Armored Division. In June 1940 the orders were given to create such units. The 1st Armored Division was officially established on July 15th 1940, with Major General Bruce Magruder assuming command. Soon it was given the nickname of "Old Ironsides" as a reference to the US Navy frigate USS Constitution. Training of new recruits quickly commenced and soon the division grew from 66 to over 600 vehicles. At the time it was stationed at Fort Knox, which was also the headquarters for the newly created Armor Branch.

Until 1942 the Division spent its time in the US training and preparing themselves for battle. It came soon, as it was attached to the US forces taking part in Operation "Torch" - amphibious landings in Oran, Algiers and Casablanca intended to pincer the German Afrika Korps and the

Italian forces in Tunisia. After securing the beachheads the Allies moved towards Tunisia; however their advance was slowed down by stiff Axis resistance. It was then that the lack of combat experience of American troops was becoming visible. The evidence was seen in 1943 when a German counter offensive near the Kasserine Pass decimated the 1st Armored Division, causing them to lose a lot of men and material. This costly lesson proved valuable in the future, as the Americans quickly started adapting their tactics to the ever changing battlefield.



The M5A1 Stuart Tank, used by Iron Soldiers in World War II

Following the surrender of the Panzerarmee Afrika in May 1943 the 1st Armored Division was attached to the 5th Army commanded by General Mark Clark. After the success of the Allied landings on Sicily the next step was the invasion on the Italian mainland. The 1st Armored found itself in the thick of battle in September 1943 after amphibious landings around the city of Salerno. Breaking out of the beachhead, the Division formed the spearhead of the allied assault on Naples which was captured in October. After that the allies continued the advance northwards towards the Volturno river; however soon the attacks were stalled by German defences centered around the town of Cassino, known as the "Winter Line".

Allied commanders then decided to land troops behind those lines near Anzio, which would allow them to capture Rome and cut off supplies to Axis defenders. The landings on the Anzio beachhead commenced in January 1944. However, due to the indecision of the Allied commander General John P. Lucas, the Germans were able to quickly isolate the beachhead. The 1st Armored did not take part in the first wave of the landings, but it was deployed later on in an effort to strengthen the Allied positions. It also led the breakthrough from the beachhead in May 1944 and reached Rome on June 4th 1944. After the capture of Rome it pursued the Germans to the north and ended the war in the Po Valley in May 1945. The Division was deactivated in 1946 but it was reinstated in 1951. After a long stay in Fort Hood, Texas, the division was redeployed to West Germany in place of the 4th Armored Division as part of the US Forces in Europe.

After the fall of communism in Europe, the Division took part in conflicts such as the Gulf War, Operation Joint Endeavor in Bosnia and in the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Currently the Division resides in Fort

Bliss, Texas, after being pulled out from Germany in 2011.

In one of the following Updates, we will include decals of 1st Cavalry Regiment, 13th Cavalry Regiment and text "Foxhunter" to War Thunder:







Decals made by Branislav "InkaL" Mirkov



Premium T-34 with a unique winter camouflage, available in Guards Starter Pack and Defenders Advanced Pack

[WARRIOR PROFILE] Dmitry Fyodorovich Lavrinenko

18 August 2015 : El Equipo de War Thunder

Dmitry Fyodorovich Lavrinenko (Russian: Дмитрий Фёдорович Лавриненко) was born in September, 1914. He was given the 'Hero of the Soviet Union' award, and was credited with a total of 52 confirmed kills. He volunteered for the army and finished his training at Ulyanovsk Tank Academy in May 1938. He saw extensive combat in Poland, 1939, and in Bessarabia,1940.

During 1941, he was the commander of a T-34/76 tank. At this time, he became famous for being the last tank to retreat from a battle, and for employing risky tactics while fighting. On the 6th of October, in a battle near Mtsensk (Russia), Lavrinenko, along with 3 other T-34s, engaged 34 German tanks. Not only did they destroy 15 of those 34 tanks, but all 4 attackers were able to successfully retreat. Out of the 15, Lavrinenko destroyed 4 of them, paving the way for his title as an ace.

During the defence of Moscow, Lavrinenko was able to earn the bulk of his achievements. On the 7th of November, Lavrinenko was leading a squad of 3 T-34s and 3 BT-7s, when he engaged a group of 7 German tanks near the village of Lystsevo. The resulting outcome proved to be a flawless victory for the Russians, as they were able to destroy all of the opposing tanks with no allied losses.

However soon after this, Lavrinenko spotted a column of 18 German tanks which had managed to break through the Soviet defences. After signalling his allies to fall back, he positioned his tank into a strategically defensible position, completely concealing his vehicle amongst the snow and trees. From here, and near point-blank range, he managed to destroy 6 tanks without revealing his position, resulting in the column's scattering and ultimate retreat.

Lavrinenko was able to repeat these feats in similar fashion throughout his next two engagements, during the defence of Gusenevo and Volokolamsk. In the latter, on the 18th of December, he scored his 52nd, and final kill. He was killed quite anticlimactically by a mortar shell, after he exited his tank and ran to report to his commander of his victory.



Dmitri Fjodorowitsch Lawrinenko

Lavrinenko holds a record for the most kills made by an Allied ace during the war, 37 of his 52 being made in only a 6-week time period. He was posthumously awarded the title of 'Hero of the Soviet Union' in 1990.

Димитрий Донской

In one of the following Updates, we will include decal Dmitry Donskoy. Decal made by Branislav "InkaL" Mirkov



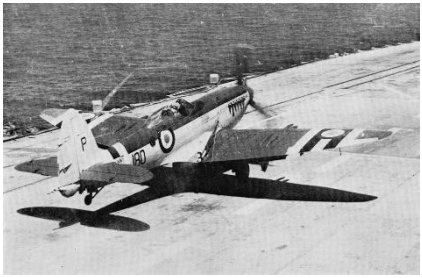
The Seafire FR 47. Notice its contra-rotating propeller, a beautiful and unique sight indeed!

[VEHICLE PROFILE] Supermarine Seafire FR 47

19 August 2015 : Author: Sean "Gingahninja" Connell

The Seafire FR 47 is the last, ultimate Seafire/Spitfire design. The FR 47 is ranked as a high Tier IV vehicle. With its distinctive contra-rotating propeller, this aircraft has a great rate of acceleration and climb rate, at 18.5 metres per second. The Seafire also boasts an impressive top speed for a piston powered fighter, clocking in at nearly 699kph (434mph). All of these factors, combined with its 4 x 20mm Hispano cannon armament, make this naval fighter very difficult for other fighters to contend with.

The Seafire FR 47 handles a lot like its RAF sister, the Spitfire, boasting considerable turn fighting capabilities. In game, it has a turn time of just 21 seconds to complete a full turn, which allows it to easily slide right in behind enemy pilots who do not have their heads on a swivel. The Seafire is best used in an energy and turn fighting capacity; climbing to gain altitude and diving to attack is the best route of action. However, if your enemy makes the mistake of attempting to engage in a turn fight, then they will be the one to end up having a bad day.



The Seafire, pictured atop a carrier

The design of the Seafire series began in late 1941 when the Fleet Air Arm (FAA) wanted to test a possible conversion of the land based Spitfire into a carrier based fighter. The first production Seafire was developed from the Spitfire Mk.V and was considered to be an immediate success; however modifications were clearly needed. The most important modification was the landing gear and the tail hook - the Spitfire landing gear was very narrow and during the Seafire's development cycle this was widened for greater stability during deck landings. The tail hook assembly also put a lot of stress on the fuselage and this required strengthening. Thus, with the addition of an arrestor hook and strengthening to the fuselage and wing surfaces above the undercarriage, a ballast weight was then required in the nose section. These factors, as well as the addition of a naval radio, resulted in the Seafire being noticeably heavier than the Spitfire.

Several more modifications were made over time, but all of this work culminated into the ultimate Seafire: the Seafire FR 47. The FR 47 possessed folding wings and wing tips to allow for easy storage beneath a carrier's deck, and also had the very distinctive contra-rotating propellers which produced more thrust and eliminated torque reaction in all phases of flight. The Seafire was used primarily as a Fleet defence fighter for the Royal Navy due to its incredible performance and comparatively short range, but early in the Korean War it did see action as a ground attack aircraft.



The Seafire's landing gear was wider than its Spitfire counterpart

In total, only 90 Seafire FR 47's were built prior to being withdrawn from front-line service in 1951, after the FAA moved its focus towards Jet-engined aircraft.



In one of the following Updates, we will include decal from the no. 887 Naval Air Squadron.
Decal made by Jej 'CharlieFoxtrot' Ortiz



Sergei Dolgushin's La-7, premium aircraft with 2x 20mm ShVAK cannon available in Gaijin.Net Store

[HISTORICAL] The ShVAK Cannon

20 August 2015 : Author: Jan "RayPall" Kozák

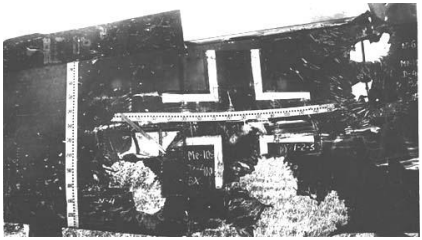
The ShVAK (abbreviation for Shpitalnyi-Vladimirov Aviatsionnyj Krupnokaliberny aka "Shpitalny-Vladimirov Large Caliber for Aircraft"), the most frequently used Soviet 20 mm cannon during the World War 2, has its roots in 1931 when Soviet government issued an order to domestically produce a large-caliber machine gun for aircraft using the newly introduced 12.7x108 mm (0.5'') cartridge. Boris Shpitalniy and Semyon Vladimirov responded to this order by modifying the ShKAS 7.62 mm (0.3'') machine gun's firing mechanism and enlarging it to the corresponding calibre. Ultimately the 12.7 mm ShVAK did not use the standardized 12.7x108 mm cartridge as the firing mechanism was not adapted to use ammunition without extraction grooves. Thus, the weapon required a rimmed version of the cartridge, designated 12.7x108R. The resulting weapon was accepted into mass production in 1935, but it was soon discovered that the gun suffered from multiple issues. It had a very complex construction with a large number of moving parts, thus it was expensive to mass-produce and suffered from frequent mechanical failures. The biggest issue, however, was the non-standard ammunition, generating problems with logistics. Less than 100 guns were produced and in 1935 production was halted. However, the design was re-used in 1936 to create an enlarged version of the ShVAK, using 20x99R cartridge (0.79'').



T-60 Light Tank at Kubinka Museum

The resulting 20 mm ShVAK was a gas-operated autocannon fed from disintegrating ammunition belts. It featured an unusual so-called “feed cage” system, inherited from the ShKAS machine gun which consisted a revolving drum, able to hold 11 rounds simultaneously. The purpose of the feed cage was to smoothly pull the rounds off the belt and discard the links. This avoided the violent jerks inherant in other designs that reduced fire rate and caused feed jams. Depending on the variant the rate of fire varied berween 700-800 rounds per minute, with muzzle velocity being up to 790 m/s (2592 ft/s). Usually, the cannon was then supplied from 120 or 180 round ammunition belts.

Four variants of the cannon were produced, marked MP, KP, TP and SP and differing from each other by rate of fire and barrel length. MP (or TNSh) was the designation for the tank version, used on T-30 and T-60 light tanks (the latter being available in the War Thunder- check our WT wiki article!). KP was the designation for wing-mounted cannons used on aircraft such as the Polikarpov I-16 type 28 fighter or early series of the Ilyushin Il-2 Sturmovik attacker (both aircraft are also available in the game. Read more on our WT wiki: I-16, Il-2). Flexible installations used on bomber defensive turrets were designated TP - later versions of Yermolayev Yer-2 (WT Wiki article) heavy bomber used such weapons in their upper turrets. However, the most frequent version was the SP variant, equipped with a synchronization gear. This variant was used as a fighter armament, either as a fuselage-mounted weapon firing through the propeller (such as on Lavochkin La-5/La-7 fighters), or it was mounted between engine cylinder banks such as on Yakovlev fighters.



Wing of the Bf-109 after the hit of 20 mm SHVAK shells

Various ammunition types for the ShVAK were available throughout the Second World War. Standard High Explosive Incendiary ammunition (HEI) was designated OZ, with OZT being the designation for the same round with a tracer compound. Alternatively, OF High-Explosive Fragmen-

tation rounds (HEF), and OFZ High Explosive Incendiary Fragmentation rounds (HEF-I) were available. As for armour-piercing rounds, standard Armour-Piercing Incendiary (AP-I) rounds were designated BZ (or BZT for the API-T version with tracer), and were able to pierce up to 24 mm (0.945'') of armour at a range of 100 meters (328 feet). Some sources also suggest that an Armour-Piercing Composite Rigid (APCR) round was developed for use on the TNSh tank variant. This round, featuring a tungsten carbide core, was supposedly able to penetrate the side armour of PzKpfw III and PzKpfw IV medium tanks at ranges of up to 350 meters.



The ShVAK proved itself to be a compact, effective weapon and served throughout the whole Second World War with more than 100 000 weapons made. The weapon's short production run continued after the end of war, but the ShVAK was ultimatedly replaced by the Beresin B-20 cannon which featured the same rate of fire and muzzle velocity but with a much lighter weight.



Panzer 38(t) Ausf. F, №9 of the 3rd Panzer Division. October 1941, during Operation Barbarossa. Camouflage created by InFerNos1 | download here

[VEHICLE PROFILE] PzKpfw 38(t) Ausf. A & F

24 August 2015 : Author: Joe "Pony51" Kudrna

Simply put, this is arguably the best tank in the 1-2.0 BR bracket of the German tree - the Ausf. A variant (BR 1.3) is second only to the US Army M2A4 in-game (v1.47), with better survivability than the BT-5. In terms of speed and terrain handling amongst the low-tier German units, it is slightly inferior to the Pz II but sports a vastly more capable cannon. Conversely, it is not as slow as early Pz III and Pz IV variants, offering markedly better acceleration, maneuvering, and a whopping 3 times faster turret rotation speed. which gives it a tactical advantage. Its fast firing 37mm ÚV vz. 38 (L/47.8) cannon can be considered as good as the German 50mm KwK 38, and 75mm KwK 37 firing non-HEAT rounds (by game metrics). The result; a terrific Blitz tank that can quickly flank and assume ambush positions to maximise its effective cannon. Its main disadvantage is the thinner armour, especially in the Ausf. A.



X-ray view of the PzKpfw 38 (t)

The two variants are the 38(t) Ausf. A (BR 1.3 AB/RB) and Ausf. F (BR 2.0 AB/RB) after the 35(t) on the Czech chassis line. The former has relatively thin 15 to 25mm armour all around,

while the F model doubles that with 30 to 50mm of armour, with only a slight increase in weight that barely affects performance. The Ausf. A is vulnerable to nearly any weapon, so one should not expose himself whilst driving it, but this also forces one to learn how to play smart, seeking cover and using ambush tactics. This improves a player's overall game experience, encouraging the use of tactics and strategies in order to strike effectively. A step up from the A is the up-armoured F, which gives you much better odds of winning an engagement. Gameplay is a marked contrast to early Pz III's and Pz IV's which maintain robust effective armour protection, but in the long run players lose because they do not learn good tactics and are too sluggish to retaliate.

The 37mm ÚV vz. 38 (L/47.8) is the earliest cannon which offers 2 good round choices, the solid core PzGr. 40 APCR with 77mm penetration @ 100m and 40mm @ 500m and the explosive tipped Pzgr.(l) umg APCBC with 50mm @ 100m and 38mm @ 500m - perhaps the best cannon in the sub 50mm class. While the first has better penetration it needs a critical hit to score a kill, so in some situations the explosive tipped Pzgr.(l) umg is the better round to use. Leaning to switch rounds to adapt to a situation will also improve your combat success.



Facing a 38(t) is mostly a matter of recognising the Ausf. A from F. The differences are easily seen with a keen eye which can indicate their level of threat. Despite this, both models have vulnerabilities, so memorise them! The key in going up against the, is to maintain a reasonable distance, whilst watching your flank. Ironically, most new players use it like Pz III or IV thinking it has strong armour, and in doing so make themselves easy targets. Be alert for those who know how to use it.



PzKpfw 38(t), Soviet Union, June 1941

Arguably Germany's most important early armoured vehicle in its class produced throughout the war. It was also one of very few pieces of equipment not originally designed in Germany; the Panzerkampfwagen 38(t)

originally came from Czechoslovakia. The LT-38 was a significant improvement to the earlier and somewhat unreliable LT-35. A private venture by Českomoravská Kolben-Daněk (ČKD) who sold about 100 to Iran, Peru, and Switzerland before Czechoslovakia decided to acquire. Production had barely started when the 1938 Munich Dictat was signed and was not in active service when Germany took over Czechoslovakia.

Although inferior in some ways to other German equipment, the Wehrmacht was desperately short on armour, and in their need, introduced the PzKpfw 38(t) into service. The (t) in the title stood for "tschechisch", the German word for Czech. In Poland, and later at the Blitzkrieg, they found it to be a powerful and significant addition to their armoured forces. Its shortcoming proved to be the riveted armour plates, which were harder but more brittle than other armoured steel making it vulnerable to internal spalling. This was a vulnerability that was difficult to combat.

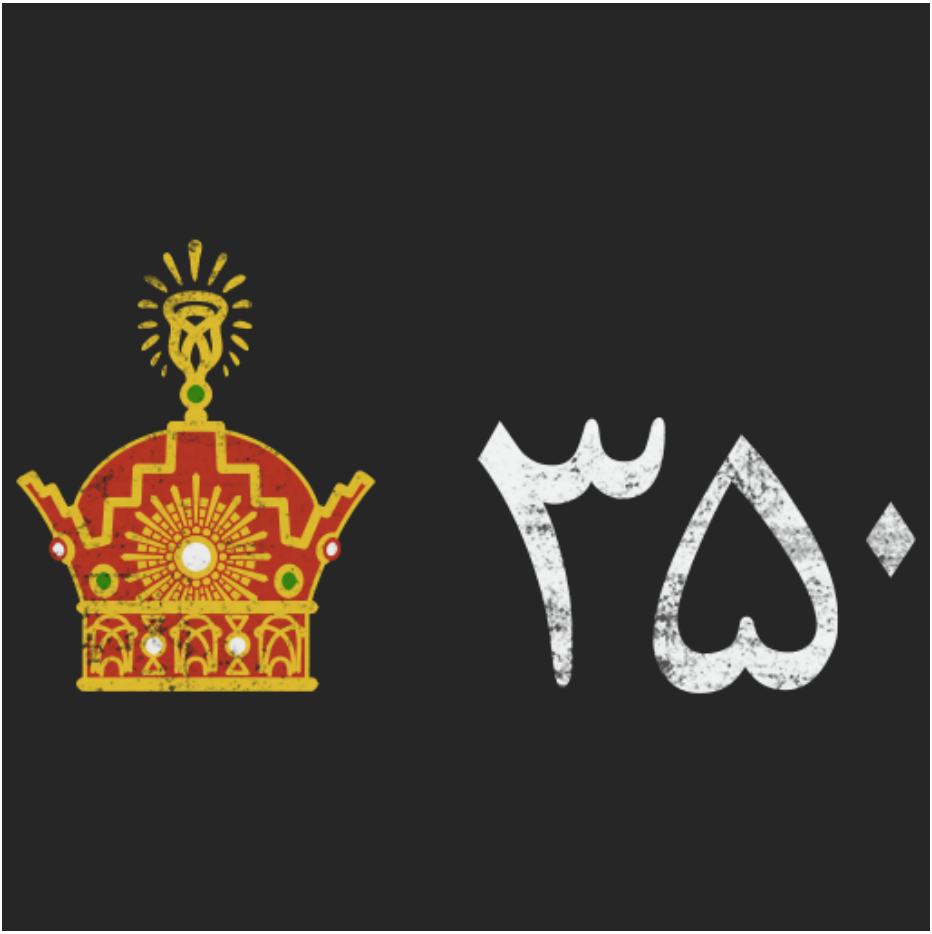


PzKpfw 38(t), France, June 1940

The 38(t)'s greatest legacy was its supremely reliable drivetrain and chassis which was produced throughout the war and saw continued use and production long after wars end in other uses. Although famed due to German usage, it is really a legacy of ingenious Czechoslovakian engineering.



In one of the following Updates, we will include the "535 Tank Number" as used by the Iranian Armed Forces on a Pz.38(t),



And "Iranian Imperial Crown".

Decals made by Branislav "InkaL" Mirkov



'Iraqi Mig-15bis of 5 Sqn, IrAF', camouflage by Stylus_Waffe | download here

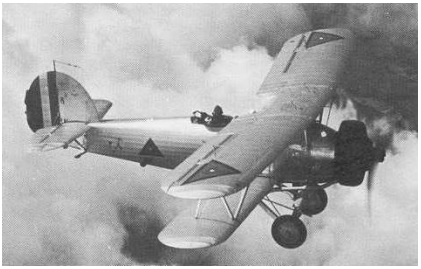
[NATIONAL FORCES] The Iraqi Air Force

25 August 2015 : Author: Jan "RayPall" Kozák

The Iraqi Air Force's (الجوية القوة العراقية; Al Quwwa al Jawwiya al Iraqiya) was founded in 1931 under name of the Royal Iraqi Air Force (abbreviated RIrAF). At the time, Iraq was a League of Nations mandate (which it became in 1920) This was administered by the United Kingdom. In Britain, the first batch of five Iraqi pilots received their aviation training at the RAF College Cranwell. On the day of return, which is the 22nd of April: This is recognised, as the official date of founding of the RIrAF. The initial inventory of the newly founded air force consisted of primarily British aircraft, such as Hawker Fury biplane fighters or Hawker Audax reconaissance aircraft. In the following years, after the Iraq achieved independence as a Kingdom of Iraq in 1932. The RIrAF aquired a number of Italian Breda Ba.65 attack aircraft as well as Savoia-Marchetti SM.79 Sparviero bombers. However, the air force was still only a very small organisation, as the goverment allocated the absolute majority of its defense budget to the Iraqi Army - by 1936. The RIrAF had, only 37 pilots and 55 aircraft.

The first operational deployment of the RIrAF occured in 1934, during the rebellion of tribesmen in southern Iraq, where the RIrAF suffered its first combat loss. The first conventional combat, the 1941 Anglo-Iraqi War incited by the Rashid Ali's coup d'état however ended far worse for the Iraqi aviators. At the time, the RIrAF consisted of roughly 120 aircraft with

only about a half of them serviceable - the number included aircraft such as already mentioned Ba.65 attackers and SM.79 bombers, as well as de Havilland Tiger Moth trainers and Northrop A-17 light bombers. Absolute most of them werehowever destroyed by British air raids, and the RIrAF practically ceased to exist as a fighting force. Meanwhile, however, the rebel goverment concluded a deal with Germany, as German officials had shown an interest in recognizing the independent Iraq and agreed to send war material to the rebels, including modern aircraft.



An Iraqi Hawker Audax ("Nisr")

Eventually, about 30 German planes, such as Messerschmitt Bf 110 heavy fighters, Heinkel He 111 bombers and Junkers Ju 52 transport planes, arrived into Iraq as a German mission in support of the rebel goverment. All aircraft of this unit, named Fliegerführer Irak, had Iraqi roundels, but were piloted by German pilots and commanded by Colonel Werner Junck. These aircraft achieved some successes against the RAF forces in the area, but suffered from losses, poor quality of fuel, lack of spare parts and constant attacks by the British. At the end of May 1941, the British launched an offensive against Baghdad, and as Germans learned about British forces converging on the Fliegerführer Irak's home base in Mosul, all German personnel was evacuated on 29th May, with only two He 111's being left from the whole force. Soon after, the coup d'état was defeated.

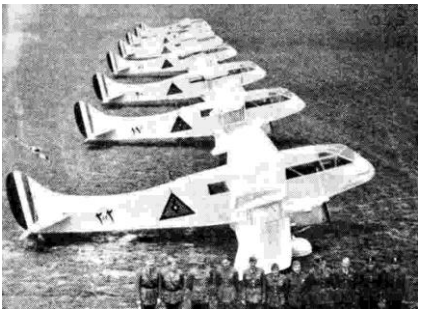


A Breda Ba-25 attacker with its Iraqi crew

After the events of Anglo-Iraqi War, the RIrAF found itself in ruins. The recovery was very slow, and when the Arab-Israeli War broke out in 1948 and Iraq formally joined the conflict against the Israel, the RIrAF played only a minor role in the war. During the conflict, the RIrAF received Hawker Sea Fury F.Mk.1 piston fighters, one of which managed to shoot down an Israeli Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress heavy bomber.

During the 1950's, RIrAF entered the jet age by aquiring de Havilland Vampire and Hawker Hunter jet fighters in 1953. The import of aircraft from the West was however ended by coup d'état in 1958, where the monarchy

was overthrown and the Republic of Iraq was establishee. The new goverment severed political relationships with the western countries, and turned their attention to Warsaw Pact, led by the USSR.



De Haviland Dragon iraquí

The renamed Iraqi Air Force (IQAF) then started to receive Soviet-made aircraft, such as MiG-17 fighters or Ilyushin Il-14 transports. These were followed by MiG-19 and MiG-21 fighters in the following years. In 1963, another coup d'état allowed the new goverment to re-align Iraq with the NATO countries, and as a result, more Hawker Hunters were delivered. At the time, the IQAF consisted of nine squadrons, six of them being fighter squadrons.

During the Six-Day War in 1967 against the Israel, IQAF pilots provided air support to Jordanian troops and claimed 12 Israeli aircraft destroyed. In the following Yom Kippur War in 1973, Iraqi pilots claimed 21 Israeli fighters in the air combat. At the same time, large shipments of Soviet-made aircraft continued to be delivered to Iraq, including Sukhoi Su-7 fighter bombers and Tupolev Tu-22 supersonic bombers. Another large conflict was the Iran-Iraq War between the years 1980-1988, during which nearly 1000 aerial dogfights ensued, including dogfights between helicopters. IQAF lost more than 270 aircraft in exchange for about 70 Iranian planes. The most famous Iraqi fighter pilot of this era was Mohammed Rayyan, nicknamed "Sky Falcon" - flying on MiG-21PF and later on MiG-25P fighter, he claimed 10 aircraft shot down between 1980-1981 before being killed in action in 1986 during combat with Iranian F-14 fighters.

In August 1990, the IQAF was the largest air force in the region with more than 750 combat aircraft in its inventory. However, after the events of the Gulf War, only a single Su-24 fighter bomber and a single squadron of MiG-25 fighters survived, with the rest being destroyed, hidden or evacuated.

Today, the Iraqi Air Force possesses modern F-16 fighters, delivered from USA and operating along with Su-25 attackers and a fleet of helicopters such as Mi-35, Mi-28 or UH-1.



With one of the upcoming Updates, we will introduce the "Roundel of the Iraqi Air Force" to War Thunder. Decal by Colin 'Fenris' Muir



Wallpaper 1280x1024 | 1920x1080

[VEHICLE PROFILE] Lavochkin La-7

27 August 2015 : Author: Adam "BONKERS" Lisiewicz

In War Thunder, the La-7 is one of the main Soviet fighters of Era IV. In game, it is available in two versions, differing in armament - the regular La-7 armed with 2 ShVAK 20mm cannons, and the upgraded La-7B-20, armed with 3 Berezin B-20S 20mm cannons. Both aircraft are placed quite low in the Battle Rating spread, which means that you will still engage Era III aircraft. The strengths of both La-7 variants lie in very good low altitude performance - ideally, you want to engage your enemies at altitudes lower than 5 km - higher up, the power output of the engine reduces drastically, making you an easy target. Aside from the speed, the La-7 possesses very good turning capabilities - while it is not as good a turner as some British and Japanese designs, it can give many German and US aircraft a run for their money.



An X-ray view of the La-7

The key to staying alive in the La-7 lies in deceiving the enemy. By flying at around 4.5km altitude you present yourself as an easy target for Boom&Zoom aircraft that are flying at higher altitudes. When you spot someone diving at you, break off and evade his burst, while slowly luring him into maneuver combat - this way you will start gaining the edge while the enemy loses his speed and momentum in the turn. Another habit worth developing in the La-7 is ammo conservation - because the available weaponry has a very low ammo capacity, it is crucial to only take shots that you know will hit and aiming them carefully. This way you stand a bigger chance of critically damaging the enemy airplane. By following those rules you will soon find yourself researching the final Lavochkin piston fighter - the La-9.

The La-7 in History

The concept of a new fighter for the Soviet Air Force was pitched in 1943. While the earlier Lavochkin La-5 proved to be one of the best Soviet fighters produced up to that point, the main designer of the La-5, Semyon Lavochkin, felt that it could be improved even further. Work on a completely new fighter began in the early months of 1944. The new fighter was supposed to be an improved version of the La-5 design. The changes included the incorporation of a lighter and more durable metal airframe in place of the earlier wooden one. Other changes included the mounting of a new gunsight and propeller, as well as the strengthening of the landing gear struts and streamlining of the wings. It was to be armed with three Berezin B-20 20mm cannons, however the delay in production meant that most new La-7s were armed with 2 20mm ShVAK cannons, like its predecessor. After more tests, the new fighter was accepted into serial production in late 1944.

n September 1944, the first La-7s found their way onto the front lines with the 63rd Guard Fighter Aviation Corps. The reception of the new fighter was warm - it was faster and more maneuverable than the La-5, which meant it could more efficiently tackle the most common German fighter the Soviets faced: the Messerschmitt Bf109G. In certain circumstances, the speed allowed the Soviet pilots to intercept Fw190 fighter-bombers - a feat impossible to achieve for other Soviet fighters like the Yak-3. The main critiques of the design were considered to be the engine reliability and armament - the twin 20mm ShVAK cannons were judged as inadequate in fights against better armoured Fw190s. Still, the La-7 became one of the most successful Soviet piston fighters of World War II. Soviet ace Ivan Kozhedub scored 17 kills while flying the La-7 - his last one being an Me262 jet. After the war the La-7 was replaced by the La-9 prop

fighter, although many were still used by other communist states as both fighters and trainer aircraft.



In one of the following Updates, we will include decal from the 9. GVIAP Alelyukhin fighter regiment. Decal made by Jej 'CharlieFoxtrot' Ortiz.



Bf 109G-6, SNP (Slovak National Uprising); Serial: W. Nr. 161725; Tri Duby air base, September 1944. Camouflage made by -313- Paegas | Download here

[COMMEMORATION] Slovak National Uprising

28 August 2015 : Autor: Jan "RayPall" Kozák

The roots of Slovak National Uprising (Slovenské národné povstanie, SNP) can be traced back to 1943. At that time, Slovakia existed in form of Slovakian State (Slovenský štát) - a clero fascist regime loyal to Nazi Germany both politically and militarily. Slovak soldiers and aviators actively participated in campaigns on the Eastern Front, but major German defeats in battles of Stalingrad and Kursk stirred serious doubts about Slovak-German alliance. As the situation worsened for the Germans, the dissent among the ranks of Slovak soldiers grew stronger, forming several groups of opposition among Slovak army officers. In 1943, these elements were contacted by Edvard Beneš, a leader of the Czech exile government, Beneš wanted to initiate preparations for potential uprising of Slovaks, which would not only assist the Red Army in liberating of Eastern Europe, but would also oust the Slovakia from the Axis, and would confirm its status as a country sympathizing with the Allies - this would be crucial in post-war reconstruction of united Czechoslovakia.

The preparations for the insurrection started in March 1944, with Lieutenant Colonel Ján Golián taking the command of the uprising. Weapons and ammunition were stockpiled in

various places across the eastern and central Slovakia, and there was notable increase of partisan activity in the area. The plan was to not only seize control of as large part of the country as possible, but also to capture and hold Carpathian mountain passes on eastern Slovak border - this would allow the advancing Red Army to attack the rear areas of German forces in eastern Carpathians through Slovakia, forcing the Germans to surrender and sparing Slovakia from destruction caused by prolonged fighting. This goal was to be achieved by two divisions of Eastern Slovak Army, led by Colonel Viliam Talsky. Golián estimated, that only about 20% of Slovak army officers are still loyal to the government, thus he did not expect any significant obstacles in launching of the insurrection.



Slovak Bf 109 G2 R6

However, increased partisan activity alarmed the Slovak government, as the loyalist security forces were unable to suppress the partisans. After 30 German soldiers were killed in Martin by partisans on 27th August, 1944, the German envoy in Bratislava, the Slovak capital, requested German military intervention in order to stabilize the country. About 40 000 German soldiers, including several elite Waffen-SS units, entered Slovakia on 29th August, 1944. Golián did not not expect the presence of German army, but it was too late to stand down. On 29th August at 20:00 hours, Golián sent a coded message to all units to begin the uprising. The next day, rebel forces secured Banská Bystrica as main headquarters. More than 47 000 rebel soldiers were mobilized in central Slovakia (this number eventually rose to 60 000) and a number of tanks and armoured vehicles were confiscated, including LT-38, LT-35 and LT-40 light tanks as well as several German tanks and artillery pieces. Golián estimated, that his forces could resist the Germans for up to two weeks.

However, in a twist of fate, Colonel Talsky hesitated when the order to begin the uprising was given, and instead of mobilizing the Eastern Slovak Army and seizing the mountain passes, he flew to Poland to consult over situation with Soviet Field Marshal Konev. His two divisions were left leaderless and in chaos, and were both quickly disarmed by advancing Germans without any resistance. The rebels thus lost their two most heavily armed units, and the crucial mountain passes were seized by Germans. Also, all Slovak Air Force squadrons positioned on eastern Slovakia left the country and landed in Soviet-controlled territory, leaving only a

handful of aircraft (less than 40) behind. These were organized in a so-called "Combined Squadron" ("Kombinovaná letka"), but only four of them were modern Bf 109 fighters (two Bf 109 G-6's and two older Bf 109 E-4's), with the rest either obsolete (such as Avia B.534 biplane fighters) or not suited to combat (training or liaison aircraft).



LT. vz. 38 (Pzkpfw 38(t)) of the Slovakian army

By the 10th of September, rebels seized control of large area in central and eastern Slovakia, including two airfields - Tri Duby and Zolná. Especially Tri Duby was an airfield of strategic importance, as its runway enabled the Soviets to send transport planes with supplies and ammunition. The situation in the air was critical at first, but changed between 15-17th September, when 1st Czechoslovak Independent Aviation Regiment, equipped with Lavochkin La-5FN fighters, landed in Zolná. Another Czechoslovak unit, 2nd Czechoslovak Parachute Brigade also arrived in 25th September - these two Czechoslovak units were integrated into rebel forces, and the whole rebel army was renamed the 1st Czechoslovak Army in Slovakia.

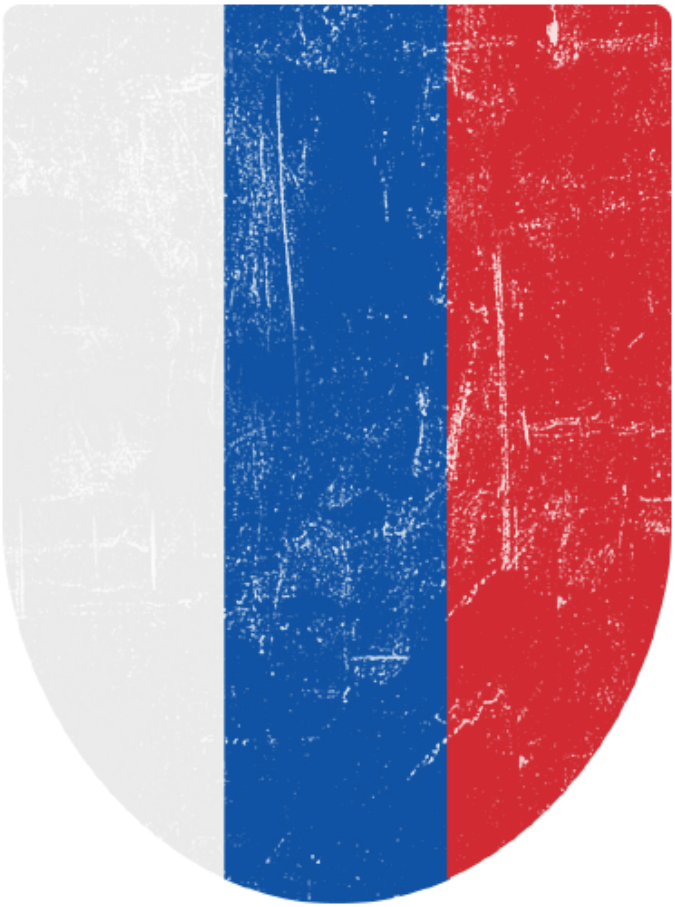
However, the Red Army was unable to provide support for the rebels in time, and the Soviet attempt to break through Dukla Pass (one of the passes that was planned to be held open by the Eastern Slovak Army) on 10th September resulted in heavy losses and stalemate. Communist partisans, operating in Slovakia, often confiscated supplies and air drops intended for the rebels, which then suffered from a lack of weapons, ammunition and supplies. Partisans were also operating independently of the 1st Czechoslovak Army command, thus preventing any coordination. Diplomatic chaos soon ensued, as the Czech exile government, Soviet partisans and various Slovak groups were arguing over control of the uprising, with the requests of Golián (which was later relieved by General Rudolf Viest) to restore coordination being fruitless. Meanwhile, Germans launched a major offensive starting on the 17th October with more than 35 000 German soldiers advancing from Hungary. At the same time, Stalin ordered his forces to focus on Hungary, Austria and Poland instead, leaving the uprising to their own fate.



Rebel convoy of Slovak army vehicles dragging anti aircraft canons

At the end of October, German troops had recaptured the major portion of central Slovakia. On 27th October, 1944, the rebel headquarters in Banská Bystrica was evacuated prior to its fall, and the remaining rebel forces withdrew to mountains. Golián and Viest were forced to escape, but both were captured in November, and were executed soon after. As a retaliation for the uprising, German special Einsatzgruppen units unleashed a terror campaign including the razing of several villages and mass executions of civilians. The remnants of the rebel forces resorted to guerilla warfare - the uprising was defeated, but these guerilla units managed to hold up large German forces, which could not be utilized anywhere else. Slovakia was eventually liberated by the Red Army during the spring of 1945, with Bratislava captured on 4th April 1945.





In one of the following Updates, we will include Slovak Insurgent Air Force insignia & marking of the Slovak armoured forces. Decal made by Branislav "InkaL" Mirkov & Colin 'Fenris' Muir