HISTORICAL CORNER

JANUARY 2015

WAR THUNDER

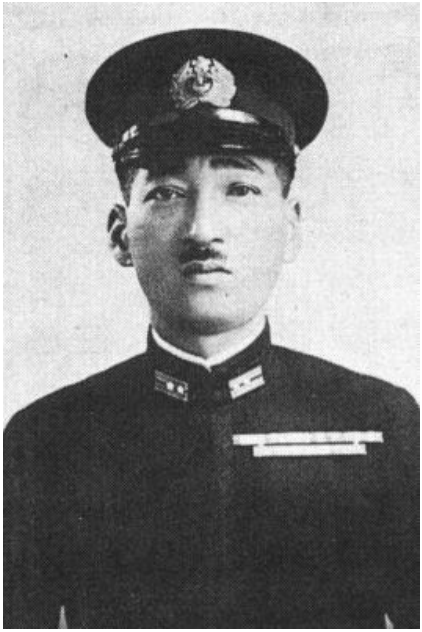
REGISTER

Nakajima B5N2 Kate, AI-301, flown by Com. Mitsuo Fuchida, camouflage by Bineos_si | download here

[ACE OF THE MONTH] – Captain Mitsuo Fuchida

1. January - Author: Mark Barber

Born in the Nara Prefecture on the Japanese island of Honshu in December 1902, Mitsuo Fuchida was never particularly interested in aviation as a youth. With a fierce sense of patriotism and attracted to a life in the military, Fuchida volunteered for naval service at the age of 18 and was accepted for officer training at the Naval Acadamy at Etakima, Hiroshima. It was whilst carrying out his naval general training that he was first made aware of the option to spend his career as a naval aviator, and he began to take a keen interest in aircraft and aviation.

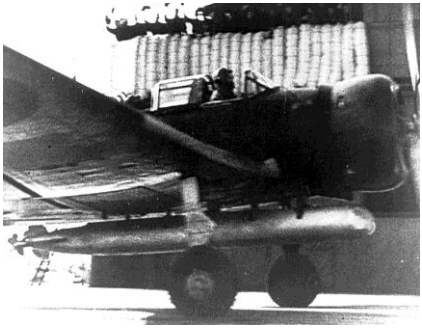


In 1924 Fuchida graduated from Etajima after three years of training, being commissioned as a Midshipman in the Japanese Imperial Navy and also successfully applying for service in the Japanese Imperial Navy Air Service. Promoted to Sub-Lieutenant two days before his 25th birthday, he successfully passed out of the notoriously difficult Japanese naval pilot training pipeline as a bomber pilot.

The 1930s saw Fuchida's experience as a naval flier grow, to the point he was selected for instructional duties in 1936. Identified as an officer with great potential, he was promoted to Lieutenant Commander and attended the yearlong course at the highly prestigious Naval War College in Tokyo.

With hostilities erupting again between Japan and China, Fuchida saw action during the Second Sino-Japanese War and gained valuable experience for what would soon be the defining point of his aviation career. With relations between Japan and the United States, 1941 saw Fuchida employed as the commander of the 37,000 ton aircraft carrier Akagi's air group.

In December 1941 – on the day of infamy – the might of the Japanese Imperial Navy Air Service attacked Pearl Harbor. Fuchida, promoted to Commander only two months before, led the attack. In the pre-dawn darkness, 353 aircraft took to the skies from six Japanese aircraft carriers before forming up and heading for Oahu. Fuchida flew in the observer's cockpit of the lead Nakajima B5N2 'Kate' – this allowed him to concentrate solely on mission command rather than spending precious mental capacity on flying the aircraft and carrying out an accurate attack run which he left to his pilot, Lieutenant Mitsuo Matsuzaki.



B5N2 "Kate" Torpedo-bomber with dummy torpedo launching from Akagi deck

Fuchida's strike wave consisted of 90 aircraft; 50 B5N2s led by Lieutenant Commander Shigaharu Murata were fitted with 800kg bombs made up by fitting a tail fin to a 16 inch naval shell, whilst the remaining 40 bombers carried torpedoes adapted with special tail fins to allow them to function in the shallow waters of a harbour. In addition to some 51 Aichi D3A1 dive bombers, an escort of 43 Mitsubishi A6M2s escorted the wave.

At 0749 local time, Fuchida arrived over Pearl Harbor and gave the now famous signal 'Tora, Tora, Tora,' to the carrier Akagi: the attack had achieved complete surprise. The first wave had completed their devastating attack in some 20 minutes; after ordering them to return Fuchida remained in the overhead to supervise the second wave of the attack, consisting of a further 54 Kates, 78 Vals and 35 Zekes. By the time the aircraft had returned to their carriers, a level of devastation beyond what many had thought possible had been achieved. Four US Navy battleships were listed as sunk (although two were subsequently recovered) with a further four damaged as well as further damage to many smaller vessels, and nearly 200 aircraft had also been destroyed. More than 2300 American lives were lost. This was in exchange for 29 Japanese aircraft shot down by anti-aircraft fire and a handful of US fighters which managed to scramble into the air; the most famous of these actions was that of 2nd Lieutenant Phil Rasmussen of the US Army Air Corps.

Fuchida returned to a hero's welcome aboard the carrier. Like the Taranto raid which the Japanese had drawn inspiration from, the aircrew were eager to launch for a follow up strike. Again, like Taranto, the command decision was taken to avoid returning to a harbour with alert defenses. Fuchida was summoned to report to no less than the Emperor himself, Hirohito, who he described the attack to in detail.

Fuchida in training for attack on Pearl Harbor

Soon back in action, Fuchida led a 188 aircraft attack against Darwin; the largest attack ever carried out against Australia. Whilst the level of devastation inflicted at Pearl Harbor was not repeated it was nonetheless a very successful attack, with vital cargo vessels in the port being destroyed. In early March Fuchida led his aircraft against British naval targets in the Ceylon area; his aircraft

were responsible for the sinking of five ships including the heavy cruisers HMS Dorsetshire and HMS Cornwall.

Still onboard the carrier Akagi, Fuchida suffered from appendicitis and had his appendix removed in the ship's sick bay. It was whilst in the early stages of recovery from the operation that the great Battle of Midway took place; Fuchida was in no fit state to fly and so offered what support he could from the carrier's bridge. After Akagi was hit (most likely by Lt Cdr Richard Best) the evacuation of the ship was ordered. Fighting through the pain of the rapid evacuation of the dying warship whilst still suffering from the effects of his operation, Fuchida was exiting the burning bridge via a rope when he was flung to the deck by an explosion, breaking his ankles in the process.

Identified as a brave, intelligent and highly respected leader, Fuchida was promoted to Captain in 1944 and would not return to the cockpit. He saw the rest of the war out as air staff officer to the Japanese Combined Fleet, and was also involved in the damage assessment operation following the dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima.

Fuchida left the navy following the cessation of hostilities. In 1948 he heard of the story of Jacob DeShazer, a survivor of the Doolittle Raid who converted to Christianity whilst struggling to survive the torture and abuse of being a Prisoner of War. After reading the Bible himself Fuchida converted to Christianity, much to the consternation of many of his friends and former comrades. He met DeShazer face to face in 1950. Mitsuo Fuchida dedicated the rest of his life to Christianity. His writings can easily be found via internet searches, and he expressed a deep and overpowering regret for the lives he took during the Second World War. He spent a great deal of time in the United States and worked as an evangelist and author. Remembered as an outspoken and intelligent man, he passed away in May 1976 at the age of 73.

Junkers Ju 87 B-2 in winter camouflage during Operation Typhoon. This special camouflage can be purchased with Golden Eagles, or unlocked in-game by destroying 200 ground targets in Arcade Battles or 100 ground targets in Realistic or Simulator Battles.

[HISTORICAL] Operation Typhoon

2. January - Author: Adam “BONKERS” Lisiewicz

The name "Operation Typhoon" was given to the German offensive on the Eastern Front that began on 2nd October 1941. After the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, things were looking dire for the Red Army. To the north, Army Group "North" of the Wehrmacht marched through the Baltic States and managed to encircle Leningrad. To the south, German forces managed to capture Kiev, isolate the Crimean Peninsula as well as capture the strategic region of Donbas. Now they were preparing to launch an offensive towards the capital of the USSR itself – Moscow.

Army Group "Center", which was earlier involved in combat in Belarus and central USSR, was tasked with capturing the city. Even though on paper the force looked menacing, it had its own share of problems.

German Sturmgeschütze advancing during Operation Typhoon

The overstretched supply lines meant that resupplying was often prolonged, and many soldiers were not fully equipped for the fighting. Also, a lot of the tanks and armored vehicles

needed maintenance from the earlier fighting. Regardless, Field Marshal Feodor von Bock still commanded a force of 2 million men, 1000 tanks and 549 aircraft. The force was supposed to attack towards Moscow, isolating any encountered Red Army forces in encircled areas (known as Kesseln).

On the Red Army side, the defense was being hastily prepared. Just before the offensive began, the Red Army could count on forces of the Reserve Front, commanded by Marshal Siemon Budionny, as well as the Briansk Front, commanded by Lieutenant General Andriei Yeromienko. The second line of defense consisted of the forces of the Western Front, commanded by Lieutenant General Ivan Koniev. Overall, the Red Army forces totalled around 1.3 million men, 3000 tanks and 545 planes.

Heavy M1931 Howitzer of the Red Army supporting the defensive operations

On the 30th September the early phase of the operation began. The 2nd Panzer Army commanded by Colonel General Heinz Guderian began its assault on the town of Orel. Three days later the main phase of Operation "Typhoon" began, with the 3rd and 4th Panzer Armies attacking the Reserve Front forces around Viazma. The German assault was relentless, and even though the Soviet soldiers fought bravely they were quickly encircled near Viazma. At the same time, Guderian's forces captured Orel and encircled the Soviet forces in another Kessel near Briansk. Overall, 5 Soviet armies found themselves surrounded. While most of the soldiers were killed or captured, some managed to escape the encirclement and even staged some local counterattacks.

The success of the first thrust was, however, to be short-lived. With the stretched supply lines, exhausted soldiers and deteriorating weather, the initial success of the German assault could not maintain its momentum. The Red Army, even though defeated, managed to regroup and consolidate the defence perimeter around the capital. The pivotal fight for Moscow was just around the corner.

Camouflage "White 106" for P-40E-1, 1st American Volunteer Group (AVG, "Flying Tigers"), May 1942, Loiwing/Baoshan, Chinese Air Force | Available in the game for 200GE or for shooting down 120/40/20 enemies in AB/RB/SB

[PROFILE] Lieutenant General Claire Chennault

5. January - Author: Mark Barber

Born in Commerce, Texas on September 6th 1893, Claire Lee Chennault was the son of a cotton planter and was raised in Louisiana. After studying agriculture and graduating from Louisiana State University he returned to Texas to become a teacher. Whilst studying at university, Chennault showed his first real interest in the military and joined the Reserve Officers' Training Corps. During the First World War, Chennault served as an officer in the US Army Signal Corps and later the Army Air Service; he was eventually accepted for pilot training but did not qualify until after the end of the war.

Smitten by military aviation, Chennault opted to remain with the US Army after the cessation of hostilities and the huge demobilization of the military. Specializing in the field of pursuit aviation – or fighters in modern terminology – Chennault became the Chief of the Pursuit Section at the Air Corps Tactical School at Maxwell Field, Alabama as well as leading the Army Air Corps Aerobatics Team. In 1935 he wrote 'The Role of Defensive Pursuit' in which he detailed his vision on fighter tactics – his views landed him in trouble with his seniors after he claimed bombers were particularly vulnerable to fighter attack.

Capt. C.L Chennault poses in front of a Boeing P-12E

Continuing disagreements with air corps command and the onset of a hearing disability led Chennault to retire from the US Army in April 1937, having achieved the rank of captain. Determined to continue flying, Chennault looked overseas for his next opportunity. He did not have to wait long: only two months later he was in China, employed as a flying instructor. Reporting to Kuomintang leader Chiang Kai-shek, Chennault was tasked with carrying out an independent investigation and report of the effectiveness of the Chinese Air Force.

When hostilities erupted with Japan in August, Chennault was propelled into action. Combining the roles of Chief Air Advisor, pilot trainer and flying in operational sorties, Chennault was suddenly one of the most highly valued operators in the country. He was also charged with setting up and leading a squadron of foreign mercenary pilots. With increasing pressure on Chinese forces and a series of lightning victories won by the Japanese, Chennault was sent back to the United States in 1940 as part of a small team tasked with raising financial and logistical support for China.

The push to Washington paid off. Financial aid was secured from the US Government, and Chennault returned with his team to China with a promise of 100 P40 fighters with pilots, maintainers and the logistical back up to keep them running. With promises of a significantly higher salary than paid by the US military - and cash bonuses for confirmed aerial victories - recruitment was not a problem: pilots and ground crew from the US Army, US Navy and US Marine Corps were not in short supply. Successful applicants were called upon to terminate their employment with the US military as the new group – now named the 1st American Volunteer Group – could not be seen internationally to be an overt and political link between the United States and China.

The new aircraft were shipped, assembled and delivered to China to form three squadrons. The pilots were not far behind – some of the aviators who were to see battle in

China would go on to illustrious careers, such as Greg 'Pappy' Boyington and 'Ed' Rector. Soon nicknamed the 'Flying Tigers', the P40s were painted with an iconic tiger emblem which Chennault is credited for having approached Walt Disney personally to have produced. Chennault quickly set about training his new team of fighter pilots – first and foremost, he was an advocate of playing to the strengths of his fighters and avoiding the advantages of the Japanese aircraft they would be facing. To that end, he trained his pilots to avoid turning fights at all costs and to use height and speed to dive down, attack, and then climb away to reposition. Doctrinally this was very different to what many nations were teaching at that time, including the United States.

The Flying Tigers first leapt into action in December 1941, when on the 20th two squadrons of P40s intercepted ten Ki-48 bombers, destroying four and forcing them to jettison their bombs before reaching their target. The Flying Tigers were highly effective in their war against Japanese forces whilst operating under Chennault's leadership; in seven months they claimed 296 enemy aircraft destroyed for the loss of 14 pilots in the air and 10 men on the ground. However, several historians have called these figures into question.

As well as leading the AVG, Chennault continued in the equally vital job of training Chinese pilots. This was important as America's aid to China would soon be taking a different form with America now formally being at war with Japan. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Chennault was brought back into the US Army with the rank of colonel; three promotions from the rank he had left with five years before. The AVG was also brought under the control of the US Army, with pilots and maintainers now wearing US rank.

Chennault continued to operate in the China-Burma-India theatre for the remainder of the war. Promoted to Major General by March 1943, Chennault lobbied for intensive bombing of Japanese forces in theatre and frequently argued with US Army General Stilwell, who criticized corruption within the Chinese system and favoured the use of ground forces rather than air attack. However, the 'Chennault Plan' received presidential backing. The rapid increase of air power in the region saw initial successes, but after a series of Japanese offensives in April 1944 many of Chenault's new air bases were overrun. Chennault's critics were quick to leap on the opportunity to blame him; he resigned from the US Army Air Force in 1945.

However, Chennault's involvement with China was far from over. In 1946 he helped form Civil Air Transport, a commercial airline which soon attracted the attention of the newly

formed CIA. CAT accepted CIA to funding to help ship personnel and supplies in and out of the area. The airline would later be bought out by the CIA and renamed Air America.

Chennault's contribution to US aviation was recognised in July 1958 when he was given the honorary rank of Lieutenant General in the United States Air Force. However, he died only days later from lung cancer at the age of 64, survived by ten children from two marriages. He was inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame in 1972 and there are statues of Chennault in Taipei and Hunan. Perhaps his greatest legacy is the legendary reputation of the Flying Tigers, immortalized in part by the 1942 movie of the same name. John Wayne leads the cast with the character of Jim Gordon; a fictitious composite character based on several leaders within the Flying Tigers; Claire Lee Chennault clearly being one of them.

Hawker Typhoon Mk1a, No.26(Rhodesian)Sqn RAF, camouflage made by OpInfo | download here

[AIR FORCES] Rhodesian Air Force

6. January - Author: Jan "RayPall" Kozák

The history of Rhodesian Air Force started in 1935, when the air section of the 1st Battalion Rhodesia Regiment was formed in the British colony of Southern Rhodesia. Based at Belvedere airfield near Salisbury (present Harare), the newly born organisation accepted their first cadets which were then trained on de Havilland Tiger Moths. The year after, Air Section Southern Rhodesia Defence force was created; its development was supervised by Group Captain Arthur Harris - future commander of RAF Bomber Command, and in December 1937 Cranborne aerodrome was commisioned sporting two runways and numerous hangars, workshops and offices. By that time, two Hawker Hart light bombers were aquired and in 1938 the air unit separated from colonial forces and was redesignated as the Southern Rhodesia Air Unit (SRAU) under command of Flight Lieutenant Jimmy Powell. Following this, in May 1938, their first batch of cadets received their pilot training.

The Rhodesian Air Training Group in Southern Rhodesia, 1941-1945

In 1939, the SRAU received four Hawker Audax aircraft and in August

it was deployed in Nairobi during the British mobilisation for war with Germany, which was declared on 3rd September 1939. Three days later the SRAU was renamed to No.1 Squadron, Southern Rhodesia Air Force and in October No. 266 (Rhodesia) Squadron was formed, equipped with Fairey Battle light bombers; it was sent to Britain as the RAF was in desperate need of combat units. Here it participated in the Battle of Britain, during night-time raids on Coventry, Birmingham and London. Later it was re-equipped with Spitfire fighters. Another squadron, No.44 (Rhodesia) Squadron RAF, was designated as a bomber squadron and was utilised conducting air raids on Calais, Augsburg, Cologne or Kiel, equipped with Handley Page Hampden bombers and later (from 1942 onwards) by Avro Lancaster heavy bombers. Meanwhile, No.1 Squadron, Southern Rhodesia Air Force was renamed to No.237 (Rhodesia) Squadron RAF and in the period from 1940-1941 it saw service in East Africa, namely in Kenya, Sudan and Eritrea.

After the end of the war the RAF maintained its presence until the South Rhodesia Air Force was officially established on 28th November 1947. At that time, SRAF forces consisted of Tiger Moth biplanes, North American Harvard trainers and several Avro Anson and de Havilland Rapide transport aircraft. This situation changed in March 1951, when a batch of Spitfire Mk.22s was received. During the 1950's the name of air force was changed to the Royal Rhodesian Air Force (RRAF) and its pilots received their first jet fighters - in 1955 the first de Havilland Vampires were delivered and in 1959 Canberra jet bombers were introduced into the RRAF. Development continued and Vampires were phased out in favour of Hawker Hunter fighters, first delivered in 1962. In the same year the RRAF received their first helicopters - French Aérospatiale Alouette III helicopters.

Allied pilots training over Southern Rhodesia in 1943

Three years later, following the dissolution of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Southern Rhodesia declared unilateral independence. During the Rhodesia Bush War, raging from 1964 to 1978, the RRAF conducted air strikes in support of Rhodesan ground forces, giving them a significant advantage. After an arms embargo was issued on Rhodesia the RRAF (renamed to Rhodesian Air Force in 1970) had to

resort to using vintage aircraft, such as C-47 Dakota transport aircraft and de Havilland Vampires, which were already obsolete at that time. Rising number of terrorist attacks in Southern Rhodesia also resulted in wide usage of helicopters.

In 1979 Rhodesia was dissolved in favour of forming a new state - Zimbabwe. The RhAF remained active until 1980, when the air force was reformed and renamed the Air Force of Zimbabwe. Under this name the air force is active to the present day.

Afrika Korps Marder III camouflage of the 15th Panzer Division created by zFireWyvern | Download here

[PROFILE] Marder III

7. January - Author: Jan "RayPall" Kozák

During 1941, the German army was faced by new Soviet tanks - T-34 medium tanks and KV-1 heavy tanks. These vehicles, while still not available in large numbers in 1941, were practically impervious to anything the Germans could send to field. German anti-tank weaponry of that time consisted mainly of towed 3.7 cm PaK 36 guns and Panzerjäger I tank destroyers, armed with the Czechoslovakian 4.7 cm PaK(t) gun - both of these weapons were absolutely ineffective against KV-1 and T-34 armour, even at short range. It was thus evident that the Wehrmacht desperately needed a new tank destroyer with better armament than towed guns and better capabilities than the Panzerjäger I.

This required fast deployment and because of this, development of a new vehicle was out of the question. Instead, it was decided to use chassis' of already existing tanks. The decision was made that new tank destroyer would be built on the chassis of the Czechoslovakian PzKpfw 38(t) light tank. This vehicle was already obsolete in 1941, but it was well liked for its reliable running gear and there was plenty of spare parts in the system. The project was developed in the Alkett plant between 1941-1942, with the first prototype built in January 1942. The vehicle was then accepted into service and into serial production under the designation "Panzerjäger 38(t) für 7,62 cm PaK 36(r)", its unofficial name, Marder III, was however much more popular.

First serial Marder III's were finished in April 1942.

Marder III on Eastern Front

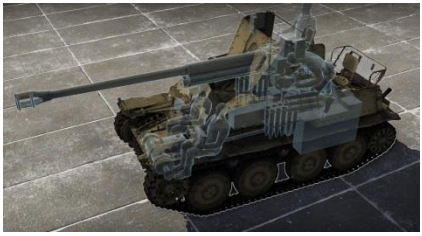
During conversion process of modifying the PzKpfw 38(t), the turret was removed and instead a lightly armoured casemate was placed on top of the hull with the gunner and commander being placed above the engine deck. Armour was very light - the casemate was only 10 mm thick, while the area around the gun's crew compartment was 14.5 mm thick, providing protection only against small arms and fragments. Additionaly, it covered the gun's compartment only from the front and provided next to no cover from the sides, rear, or top. Interesting was choice of armament. With 3.7 cm and 4.7 cm guns being deemed ineffective, and the legendary 7.5 cm PaK 40 anti-tank gun still not available in sufficient numbers, it was decided to use the captured Soviet 76.2 mm F-22 regimental gun. This weapon was modified by adding a muzzle brake, using larger cartridges and several other changes. Improved weapon, designated as "7.62 cm PaK 36(r)" had sufficient penetration to defeat both T-34 and KV-1 armour.

The new vehicle was introduced into service and crews welcomed it heartly. They were able to knock out Soviet or Allied tanks of that time, and had good reliability and mobility. The vehicle did, however, suffer from a high profile and practically non-existent armour protection, resulting in extremely low survivability. As an attempt to rectify this weakness, two additional variants were manufactured during its production run - the Ausf.H re-armed to PaK 40 anti-tank gun and sporting improved armour protection (reaching up to 50 mm), and the Ausf.M with rearranged layout and lower profile. Overall, Marders were liked for their reliability and firepower, and remained in service right until the end of war, even when they were substitued by fully enclosed designs such as Jagdpanzer 38(t) Hetzer. In total, from 1942 to 1944, 942 Marders III were made in the Böhmisch-Mährische Maschinenfabrik AG plant in Prague, and were used on all fronts, including the deserts of North Africa.

In the game, the Marder III is a German tank destroyer placed in rank II with BR 2.7; it is a continuation of the PzKpfw 38(t) line in the German tech tree after the PzKpfw 38(t) Ausf.F light tank, and shares its pros and cons with its real life counterpart. It comes with excellent firepower for its tier - with basic APCBC PzGr 39 rot

ammunition, it can pierce up to 99 mm of armour at ranges of 500 meters and 86 mm at 1000 meters, making it possible to defeat pretty much everything in its tier, including T-34's and KV-1's. What's even better, it is possible to unlock sub-caliber APCR ammunition with 122 mm of penetration at 500 m, or HEAT shells trading 100 mm of penetration at all ranges in exchange for much worse ballistic performance. In addition to that, the Marder III has good mobility and acceleration - it can reach its 42 kph (26 mph) max. speed in eight seconds on flat surfaces.

Mobility and firepower comes at a high price, though. As in real life, the Marder III has nearly no armour whatsoever. The strongest armour is at the frontal upper and lower plates, sporting 50 mm thickness, but otherwise, the armour is 16 mm thick at best with no side or rear cover for the gun's crew, making it vulnerable even for machine gun rounds. Armour-piercing shells can be less effective due to armour being sometimes too thin for bursting charges' fuses to activate, but HE shells are absolutely lethal.



Crew, modules and ammunition in Marder III

Given the advantages and disadvantages, the Marder III's role is then limited to ambushes and long-range sniping, taking advantage of its outstanding gun. Use its mobility to play as a mobile sniper - find a suitable position, take a shot and then immediately relocate in order to avoid return fire. Avoid any prolonged shootouts at all costs, and always seek cover - the Marder III's high profile means it really sticks out in the middle of open terrain, making it an easy target.

With light armour in exchange for great firepower, the Marder III is great in long-range sniping and if you master the art of being a mobile sniper, you can get pretty good results. And if you stay with it, you can lead your way up to the pinnacle of the PzKpfw 38(t) branch - the legendary Jagdpanzer 38(t) Hetzer.

'Number "16". Non-standard field camouflage by Justin "Spogooter" Kramer, available in game thanks to the Revenue Share Program!

[PROFILE] Polikarpov I-153

8. January - Author: Joe "Pony51" Kudrna

The Polikarpov I-15bis (2nd version) was becoming obsolete yet the Soviet military felt it was too early to abandon biplanes so they approved of an update proposed by Polikarpov. The resulting I-15, 3rd version, or I-153 Chaika (Russian Чайка, "Seagull") was, in short, an unmitigated success. Mounting a more powerful Shvetsov M-62 engine and retractable wheels (unusual for a biplane) it gained an almost 100 km/h speed advantage over its older sibling.

In addition the four slow firing PV-1 machine guns were replaced with the ShKAS machine gun which fired some 2.3 times faster, making its firepower competitive with more modern fighters of the period; however its dominance was short lived.

I-153 equipped with skids to start from snowy and frozen surfaces

While successful in Khalkhin Gol it was matched by the latest Japanese monoplanes and more powerful engines did not improve top speed. Although well loved by crews for its sublime combat performance, enemy forces developed effective counter tactics, and finally it could no longer meet future performance requirements so retirement came fast. Decades later a number of I-153's wrecks were found across the

former Soviet Union and restored to flying condition, keeping this last great biplane fighter alive today.

Rifle caliber machine guns (5 to 10mm) are a low energy round that has a difficult time penetrating even thin aluminum skin of new aircraft being built, but it was far from a useless weapon in air combat. Its chief advantage is a fast firing, high velocity, nearly flat trajectory making it very easy for even inexperienced pilots to get their rounds on target. To compensate for the low damage potential of the round a number of aircraft were equipped with 4 or more and faster firing machine guns. The king of the latter is the ShKAS machine gun, firing an astounding 1800 rounds per minute (rpm). Although losing some rpm due to propeller synchronization it was still a massive improvement over the earlier PV-1's and the well spaced square centerline mount achieves an optimal kill sweetspot; one does not need to be a marksman to get rounds on target.

In War Thunder the I-153 itself is a very capable fighter, the fastest of the biplanes although slow compared to nearly all monoplane fighters. In contrast compared to biplanes it has average maneuverability yet it can readily out maneuver any monoplane fighter and is very hard to get into a spin. It possible to turn into an attacker and let loose with a wall of bullets before they can achieve a firing solution. At the very least one can readily spoil the attacks and have a chance at a split second burst as they pass. As an attacker, buy your time, don't underestimate how fast they can turn around and bite you! The treat with this lethal package is the 8 count RS-82 rockets option, making it a downright vicious little beast!

A group of I-153 equipped with ground attack rockets preparing for liftoff

While any novice can do well with this fighter, being experienced with deflection shooting and having independent view (use Track IR or OR) for maximum situational awareness will make you go from good to a terror. This little beast also benefits from being flown very aggressively: engage attackers and take swipes every chance but short bursts only, ammo goes very fast. You have two identical I-153's in the tree of BR 2.3 in AB/HB, the regular and "Zhukovsky's" premium, a great one-two AB punch. Make sure to upgrade the weapons as soon as possible. A parting shot: don't be afraid to take it in team matches of much higher BR's and frustrate attackers who don't have a chance to shoot you but find their tail feathers chewed up instead.

Panzerbefehlswagen Tiger (P) premium tank in War Thunder, purchasable in-game through Golden Eagles

[HISTORICAL] Paper Giants - the heavy tanks of Ferdinand Porsche

9. January - Author: Adam "BONKERS" Lisiewicz

Professor Doctor Ferdinand Porsche is remembered as one of the pioneers in automotive engineering. His car projects, such as the Volkswagen Type 1 or the Porsche 911 are legendary. However, what many people do not know, is that during the WW2 Dr. Porsche was also trying to design tanks. While most of them did not leave the prototype stage, they were still fairly important thanks to innovative design philosophies.

The first venture of Porsche into the world of tank design started in 1939. In that year, works on the vehicle known as Typ 100 began. Since the tank was not designed to fulfill any specifications, Porsche and his engineers were free to experiment with their own ideas. One of the most groundbreaking features in the construction of the new tank was the diesel-electric propulsion system. In the Typ 100, the two Porsche V10 air-cooled engines were mounted in the back of the tank. Those two engines were then used to power an electric generator made by Siemens, which then transferred the electric power to two smaller electric motors designed to move the two frontal drive wheels. Also the suspension was unique: to save internal space, it consisted of three roadwheels on each side with torsion bars mounted longitudinally. At the same time, Krupp began the construction of turrets for the vehicle,

which was to be armed with the 88 mm L/56 gun. However, only one hull of the Typ 100 was constructed, before the works on the new tank began in May 1941.

Panzerjäger Tiger (P) Elefant, modified version of the 'Ferdinand' tank destroyer

The new tank's, designated as the Typ 101 main feature was increased armor thickness – 100 mm of frontal hull armor and 80 mm of armor at the sides and rear of the vehicle. After the tests the new vehicle was designated as the VK 45.01 (P), with Krupp being ordered to produce 100 hulls of the new tank. However, the new construction was turning out to be to be prone to breakdowns, mainly due to the innovative propulsion system. Finally, on the 22nd of November 1942 Porsche was invited to meet Adolf Hitler. During that meeting, Hitler decided that the production of the "Tiger P" will be discontinued, with the rest of the hulls to be adopted as the Panzerjäger Tiger (P) (also known as the Ferdinand), armed with the 88 mm L/71 gun. Only one Porsche Tiger saw service during the war. After being modified, it was used as a command tank (Befehlswagen) in the 653 Schwere Panzerjäger Abteilung on the Eastern Front. After arriving there in April 1944, it was lost in combat in July 1944.

While the Tiger P design was still in the making, Porsche wanted to improve it further. This new tank would become then known as the Porsche Typ 180, designated later as the VK 45.02 (P). The Porsche design team also decided to change the armor layout of the new machine. The new tank would feature a 80 mm frontal glacis plate sloped at 55 degrees instead of non-sloped 200 mm plate seen on the Ferdinand. However, once again, the propulsion mechanism was judged as too complicated even before the first hull prototype was produced. With Henschel proposing a far more conventional version of the new tank, the Typ 180 was scrapped. Krupp still produced the prototype turret – it was fitted to the first 50 new Tiger II tanks. It was, however, later changed to an improved version, that eliminated the frontal shot trap and strengthened the turret front.

Pz.Kpfw. VIII Maus, designed by Porsche, in the Kubinka Tank Museum

Porsche was not yet done, however. In July 1942, he proposed the construction of a superheavy tank to Hitler, which the Führer approved. Known as the “Maus”, this new steel behemoth would become the biggest and heaviest tank ever built. The plans called for a 200 tonne tank, equipped with a 128 mm L/55 gun, with the best possible armor. The first tests of a turretless V1 prototype began in December 1943. Later, the second prototype, designated as the V2, was equipped with the MB517 diesel engine. The armor profile of the Maus was impressive – with 200 mm of frontal hull armor sloped at 30 degrees, as well as 240 mm of frontal turret armor, the Maus would be nearly impossible to penetrate frontally. However, the tank was a logistical nightmare, being too heavy and ultimately underpowered. Even before the testing began, the order to produce 150 of those tanks was cancelled in October 1943. Ultimately, only two prototypes were built, and the vehicle never saw combat service.

With a coming update we will introduce the "Schwere Panzerjäger-Abteilung 653" decal, where some of Ferdinand Porsche's 'Elefant' tank destroyers and the Pz.Bfw. VI (P) saw service. Made by Branislav 'InkaL' Mirkov

Bf 109 G-6, piloted by Franz Stigler escorting B-17, camouflage for Bf 109
by LoneWolfSones | Download Here

[PROFILE] Oberleutnant Ludwig Franz Stigler

12. January - Author: Mark Barber

Ludwig Franz Stigler was born in Regensburg on August 21st 1915, the younger of two sons of Franz Stigler. Stigler recalled both of his parents with great affectation; his mother was the disciplinarian and raised him with the same staunch Catholic ideals she held whilst his father was a little more relaxed and a gentle and affectionate man. Idolising his father – a First World War reconnaissance pilot – the young Stigler went by his middle name of Franz.

After the war Stigler's father had found work managing horses for an estate. He met Father Josef, a Catholic Priest who had flown fighters in the First World War. The two decided to start a gliding school for local children; after saving up for plans for a Stamer Lippisch 'Pupil' glider, they supervised the building of the aircraft by local boys. In the summer of 1927, the young Franz Stigler took his first flight in a glider at the age of only 12.

As his father watched in horror the glider pitched violently nose up and rocketed skyward before plummeting down and impacting with the ground. Stigler Senior sprinted over to the crash site in panic, but found his son alive and well. He burst into tears and embraced his son, apologizing profusely as he realized he had not added any counter balance weights to the glider to compensate for such a

light pilot. The glider was repaired and, undeterred, Stigler took his first flight.

Oberleutnant Franz Stigler

To his mother's delight, Stigler initially trained as a priest but at the age of 17, after being caught in an amorous relationship with a brewmaster's daughter, it was clear that the priesthood was not for Stigler. He wanted to fly; after starting an aeronautical engineering degree at university, Stigler dropped out to concentrate on flying itself. He qualified as an airline pilot and flew for Lufthansa for four years, amassing some 2000 hours in his logbook. Then, in 1937, Stigler was ordered to begin a new job of training pilots for the military. This would also involve flying to Spain where he would be dropping off supplies for Nationalist forces engaged in fighting in the civil war.

Stigler enjoyed being an instructor; one of his students was a young Gerhard Barkhorn. However, as a civilian instructor he found he lacked the authority to deal with some of his military students and so was enlisted into the ranks of the Luftwaffe. A highly experienced pilot, he was soon promoted to unteroffizier (corporal). In early 1939 Stigler even trained his older brother August, who stated his preference to fly bombers. However, Franz worried about his brother – vocal in his opposition to the Nazi party, August followed in his parents' footsteps as both had voted against Hitler's rise to power. Franz's pride at seeing his brother graduate was tragically short lived – in October 1940 August's Ju88 crashed on take off. The loss of his brother made him angry and resentful; Stigler volunteered for service on the front line.

After acceptance within the ranks of the fighter fraternity, Stigler was promoted to feldwebel (sergeant) and posted to North Africa to fly Bf109Fs with JG27, arriving in late spring of 1942. Despite 4000 flying hours logged, Stigler's first encounter with the enemy was a disaster; Stigler panicked as soon as he was locked in combat with RAF P40s – he

abandoned his wing leader and fled. Upon landing his leader – 37 kill ace Gustav Roedel – had enough sympathy to congratulate Stigler on surviving his first mission. Stigler replied that he would be happy to confirm Roedel's latest kill but first needed to change his trousers. Stigler was soon introduced to the legendary ace Hans-Joachim Marseille. He immediately took to Marseille and found himself in awe of the pilot, but found other flyers of JG 27 to be far less enamored.

The crew of the B-17F "Ye Olde Pub"

On May 31st, Stigler scored his first kill – a P40. After landing he was reprimanded by Roedel for smiling; the veteran pilot lectured him as they had lost three friends to the RAF in the same fight; there was nothing to celebrate. Shortly after Stigler was shot down for the first time, but was taken back to his airstrip via camel, courtesy of a local Bedouin tribe. By the end of July Stigler had shot down five British aircraft to become an ace; in an effort to emulate Roedel he copied his leader's practice of refusing to paint kill markings on his rudder – it was just a job, a team effort and personal glory was not an aim. Eventually, with photographers featuring JG 27's exploits, Stigler was ordered to paint his kill markings on. Finally, in September 1942, Stigler was sent back to Germany for a break from combat.

After North Africa, Stigler next saw combat whilst defending Sicily from allied bombers. His tally of victories continued to mount – by April 1943 he had shot down 17 aircraft. Later in the month, Stigler met Adolf Galland for the first time; the meeting was intended as a reprimand for pursuing enemy fighters rather than bombers, but after discussing tactics and their experiences in Spain, the two left on very good terms. Whilst in Sicily Stigler was also interviewed by the Gestapo; the Catholic Church in Germany was stirring up anti-Nazi sentiment and links to Stigler's brother had been uncovered.

In August Stigler found himself back in Germany, now tasked with flying his Bf109 in defense of the Reich against the mass day bombing of the USAAF. In December he was involved in an incident which decades later would become famous. On its first mission, a bombing run to Bremen, a B-17 of the 379th Bomb Group named 'Ye Olde Pub' was severely damaged by a combination of AA and German fighters. Clawing its way home with engines spluttering, one stabilizer

shot off completely, its nose open to the elements and dead and wounded on board, the lone bomber was intercepted by Stigler – this kill would give him the points he needed for a Knights Cross. Seeing the plight of the American airmen Stigler was filled with compassion; instead of finishing the bomber off, he flew alongside and tried to signal for the bomber to land. When they refused, he gestured for them to head to neutral Sweden. In the end, after flying alongside for some time, Stigler saluted, said a brief prayer for them and headed for home.

January 1944 saw Stigler promoted and given command of his own squadron within JG 27, operating from Graz in Austria. He took far more time trying to train his pilots to survive than chasing kills – the points required for a Knights Cross had been raised but Stigler no longer cared. Stigler continued bravely with his duty but signed his victories off to his junior pilots to help bolster their confidence. In October Stigler was wounded by a .50 calibre round to the head; whilst his survival was miraculous, he was grounded by doctors worried over brain trauma.

After spending time looking after his recently widowed mother, Stigler returned to flying and began his conversion course to the Me 262 in January 1945. After converting, he returned briefly to instructing before seeing out the last days of the war back on the front line with the elite JV 44. Whilst unit records show Stigler shot down at least four US bombers whilst flying Me 262s, his final tally is impossible to verify as he had ceased to bother claiming victories. In May 1945, Stigler took his jet and fled, eventually surrendering to American forces.

Charlie Brown and Franz Stigler in 2008

After the war Stigler initially struggled along in Germany before moving to Canada in 1953 with his wife. He found work as a mechanic with a logging company. After fathering a daughter, the two divorced in 1954. He remarried and did return to the skies, buying a Messerschmit 108 which he painted as his old Bf109 to play the 'villain' at air shows. In 1990 he met Charles Brown, the pilot of the B-17 he had spared back in 1943. The two remained friends until Stigler passed away in March 2008.

Pzkpfw II Ausf. C DAK (Deutsches Afrikakorps) available in the game for 250GE

[GROUND FORCES] 15th panzer division

13. January - Author: Aaron "anglomanii" Lentz

The Battles of France in 1940 and the rapid and decisive victories there were to prove to the High command in the Wehrmacht that more Panzer Divisions were needed to compliment the armies existing panzer elements. A solution to this need was to combine existing infantry Divisions with Panzer regiments to form new panzer Divisions and to compliment these with a superior number of motorised transport and engineering units. The 15th Panzer Division was one such unit, the 8th Panzer Regiment and elements of the 33rd Infantry division including the 104th infantry and 115th motorized infantry regiments were combined on the 1st of november 1940 at Landau in the Darmstadt area. The newly formed 15th Panzer Division soon underwent preparations for tropical deployment as the campaign in north africa began to take shape. Already Equipped with Panzer II light tanks and panzer III medium tanks the unit also received the new Panzer IV medium tank. The short barreled 7.5cm gun of the Panzer IV complimented the High velocity 2cm and 3.7cm weapons of the early panzer II and III's.

Advance of the Panzerjager Abteilung 39

The 15th Panzers were soon committed to the north african

campaign, with the first elements arriving on the 5th of april 1941 at tripoli, the bulk would arrive by the the end of april by ship in convoy. The Division was quickly pushed on to the area south of Tobruk at Fort Acroma. From here the 15th would take part in many battles, the fighting at tobruk, Bardia, Sollum and Halfaya Pass. Always at the front and constantly on the move the men and machines of the 15th performed above and beyond maintaining a high moral and gaining many victories in the process, the price of these victories was steep, many officers often boldly leading from the front would become casualties, the men and machines would also be thoroughly exhausted, covering thousands of kilometers and traversing some of the most hostile terrain on earth the tanks were often worn out just as they were reaching combat. Despite this the they often came off better than their British adversaries from Gazala and finally to El Alamein. It was here finally that Rommel Halted, Exhausted he and his men retired to defencive positions, the 15th took up a position to the north of the line, to refit and repair. many of the Panzer II tanks were by now worn out and the unit was now mostly made up of panzer III and IV tanks, the Division had also acquired several British matilda tanks which it had put to good use. Eventually the 15th would acquire upgraded panzer III and IV tanks with much more capable 5cm and 7.5cm long guns.

The main killing power of the Division remained it's antitank guns, the light towed 5cm and the later 7.5cm PaK guns being very capable weapons, it would however be the 8.8cm flak gun that would become the most feared weapon in the DAK's arsenal. Despite the brilliant performance of the 15th panzer division the tide had turned and the successes of the early phases of the campaign gave way to a series of defeats that even their new tanks proved incapable of turning around. The old glory of the 15th would return in the battles of Sidi Bou Zid, Faid pass and Kasserine pass, though here the division was subordinate to the 10th and 21st divisions as at that time the 15th was so understrength. The last desperate fighting of the 15th would be at Medenine, Wadi Zigaou and El Hauma where down to just 10 panzer III tanks the last of the division would face the overwhelming power of the 8th Army.

Out of fuel, tanks and men, the remnants of the 15th panzer division would finally lay down their arms and at noon the 9th of May 1943 the story of the Division would be closed here it's incredible exploits beyond doubt.

Panzerkampfwagen II Ausf. C - historical Skin - PzRgt 10, 8. PzDiv created by JoKeR_BvB09 | Download here

[PROFILE] PzKpfw II Ausf C/F and DAK

14. January - Author: Joe "Pony51" Kudrna

Don't let this "toy" tank fool you, it can pull its weight even in higher BR battles using its high mobility to spot and outflank. Historically it also showed its mettle against superior armored but slower forces were used successfully in blitzkrieg tactics again and again.

Panzer II of the 15th Panzer Divison in North Africa. Bundesarchiv

Mobile armor ("tanks") were a war technology the Germans were seriously deficient in. During the First World War they only had limited number and experience with a single design (A7V) and post war the Versaille treaty forbade any development let alone production. While secret designs and experiments were conducted during the 1920's they still had nothing that could be considered a tank. It was Lieutenant Colonel Heinz Guderian who spurred the urgency for armor, outlined performance requirements, and pushed for production. With Hitler's rise to power, armor was given a priority, except few knew how to make or use them. It was decided to build a simple and cheap stop-gap "Sonderkraftfahrzeug (SdKfz) 101"

(special purpose vehicle 101), better known as the "PzKpfw (Panzer) I", as a training tool for design, testing, and training. As experience in making and using the Panzer I grew so did requirements for their main battle armor design; however progress was very slow so it was decided in 1934 to build yet another stop-gap, the SdKfz 121, better known as the "PzKpfw II".

Ostensibly a larger PzKpfw I, it incorporated a significant number of improvements and added a 20mm cannon over the pair of obsolete MG-13 machineguns. The resulting vehicle was about on par with light armor from others nations, a notable accomplishment for a nation new to modern armor design, except it would be no match against nearly any armor and anti-tank weapons fielded by other countries. Despite this, when the war started on September 1st 1939 it made up a significant proportion of Wehrmacht forces during the Polish invasion. Eight months later in the Blitzkrieg of the west it was still the most numerous armor unit and Germans used the up-armored "Ausf C" version to great effect against vastly superior forces! It was not finished yet. Over a year later it was again a major unit in the blitzkrieg of the Soviet Union helping in early gains where its speed and terrain handling in recon duties compensated for its weak armor and weapons; however once the front became stagnant the PzKpfw II was completely doomed. Still, its legacy as a "training tank" that was pivotal to victory in several major battles is amazing. It was the little tank that could!

A captured Panzer II near El Alamein, Egypt, in August 1942.

Although lightly armored with a weak 20mm cannon, do not underestimate the capabilities of this "toy" tank. With good top speed, maneuverability, terrain handling, and a low profile it makes for an excellent scout and out flanking enemy forces. Acceleration is a respectable 3.9 seconds to 20 km/h, 6.8s to 30, 10.8s to 40 with top speed about 42 km/h on average terrain. Don't rush to hot zones where you will quickly be destroyed. Instead use terrain to hide your moves, call in artillery, and hit exposed flanks and rear were point blank the 20mm is very effective at doing critical hits (learn weak points). The beauty of the 20mm is a magazine of 10 rounds that increase the chance of a penetrative round doing critical with burst fire at different areas on target. The 20mm KwK 30 L/55 default load is a 50/50

mix of API-T/HEFI-T (PzGr/Sprgr), with respectable 35mm penetration at 100m and the HE round will take out soft skinned targets like artillery and SPAA fast. Unlockable loads include a pure PzGr and Sprgr and finally the highly desirable PzGr 40 with 45mm at 100m.

Team battles is where it shines; it can scout out the enemy, harass with pop up cannon barrages and artillery to distract, help teammates that get stuck, squeeze through all city passages, and best of all has extra respawns with the Reserve unit capability. And if the pure load of Sprgr HEFI-T was a clue, yes, it is also an excellent armored SPAA to boot! Drive up inclines to increase elevation and profit!

Facing off against a Pz 2 is more a matter of being alert than a big gun. Except for the front up-armored section it is thin skinned and an easy kill, but it can come in fast and unload a barrage of 20mm into your vulnerable flank before you realize it's there. They could also distract you from a more formidable threat coming down the road.

The Reserve Ausf C and Premium DAK (Deutsche Afrikakorps (German Africa Corps)) are identical with 1.0 BR while the Ausf F (BR 1.3) incorporates better side armor at the expense of frontal armor and a faster firing main gun from 279.6 to 450 SPM, and note non-Reserve only spawn once. The faster rate is a mixed blessing as one can easily expend the entire magazine uselessly, 3 round bursts are better even point blank as you find that vulnerable point. After unlocking the PzGr API-T round unlock Repairs and Fire Extinguisher as you will use them, often.

Panzer II, the toy terror tank!

'Kawanishi N1K2-J «Shiden-Kai», 407th Combat Flying Group' skin by TSGT | download here

[PROFILE] Kawanishi N1K2-J «Shiden-Kai»

15. January - Author: Jan „RayPall“ Kozák

Roots of Kawanishi N1K2, one of the best Japanese fighters ever built, reach into year 1941, where Kawanishi N1K floatplane fighter design was made. However, it was not until 1943, when Kawanishi N1K Kyofu entered service. Sheer weight of floats hampered it's performance, but it's airframe and powerful engine offered great potential. Proposal was made as soon as in 1941 to modify Kyofu into land-based fighter. New plane first flew on 27th December 1942, but trials were unsatisfactory due to engine's reliability issues, low maximum speed and other problems. However, new fighter was still faster than A6M Zero, and had longer range than Mitsubishi J2M Raiden, so it was accepted into service under designation of N1K1-J Shiden ("Violet Lightning"). But only couple of days after Shiden's flight tests, work on complete redesign begun. Construction was simplified and significantly lightened, and in 1944, resulting fighter, named N1K2-J Shiden-Kai, was rushed into service.

Powered by 1990 hp Nakajima Ha-45-21 radial engine, and carrying heavy armament of four 20 mm Type 99-2 Mk.4 cannons, Shiden soon established itself as a very effective

fighter. Albeit still suffering from engine reliability issues, it was fast enough to be more than a match for best US fighters like F4U Corsair or F6F Hellcat. Shiden-Kai possessed extreme agility, and had rugged construction with self-sealing fuel tanks, solid amount of armour, and bulletproof windshield - all of it allowing the plane to withstand heavy battle damage. It's biggest disadvantage, aside of sub-par climbrate, was a lack of effective supercharger, hampering high-altitude performance and limiting it's capability to intercept B-29 Superfortress heavy bombers.

As a war situation worsened for the Empire, strained Japanese industry was able to produce N1K2-J only in a very limited numbers. Only 428 Shiden-Kai fighters were produced, resulting in Shiden-Kais being issued only to a handful of elite fighter squadrons. Probably most famous of Shiden-Kai pilots was Kaneyoshi Muto, fighter ace with 34 confirmed kills - in one of his encounters, he is credited by battling 12 F6F Hellcats alone, shooting down four of them and forcing the rest to retreat.

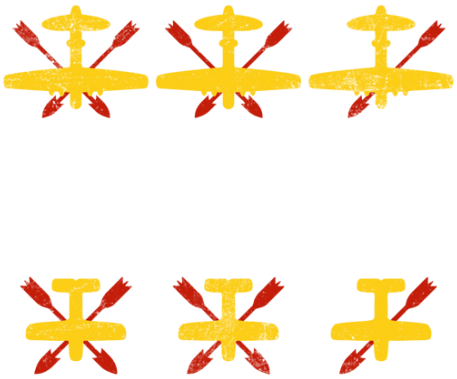
In War Thunder, N1K2-J Shiden is tier IV Japanese fighter with BR 6.3 and a direct successor of A6M Zero line. It's maximum speed is 595 kph and Turn time is only 19 seconds, but climbrate, as of Shiden's real-life counterpart, is less than stellar - only 12,8 m/s. In terms of armament though, Shiden-Kai packs a punch. Four 20 mm cannons give you heavy firepower, and generous ammo supply of 900 rounds (225 rounds per gun) allows you to down several targets and still have plenty of ammo to spare. In addition, you can mount two 82 mm unguided rockets to amplify your bomber-hunting capabilities, or up to 500 kg of bombs for fighter-bomber duties. And we must not forget ruggedness of Shiden-Kai - unusually tough for a Japanese fighter, it can soak up good amounts of damage and still be able to return you safely home.

If you mastered the playstyle of Zero fighters - being somewhat slow, but extremely agile - N1K2-J will be nothing new for you, but with addition of giving you significant boost in ruggedness, firepower and speed. Given the opposition at BR 6.3, you will be faced mainly by high-end propeller-driven aircraft like F8F Bearcat, Hawker Tempest Mk.V, or Griffon-engined Spitfire marks. These fighters can outclimb and outrun you, but they will have a very hard time outturning you. Lure your opponent

into a turning fight and use your superior agility to get him into your crosshairs.

Due to it's BR, Shiden-Kai has a chance to be pitted against low-end jet fighters, like P-80A or Gloster Meteor F.Mk.3. Against these, your lack of speed is even more annyoing, but your turning advantage is further enhanced. Use the speed of jets against them - evade their repeated passes, using your agility to make an elusive target from yourself, and patiently wait, until jet pilot makes a mistake. Another viable tactic is to look for already engaged jet fighters, which would be often low on speed and energy. In that moment, sneak up behind, as he will be occupied and likely not paying attention to his surroundings.

While not as fast as it's opponents, but combining great maneuverability with heavy firepower and ruggedness, Shiden-Kai can be deadly in right hands, and very hard target to kill. And if you will stay with it, you can research either fighter-bomber variant of Shiden-Kai, N1K2-Ja with additional bombload, or exotic Kyushu J7W1 canard interceptor - extremely fast plane possessing deadly firepower of four 30 mm cannons.



In a future update, we will include the victory markings used by the 343th Kokutai, which was equipped by Shidens. Made by Jej 'CharlieFoxtrot' Ortiz

Historical camouflage for KV-1 ZiS-5 called "Merciless", camouflage created by Tiger_VI | Download here

[HISTORICAL] Tanks of Kliment Voroshilov

16. January - Author: Sergej "NuclearFoot" Hrustic

In 1938, the Soviet Union began development of several modern heavy tank designs, to be used in the Soviet "deep battle" doctrine. During the Winter War, three tank prototypes were sent to Finland to be tested: The SMK, KV, and T-100. Out of all of them, the KV proved to be dominant in every aspect, and construction began immediately.

The KV tanks were named after the Soviet defense commissar, politician and statesman Kliment Voroshilov. He had no actual part in their engineering, yet he was considered important enough for an entire tank series to be named after him.

The "deep battle" doctrine advocated heavy 'siege' tanks, which were to be used in the siege phases of battle. These tanks were meant to shrug off rounds from most enemy cannons, and to be able to destroy the tanks that bore them as well. This, of course, meant that compromises had to be made regarding manoeuvrability, speed, and agility. The KV tank that was adopted after its test phase in the Winter War complied with the above criteria. The tank weighed a whopping 45 tons, and had more frontal and side armour than any other tank of that era. The gun, however, was nearly the same as that of the T-34 medium tank. Moreover, the quality of the tank

overall was wanting: the crew's vision was severely lacking, and the tank was so cumbersome that it could not go over wooden bridges (which medium tanks could) for fear of it crashing down, and it was barely faster than a bicycle.

Kliment Yefremovich Voroshilov

Some versions of the KV were also equipped with a large 152mm howitzer cannon and an expanded turret, as this version became known as the KV-2, with the former being labeled the KV-1.

Even with its flaws and its limited numbers (there were only ~500 of the KV-1 and 2 tanks out of the 22 000 Soviet tanks at the time), the KV tanks proved a huge nuisance to the invading German forces. None of the German tanks at the time could penetrate the KV's armour, and they had to employ either high-caliber anti-tank artillery or to call in specialized ground attack aircraft just to take out one KV tank. Meanwhile the KV's had no problem penetrating German armour, and there is even a story of 5 KV-2's taking out 43 German Panzers while holding a bridge. In this early stage of the war, the KV's proved to be probably the most powerful tank in the world.

However, by 1942, the KV slowly became outclassed by its German counterparts. The German 50mm and 75mm long-barreled guns (Pak 38 and Pak 40, respectively) were in fact able to penetrate the KV's armour at medium range, and KV's gun proved completely useless against the Tiger I. The first issue was addressed by adding appliqué armour, though this limited the KV's manoeuvrability even more. Eventually, another model of the KV-1, named the KV-1S, was developed. This one boasted increased speed and manoeuvrability, at a cost of armour in several specific points. However, the Soviets soon realised that the T-34 offered the same relative performance, but much cheaper.

The life of the KV tanks was uncertain at best, until the appearance of the Panther class of German tanks. This dangerous tank again called for heavy armour, and the KV tanks were renewed. This time, the KV-85 was put into service. With nearly the same

armour as the KV-1, it was still quite formidable, but it now boasted an 85-mm cannon, which proved powerful enough to penetrate the Panther's armour at long range, and even the Tiger's armour at close-to-medium range.

"Tankmen going to the front"

However, these tanks soon stopped being produced, but they formed the basis for the later IS class of Soviet heavy tanks. The IS (Iosef Stalin) class were still technically KVs, but they were renamed to honour the Soviet leader, rather than Kliment Voroshilov, who fell out of Stalin's favour. The IS tanks carried on the KV legacy, acting as a breakthrough and siege tank against the German army.

T-34 1942 with "Боевая подруга" (War Bride) decal, same as Mariya used on her tank. You can unlock it with 450 kills or for 200GE

[ACE] Mariya Vasilyevna Oktyabrskaya

19. January - Author: Sergej "NuclearFoot" Hrustić

She was born to a peasant family in 1905, in the Crimean Peninsula of the old Russian Empire. As one of ten children in the family, her future prospects did not seem high. After completing her secondary education, she worked in a cannery for a while, and then as a telephone operator. In 1925 she married a Soviet army officer, and they both changed their last name in honour of the October Revolution. She took a great interest in military affairs after meeting him, and eventually she even decided to join the army as a military nurse, as well as joining the Military Wives' Council.

When the Eastern Front of WWII opened (Called The Great Patriotic War in Russia), she was sent to Tomsk, in Siberia, far away from the fighting.

Whilst there, she received news that her husband had died in the war in August of 1941, near Kiev.
It took 2 years for the message to reach her. Absolutely infuriated, she vowed to kill all the Nazis that she could lay her hands upon, in order to avenge her husband's death.

She did good on her vow by selling all of her possessions in order to buy a T-34 tank, which she then donated to the Red Army, under one condition: that she be allowed to drive it, and it should be called "Fighting Girlfriend" ("Боевая подруга"). She even sent a personal letter to Stalin himself. Upon receiving it, he consented, and she was sent on a 5-month training course, after which she was appointed to the 26th Guards Tank Brigade.

Upon seeing a woman driving a tank, with the name "Fighting Girlfriend" on the side of its turret, the other soldiers regarded her as a joke, a publicity stunt set up by the higher-ups. However, this proved far from true. In her first tank battle near Smolensk, on the 21. October 1943, she was the first amongst the tankers to charge into the enemy positions, and managed to destroy several machine-gun and artillery nests. When her tank was hit by enemy gunfire and damaged, she leaped out of it and began conducting repairs while her crewman gave supporting fire, despite strict orders never to do such a thing. After the repairs had been successfully completed, they returned to their unit two days later.

On 17. January 1944, during a night operation, she continued showing extreme prowess, taking out several artillery nests and a self-propelled gun. However, an anti-tank gunner managed to score a hit into the tank's tracks. Defying orders yet again, she jumped out of the tank and started making repairs right in the middle of enemy territory. This time, unfortunately, another shell hit the tank, exploding into fragments. One of them hit Mariya in the head, and she fell into a coma.

She was in an unconscious state for nearly two months, and died on 15. March 1944. She was awarded the title Hero of the Soviet Union for her deeds and contribution during the war posthumously.

PLAAF Chinese MiG 15, camouflage made by Audrey_McKnight | download here

[AIR FORCES] PRC Air Force

20. January - Author: Adam "BONKERS" Lisiewicz

Officially, the People's Liberation Army Air Force of the People's Republic of China was established on 11th November 1949. After the victory of the communists in the Civil War and the retreat of the Kuomintang to Formosa (Taiwan), the new government in Beijing knew the importance of air power in a modern battlefield. Quickly turning to the Soviet Union for both material and personnel help, the Chinese began building a new force from scratch. With the help of Soviet advisors, the first air unit of the People's Liberation Army was founded. The Nanyuan Flying Group was tasked with defending the skies over the new Chinese capital Beijing, and consisted of 40 aircraft captured from the Kuomintang.

Chinese Mig Ace Sun Shenlu during the Korean War.

In 1951 the Soviet Union started supplying the PLAAF with aircraft. At first these were propeller-driven Lavochkin La-11 fighters; however the new force was soon equipped with new MiG-15 jet fighters. The Korean War saw the first use of PLAAF aircraft in combat against the forces of the United Nations, with the United States Air Force being the main

adversary. However, inexperienced Chinese pilots quickly fell victim to far more experienced US pilots. The war, even though costly for the Chinese, was also a boost for the indigenous aircraft industry. The aircraft works in Shenyang were used not only as a repair workshop, but also as an aircraft factory, producing MiG-15 fighters under license, known in China as Shenyang J-2. Another aircraft factory in Harbin began works on producing the licensed versions of the Ilyushin Il-28 bomber, known by the PLAAF as the Harbin H-5.

The 1950s and 1960s were not pleasant for the PLAAF. At first, the new Chinese mainland state was involved in a series of clashes with the Armed Forces of the Republic of Taiwan in the Taiwan Strait. The series of skirmishes lasted from 1954 until as late as 1996. The PLAAF involvement was most prevalent in the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis, when Chinese MiG-15 and MiG-17 fighters clashed with Taiwanese F-86 Sabres. The Taiwanese fighters, however, had an advantage - they were fitted with new US made AIM-9 Sidewinder air-to-air missiles. Because of this, ROCAF pilots were able to achieve air superiority. On 22nd September 1958 a ROCAF F-86 shot down a Chinese MiG with the use of the Sidewinder missile - the first confirmed air-to-air missile kill in history.

Because of the Sino-Soviet split in relations, the USSR ceased its technological transfer with Beijing in the early 1960s. However, the Shenyang works were prepared for this and continued manufacturing aircraft such as the J-5 (a copy of the Soviet MiG-17), the J-6 (a copy of the MiG-19) and the Chengdu J-7 (a copy of the MiG-21). China also supplied North Vietnam with aircraft during the Vietnam War, Pakistan during the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971 and both sides in the Iran-Iraq war.

After the collapse of the Soviet union in 1991, the PLAAF began a series of modernization programs designed to replace outdated aircraft. Currently, the main fighters of the force are the Chengdu J-10 and Sukhoi Su-27 multirole aircraft, with the Nanchang Q-5 serving as the main Close Air Support aircraft. The PLAAF also operates Xi'an H-6 strategic bombers and Changhe Z-10 attack helicopters. Thanks to this impressive operational capability, the People's Liberation Army Air Force is currently the second strongest air force in the world, just behind the USAF.

With a coming update we will introduce roundel of the "People's Liberation Army Air Force"

[PROFILE] ISU-152 «Zveroboy»

21. January - Author: Andrew 'Chaos_Tzeentch' O'sullivan

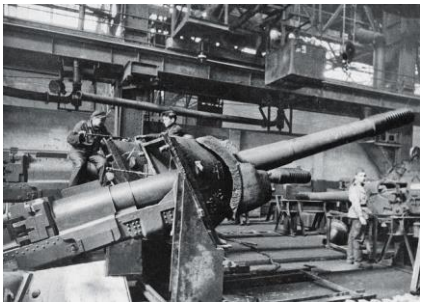
The ISU-152 began it's life on the drawing board at Chelyabinsk factory under the watchful eyes of Joseph Kotin in the enclosed construction bureau. The Red Army was in need to find a successor the SU-152, as it was based on the chassis of the KV tank, which was going to be removed from production. Thus it was decided that the newer IS chassis should be used to house the new superstructure while maintaining the same gun. Improvements were made to the new design including improved ventilation for the crew compartment, improved optics and a machine gun. One of the main requirements for this new SPG was the necessity of 100 mm of armor. Being on the drawing board for weeks while the blueprints were being drawn, the designs were eventually finished in 1943 and the prototype was under construction from July, later designated the ISU-152.

Stalin himself and three others viewed the new design when it went on display as a prototype at Ivanovskaya Square at the Kremlin. With great interest Stalin looked at the new designed SPG up close and at one stage he looked inside the vehicle to ask if the ventilation issue had been solved. No answer was given until the driver spoke up and stated it had. Stalin was satisfied and it was cleared for production by the Committee of Defense in November of 1943.

As a prototype the SPG was known as the "Object 236". While in the testing, many faults were found and the SPG was sent back to Chelyabinsk. After the shortcomings were looked at and improved, it was given a new

designation as “Object 241”. After state trials on the Gorohovetskom test range, the order was given to adopt this variant under the name “ISU-152”. This happened in December 1943, putting the Chelyabinsk factory in full swing production. Although up armored and on the IS chassis, this SPG still held onto some of its former SU-152 traits, these being: the gun, the same rear drive wheels, the same amount of road wheels and a torsion bar suspension system.

The fighting compartment was able to house five crew members. Three of them were situated left of the gun, namely the driver, gunner and first loader, while two of them were placed on the right of the gun, here namely the commander and second loader. The two loaders were perceived necessary, due to the large and heavy two piece ammunition.



Detail view of the ISU-152's ML-20S howitzer cannon prior to installation

In game, the ISU-152 is positioned at rank V. With a Battle Rating of 6.7 it is easily outclassed in armor, speed and reload times compared to its enemies. It does, however, have good mobility during turns and the ML-20s also brings a good range of shells with it, like the PB-540 HEAT round, QF-540 HE round, BR-540B APHEBC round and the BR-540 APHE round. Making the right choice of ammunition is important, as the maximum capacity is only 20 shells in total. My personal favourites are the QF540, and BP-540.

While weighing in at 46 tonnes, the ISU-152 with its lower profile can still sneak up on its enemies and do some major damage. The top speed of this assault gun is 38 km/h and with an expert crew you can get you reloads down to about 24.5 seconds. And yes, it is still a long reload but remember, the ammunition comes in two pieces that both weight a lot. So after firing your shot, it is best to remove yourself from your firing position while you reload. How you play this assault gun is up to you, but with the max armor of 90 mm I would stay out of harms way as much as possible. Personally, I feel the ISU-152 is better used in groups than as a lone wolf, as there will be moments where you could use support for this monster from your group. At the same time, you will be able to supplement your comrades with well needed heavy hitting support fire in the process.

Typhoon Mk.Ia from no.56 squadron RAF camouflage created by DarkSoul79 | Download Here

[HISTORICAL] Ugly ducklings - Hawker Typhoon Mk.Ia

22. January - Authoor: Mark Barber

The Ugly Duckling series has looked at a number of aircraft which are perhaps less popular than others in War Thunder, but has then gone on to detail how in real life these aircraft were actually very capable within their field. This month, we're taking a different approach – an aircraft which is relatively popular within the game, but in real life fell far short of the mark…

Within the confines of military aviation history, the Hawker Typhoon is far from an obscure aircraft; in fact, it is something of a household name. Famous for its untiring support of allied forces during the Normandy campaign, rocket firing Typhoons employed by the 2nd Tactical Air Force were a symbol of dread to many a German soldier. However, perhaps less well known are the less than stellar origins of the Typhoon. In fact, it would perhaps be fair to say that it began its service life as nothing short of an unmitigated disaster.

The Hawker team began work on the Typhoon in 1937, knowing full well that the then new Hurricane would still need a replacement at some point. The prediction proved to be accurate – in January 1938 the British Air Ministry issued specification F.18/37, calling for a replacement for the Hurricane and Spitfire which should be armed with twelve machine

guns and have a top speed in excess of 400 mph. The two engines available were the Rolls-Royce Vulture and the Napier Sabre, both predicted to deliver some 2000 hp; Hawker developed two prototype lines to coincide with the two engines. The Hawker Tornado would be powered by the Vulture whilst the Hawker Typhoon would be fitted with the Sabre.

Napier Sabre engine

Both engines suffered significant problems during the development phase and Rolls-Royce, already snowed under with both the production and the development of the Merlin, opted to abandon the Vulture, despite orders for 500 Tornadoes having already been placed following the successful first flight of the prototype. This left Napier with the Sabre powered Typhoon project, which first took to the skies on February 24th, 1940. Testing continued until May 1940, when the prototype suffered from major structural failure in the fuselage whilst in flight. A second prototype was also developed, armed with four 20mm Hispano cannons and first flying in May 1941.

May 1941 also saw the first flight of a production Typhoon intended for front line service. Some 110 Typhoons would be fitted with twelve 0.303 inch machine guns and designated Mk.Ia; the remainder of the production run over the course of the next few years resulted in over 3200 Mk.Ibs armed with four 20mm cannons. No.56 Squadron based at RAF Duxford were the first to receive the Typhoon in September 1941, and here the real problems began.

The accident rate of the new fighter was increasing, noticeably. Not only were fatalities occurring on front line squadrons, but also with pilots who were test flying aircraft ready for delivery. Isolating the problem with the unpopular new fighter was made far more difficult by the fact that it was not one isolated issue. Aside from the huge factor of numerous fatal accidents with as of yet unknown causes and continuing reliability problems with the Sabre powerplant, the Typhoon's performance actually left a lot to be desired anyway. Intended as a fighter and interceptor, the Typhoon's maneuverability left a lot to be desired, particularly at medium to high altitude, and its rate of climb was far from that originally promised. Voices echoing around the Air Ministry even began to call for the Typhoon to be removed from service

and discontinued before it was too late.

Nonetheless, Hawker vowed to get to the bottom of these numerous problems:

-Engine reliability. This was eventually tied down to deformed sleeve valves which often caused the engine to seize and fail. However, this was not remedied until mid 1943.

-Fatal accidents. In November 1941 a Typhoon, seemingly completely intact, crashed into the ground with no response from the pilot. There is anecdotal evidence to support the claim that this was not an isolated incident. The problem in this case was found to be carbon monoxide poisoning from the engine due to insufficient sealing around the cockpit. Whilst sealing was improved the problem was never eradicated, and the Typhoon suffered the ignominy of being the only aircraft in the RAF's history where the pilot was forced to be on oxygen from before starting his engine to after shutting down on completion of flying.

-Even more fatal accidents. A worryingly increasing trend was being reported back from Typhoon pilots – the entire tail was detaching in flight. Those lucky enough were able to escape via parachute, but some reports came back from pilots who watched their comrades plummet to their deaths with a tail-less fighter. Hawker identified that the rear fuselage joint was not strong enough and also particularly susceptible to fatigue, and the joint was strengthened. However, later investigations pinned the cause to elevator flutter and the only real solution to the issue was a different tail, as fitted to the Typhoon's replacement – the Tempest.

-Further problems. Engines continued to fail. The Typhoon had issues with aileron reversal; the problem where, in some flight configurations, pilot control input will result in the exact opposite of what was demanded. High speed buffeting and instability was also a regular complaint, which was far from ideal in an aircraft which boasted top speed as one of its few real qualities.

Bit by bit, the Typhoon's problems were reduced to finally leave the RAF with a useable aircraft. However, even after the reliability issues had been addressed nothing could be done for the Typhoon's performance and it was relegated to duties as low level, such as interception and ground attack. With an inline engine whose coolant system could be taken out

with a single bullet, the Typhoon was far from being ideal for ground attack and more found itself in this role as it was unable to carry out its intended job, rather than by design.

By the time the Typhoon was achieving notoriety over Normandy and causing havoc at the Falaise Gap, it was a very different aircraft to the disastrous twelve gun Mk.Ia which first attempted to replace the Spitfire and Hurricane as a true fighter. The later Mk.Ib Typhoons were loved and praised by many of their pilots, but it would take the development of the Tempest to finally eliminate the problems once and for all.

M4A1 (76)W available in the US ground forces

[HISTORICAL] The 761st Tank Battalion

23. january - Author: Andrew "Chaos_Tzeentch" Osullivan

At Camp Claiborne in April of 1941 the 761st was born and were deployed on October 10, 1944 on Omaha Beach in France.

The 761st was part of the 5th Tank Group along with the 785th and the 784th, this was the first all African American Armored tank group. All of the Senior officers were white, while only having a few black junior officers overseeing 675 African American soldiers per battalion. Even though the 5th Army was comprised together on paper, they never actually fought together as a whole Army group but as separate Battalions when needed. The 761st was activated and sent to Camp Claiborne for training, the basics is what was taught on light tanks.

Cpl. Carlton Chapman in an M-4 with the 761st Tank Battalion, Nancy, France. November 5, 1944

After this they were sent to Fort Hood, here they underwent their further and final training while being

upgraded to Medium tanks. This lasted for two years, while white units were sent overseas into service only after a few months of training.

Even though these African American troops signed up to defend the country they lived they were subject to cruel racism, murder, and severe beatings by neighboring soldiers from nearby training camps. The 761st wanted to retaliate but commanding officer Lt. Colonel, Paul L. Bates talked them out of it. Bates pushed the troops hard in the quest for excellence, which worked as the Unit would later find out.

GEORGE PATTON's Third Army

The 761st finally got the chance they needed to prove a lot of critics wrong when they landed in France on October 10 1944 for the Invasion. Despite Patton's reservations the training report on the 761st (rated as Superior) convinced him to give the 761st a chance. Patton before he sent the 761st to battle addressed them with a famous speech - "Men, you're the first Negro tankers to ever fight in the American Army. I would never have asked for you if you weren't good. I have nothing but the best in my Army. I don't care what color you are as long as you go up there and kill those Kraut sons of ******. Everyone has their eyes on you and is expecting great things from you. Most of all your race is looking forward to your success. Don't let them down and damn you, don't let me down."

Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr. pins Silver Star on Ernest A. Jenkins

From that day forward the 761st "Black Panthers" were nearly always at the spearhead of attacks, it was November 7th 1944 this Battalion first saw action. Their objective was a French town of Morville-les-vic, the battle hard fort payed off as their performance was second to none. A fact that was proven many times over, in all the 761st took back 30 towns that were occupied by the Germans by the end of the war. December 1944 the 761st took part in the Battle of the Bulge where they took a village called Tillet, just west of Bastogne. From there they pushed North and cut-off the main supply routes of Germany.

In six months of fighting the 761st was awarded 4 campaign streamers, while the units soldiers received 11 Silver Stars and 69 Bronze Stars. In 1978 the 761st was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation, further more Staff Sergeant Ruben Rivers was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor in 1997 for extraordinary heroism November 15-19 1944. Sergeant Warren G. H. Crecy was also nominated for the Medal of Honor for actions during combat on November 10-11, a medal he did not receive. The Unit also were awarded 296 Purple Hearts, 8 with clusters.

This Battalion was battle hardened at wars end, they never gave up hope, Nor did they give up the fight to fight for their country. These brave fighting men will always be remembered in history. We salute you the fighting unit of the 761st.

In one of the upcoming updates, we will introduce 761st shoulder patch as an emblem. Made by Branislav „InkaL“ Mirkov

Spitfire MkI, KL.B, Ser.No. N3183, No. 54 Sqn RAF, flown by PltOff A. Deere, Hornchurch, May 1940, created by[Bineos_si](#) | [Download here](#)

[ACE] Air Commodore Alan 'Al' Deere

26. January - Author: Mark Barber

Born in Westport on the South Island of New Zealand in December 1917, Alan Christopher Deere was the the third of six sons of postal worker Terrence Deere. The family soon moved to Wanganui on New Zealand's North Island, and it was here that the young Deere first had the opportunity to sit in an aircraft and made the decision to be a pilot when he was older. More of a physical than an academic youth, Deere represented his school at several sports before finishing education and finding employment briefly as a shepherd and then as a law clerk. However, at the age of 19 he followed his childhood dream and joined the Royal Air Force, setting sail for Britain in September 1937.

Whilst carrying out his initial training, the first in a series of death defying incidents occurred which gave Deere a reputation for leading a blessed life. Deere was selected for the RAF boxing team, but with war approaching he was told that his flying training took priority. The RAF boxing team departed for a tour of South Africa; their aircraft crashed en route in Bulawayo (modern day Zimbabwe) killing all on board. After completion of training, Flying Officer Deere was posted very briefly to No.74 Squadron in September 1938, equipped with Gloster Gauntlets, before then moving across the airfield to fly Gladiators with No.54 Squadron, also based at RAF Hornchurch.

Alan Deere portrait by Cuthbert Orde, 1941

In March 1939 the squadron began their conversion to Supermarine Spitfires, and Deere had another lucky escape when his oxygen system failed at altitude and he lost consciousness, coming to just in time when his Spitfire was only seconds away from smashing into the ground. With Britain declaring war on Germany in September 1939, No.54 Squadron's opening months of conflict were far from eventful. Tasked with home defence, Deere and his comrades flew seemingly endless defensive patrols. However, after the BEF's defeat in France, No.54 Squadron became involved with flying cover over British forces during the retreat across France. On May 23rd, the Commanding Officer of No.74 Squadron was shot down and managed to make a force landing at an airfield at Calais-Marck. A daring rescue attempt was planned with Flight Lieutenant Leathart of No.54 volunteering to fly a Miles Magister basic training aircraft to go and recover the downed CO; Deere flew one of the two Spitfire escort.

With the Magister on the ground and the pick up being made, six Bf109s dived down to attack. Deere turned to engage, shooting down two German fighters and firing at a third before running out of ammunition – a third 109 was also shot down by the second escorting Spitfire, and the rescue was a success: all three pilots were later awarded a DFC by King George VI. Deere's participation in the cover of the BEF was not over; he shot down a third 109 on the same day, and a further three German fighters in the next three days. On May 28th he was shot down by the gunner of a Dornier Do17, and evacuated with the soldiers he was trying to defend from the beaches of Dunkirk.

Involved in the thick of the fighting during the Battle of Britain, Deere shot down a further seven enemy fighters and a bomber. However, Deere's reputation for phenomenal luck and invincibility began to cement itself; he survived a mid air collision with a Bf109, being shot down twice (once by a Spitfire) and being bombed whilst attempting to take off. By the end of the battle, Deere had been

promoted to Flight Lieutenant and had been awarded a bar to his DFC.

After being removed from the front line for a period of rest, Deere was employed as an instructor for pilots converting to the Spitfire. In January 1941 he was involved in a mid air collision with another Spitfire and his parachute failed to fully open. Deere's guardian angel stepped in yet again, and the New Zealander survived the fall by landing in raw sewage at a treatment plant. After a posting as Operations Controller at RAF Catterick, Deere returned to the front line as a Flight Commander with No.602 Squadron at Ayr, Scotland – here he survived another forced landing after an engine failure. Deere was promoted to Squadron Leader in July 1941 and took command of No.602, before moving to RAF Kenley and shooting down a Bf109 on the first day of operations back in England.

1942 was an eventful year for Deere, with a lecturing tour of the United States to teach US pilots about air combat tactics, several months as CO of No.403 Squadron RCAF, completion of a staff course at RAF Staff College and a posting to HQ of No.13 Group. Soon tiring of staff work, Deere pushed for a return to combat and flew briefly with No.611 Squadron at RAF Biggin Hill before taking command of the Biggin Hill Wing. Leading over 100 sorties as Wing Leader, Deere was awarded the DSO for his inspiring leadership.

In September 1943 Deere was made Commanding Officer of the Central Gunnery School at Sutton Bridge. This almost spelled an end to his front line career; he took command of the Free French Fighter Wing for D-Day and the subsequent air campaign over Normandy, but after the allies gained a foothold in continental Europe, Deere was soon given another staff appointment before being made station commander of RAF Biggin Hill. It was here he ended the war, being awarded an OBE shortly before the end of hostilities. His combat career ended with 22 victories.

Deere with fellow Battle of Britain pilots at a reunion in London in September 1942. Deere is shown to Dowding's immediate left

After the war, Deere married and became a father, was given a permanent commission in the RAF and settled in Britain. A varied career of flying appointments, staff jobs and even a period as Aide-de-camp to the Queen punctuated a highly successful career before his retirement in 1967. Following this he played an active part in the development of sport in the

RAF, and joined Adolf Galland and Robert Stanford-Tuck as advisors during the filming of the movie 'Battle of Britain.' Al Deere, one of New Zealand's greatest fighter leaders, succumbed to cancer in September 1995. His ashes were scattered over the Thames by a Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Spitfire.

'Tiger 122 of the 503rd Heavy Tank Battalion' camouflage by JoKeR_BvB09 | download here

[HISTORICAL] 503rd Heavy Tank Battalion

27. January - Author: Mark Barber

In May 1942, 503. Schwere Panzerabteilung, or the 503rd Heavy Tank Battalion, was formed at Neuruppin in Brandenburg, Germany. As the German army's third heavy tank battalion, it was planned to be equipped with the Porsche produced Tiger tank, with the intention to deploy to North Africa to assist the 501st Heavy Tank Battalion.

Tiger I of 503rd while rearming, prior to Operation Citadel

However, after the cancellation of Porsche's heavy tank the unit was delayed whilst waiting for Henschel Tigers to accompany its Panzer IIIs, and instead was sent to the Eastern Front.

Initially assigned to Army Group Don, 503 deployed to the Eastern Front between December 1942 and May 1944. The unit first saw action in January 1943, where it was involved in bitter fighting against Soviet forces in the vicinity of Stavropol. The battalion then fought at the Third Battle of Kharkov, one of the last great German victories on the Eastern Front. However, these fortunes were soon reversed when 503 were assigned the task of providing support to Army Group Kempf during Operation Citadel – the Battle of

Kursk. The unit's Tiger's performed well against Soviet armour but the climactic battle resulted in a significant defeat for German forces.

Following Kursk, the battalion was used as a 'fire brigade' – quickly deploying to weak areas along the German line to plug gaps against Soviet forces before rapidly moving to the next area they were needed. In January 1944, 503 joined Schwere Panzerregiment Bäke with the intention of leading a German offensive to assist forces trapped in the Korsun Pocket. 503's 34 Tigers provided a vital component to the force, although one was lost to friendly fire.

Tiger II with Porsche turret, France, July 1944

May 1944 saw the unit finally withdrawn to Germany for a brief respite from the fighting and a chance to re-equip. By the end of June, the battalion was now up to strength with two companies of Tiger 1E heavy tanks, and a company of the new, dreaded King Tiger – in this case fitted with the early Porsche designed turret. With the allied landing at Normandy on June 6th, 503 was immediately rushed westwards to face the new threat and arrived in theatre in early July.

First seeing action against the western allies on July 11th, the veterans of the Eastern Front quickly proved their worth by destroying 12 Shermans and capturing two more on their first day of fighting against British and Canadian forces near Caen. However, with the launch of Operation Goodwood on July 18th, 503's 3rd Company was all but completely destroyed by British bombing, with only one Tiger still operational by the end of the day. On the same day a Kingtiger of the 1st Company was disabled and the crew captured when it was rammed by a Sherman of the Irish Guards. The 2nd Company was able to engage British forces, however, and was one of the main contributing factors to halting the entire British advance in the area. Meanwhile, the 1st Company was also in action but lost two Kingtigers against the British. The final action in the Normandy campaign took place on August 11th when two Tigers stood against 30 allied tanks, destroying three before they were overwhelmed.

After being re-equipped as a full KIngtiger unit, the battalion spent its final days fighting against the Soviet advance through Hungary. Despite initial successes the unit suffered

heavy casualties, not only in combat but also due to the technical and mechanical issues which continued to plague the Kingtiger throughout its service life.

Several Tiger II with Henschel turret of s.Pz.Abt. 503

The unit has been credited with the destruction of some 1700 enemy vehicles for the loss of 252 tanks. However, this kill to loss ratio of some 15:1 has been questioned by some post war analogists and historians. What is clear from German records is that whilst the legendary heavy tanks performed well in battle, it was the issues outside of combat which proved to be their undoing; 503 lost more tanks to breakdown and abandonment by their own crews than to enemy action. Many of Germany's very best tank crews served within the ranks of 503, amongst them was Kurt Knispel – possibly the greatest tank commander of all.

With a future update, we will include the decal of the s.Pz.Abt. 503 by Branislav 'InkaL' Mirkov

Turkish Air Force Spitfire Mk.Vb Tropical 'OK.14', created by LNSE492 | Download here

[AIR FORCES] Turkish Air Force

28. January - Author: Nihat "VuLTURE" Çagatay

The Turkish interest in flight is based deep in it's history, in 1632 Hezarfen Ahmet Çelebi flew 3300 meters across the Bosphorus Strait by launching himself from the top of the Galata Tower on his own handmade glider and ranks as one of the first successful flights in aviation history.

Turkish pilots with Supermarine Southampton Mk.II in 1933.

At the beginning of the 1900's the Ottoman Empire recognised the importance of military aviation and on the 1st of June 1911 the Ottoman Empires first aviation organisation the "Aviation Commission" was founded. one month later, Captain Fesa and Lieutenant Yusuf Kenan embarked for France to undertake flight training at the Blériot Aéronautique flight school thus becoming the first pilots of Turkish aviation. On the 3rd of June 1912 the Ottoman Empires first flight school was founded in Istanbul, with the Ottoman Army undertaking the education of the countries own pilots.

During World War 1 the Ottoman Empires Pilots fought on many different fronts such as Caucasia, Palestine and Gallipoli. On the 25th of October 1918 Major Fazil single-

handedly fought with 5 enemy British Planes which were attacking Istanbul and successfully landed his aircraft after suffering severe wounds. After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War One, the Aviation Commission was abolished on june 25,1920 only to be reformed by the new Turkish Government in Anatolia as the Turkish Air Force on June 13, 1920.

Pilot Vecihi Hürkuş, his name meaning "Manner of free bird" was the first person in Turkish aviation history to shoot down an enemy plane, He is credited with one russian plane during a reconnaissance and bombing mission over the Caucasian front and one Greek aircraft during the ongoing battles in Anatolia. On January 28, 1925 flying an aircraft he designed and built himself, Hürkuş took off, and in what was the first aircraft produced by the turkish aviation industry.

Not to be outdone the Turkish Air Force Pilot Sabiha Gökçen, is considered by some as the first female military pilot in the world. Starting in 1937 Sabiha Gökçen took part in 32 combat missions flying 22 different types of aircraft in total with 8000 flying hours.

In the late 1940's with over 500 aircraft the Turkish Air Force was the most powerful in the Balkans, during the following decade the Turkish Air Force utilised aircraft such as the Fw190, He-111, M.S.406, Spitfires, Beaufighters, Beauforts, Mosquito's, P-40 Kittyhawks, P-47 Thunderbolts, the B24 and Douglas A-26.

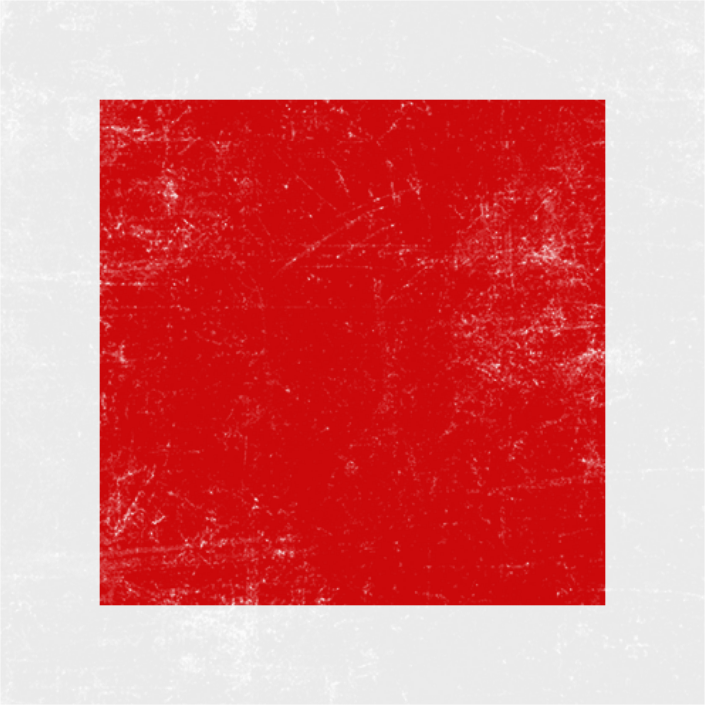
During World War Two, Turkey maintained its neutral status until February 1945 and was not legally involved in any air combat or bombing but had 30 pilot casualties during their training in Britain. It is believed that some turkish pilots took part in attacks over Germany. On Hakki Akarçay's tomb in the Turkish Air Force burial grounds at Brookswood Cemetery is written "Lost his life during a night operation by a German plane's attack" Also, General Pilot Emin Alpkaya's diary has sentences such as "My teacher said that 'You are ready to go to Berlin'… " and "I'm so tired, I came in 6 am from bombardment"

Dewoitine D.21 (not Caudron C-59) "Orhaneli"

By the 1950's the Turkish Air Force was expanded to army scale and decided to enter the "jet age". In the following months the Turkish Air Force acquired two Lockheed T-33A's

going on to receive many F84G Thunderjets and F-86 Sabres. During the 1999 conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovia and Kosovo Turkish F-16 Atmaca Fleet Pilots First Lieutenant Erkan Salman and Lieutenant Oguz Yeten, who were piloting TAI(Turkish Aerospace Industries)-built F-16s, were awarded the Citation "F-16 Endurance Record in Threat conditions" for being airborne for 9.5 hours.

Today, the Turkish Air Force serves the Turkish Army with 2040 aircraft including 154 UAV's with 60,100 Personnel. The Turkish Air Force flies various aircraft including the F-16 C/D, F-4E 2020, C130B Hercules CASA Cn-235, Boeing KC-135R Stratotanker and Boeing 737AEW&C MESA. Two A400M's have joined the Turkish Air Force fleet recently with 10 more to follow by 2018. The Turkish Air Force is also part of the F-35 5th Generation Fighter Program, ordering 100 aircraft to replace the F-4E currently in service.



In one of the upcoming updates, we will introduce the roundel of the Turkish Air Force between 1918-72 by Jej 'CharlieFoxtrot' Ortiz

B-25J-20 "Briefing Time" is one of the B-25 that served with the 489th Bomb Squadron in the Italian campaign, camouflage made by [cambridge79] | [download here]

[PROFILE] B-25J series

29. January - Author: Joe “Pony51” Kudrna

To North American Aviation, its NA-39 bomber prototype was a major disappointment. The USAAC chose Douglas’ B-18 and foreign designs were significantly faster; the Dornier Do-17MV1 was faster than any fighter then in service. These losses embolden NAA to start from scratch and think big for the NA-40. They pursued France and Britain as eager but demanding customers - however they once again lost out to Douglas and its DB-7, but this time the USAAC did take interest and did place an order, designating it as the B-25. Built to be smaller and faster than its predecessor and - unusually for a medium bomber - accommodating two pilots with just enough crawl space from nose to tail, a competitive bomb load, and long range, the B-25 made up in utility of what it lacked in raw top speed. Entering service just in time for America's entry into World War Two, it serendipitously proved to be an excellent platform with a wide combat radius and able to carry ever heavier and varied loads than anyone imagined.

North American B-25J on airstrip

Crawl spaces were often used for more equipment, fuel, and munitions as well as a location for a big 75mm cannon! Of course when the USN launched 16 USAAF B-25D's off the USS Hornet to strike Japan it made this versatile bomber a legend. It became a major unit in the Pacific theater, destroying countless Japanese assets and thus was key in Japan's defeat. Used by many allied nations across all fronts, its service with the Soviet Union was particularly noteworthy where crews were both delighted in its capabilities and dismayed by its poor sub-zero climate operations. Post war saw the B-25 continue to serve with many countries for decades afterward. In civilian use it found many more roles including fire fighting and as a camera platform used to make countless movies.

As with most other in game bombers it is not maneuverable nor particularly fast. What it does have is a good selection of bomb loads and a fantastic set of offensive and defensive armament, all of which are made up of hard hitting .50 cal (12.7mm) machine guns with excellent arcs, which must be upgraded as soon as possible. Prioritise researching the .50's first to get the AP (M2) or better the AP-I (M8) rounds in your belts. Also get the first bomb rack unlocked, which doubles your payload and offers a nice combination of four 250 lb and eight 100 lb bombs. This combination can destroy light tanks and the rest can be used against soft targets like AAA. And don't forget to strafe anything left over with the fearsome fixed mounts. After the weapons, get flak jackets and anything that improves top speed.

B-25J-5 is Yellow Rose (N25YR), part of CAF stationed in San Marcos, TX. Photo bz Joe Kudrna

Training the crew is vital to profit in the B-25. To take advantage of all those HMG's one needs to max out "Weapons Maintenance" and the gunners as soon as possible and at least the "Expert Qualification" if not Ace. The B-25 is not maneuverable nor fast enough to readily engage targets on its own terms (unless another bomber) so the turrets are very important. It is also important to maneuver in a way for as many turrets as possible to engage. For example, if being pursued by fighters then consider a slight turn or climb so the upper turret can engage in addition to the tail position. Flying on the deck also forces pursuing fighters into the arc of the top turret.

The B-25J-1 is a Tier 2 bomber with 3.3 BR making it easy to get and not face too many advanced fighters. It is arguably the best bomber of this Tier and BR. The nearly identical B-25J-20 and Soviet Premium B-25J-30 are Tier 3 with 4.0 BR putting them in a slot that is much more challenging, but they can still hold their own. The main and perhaps only difference is the addition of one more fixed offensive HMG (5 to 6) for pilot use. The Soviet premium is fully equipped on purchase so off bat it lists a higher top speed but in the end, once upgraded, all three fly the same.

In one of the upcoming updates, we will introduce the "Paper Doll" Pin-up from 57th Bomber Wing, 321st Bomb Group, 447th Bomb Squadron #43-27473.
Decal by Jej 'CharlieFoxtrot' Ortiz

Il-16 type 10 "Super-MOSKA" camouflage, Republican Air Force, Spain, Liria, April 1938, available in the game

[HISTORICAL] Spanish Civil War Aviation

30. January - Author: Joe “Pony51” Kudrna

Spain erupted into civil war on July 1936 with the popularly elected “loyal” Republican faction defending themselves against the rebel “true Spanish” Nationalist side. The opportunity to test their armed forces attracted Stalin, Hitler, and Mussolini to the war more than political and financial reasons and thus shaped the future of aircraft and air combat in the world war to soon follow.

A Savoia Marchetti SM.81 of the 16-G-21

The Republican Air Forces were lead by Manuel Azana and received support from Stalin. These had volunteers mainly from the USSR as well as Mexico, France, and a handful from America. At the beginning of hostilities they flew old obsolete types, soon completely outmatched by Nationalist forces. Early on the most advanced “combat” aircraft in service were impressed passenger airliners, including Douglas DC-2 and sole DC-1 both slightly faster than Nationalist fighters. The “Tupolev SB-2” - nicknamed “Katiuska” - arrived in October 1936 where its speed advantage made it nearly untouchable against Nationalist He-51 and Fiat CR.32 fighters, until the introduction of more modern aircraft. Soon after the “Polikarpov I-15”

"Chato" ('Snubnosed') joined the conflict. The arrival of this fighter proved to be a huge boost for the Republicans as it was a substantial improvement and gave Republican pilots a chance to compete on far better terms. With it arrived "Polikarpov I-16" "Mosca" (Housefly) ("Rata" 'Rat' by Nationalists) allowing the Republican air forces to turn the tide; however due to limited numbers neither would dominate the skies over Spain. In early 1937 the Nationalists received the He 112 and Bf 109; still the small, maneuverable, I-16 proved to be a match despite being slower. A substantial number of other combat aircraft not modeled in game were also used by the Republican forces, including the Nieuport-Delage NiD 52 (fighter used by both sides), Dewoitine D.500/510 and D.371, Potez 54/540 and 25, Loire 46, Bloch 210, Breguet XIX, and Amiot 143.

The crews that flew for the loyalists were just as diverse, from locals to volunteers incorporating many nations all over the globe but mainly Russian where a number of aces were forged and helped the loyalists forge its own. Manuel Zarauza Clavero was one of those aces in Spain, an "exceptionally gifted pilot" and nicknamed "piloto fantasma" (flying ghost) because his short stature made him hard to see in the cockpit. With loyalist defeat he found himself without a country eventually finding a welcoming home in the Soviet Union among comrades. His skill was critically needed in the early days of the Great Patriotic War and earning several more kills, repayment in kind for their earlier help. Unfortunately a simple flying accident prevented from seeing that this time his side won.

In the fields in front of Trijueque, the nationalist troops mounted cannons to prepare for the attack on the Bolshevik positions.

The Aviación Nacional (National Air Force) was led by General Francisco Franco with Hitler and Mussolini backing. All of their aircraft were painted in Spanish colors even if overwhelmingly crewed and maintained by non-Spanish personnel, either Condor Legion (German) or Aviazione Legionaria (Italian: Legionary Air Force). Although operating some obsolete Spanish aircraft it was substantial foreign support which ensured control of the skies. The Junkers Ju 52 (AI in game) was used from the start helping to transport rebel troops from Morocco to Spain in the first ever mass military airlift in history, later for

a time as bombers. The Heinkel He 51 arrived soon after, helping control the skies until I-15's arrived. In an effort to regain interest in the Heinkel He 112, prototypes and B variants were sent over, but failed to win new orders. The Heinkel He 111B and E "Pedro" on the other hand was not only a success, it prompted Spain to purchase rights to build the aircraft under license themselves as the CASA 2.111. Similar mixed results were experienced by Junkers with its Ju 86 a failure while its Junkers Ju 87A model successful. It was also the baptism of fire for the Messerschmitt Bf 109 which was flown by many future aces, including Galland and Molders, it too being built in Spain as the HA-1112. Italian contributions include twelve Fiat G.50s and a hundred Savoia-Marchetti SM.79 bombers, a tiny portion of the Italian total contribution.

Others not in game: Dornier Do 17E, F, P models, "Pablo" or "Bacalao" did well with Germans gaining valuable reconnaissance experience in F and P. The previously mentioned Junkers Ju 86 bomber, the successful Henschel Hs 123 bi-plane attack bomber, the militarized version of the record breaking Heinkel He-70 Blitz. The Aviazione Legionaria contributed substantially to the conflict, however most of these aircraft are not currently represented in game. The list includes 377 of the excellent Fiat CR.32 fighters, 13 Fiat BR.20 bombers, 64 Savoia-Marchetti SM.81 bombers, 12 Breda Ba.65 ground attack aircraft and many others such as CANT Z seaplanes.

Many veteran Spanish pilots joined National forces, with Joaquín García Morato already battled hardened from the Rif war. His first victory was in a Nieuport-Delage NiD 52's and a few more in the He-51, but the vast majority were earned in the superior Fiat CR.32, some 36 out of 40 confirmed kills, but died in flying accident post war.

While the war ended 1st April 1939 with National forces in power, the only real victors of the terrible conflict was the Italians and particularly the Germans who gained the most experience.