

# Messerschmitt Bf 109 G-10 *Gustav*

1944

## General History

### The Air Power of the Third Reich

Misnamed the “Me 109” in many World War II publications, the Bf 109 was created by the Bayerische Flugzeugwerke’s (Bavarian Aircraft Works’) chief designer, Professor Willy Messerschmitt. In 1938, Bayerische Flugzeugwerke AG (Aktiengesellschaft or Corporation) was redesignated as the Messerschmitt AG, which led many to call the aircraft the Me 109. However, the official Luftwaffe designation of the aircraft remained the Bf 109 throughout the war.

At first, things looked bleak for Professor Messerschmitt’s creation. Out of favor with the Nazis, the head of the Luftwaffe, Ernst Udet, told the Professor, “That thing will never make a fighter!” But the small, angular airplane looked easy to mass-produce, and no one could deny that it had excellent performance.

Tested in combat in Spain during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), Luftwaffe (German Air Force) pilots learned to fly the complicated but deadly 109s. When Hitler initiated his Blitzkrieg attacks to start World War II, the German fighters made short work of many Russian, Polish and French airplanes.

The Bf 109 flew virtually unchallenged until the Battle of Britain, when it encountered the *Spitfire*. Like Britain’s *Spitfire*, the sinister-looking Messerschmitt Bf 109 became the symbol of its nation, and flew from the war’s opening moments to Germany’s surrender. It is estimated that nearly 35,000 Bf 109s were produced and used in almost every airborne role including fighter, bomber, reconnaissance and attack.

### The Good and the Bad

Aerodynamically, the Bf 109 was advanced in design, with its enclosed cockpit, retractable landing gear, automatic flaps and cantilever wings. While the Bf 109 was deadly in the hands of an expert flyer, it could also kill a less experienced pilot. It demanded respect and was difficult to fly. Despite its magnificent speed and maneuverability, it had many vices.

Up to one third of the Luftwaffe’s Messerschmitt Bf 109s were lost in mid-air and ground accidents caused by poor cockpit visibility, automatic wing slats deploying unevenly and the airplane’s knock-kneed, narrow-stance landing gear. Historians suggest that the great fighter could have been even better if Willy Messerschmitt and Luftwaffe leaders had listened to the suggestions of pilots to implement serious refinements and improvements.

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## About This Aircraft

Some of the prime targets for Allied air attacks during World War II were enemy airplane factories and airfields. As a result, much of the documentation regarding aircraft like this Bf 109 was lost.

A man from Yugoslavia wrote to say he recognized the “Werke Nummer” of this aircraft and offered this story of its history: built in 1944, the fighter went almost immediately to Bulgaria. (The Royal Bulgarian Air Force flew approximately 145 Bf 109Gs during the war.) While little is known about its wartime missions, the 109 was acquired by the Yugoslav Air Force in 1947 or 1948. In late 1950, the plane was retired, and acquired by a Yugoslav technical school in 1953. Hundreds of students worked on the machine which served as a means of instruction. In the 1970s, the airframe was acquired by an aeronautical museum in Yugoslavia.

In 1984, the plane was sold to Warbirds of Great Britain. Five years later, Evergreen purchased this airframe and another. In 1991, the Bf 109 began a complete five-year restoration.

Today, this aircraft wears the paint scheme of the Bf 109 flown by the world’s most prolific fighter ace, Erich Hartmann. Flying into combat more than 800 times in his Messerschmitt, the young German shot down a staggering 352 enemy aircraft during World War II.

## Specifications

Type:	Fighter Aircraft
First Flight:	September of 1935
Wingspan:	32 feet 6.5 inches
Length:	29 feet 8 inches
Height:	8 feet 6 inches
Wing Area:	174 square feet
Weight, Empty:	5,132 pounds
Weight, Loaded:	7,370 pounds
Power:	One Daimler-Benz DB 605 D-1, 1,800 horsepower engine
Normal Crew:	One
Typical Armament:	Two 13 mm MG 131 machine guns; one 30 mm MK 108 cannon

## Performance

Cruise Speed:	310 miles per hour
Top Speed:	429 miles per hour at 24,606 feet
Range:	450 miles at 330 miles per hour
Service Ceiling:	41,000 feet