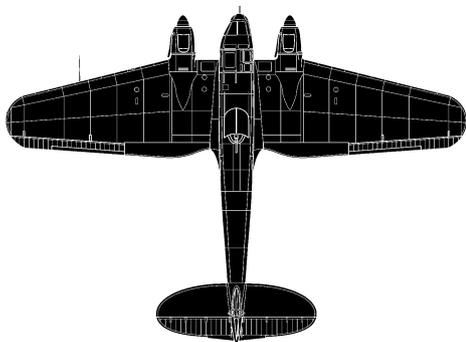


Airpower Classics

Artwork by Zaur Eylanbekov

He 111



The He 111 was designed in the early 1930s, masquerading as an airliner and in violation of the Versailles Treaty. In the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39, this medium bomber seemed invincible, and so it became the Luftwaffe's World War II workhorse, serving on every front until the war's end. Germany and its allies operated it as a bomber but also for other purposes, including airlift, ground attack, anti-ship operations, saboteur drops, mine-laying, glider tug, and more.

Germany started World War II with some 800 He 111s of varying types, and they performed well against the air forces of Poland and then France. It was notorious for being the preferred instrument of devastation in some of the Reich's most cold-blooded bombings of civilian centers—Warsaw

and London among them. By 1940, the He 111 had become highly vulnerable because of its relatively light armor and scanty defensive armament. High attrition in the Battle of Britain forced it into the night-bomber role.

The June 22, 1941 launch of Operation Barbarossa—the German invasion of Russia—gave the He 111's a new lease on life against mediocre opposition. Its greatest offensive successes in Russia were torpedo attacks on Arctic convoys and retaliation raids made against US shuttle bombers. Still, success didn't last long. The 1942 Battle of Stalingrad cost Germany 165—more than half—of its bombers remaining on the Eastern Front. As Soviet fighter forces grew in capability, He 111s were relegated to transport and support.

—Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: Heinkel 111 bomber—1H+BN—as it looked in spring 1940 when assigned to Kampfgeschwader 26 for operations against Norway.



An He 111 on a mission over London and the Thames River.

In Brief

Designed by Heinkel ★ built by Heinkel, Dornier, Arado, SNCASO, Fabrica de Avione, CASA ★ first flight Feb. 24, 1935 ★ crew of five (pilot, nav/bomb, three gunners) ★ number built 7,300 ★ **Specific to He 111H-16:** two Junkers Jumo 211 engines ★ armament one 20 mm cannon, one 13 mm and four 7.9 mm machine guns ★ max load eight 551-lb bombs and one 2,204-lb bomb ★ max speed 270 mph ★ cruise speed 230 mph ★ max range 1,280 mi ★ weight (loaded) 30,865 lb ★ span 74 ft 2 in ★ length 53 ft 9 in ★ height 13 ft 1 in.

Famous Fliers

Military notables: Hans Baur, Werner Baumbach, Ernst Udet, Theo Blaich, Theodore Rowehl, Ulrich Kessler, Martin Fiebig, Victor von Lossberg, Friedrich Aschenbrenner, Gernot Eicke, Werner Klumper, Ernst Kuhl, Werner Moelders, Fritz Todt. **Others:** Adolf Hitler, Heinrich Himmler, Albert Speer.

Interesting Facts

Designed by brothers Walter and Siegfried Gunter ★ Employed first by Kondor Legion in Spanish Civil War ★ led notorious raids on Guernica, Warsaw, Rotterdam, London, Coventry ★ flew pre-WWII reconnaissance missions over France, Britain, Soviet Union ★ dropped guided missiles and V-1 buzz bombs ★ nicknamed Pedro and Spade ★ appeared in 1969 Guy Hamilton film, "Battle of Britain" ★ more than 60 major variants.