

Our Plane, Their Paint



On March 11, 1941, Congress passed the Lend-Lease Act, authorizing the US to supply much-needed military equipment to Allied nations fighting the Axis powers. Soon after the German attack on the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, Moscow purchased from the US some 60 US fighters, of which about 20 were P-39 Airacobras. In this 1944 photo taken at a base in Russia near the Romanian border, USAAF

Lt. Thompson Highfill (center) stands in front of a Lend-Lease P-39 along with two unidentified Soviet pilots. (Note the Soviet red star markings.) Lend-Lease aircraft comprised about 18 percent of all aircraft in the Soviet air forces. Several Soviet pilots who flew Airacobras became aces. After the war, not very much "leased" war materiel came back to the US.