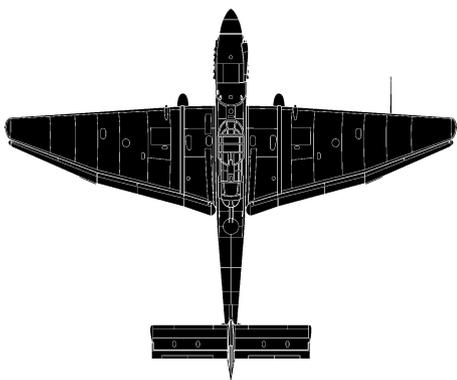


# Airpower Classics

Artwork by Zaur Eylanbekov

## Ju 87 Stuka



No aircraft better combined psychological and physical effect than the sinister-looking Junkers Ju 87 Stuka of World War II, an airplane that wreaked havoc whenever and wherever the Luftwaffe had air superiority. The inverted-gull wing dive-bomber was key to the success of German ground campaigns in Poland, Norway, and France. It was also critical in the early stages of the Nazi campaigns in North Africa and, especially, the Soviet Union.

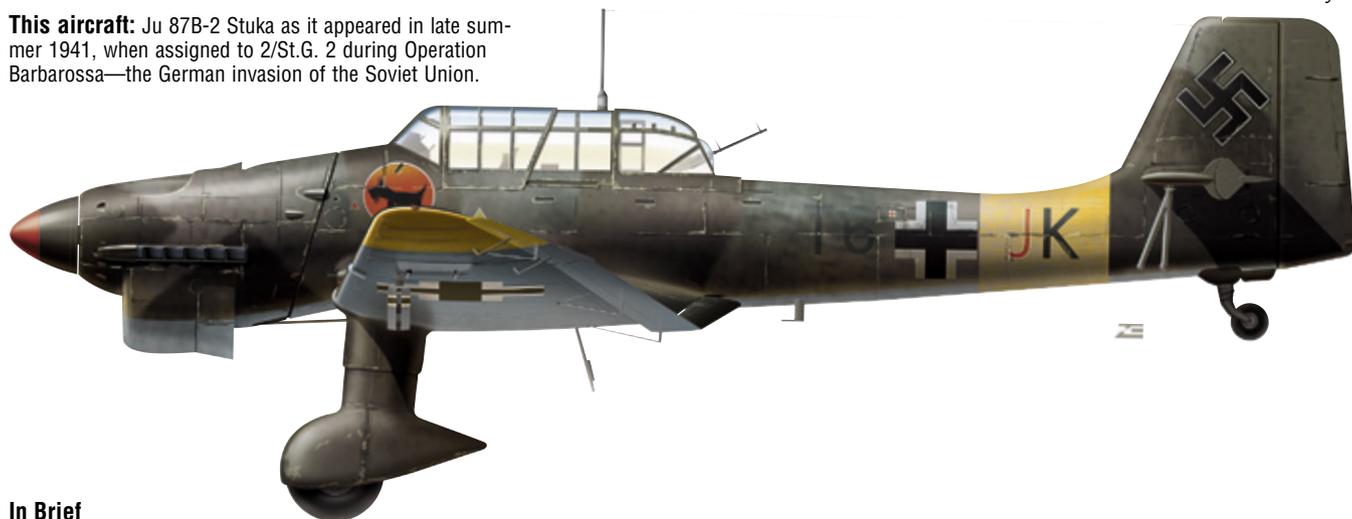
The name “Stuka” came from the generic term *Sturzkampfflugzeug*—roughly, “steep-diving-bomber.” Its design began in 1933. Famous World War I ace and aerobatic pilot Ernst Udet was inspired by the US Navy’s Curtiss F6C and BF2C Hawks and fostered the development of the Ju 87. The fixed-gear Ju 87 was of modern all-metal stress-skin construction, and was strong,

if not swift. Its rugged frame and landing gear allowed it to operate close to the front lines from improvised fields. The Stuka quickly responded to ground-based forward air controllers, and its pinpoint accuracy allowed the German Army to use it as a kind of airborne artillery.

A small number of Stukas were tested in the Kondor Legion during the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39. The much-feared Stuka delivered its bomb load in an 85 degree angle dive. The danger of the pilot blacking out from G-forces was great, but was offset by an auto-pull-out device installed on each aircraft. For all its strengths, the Stuka suffered from low speed and poor maneuverability. It had little defensive armament, making it highly vulnerable to enemy fighters. Once the Allies established air superiority in the West and Soviet Union, the Stuka faded in significance.

—Walter J. Boyne

**This aircraft:** Ju 87B-2 Stuka as it appeared in late summer 1941, when assigned to 2/St.G. 2 during Operation Barbarossa—the German invasion of the Soviet Union.



### In Brief

Designed, built by *Junkers Flugzeugwerke* ★ first flight Sept. 17, 1935 ★ crew of two ★ number built 5,752 ★ **Specific to Ju 87D1:** one Junkers Jumo 211J-1 engine ★ armament (typical) two MG-17 and two MG-81 guns with up to three bombs (one centerline, two on wing) ★ max speed 255 mph ★ cruise speed 193 mph ★ max range 620 mi ★ weight (loaded) 14,550 lb ★ span 45 ft 3 in ★ length 37 ft 9 in ★ height 12 ft 9 in.

### Famous Fliers

**Notable:** Hans-Ulrich Rudel, ace and most-decorated German serviceman of World War II (flew 2,350 combat missions, was shot down 32 times, and destroyed 800 vehicles, 519 tanks, 150 guns, a destroyer, two cruisers, a battleship, nine aircraft), Helmut Fickel (Rudel’s wingman). **Other Notables:** Alwin Boerst, Walter Ennecerus, Alexander Glaser, Franz Kieslich, Kurt Kuhlmeier, Hubert Polz, Werner Roell, Hans-Karl Stepp.

### Interesting Facts

Dropped first bomb of World War II (Sept. 1, 1939, Poland) ★ featured Rolls Royce Kestrel engine in prototype ★ used on every battle front in Europe ★ navalized for never-completed carrier *Graf Zeppelin* ★ equipped with the “Jericho Trumpet,” a small siren used as a psychological device against infantry and horses.



*The Stuka was a menacing sight.*