

WESTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: BATTLE OF BRITAIN

Official facts and figures from the Battle of Britain

Operational aircraft and crews in the Battle of Britain

Catalogue re: AIR 20/4174

BATTLE OF BRITAIN.
FIghter COMMAND - OPERATIONAL AIRCRAFT AND CREWS

AS AT

	10 JULY, 1940				8 AUGUST, 1940				31 OCTOBER, 1940			
	<u>Sqdns.</u>	<u>I.E.</u>	<u>Service- able a/c.</u>	<u>OPERATIONAL (Serviceable with crews)</u>	<u>Sqdns.</u>	<u>I.E.</u>	<u>Service- able a/c.</u>	<u>OPERATIONAL (Serviceable with crews)</u>	<u>Sqdns.</u>	<u>I.E.</u>	<u>Service- able a/c.</u>	<u>OPERATIONAL (Serviceable with crews)</u>
Hurricanes	27	432	582	344	28½	568	645	370	34	544	561	399
Spitfires	19	304	320	226	19	328	335	257	19	304	294	227
Gladiators	-	-	-	-	½	8	7	7	½	8	9	8
Defiants	2	32	39	24	2	32	30	20	2	32	39	10
Blenheims	6	96	92	62	6	96	83	66	6	96	61	40
	<u>54</u>	<u>864</u>	<u>1033*</u>	<u>656</u>	<u>56</u>	<u>1032</u>	<u>1100</u>	<u>720</u>	<u>61½</u>	<u>984</u>	<u>964</u>	<u>684</u>

* As at 16.7.40 (earliest available).
N.B. Orders of Battle for this period did not show I.R.

Air Ministry War Room.
26th October, 1945.

What is this source?

This document comes from the archives of the Air Ministry for the Battle of Britain and shows how many aircraft the RAF had available at different stages of the battle.

This source shows the objective, or target, which the Germans were attacking on the various days of the battle.

What's the background to this source?

By the summer of 1940 Britain and its empire stood alone against Hitler's Germany. The Germans had serious plans to invade Britain. Their problem was crossing the English Channel against the Royal Navy. They thought that they might achieve this if they controlled the air and could attack Royal Navy ships. As a result, the first stage of the German invasion plan, Operation

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Sealion, was to try and destroy the Royal Air Force and also the factories that supplied it.

The first stage of the campaign was to try and destroy airfields and aircraft factories. This proved unsuccessful and so bombing raids then switched to important towns and cities. There is no definite beginning or end to the Battle of Britain but it is generally agreed that it ran from July to October 1940.

It's worth knowing that...

The RAF had a number of important advantages in the Battle. Fighters were well organised into different regions which protected their particular area. The RAF also had excellent aircraft in their Hurricanes and Spitfires. Another advantage was that the German fighters often ran short of fuel because they had to travel across to England. RAF pilots could stay in the air longer. Finally, if RAF pilots were shot down and survived, they could usually find another plane and fight again. Luftwaffe pilots who crashed in England were taken prisoner.

A German Air Force document captured at the end of the war shows that the German losses were actually about 35% lower than claimed in this document. However, there is no doubt that the RAF shot down more German planes than it lost and that British factories were able to replace the fighters that were damaged or destroyed. Throughout the Battle of Britain they produced more aircraft than German factories.

What conclusions can you draw from this source?

1. Is this a piece of propaganda or an attempt to record accurately what happened?
2. At what point did the RAF seem seriously in danger of running out of aircraft?
3. Look at the plan for your TV documentary.
 - o Do you think you will give some time in the documentary to the facts and figures of the Battle?
 - o How much of the 30 minutes do you think you will give?

Use this storyboard framework to plan your documentary.