

Triumph of "The Few"

This year marks the 70th anniversary of one of the most decisive clashes of World War II – the Battle of Britain – when a handful of Royal Air Force pilots fought in the skies over southern England to defeat Germany's mighty Luftwaffe squadrons and foil Adolf Hitler's invasion plans

► **Jul 10, 1940:** Battle begins with Luftwaffe attacking south coast ports and shipping

► **Jul 16:** Hitler orders detailed plans for invasion of Britain, codenamed **Operation Sealion**. Germans begin assembling hundreds of invasion barges in Channel ports



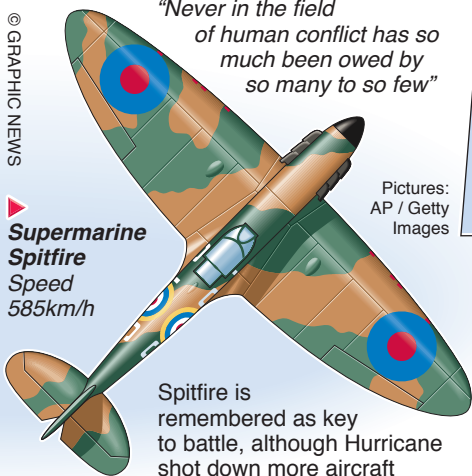
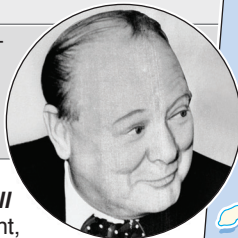
▲ **Hawker Hurricane:** Mainstay of RAF Fighter Command squadrons. Speed 530km/h

► **Aug 13: Adlertag (Eagle Day)** – Germany launches campaign to destroy RAF, targeting airfields, aircraft factories and radar sites

► **Aug 15:** Luftwaffe mounts largest number of sorties – over 2,000 – destroying 34 RAF aircraft for loss of 75

► **Aug 18:** "Hardest day" – intense air-to-air combat results in greatest number of casualties on both sides

► **Aug 20:** Britain's Prime Minister **Winston Churchill** makes speech to parliament, "Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few"



► **Supermarine Spitfire**
Speed 585km/h

Spitfire is remembered as key to battle, although Hurricane shot down more aircraft

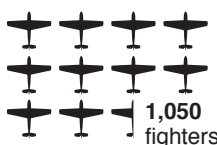
Pictures:
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STRENGTHS AT START OF BATTLE

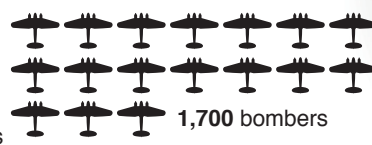
Royal Air Force (RAF)*



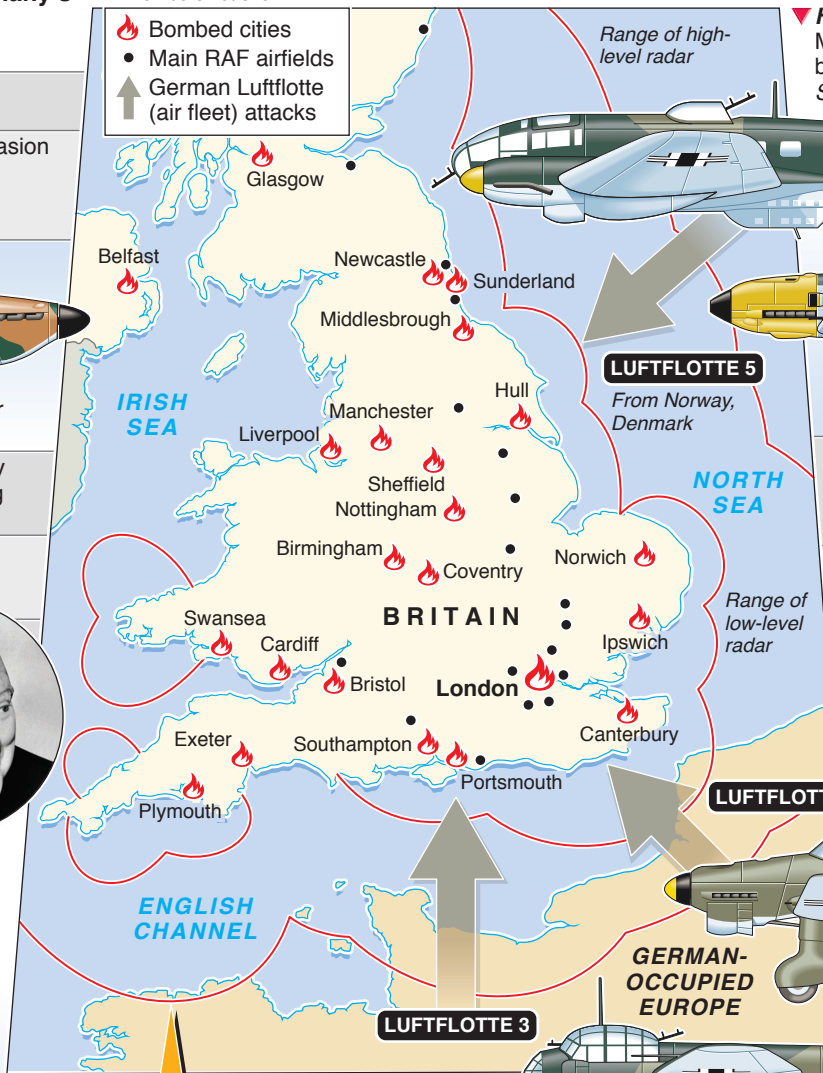
*Bombers not shown



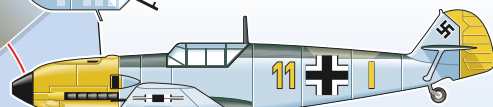
German Air Force (Luftwaffe)



- 🔥 Bombed cities
- Main RAF airfields
- ↑ German Luftflotte (air fleet) attacks



▼ **Heinkel He 111**
Main German bomber used in battle
Speed 350km/h



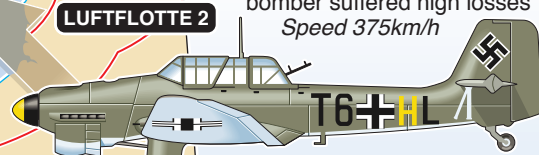
▲ **Messerschmitt Bf 109:** German fighter lacked range to escort bombers. Speed 575km/h

► **Aug 24:** German aircraft accidentally bomb residential areas of London. In retaliation, RAF raids Berlin on Aug 25

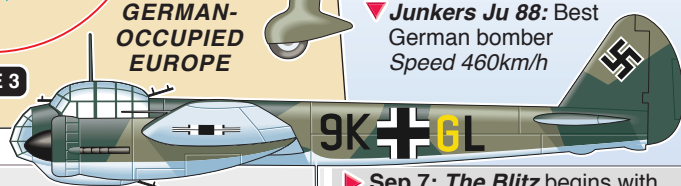
► **Aug 30-31:** RAF close to defeat, suffering heavy losses in aircraft and pilots

► **Sep 5:** After more RAF raids on Berlin, Hitler orders attack on British cities – fatal error that takes pressure off RAF airfields

▼ **Junkers Ju 87 Stuka:** Dive bomber suffered high losses
Speed 375km/h

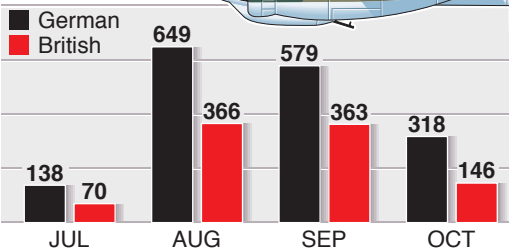


▼ **Junkers Ju 88:** Best German bomber
Speed 460km/h



Aircraft losses

■ German
■ British



► **Sep 7: The Blitz** begins with massive air raids on London

► **Sep 15:** Battle reaches climax – 60 German aircraft shot down for RAF loss of 26

► **Sep 17:** Hitler cancels invasion plans. Battle peters out by end of October but Blitz continues until May 1941

RADAR: Vital weapon gave Britain advance warning of attack. RAF could determine size, altitude and direction of enemy formations and send their planes to intercept