

# COLORS OF WAR

ANOTHER SELECTION OF RARE COLOR IMAGES FROM THE CHALLENGE PHOTOGRAPHIC FILES

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Bristol Beaufighter receiving a 100-hour inspection somewhere in the Middle East. The twin-engine attack aircraft saw considerable action in the Middle East and Mediterranean but its history has not been well-recorded. As can be seen, conditions were pretty basic and all the work had to be done in the open. The intense sun and salt-laden atmosphere has played havoc with the Beaufighter's camouflage and various areas have been touched up where the paint was worn away to reveal the bare metal underneath. Unfortunately, the serial does not show but the Beaufighter was utilized for many different missions — from carrying torpedoes to being modified into an effective night-fighter. The aircraft was particularly effective in the maritime strike role and played havoc with Axis shipping. Power came from Bristol Hercules sleeve-valve radials of 1600-hp each but the Beaufighter, being a large aircraft, was not particularly fast, with a max speed of 320 mph so it could fall prey to Luftwaffe fighters. Often flying in groups, the Beaufighters would go into a defense circle when attacked and use their heavy forward armament of four 20mm cannon and six .303-caliber machine to defend against attackers.



Rare early color image of a Hawker Hurricane Mk. I. Serial L1936 was out of the first production batch of 50 of the RAF's first monoplane fighter. Fitted with a fixed-pitch wooden propeller, the Hurricane carries the OP codes of No. 3 Squadron. The camouflage was for 1938's Munich Crisis but when the war started in September 1939, squadron codes change to QO. By the middle of 1938, the first 50 Hurricanes reached squadrons but the type was being delivered faster than the RAF could absorb them into squadron use. By the time of the Munich Crisis, only two of the projected twelve Hurricane squadrons were operational. By the start of the war, there were 18 operational Hurricane squadrons with three more converting.

