

Hurricane Fighters From WWII Unearthed In Ukrainian Forest
Thomas Newdick - The Drive



Hurricane Fighters From WWII Unearthed In Ukrainian Forest © Photo by Royal Air Force Official Photographer/Imperial War Museums via Getty Images

With Ukraine seemingly poised to receive the *modern F-16 jets* that it has *long campaigned for* sometime in the near future, a unique discovery in a forest in that country sheds light on a previous effort to deliver fighter aircraft to it to help force out an invading power.

The planes — eight World War II-era British-built *Hawker Hurricanes* — were unearthed while authorities were dealing with an unexploded bomb, another legacy of the Soviet conflict with Nazi Germany that lasted between 1941 and 1945.

 **Glasnost Gone**
@GlasnostGone · [Follow](#) 

Russia hiding US help. #Ukraine's found remains of 8 British Hurricane fighter planes from #WW2 buried in a forest. Some of the 3,000 Hurricanes given to Soviets were broken up & buried after the war to avoid paying US back under the Lend-Lease legislation [bbc.co.uk/news/world-eur...](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-eur...)



2:40 AM · Jul 2, 2023 

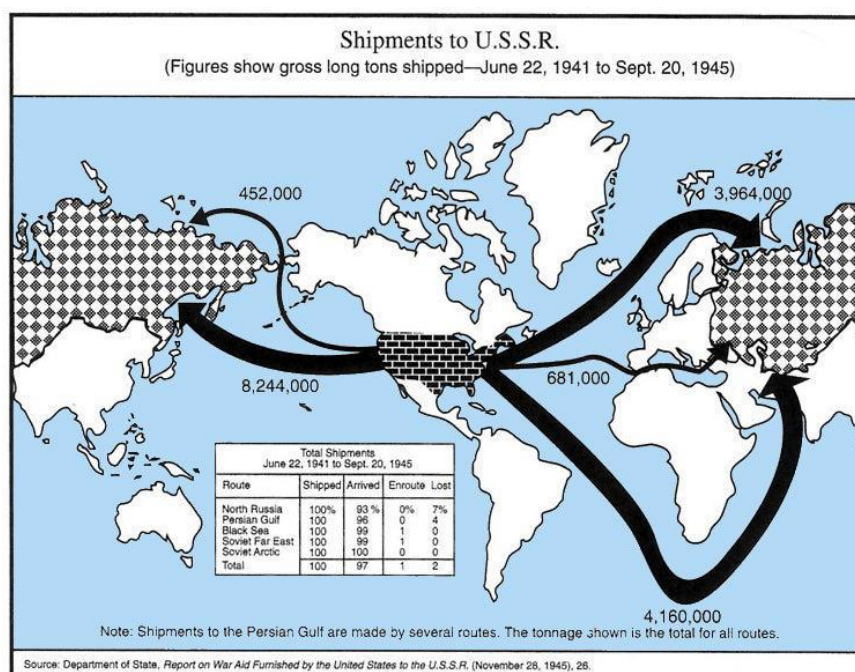
The Hurricanes — or the remains of them — were discovered south of Kyiv, where the Soviets had apparently buried them at the end of World War II. At the time, of course, Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union, its people fighting alongside the Russians against the Nazis.

These aircraft were part of the *Lend-Lease program*, an enormous U.S. effort to put aid into the hands of other Allied nations fighting against Nazi Germany. After the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union was the biggest beneficiary of Lend-Lease, receiving \$11.3 billion in arms, oil, food, and materiel as it battled to turn the tide of the Nazi German invasion, launched under Operation Barbarossa in June 1941.

Lend-Lease aid arrived free of charge, with arms to be used until returned or destroyed. In practice, most of the equipment was destroyed, but anything retained after the end of the agreement had to be paid for. It's almost certain that the Hurricanes were concealed in the forest after the war to avoid these costs.

Reports suggest they were moved by tractors from a nearby airfield, broken up, and then dumped in a shallow ravine. They were then covered with soil.

As well as U.S.-made arms, Lend-Lease also sourced weapons from other Allies, including the Hurricanes from the United Kingdom, which were paid for by the United States. Starting in late 1941, the Soviet Union received 2,776 Hurricane Mk II aircraft, which, alongside the P-39 Airacobra and P-40 Tomahawk/Kittyhawk, were among the first generation of Lend-Lease fighters provided.



A map shows U.S. Lend-Lease shipments to the Soviet Union in World War II, by route. U.S. State Department

A contemporary poster from the U.K. Office for Emergency Management showing British military aid supplied to the Soviet Union. National Archives

Before the first Lend-Lease Hurricanes arrived in the Soviet Union, the U.K. Royal Air Force also *deployed some of its own aircraft* to the Soviet Arctic, where they provided air defense of the critical port of Murmansk and also began to train Soviet pilots on the type.

U. K. Royal Air Force Hurricane Mk IIBs at Murmansk-Vaenga airfield in the Soviet Union. Imperial War Museum

BRITAIN has
sent to **RUSSIA**

- 3,000 TANKS
- 3,000 AIRCRAFT
- 70,000,000 rounds of SMALL ARMS AMMUNITION
- 40,000 TONS of BOOTS
- 50,000 TONS of RUBBER
- and with the UNITED STATES —
- 85,000 TRUCKS

831,000 TONS OF

- STEEL, BRASS, ZINC, COPPER, LEAD, NICKEL
- MACHINE TOOLS
- SMALL ARMS AND AMMUNITION

OUR PRODUCTS FIGHT ON RUSSIAN FRONTS!

MINISTRY OF SUPPLY BT 75

44-pf-113© Provided by The Drive

The excavation of the eight aircraft is now being handled by Ukraine's State Aviation Museum, which plans to eventually put one or more of the Hurricanes on permanent display.

“It is very rare to find this aircraft in Ukraine,” Oleks Shtan, a former airline pilot who is leading the excavation, [told the BBC](#). “It’s very important for our aviation history because no Lend-Lease aircraft have been found here before.”

Photos of the Hurricanes so far show only heavily corroded and twisted metal, but with eight aircraft having been discovered, there are likely to be enough components to reassemble and restore at least one of them.

Indeed, [similar finds](#) in the past have even led to airworthy war-bird rebuilds, but there are so far no signs that this is being considered. Compared to the [Supermarine Spitfire](#) or [P-51 Mustang](#), relatively few Hurricanes and [Sea Hurricanes](#) still fly today, with a little more than a dozen airworthy examples around the globe.



Hurricane Fighters From WWII Unearthed In Ukrainian Forest© Provided by The Drive

At the same time, reports suggest that, prior to being disposed of in the forest, the Hurricanes already had much of their more valuable equipment removed, including their weapons, radios, instruments, and even useful scrap metal.

While the Hurricane is best remembered for being the leading destroyer of German aircraft in the Battle of Britain, it went on to have a significant career in Soviet hands.

In fact, at one point in 1942, it was the most numerous Western-supplied fighter in Soviet use, operated by both the air force and the naval air arm, from land bases. “The Hurricane was a strong, easy-to-fly machine,” Oleks Shtan explained. The Hurricane also proved itself suitable for operations from rough airstrips, essential for supporting ground troops on the front lines.



*A different Soviet Hurricane wreck undergoes restoration near Moscow, Russia.
parfaits/Wikimedia Commons*

*“It was stable as a gun platform and suitable for inexperienced pilots,” Shtan added.
“A reliable aircraft.”*



Hurricane Fighters From WWII Unearthed In Ukrainian Forest© Provided by The Drive

The guns in question were a pair of locally installed 20-mm [ShVAK](#) cannons and two 12.7-mm UBK heavy machine guns, which provided a significant weight of fire — superior to any other Soviet-flown single-engine fighter as of 1941–42. This, coupled with a relatively low top speed and rate of climb, made the Hurricane more suitable as a bomber destroyer, a role in which it also served with Soviet air defense units.



Hurricane Fighters From WWII Unearthed In Ukrainian Forest© Provided by The Drive

Soviet fighter ace Boris Safonov, who was credited with 20 aerial kills, based on Soviet records. He flew 44 combat sorties in Hurricanes and posted two victories on the type: a Bf 109 and a Heinkel He 111. Wikimedia Commons

A Soviet Hurricane that was shot down during action against Finnish forces in March 1942. Both Finland and the Soviet Union operated Hurricanes in World War II. Sakuva/Wikimedia Commons

On the other hand, the Hurricane was outclassed by the Luftwaffe's Messerschmidt Bf 109F/G fighter which it frequently encountered, meaning that many leading Soviet aces preferred to fly other, more modern types.

With the continued flow of new and more capable fighters via Lend-Lease, together with the emergence of a new generation of Soviet-made aircraft, the Hurricane has tended to be overlooked in historical accounts, although it clearly made an important contribution at a critical time and was still the mount of [multiple Soviet aces](#).



R. A.F fighter pilots, some of them leaning against a Hurricane aircraft meeting a Russian sentry guarding the aircraft from which the R.A.F wing is operating in Russia, circa 1940s. (Photo by FPG/Hulton Archive/Getty Images)© Provided by The Drive

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia has led to other, more macabre examples of the legacy of World War II being brought into focus.

Last month, after the [destruction of the Kakhovka Dam](#) on the Dnipro River, the subsequent drainage of the huge reservoir behind it left mudflats that were littered with skeletons, purportedly of soldiers killed during battles in World War II.

While there is a possibility that some of the resulting video footage was staged to an extent — there's no doubt that the area saw intense fighting during that previous conflict.

In particular, it was here that the Soviet Army launched a major counteroffensive against the Germans in 1943, with almost four million soldiers involved. Today, the Dnipro River is seeing more intense fighting, as the Ukrainian Armed Forces continue their counteroffensive against the Russian occupation.

As for the Hurricanes, it's significant that, despite the ongoing conflict, so much effort is being devoted to their recovery. While these are now very rare aircraft, more important is the resonance with Ukraine's situation today and, in particular, its need for weapons to continue its fight against Russian aggression. In this sense, there are powerful parallels with the Lend-Lease program of World War II.

“The Hurricanes are a symbol of British assistance during the years of the Second World War, just as we are very appreciative of British assistance nowadays,” Valerii Romanenko, the head of research at Ukraine's State Aviation Museum, [told the BBC](#). “The U.K. is one of the largest suppliers of military equipment to our country now.”

The United Kingdom was quick to send shoulder-launched [anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons](#) to Ukraine and its decision, earlier this year, to send 14 of its

main *Challenger 2* main battle tanks helped launch a broader international effort to get *similar equipment* to Ukraine.

Britain was also the first to announce it would begin *training Ukrainian pilots* to operate modern NATO-standard fighters. However, Ukrainian requests for *the aircraft themselves* have so far been ignored in London, which has determined it's not in a position to hand over *any of its Typhoon jets*.

“In 1941 Britain was the first who supplied fighter aircraft to the Soviet Union in [a] mass scale,” Romanenko added.

“Now the U.K. is the first country which gives *Storm Shadow cruise missiles* to our armed forces.”

The *delivery of Storm Shadow*, which is a *high-end tactical air-launched cruise missile*, also set a new precedent for arms donations to Ukraine. We now know that its integration with Soviet-built Su-24 Fencer strike jets came with the help of another U.K. component — pylons from retired Tornado strike jets.

<https://twitter.com/Osinttechnical/status/1675281779043729409?s=20> <https://twitter.com/OSINTII/status/1675501220822228994?s=20>

As such, when one or more of these Hurricanes finally gets put on display, they will serve not only as a reminder of the British and Allied military assistance that helped defeat Nazi Germany but also of the ongoing military support received by Ukraine from the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

*** Contact the author: thomas@thedrive.com