

The T-26 saw combat during the Red Army battles with the Japanese Kwangtung army around Lake Khasan in 1938 and again around Khalkin Gol in 1939. Here is a platoon of T-26 Model 1933s of the 334th Ind Tank Battalion, 36th Motor Rifle Division on the Far Eastern Front during the 1939 campaign.



underwater, and inflatable pontoons for swimming across rivers. None were accepted for production. The only engineer tank to reach serial production was the ST-26, manufactured in small numbers in 1934, which could deliver and deploy a 6-meter-long bridge. These were typically deployed in motorized pontoon-bridge battalions with a section of four bridging tanks.

COMBAT RECORD

War in the Far East

The first combat use of the T-26 by the Red Army took place in 1938 during the fighting with the Japanese around Lake Khasan in July. There were 257 T-26 tanks in this sector with the 2nd Mechanized Brigade and the 32nd and 30th Ind Tank Battalions, including ten KhT-26 flamethrower tanks, three ST-26 bridgelayers, and 13 SU-5-2 122mm self-propelled howitzers. The 2nd Mechanized Brigade had had its upper ranks decimated by political purges in the days before the battle, and performed badly in combat. During

D

1: SU-26, 220TH INDEPENDENT TANK BRIGADE, LENINGRAD FRONT, WINTER 1943

The Kirov plant in Leningrad began fashioning improvised self-propelled guns using spare T-26 chassis in the fall of 1941. These used the 76mm Model 1927 regimental gun behind an armored shield. The 124th Tank Brigade was the first unit to receive these, and they were variously called SU-26, SU-T-26, or SU-76. These subsequently equipped the 220th Tank Brigade, and this plate shows one still in use in the winter of 1943, with a rough whitewash finish.

2, T-26 MODEL 1933 (EKRANOVKA), 220TH TANK BRIGADE, LENINGRAD FRONT, FEBRUARY 1944

One of the main tactical shortcomings of the T-26 was its thin frontal armor. In 1941, several factories began steps to improve the armor on T-26 tanks. This particular variant avoided the problems of trying to fit armor plate over the curved surfaces of the turret front by building out the entire front turret structure. It was painted in a simple whitewash over the usual 4BO green, and carries tactical markings in red.

1



2



the fighting around the Bogomolnaya and Zaozernaya hills, the brigade lost 85 T-26 tanks against Japanese antitank defenses.

The fighting resumed in the summer of 1939 along the Khalkin Gol river. By this time the Soviet tactical leadership had stabilized, and Moscow reinforced the region with additional tank units. The primary tanks in this theater were BT cavalry tanks. There were small numbers of T-26 tanks, mainly serving in the tank battalions of the rifle divisions. So for example, the 82nd Rifle Division had a battalion with 14 T-26 tanks. There were also flamethrower tanks attached to the tank brigades. The T-26 performed reasonably well in the 1939 fighting as the Japanese 37mm antitank gun was not especially effective against its armor. Of the T-26 tank types in the area, the flamethrower tanks saw the most extensive use, and ten KhT-26 and two KhT-130 tanks were lost in the fighting.

The Polish Campaign, 1939

The Soviet invasion of eastern Poland on September 17, 1939, was the largest tank operation by the Red Army to date and included 1,675 T-26 tanks, or about 15 percent of the total tank park. Most of these were in the tank brigades, which had a nominal strength of 256 to 267 tanks per brigade; others served in the tank battalions attached to the rifle divisions with 12–15 T-26 tanks per division. The invasion was largely uncontested except for skirmishes with border guards since the Polish Army was preoccupied with fighting the German Army in western and central Poland. The Soviet forces included the Byelorussian Front with 878 T-26 tanks (22nd, 25th, 29th, and 32nd Tank Brigades) and the Ukrainian Front with 797 T-26 tanks (26th, 36th, and 38th Tank Brigades). Combat losses were miniscule, only 15 T-26 tanks of all types. However, the invasion was an embarrassing display of the incompetence of the Red Army to conduct even an uncontested road march. Some 302 T-26 tanks broke down during the advance, about a fifth of the invading force. The problems were due to the poor leadership and demoralization of the senior commanders in the wake of the purges, the poor training of the average Red Army conscripts, and the lingering durability problems with the T-26 tank.



A column of T-26 Model 1933s of the 29th Tank Brigade are seen in Brześć-nad-Bugiem (Brest-Litovsk) along with German troops on September 24, 1939, during a parade for General Heinz Guderian and Kombrig S. M. Krivoshein to celebrate the end of the joint campaign against Poland.

The Russo-Finnish Winter War, 1939–40

The uncontested Polish invasion hinted at the profound problems in the Red Army tank force, but the campaign against Finland starting on November 30, 1939, made these problems alarmingly clear. The Leningrad Front, home to the main T-26 production center, had 848 T-26 tanks on hand at the start of the war. The fighting eventually involved 20 divisional tank battalions, four light tank brigades, and the 10th Tank Corps. The employment of specialized flamethrower tanks and teletanks in the campaign has been detailed in the sections above.

The performance of the T-26 units in the first months of the campaign was poor. The narrow tracks of the T-26 were not ideal in deep snow, and snow-covered antitank obstructions and minefields took their toll. The Finnish forces were ensconced in the defensive positions of the Mannerheim Line. Even though the Finnish antitank arsenal was poor by European standards, it proved deadly against the thinly armored T-26. In the first two months of fighting from November 30, 1939, to February 1, 1940, the Red Army lost 1,110 tanks of all types from a starting strength of 1,570 tanks. Of these tank casualties, 540 were combat losses and 570 were mechanical breakdowns. The primary causes of the combat losses were gunfire (275 tanks) and mines/obstacles (106 tanks).

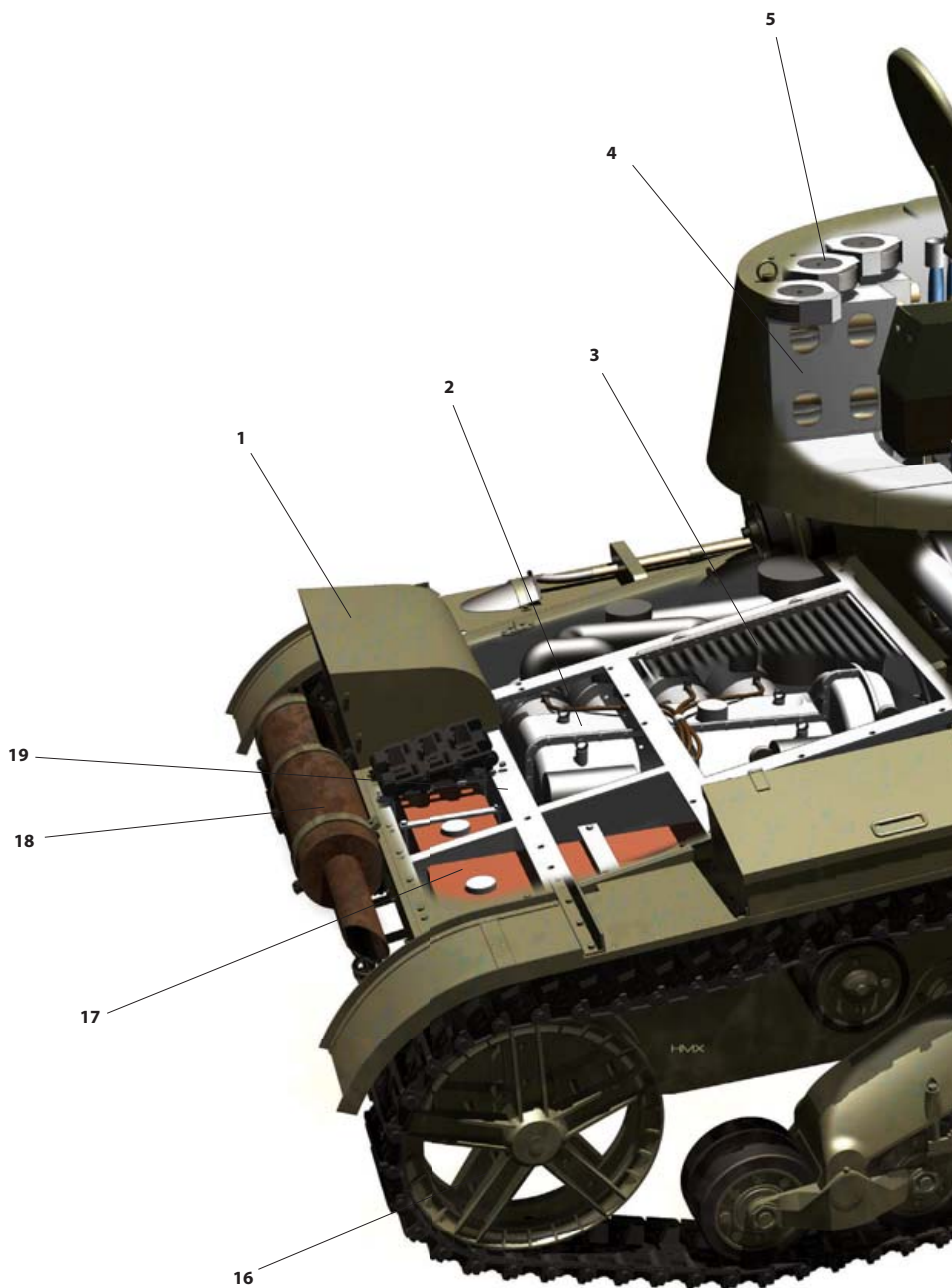
Prior to the renewal of the offensive, the Red Army on the Finnish front began a thorough reexamination of tactics and training, with the intention of reforming its forces prior to a major offensive. There were a few small technical innovations, such as the introduction of tank-drawn engineer sleds, which could be used to haul explosives forward for attacking Finnish bunkers, and Sokolov armored sleds to tow infantry assault squads forward under limited protective cover. The offensive resumed on February 1, 1940,

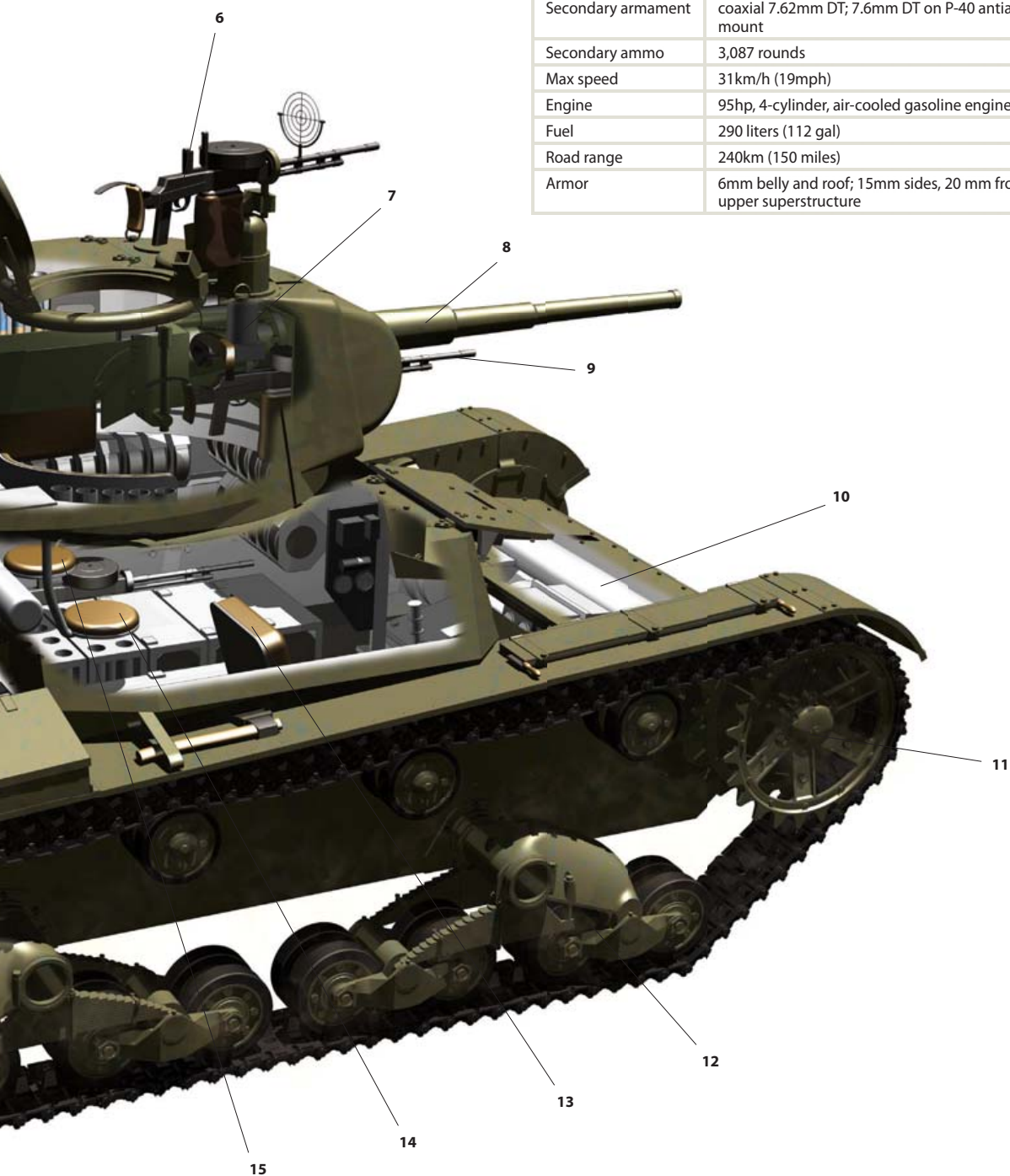


A twin-turret T-26 Model 1931 knocked out during the 1939–40 Winter War with Finland. It has the original riveted hull and has a 37mm PS-1 gun in the right turret.

KEY

1. Engine air intake cowl
2. 95 hp engine
3. Engine radiator grill
4. 45mm tank gun ammunition rack
5. 7.62mm ammunition drum stowage
6. 7.62mm DT machine gun on P-40 anti-aircraft mount
7. Gunner's periscopic sight
8. 20-K 45mm Model 1934-38 tank gun
9. Coaxial 7.62mm machine gun
10. Transmission
11. Drive sprocket
12. Suspension bogie
13. Driver's seat
14. Gunner's seat
15. Loader's seat
16. Idler wheel
17. Fuel tank
18. Engine muffler
19. Spare track link





Technical Data

Crew	3: commander/loader, gunner, driver
Length	4.62m (15.1ft)
Width	2.44m (8ft)
Height	2.33m (7.6ft)
Weight	10.25 metric tons (11.2 tons)
Main armament	20-K 45mm Model 1934-38
Main ammo	205 rounds (165 in radio tank)
Secondary armament	coaxial 7.62mm DT; 7.6mm DT on P-40 anti-aircraft mount
Secondary ammo	3,087 rounds
Max speed	31km/h (19mph)
Engine	95hp, 4-cylinder, air-cooled gasoline engine
Fuel	290 liters (112 gal)
Road range	240km (150 miles)
Armor	6mm belly and roof; 15mm sides, 20 mm frontal and upper superstructure

and relied as much on brute force as on refinements in tactics. At the start of the February offensive, there were 1,740 tanks of all types. Tank losses during the final six weeks of the assault were quite heavy, but the Finnish defenses finally crumbled. Total losses in the Finnish campaign were nearly 3,200 tanks of all types, of which 1,920 were combat losses and 1,275 were mechanical breakdowns and accidents; T-26 losses were about 1,170 tanks, including flamethrower tanks. The Soviet 7th Army bore the brunt of the fighting and lost 2,543 tanks, of which 930 were T-26s. Of these, 1,498 tanks including 463 T-26s were recovered and rebuilt.

Soviet Tank Losses in the Winter War, 1939–40

Period	Gunfire	Mines	Burned	Other combat	Mechanical, accident	Subtotal	Total loss
November 30, 1939, to February 1, 1940	275	106	154	15	570	1,120	118
February 1, 1940, to February 25, 1940	380	177	127	62	411	1,157	160
February 25, 1940, to March 13, 1940	300	100	155	68	294	917	90
Total	955	383	436	145	1,275	3,194	368

Operation Barbarossa

The Wehrmacht had watched the inept performance of the Red Army in Poland; its disastrous performance in Finland whetted Hitler's appetite for aggression against his erstwhile ally. In the wake of the spectacular and unexpected German victory over France in May and June 1940, the Red Army changed course yet again and reorganized its armored force. Its various tank brigades were consolidated into massive mechanized corps, emulating the Panzerkorps. This proved to be a serious mistake. In the wake of the purges, the Red Army lacked an experienced cadre of senior commanders to lead such a force, its junior officer ranks were inexperienced and usually a pay grade above their skill level, and the Red Army had systemic problems in command and control as well as logistics.

A large fraction of the Soviet tank losses during the summer 1941 campaign were due to road accidents and other misadventures resulting from the low level of training of many of the conscripts. This T-26 Model 1938 has ended up in a bog outside Tallin in Estonia. It was originally built as a radio tank, evident from the fittings on the turret side. Problems with the 71-TK-1 radio sets sometimes led to their removal, along with the awkward rail antenna around the turret.



T-26 Strength by Military District, 1940–41

Military district	T-26 twin	T-26 line	T-26 radio	KhT-26	KhT-130	Other KhT	SU-5	ST-26	T-26T	Total June 1, 1940	Total June 22, 1941
In plants, depots	78	102	114	62	12	3		9	10	390	371
Leningrad	87	222	222	64	12	70		2	17	696	677
Baltic	25	334	148	10	1	9			3	530	527
Western	211	719	341	38	50	22	8	8	42	1,439	1,389
Kiev	230	746	722	16	113	119	9	2	33	1,990	1,955
Kharkov	81	46	46		4				4	181	177
Odessa	36	83	95		4	14			5	237	232
Moscow	30	131	114	50	31	100		26	18	500	361
Volga	50	15	8	14	2	3		1	9	102	92
Orlov	37	14	16						7	74	160
Caucasus/ Central Asia	79	377	400	23	10	105			4	998	994
Siberia	12	34	7		10				2	65	63
Far East/ Baikal	305	1,223	1,207	31	251		11	9	57	3,094	3,017
<i>Total</i>	<i>1,261</i>	<i>4,046</i>	<i>3,440</i>	<i>308</i>	<i>500</i>	<i>445</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>211</i>	<i>10,296</i>	<i>10,015</i>

On paper, the Red Army tank force was impressive. Even after the tank losses in Finland, the Red Army had more T-26 tanks on hand than all German tanks combined. The German panzer force was still heavily dependent on obsolete and weakly armed types such as the PzKpfw I and PzKpfw II. What the panzer force lacked in numbers and tank firepower it made up for with combat experience, better unit organization, and a much more sophisticated command-and-control network, which was well suited to waging mobile warfare. Furthermore, the Red Army's apparent superiority in tanks was an illusion. The vast numbers of T-26 infantry tanks and BT cavalry tanks hid the rotten core of mechanical decay, shortages of spare parts, and poor repair. The mechanical problems were exacerbated by a poor standard of training amongst the tankers and junior officers.

The 1941 reorganization plan envisioned 30 mechanized corps, which would have required 30,930 tanks; actual Soviet tank inventory in June 1941 was 23,106, of which about half were T-26 light tanks. The T-26 was not well suited to the mechanized-corps role, and the proposed tables of organization and equipment largely ignored the T-26 in favor of more modern types, relegating the T-26 to tank battalions in the rifle divisions. The new tank division was officially allotted only 22 T-26s and 54 T-26 flamethrower tanks of its 375 tanks. In the event, the grandiose scheme for the mechanized corps forced the Red Army to use more than half the T-26 inventory in this role.

In late August 1941, Soviet forces launched Operation *Compassion* against Iran to gain control of communication networks for the shipment of Lend-Lease supplies. This is a Soviet T-26 Model 1938 of the 57th Tank Division, 28th Mechanized Corps, in Tebriz on September 17, 1941.



T-26 Strength in Red Army Mechanized Corps, June 22, 1941

Mechanized corps	Commander	Tank divisions	Mechanized divisions	Military district	AFV strength June 22, 1941	T-26 tanks*
1	M. L. Chernyavskiy	1, 3	163	Leningrad	1,039	278
2	Yu. V. Novoselskiy	11, 16	15	Odessa	527	62
3	A. V. Kurkin	2, 5	84	Baltic	672	41
4	A. A. Vlasov	8, 32	81	Kiev	979	178
5	I. P. Alekseyenko	13, 17	109	Transbaikal	1,187	303
6	M. G. Khatskilevich	4, 7	29	Western	1,021	126
7	V. I. Vinogradov	14, 18	1	Moscow	959	340
8	R. I. Ryabyshev	12, 34	7	Kiev	932	340
9	K. K. Rokossovskiy	20, 35	131	Kiev	316	144
10	I. G. Lazarev	21, 24	198	Leningrad	469	198
11	D. K. Mostovenko	29, 33	204	Western	414	166
12	N. M. Shestopalov	23, 28	202	Baltic	730	539
13	P. N. Akhystan	25, 31	208	Western	282	264
14	S. I. Oborin	22, 30	205	Western	518	528
15	I. I. Karpezo	10, 37	212	Kiev	749	58
16	A. D. Sokolov	15, 39	240	Kiev	608	245
17	M. P. Petrov	27, 36	209	Western	63	1
18	P. V. Volokh	44, 47	218	Odessa	282	308
19	N. V. Feklenko	40, 43	213	Kiev	454	291
20	A. G. Nikitin	26, 38	210	Western	94	80
21	D. D. Lelyushenko	42, 46	185	Moscow	175	?
22	S. M. Kondrusev	19, 41	215	Kiev	712	512
23	M. A. Miasnikov	48, 51	220	Orel	413	101
24	V. I. Chistyakov	45, 49	216	Kiev	222	168
25	S. M. Krivoshein	50, 55	219	Kharkov	300	157
26	N. Ya. Kirichenko	52, 56	103	N Caucasus	184	?
27	I. E. Petrov	9, 53	221	Central Asia	356	136
28	V. V. Novikov	6, 54	236	Transcaucasus	869	?
30	V. S. Golubovskiy	58, 60	239	Far East		?
Other		57, 59, 61	69, 82			
Total					15,526	5,239
*numbers include flamethrower tanks and other T-26 sub-variants						

As of April 1940, Red Army weapons were categorized at five readiness levels: Category 1 (new, unused); 2 (operational, minor repairs); 3 (medium repair needed at unit or district workshops); 4 (capital overhaul needed at special workshops or factories); 5 (retired for scrapping). In the case of the tank units of the Red Army in the western military districts in June 1941 that would bear the brunt of the initial fighting, there were 4,875 T-26 tanks, of which 828 were in Category 1, 3,339 in Category 2, and 708 in Category 3

F

T-26 MODEL 1938, 28TH MECHANIZED CORPS, IRAN, 1941

Tanks of the 28th Mechanized Corps were widely painted in the "Group 3" scheme of 4BO camouflage green with bands of 6K dark brown and 7K earth yellow brown. This camouflage was mostly applied in 1939 before the consolidation of various units into the 28th Mechanized Corps, so the patterns varied widely. In anticipation of the Operation *Compassion* invasion of Iran in August 1941, the usual white invasion cross was painted on the tank roofs. This was a standard Red Army marking for aerial recognition, and had been used on previous foreign operations including the invasion of the Baltic states in 1941.





A column of T-26 tanks led by a T-26 Model 1938 moves to the front during the fighting in the winter of 1941–42.

or 4. While this suggests that about 85 percent of the T-26s were new or ready for operation, in fact many of the tanks were sidelined due to a lack of spare parts such as track links, and many others had nearly exhausted their number of engine hours. On average, the T-26 tanks in the western military districts had accumulated 75–100 motor hours; a medium overhaul was required at 150 motor hours. This had debilitating consequences in combat. The seven mechanized corps of the Southwestern Front in Ukraine conducted road marches averaging 300–365km in the first nine days of combat from June 22 to June 30, using up 35 to 40 motor hours on their tanks, or about a quarter of their engine life. A typical example was the 10th Tank Division, 15th Mechanized Corps, which started the fighting with 27 T-26 tanks (19 gun tanks and eight flamethrower tanks). In three weeks of fighting, it lost 24 of 27 T-26 tanks with nine combat losses, three missing, and 12 abandoned due to mechanical breakdowns.

The summer battles of 1941 were catastrophic for the Red Army. The older tanks such as the T-26 suffered especially heavy losses. For example, the Southwestern Front in Ukraine, formerly the Kiev Special Military District, started the war with 5,966 tanks, of which 1,955 were T-26 tanks. Of these, 1,326 T-26 tanks were in the six mechanized corps. The great encirclement battles that took place over the next five weeks whittled this down to only 74 T-26 tanks by August 1, 1941.



Officers of the 6th Tank Brigade discuss plans during the August 1942 fighting on the Southwestern Front on the approaches to Stalingrad. The officer on the far left is a lieutenant colonel and the unit commissar, evident from sleeve star insignia of the Red Army Political Administration. The tanker to the far right is a junior lieutenant, evident from the insignia on the collar. In the background are three T-26 tanks, a T-26 Model 1938 on the left and two T-26 Model 1933s.

The Western Front, formerly the Western Special Military District, started the war with 3,330 tanks, of which 1,389 were T-26s. By October 1, 1941, the Western Front had been reduced to 475 tanks, of which only 298 were T-26s. By October 28, 1941, the Western Front had a strength of 441 tanks but only 50 T-26s. The table below provides a graphic summary of the fighting on the approaches to Moscow in the fall of 1941. By mid-November 1941, the Western Front's tank force had been greatly reduced but for the sudden influx of the Reserve Front from units deep in the interior. Even with these reinforcements, the size of the T-26 force continued to fall compared to the summer. It is worth noting that in October–November 1941, on average only about 47 percent of the Soviet tank force was operational, with the remainder in repair.

The Approaches to Moscow: T-26 Strength on the Western Front

	T-26 operational + repair	T-26 total	All tanks operational + repair	All tanks total	T-26 as percent of force
June 22, 1941	1,165	1,165	1,896	1,896	61%
October 1, 1941	298 + ?	298+	475 +?	475+	63%
October 28, 1941	21 + 11	32	315 + 101	416	8%
November 7, 1941	84 + 3	87	519 + 592	1,111	8%
November 15, 1941	21 + 4	25	109 + 145	254	10%
November 15, 1941*	296 + 12	308	899 + 988	1,887	16%
November 22, 1941	129 + 16	145	600 + 852	1,452	10%

*Arriving Reserve Front reinforcements

In total, the Red Army lost about 20,500 tanks in 1941, of which 17,300 were light tanks, including the T-26 and BT tanks. A German evaluation of Soviet tanks in 1942 assessed the T-26 as being weakly protected, well-armed, underpowered, too slow, and obsolete. Although hundreds of operational T-26 tanks were captured, the Wehrmacht had a very low opinion of the type and sent most back to smelters in Germany to recycle their steel.



The Leningrad Military District still had a small pool of T-26s in service as late as 1944, with 32 tanks in service with the 1st and 220th Tank Brigades. This T-26 Model 1936 was knocked out during the fighting on the Finnish front near Lehmivaara on August 9, 1944. It has many late features such as the P-40 anti-aircraft machine-gun mount. (SA-Kuva)

While it might seem that the T-26 had completely disappeared from the scene by the end of 1941, this was not the case. There were substantial inventories of T-26 tanks deeper in the Soviet Union, most notably in the Caucasus and in the Far East. Some of these units were dispatched to the Moscow theater and saw combat in the bitter battles of winter 1941–42.

One of the more obscure campaigns from the summer of 1941 was Operation *Compassion* (*Operatsiya Sochuvstvie*), the Soviet element of the Anglo-Russian invasion of Iran in August–September 1941. The aim was to depose the pro-German Shah in order to provide a route for shipping supplies to the Red Army. The largest tank element of the Red Army contingent was the 28th Mechanized Corps, which contained two tank divisions, both equipped with the T-26 tank, and totaling 869 light tanks and 131

G

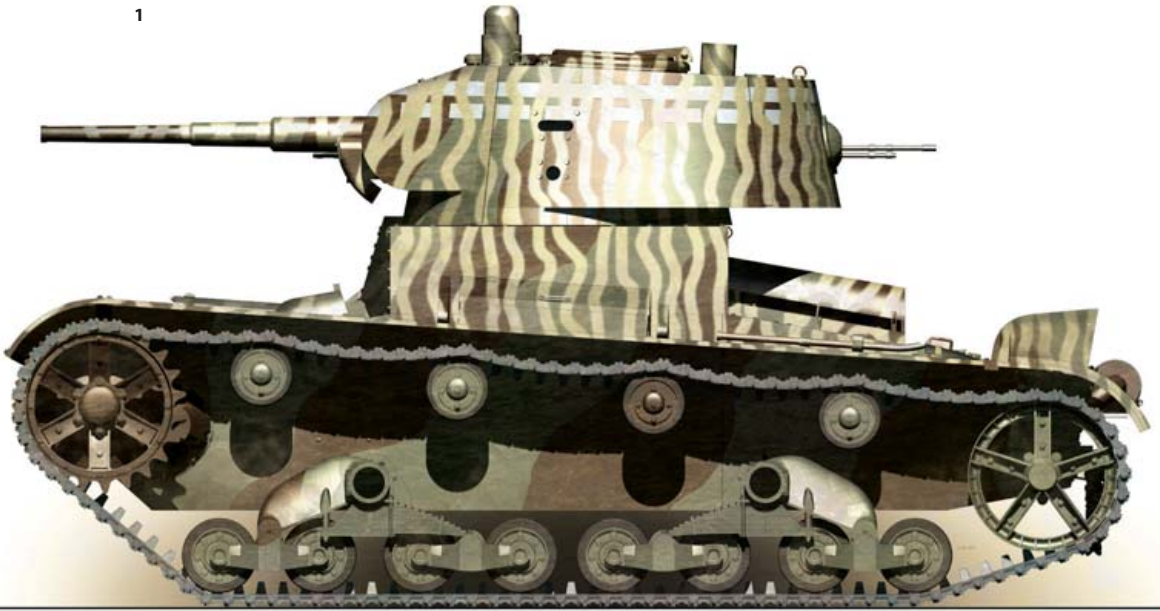
1: T-26 MODEL 1938, 55TH TANK BRIGADE, CRIMEAN FRONT, MARCH 1942

This is another example of one of the variations in the Group 3 scheme in a brigade formerly part of the 6th Tank Division, 28th Mechanized Corps, after it had been withdrawn from Iran and reorganized. The base 4BO color of the tank has a pattern of 6K brown bands, along with the battalion/company bands in white. This has been over-painted by a pattern of 7K earth yellow, partly covering the old battalion/company bands.

2: T-26 MODEL 1938, 39TH TANK DIVISION, 18TH MECHANIZED CORPS, UMAN, AUGUST 1941

The formation of the massive mechanized corps in 1941 encouraged the use of tactical markings to distinguish the component divisions and tank regiments. There was no national system for these markings in 1941, and they were usually adopted on the initiative of local commanders. This is an example from one of the tank divisions that served in the Ukraine in the summer of 1941, consisting of a broken white turret band with a number, possibly indicating one of the constituent regiments or subformations.

1



2



flamethrower tanks. There were additional tank subunits attached to various rifle and cavalry units. The Soviet advance was not strongly opposed, but the Red Army was plagued by repair problems. After an advance of about 700km in less than a week, about 35 percent of the tanks had broken down and required depot or factory rebuilding. In some units, for example the 24th Tank Regiment, half of the tanks were non-operational after four days of road marches. After the campaign, most of the tanks were rebuilt and sent back to the Transcaucasus Military District. The tank divisions were broken up into small tank brigades. These tank units saw extensive fighting in the summer 1942 campaign in the Caucasus.

The focus of German operations in the spring and summer of 1942 was the southern front, with the Wehrmacht launching Plan *Blue* (Fall *Blau*). This assault intended to secure the Crimea and seize the oilfields of the Caucasus. The scale of the tank battles in the sector near the Black Sea was not as large as the titanic summer battles of 1941. The Red Army still had reserves of old T-26 tanks available. For example, by the time of the Kerch battles in March 1942, the Red Army had 225 tanks in the Crimea, of which 172 were T-26 light tanks. However, the Red Army began committing its new tank corps on the approaches to Stalingrad, and the T-26 largely disappeared. So during the fighting in late August 1942 on the Southeastern Front, there were only six T-26s out of some 220 Soviet tanks; by September 1942 there were none. There were no T-26s in Soviet tank units of the Stalingrad Front by October 1942.

The T-26 appeared in dwindling numbers on other fronts. In 1944 there were 424 T-26s still in inventory, of which 35 were at the front, 213 were in rear-area military districts for training, and 176 were in repair plants. These figures do not include the Far Eastern Front as detailed below. On the isolated Leningrad Front, small units of T-26 tanks continued to appear well into the 1944 campaign. Although Plant No 174 was evacuated from the city, there were enough spare parts that over 100 T-26 tanks were built in the late summer and fall of 1941. In January 1944, during the final offensive to liberate Leningrad, the 3rd Company of the 220th Tank Brigade had 27 T-26 tanks. This unit saw fighting against Finland in the summer of 1944.

Captured T-26 Tanks in Combat

Finland purchased 34 Vickers 6-Ton Tanks, and these saw combat service in the 1940 fighting. The Finnish captured numerous T-26 tanks and their derivatives during the 1939–40 Winter War. The Vickers 6-Ton Tanks were modernized by rearming them with captured Soviet 45mm tank guns, and they were sometimes called T-26E. As of May 31, 1941, the Finnish Army had 26 Vickers light tanks, ten T-26 Model 1931s, 20 T-26 Model 1933s, four T-26 Model 1938s, OT-26 flamethrower tanks, and four OT-130 flamethrower tanks. These saw extensive fighting in Karelia in the summer 1941 battles. Additional Soviet T-26 tanks were captured in the summer 1941 fighting and afterwards. The Finnish Army recognized the shortcomings of the T-26 in terms of firepower and protection, but even as late as July 1943, more than 120 Vickers and T-26 light tanks were in service, making up the bulk of the Finnish tank force. When the Red Army launched its summer 1944 offensive in Karelia, the Finnish Army still had 87 T-26 tanks in service, and 25 were lost in the summer fighting. The Finnish T-26 remained in service in dwindling numbers after the war.

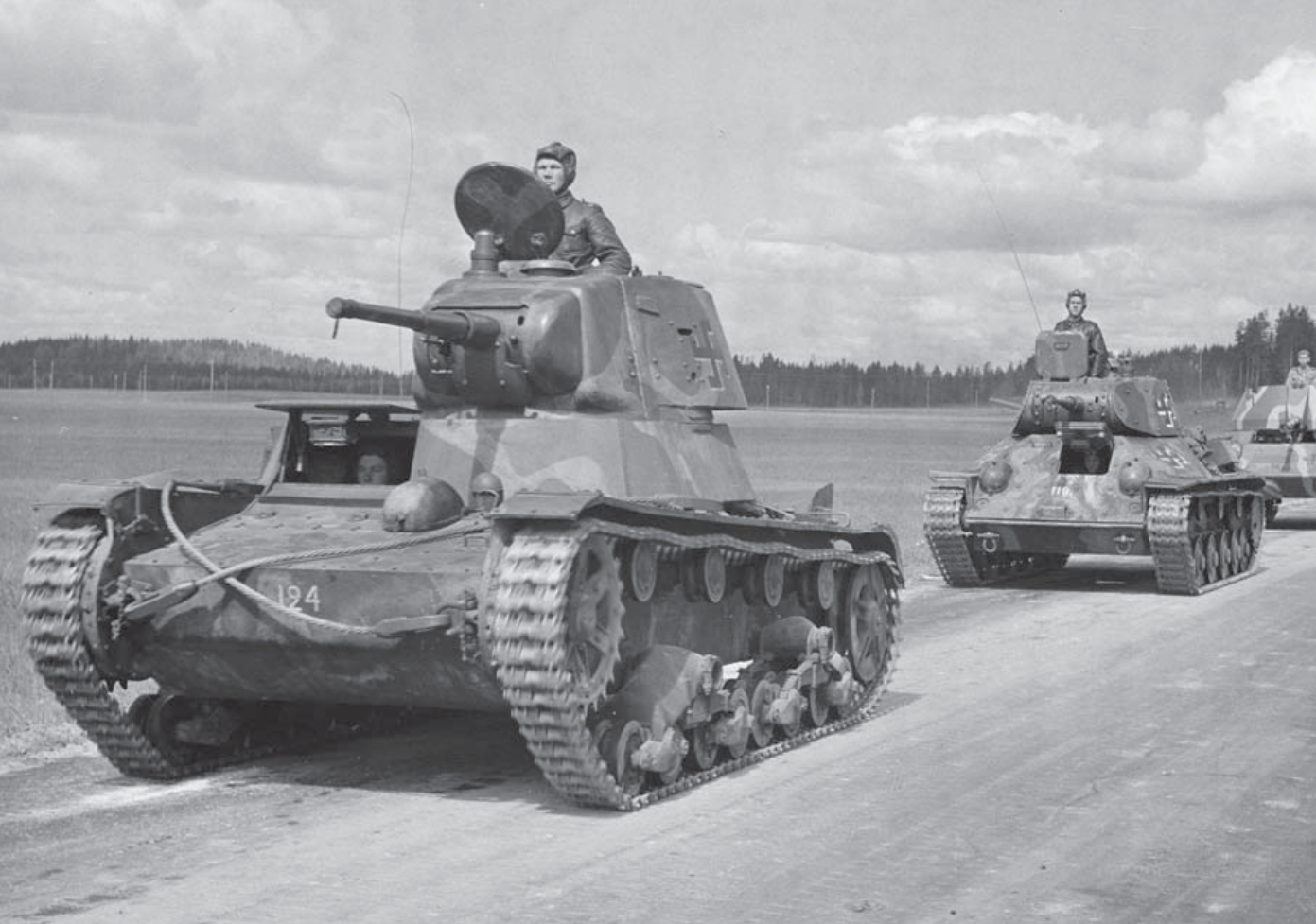


Germany captured thousands of T-26s in 1941, but regarded the type as obsolete and mechanically troublesome. A small number were retained for use by rear-area security and police units under the designation *PzKpfw 740(r)* or *T-26(r)*. By the end of 1941, only 16 *T-26(r)* tanks had been repaired and issued to security units. They continued to be used in small numbers through the war. *Panzerjager Abt. 563* built about ten improvised tank destroyers on captured T-26 chassis, replacing the turret with a 75mm *PaK 97/38*. Some of Germany's eastern allied armies made limited use of captured T-26 tanks. The Romanian army had 33 T-26 tanks in service in November 1942.

The Finnish Army rebuilt many of its T-26s from damaged tanks. This particular T-26 was rebuilt on the chassis of a flamethrower tank, as is evident from the location of the turret on the right side. Some Finnish T-26s also had an added hull machine-gun station, as seen on this tank. (SA-Kuva)

The Final Battle: 1945

The last stronghold for the T-26 was in the Soviet Far East. The T-26 was still a viable tank when facing the poorly equipped Japanese Army. Compared to the start of the war in 1941, when there were about 3,000 T-26s in the Far East, by August 5, 1945, there were still 1,461 T-26s in the region, of which 1,272 were in service and the rest undergoing repair. The T-26 was the most common tank type in the region next to the T-34. In 1944–45, the Baikal military district created 55 armored transporters using obsolete T-26 tank chassis that served with the mechanized infantry elements



The Finnish Army continued to use captured T-26 tanks well into 1944 in spite of their growing obsolescence. This is R-124, a T-26-1 Model 1939 at a parade for Marshal Mannerheim at Enso on June 4, 1944, followed by a T-50 infantry tank. (SA-Kuva)

of the 10th Mechanized Corps. A widened track grouser (*Spetstrak*) was also developed and manufactured locally to improve T-26 traction in soft soil. During the August 1945 offensive by the 1st Far East Front against the Japanese Army in Manchuria, the T-26 served in the 10th Mechanized Corps, in 11 tank brigades, and in one independent tank regiment totaling 347 T-26 tanks and 55 armored transporters.

After the war, in December 1945, there were still some 1,455 T-26 tanks in the Far East. On April 2, 1947, Moscow ordered that the local commands preserve two complete examples of each obsolete tank type for display at army museums, while the remaining inventory of T-26 tanks was placed at the disposal of the civilian economy for scrapping or secondary uses. This ended the use of the T-26 by the Red Army.