

The Pak 38 Anti-Tank Gun

The advancement of tank armour in the late 1930's had rendered the Pak 36 obsolete and a more powerful weapon was sought. The result was the 50mm Pak38 anti-tank gun, the Pak38 was of the same design as the Pak36 but featured a muzzle break to decrease recoil stress on the mount and a double shield each 4mm thick. As with its predecessor the Pak 38 was designed to be as light as possible, the weapon was however double the weight of the Pak 36 but still nearly 200kg lighter than the British 6 Pounder.

Production of the Pak38 around the beginning of 1940 and issued to units towards the end of the year. By the invasion of Russia in June 1941 just over 1,000 were in the hands of the Wehrmacht.

The Pak 38 was a significantly more powerful weapon than the Pak36, however this increase in power was still not enough to defeat the British infantry tanks such as the Matilda Mk II or the well armoured Russian tanks such as the T-34 at medium to long ranges. The Pak38 became the backbone of the German anti-tank force for the mid part of the Second World War until it was replaced by heavier, more powerful weapons such as the Pak40.

As with the Pak36, special tungsten cored armour piercing composite rigid ammunition was provided which significantly improved the penetrative power of the weapon at close/medium ranges. This type of ammunition was produced in large numbers making up approximately 36% of armour piercing ammunition in 1941 and 1942, by 1943 however stocks of tungsten had been greatly reduced and so it could no longer be used for ammunition. The tungsten in existing ammunition may also have been retrieved for more vital use such as machine tools.

Pak 38 Anti-Tank Gun Statistics

Total Length

475cm

Length of Gun

318.7cm

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Written by David Boyd
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Calibre

5cm

Elevation

-8°, +27°

Transverse

65°

Rate of fire

Rifling 20 grooves

Telescope magnification

Weight in Action
566kg

Performance of the Pak38 Anti-Tank Gun

Ammunition

Weight of shot/shell

Complete Weight

Bursting Charge

Propellant Charge

Muzzle Velocity

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Angle

Plate

100m

500 m

1000m

Sprgr Patr

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1.78kg

3.28kg

165gm

280gm

549m/s

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Pzgr 39

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