

THE HAWKER TYPHOON – Feared by both its pilots and the Enemy

The legendary Hawker Typhoon fighter bomber was dangerous both to its pilots and to the enemy, in equal measure, but feared by all German infantry more than any other Allied war machine, in the Battle of Normandy and beyond.

Early Typhoons experienced structural failures, resulting in the tail separating from the fuselage, which was cured by adding strengthening fishplates. The Napier Sabre engines had a tendency to catch fire, which caused several crashes, in which pilots died. The large radiator was vulnerable to ground forces. One bullet through the radiator gave the pilot three minutes of powered flight, before the engine seized.

Nevertheless, the Typhoon's eight unguided rockets, each with hitting power equivalent to that of an artillery shell, made the Typhoon supremely effective against large concentrations of infantry, against tanks, and other armoured vehicles, railway lines and bridges, only equalled by the Republic P-47 Thunderbolt.

“The chief credit in smashing the enemy’s spearhead must go to the rocket-firing Typhoon planes of the Second Tactical Air Force. The result of this strafing was that the enemy attack was effectively brought to a halt, and a threat was turned into a great victory.”

General Dwight D Eisenhower, reflecting on the role of airpower at the Battle of Mortain, where the German Army attempted to split the invasion front at Normandy – *Supreme Allied Commander’s dispatch, 1945.*