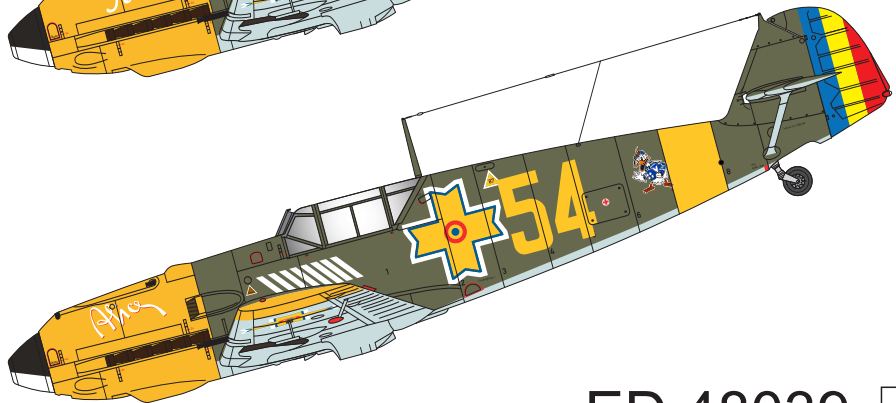
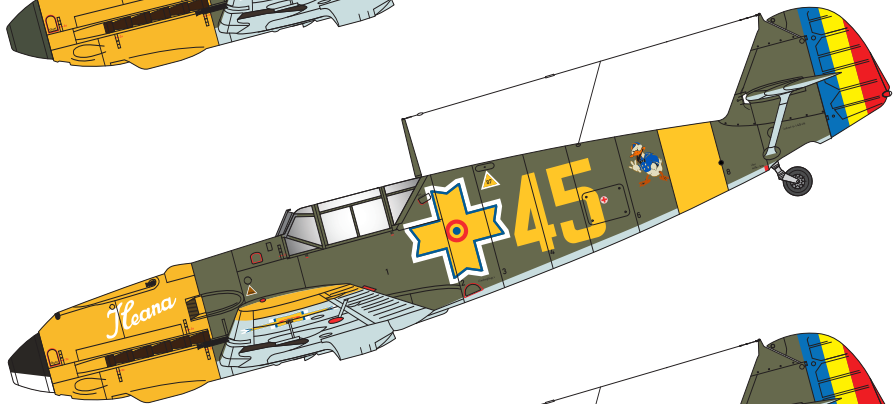
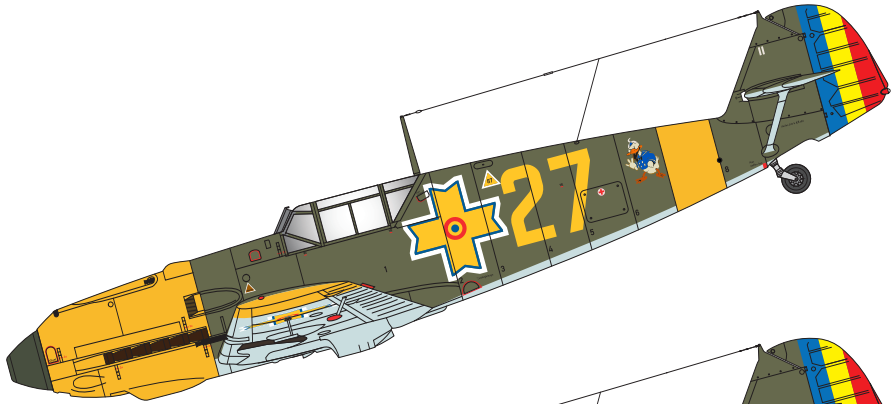




Romanian Emils #3

Messerschmitt Bf 109 E
in Romanian service - part 3



ED 48039

ED 72039

Messerschmitt Bf 109E in Romanian service

In December 1939, *Aeronautica Regală Română* (Royal Romanian Aeronautics) placed an order for 50 Bf 109E fighters with *Bayerische Flugzeugwerke*. The first eleven aircraft arrived during the spring of 1940 and the remaining 39 came a year later. Based on Pipera-Bucharest airfield, the newly formed *Grupul 7 Vânătoare* (7th Fighter Group), received the modern German fighters. The commander of the Group was *Lt. Comandor. Av. Alexandru „Popicu” Popișteanu*.

The Romanian Bf 109E fighters took part in Operation Barbarossa from the very beginning of operations, when they escorted the bombers attacking Soviet airfields. By the end of the Bessarabian campaign, *Grupul 7 Vânătoare* raised the score for 1941 to 62 confirmed, 1 probable and 7 ground victories. Only 6 aircraft were lost by the 7th Fighter Group. Among the Group's best pilots was *Lt. Av. (r) Nicolae Polizu*, a top scoring ace in 1941 with 8 victories.

After the 1941 campaign, the Romanian fighter arm had to be reorganized. Fifteen Bf 109E-7 fighters (mostly refurbished E-3 and E-4 airframes) arrived from Germany in early 1942 and were assigned to the 56th Squadron.

The *Grupul 7 Vânătoare* was sent to the front again in the autumn of 1942, near Stalingrad. In October, the Group moved to Karpovka airfield, where German fighters and reconnaissance units were also based, where they started to dig underground accommodation and prepared for the first winter on the front.

The situation around Stalingrad became critical on 20 November when Red Army broke through the Romanian 3rd and 4th Armies. *Grupul 7 Vânătoare* carried out several reconnaissance flights, despite the very difficult weather conditions and low clouds, and discovered that the Soviet tanks were only a few kilometers to the south of the airfield. *Lt. Av. Alexandru Șerbănescu* organized the defence of the airfield. He used the two AA batteries (37 and 75mm) and the guns from the Bf 109Es, which were raised on barrels, to counterattack the Soviet assault. The heavy fire unleashed on the attackers probably made them believe that they were facing an entrenched infantry formation, instead of a fighter Group. However, this situation could not remain this way for long and early on 23 November 1942, all available airplanes took-off under an artillery barrage from Soviet tanks. Five aircraft were damaged or destroyed during the attempt, but eight managed to reach Tachinskaya. They also took one or even two mechanics in their Bf 109E fighters. Seven other unserviceable aircraft were left behind.

Starting with 1943, the remaining Bf 109Es were assigned to training duties or to the 52nd Fighter Squadron. This unit flew fighter cover missions over the Black Sea and in 1944 joined the rest of the Groups in several interception missions against the US 15th Air Force.

After August 1944, the obsolete Bf 109Es did not see any further action and were phased out in 1946.

info based on Teodor Liviu Morosanu & Dan Alexandru Melinte book „Romanian Fighter Colours 1941-1945”



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