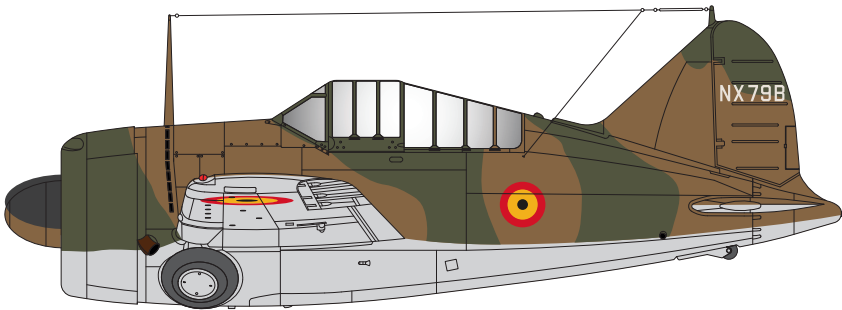
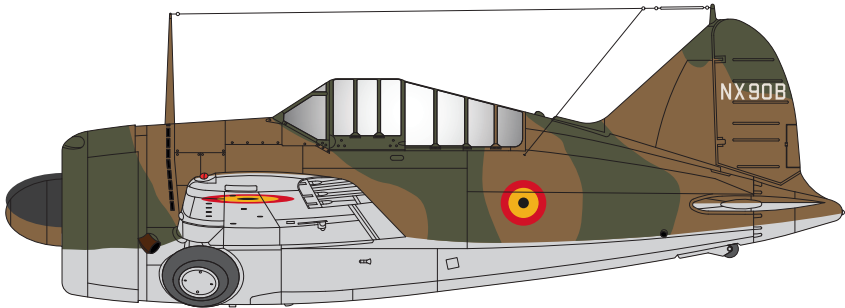
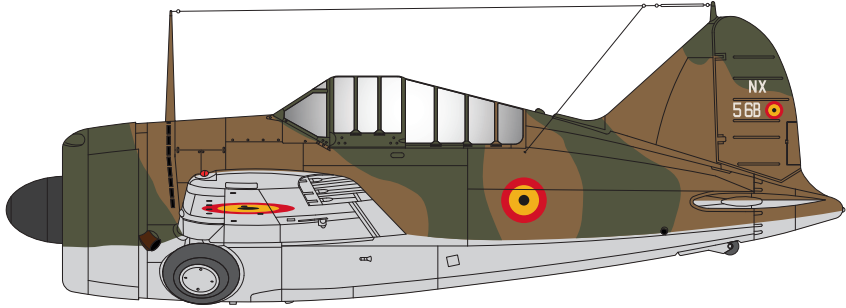




Belgian Buffaloes

Brewster Model 339B
in Belgian service



ED 48040

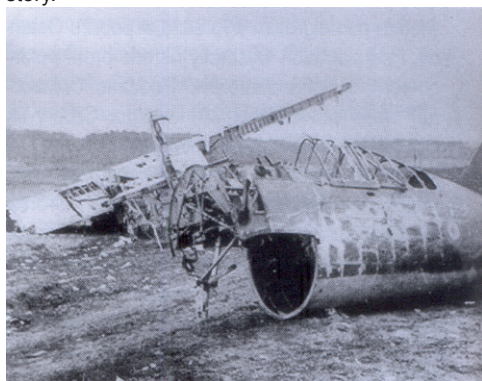
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Brewster Model 339B in Belgian service

With the Munich Crisis of September 1938, most European countries had been confronted with the real threat caused by the expansion plans of Nazi Germany. Most European countries realized that their armies and in particular their Air Forces were certainly no match against the modern equipment of the German Luftwaffe and this kicked off an unprecedented shopping spree for modern combat aircraft.

Belgium which was already in the process of replacing a number of its fighters by "modern" Hurricanes, Gladiators and later Fiat CR-42's, still operated two fighter squadrons (5/II/2 Aé and 6/III/2 Aé) equipped with the obsolete Fairey Fox VIC (the fighter version of the Fox design). As a small country which was officially still neutral, Belgium could not count on any priority for the delivery of new aerospace equipment. For that reason the government was more than happy to acquire one of the few new aircraft types still available in numbers and in time: the Brewster B-339. The small fighter aircraft was a de-navalized version of the Brewster F2A-1 of the U.S. Navy powered by a Wright Cyclone R-1820-G105 of 1.100hp. On December 11th, 1939 Belgium signed a contract for the delivery of 40 Brewster B-339B's. The first B-339B destined for the Aéronautique Militaire Belge was rolled out of the Brewster plant at Newark in April 1940 and was shipped to Belgium on April 27th, 1940. Overtaken by the events this Brewster, (which had received the temporarily US registration NX56B) was rerouted to Bordeaux in France where it remained boxed and untouched until captured by the Germans. The fact that this particular machine was found at Darmstadt (D.) in 1945 indicates that the Germans at least took interest in this diminutive fighter and most probably have tested it. Meanwhile in the United States production of the Belgian Brewsters continued and 6 more B 339B's's were loaded aboard the French aircraft carrier Béarn at Halifax (Can.) on June 16th 1940, to be shipped to France. During this journey, France surrendered on 20 June and the Béarn was ordered to sail to Martinique, where the six Belgian Brewsters together with a large number of aircraft ordered by the French Government were offloaded at Fort-de-France and later placed in storage at La Pointe des Sables. These aircraft were allotted serial numbers 2, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 9. The Belgian Government in exile at London tried to recuperate the equipment but the Vichy regime remained silent. After two years in the tropical air of Martinique the aircraft had to be scrapped only the engines being recuperated. As production continued at Newark, the Belgian Government in London signed a cessation agreement for the 33 remaining aircraft which then were transferred to the Royal Air Force. All aircraft arrived in Britain in July and August 1940, receiving the serials AS410-437, AX810-820 and BB450, but that is another story.

*text Daniel Brackx
Belgian Wings / Brewster 339B (Buffalo)
www.belgian-wings.be*



*fuselage of Belgian Buffalo NX56B
found in Germany in 1945
Jacek Pukropp - Belgijskie lotnictwo
wojskowe w 1940 roku
Technika Wojskowa Historia
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