



# Luftwaffe

The **Luftwaffe**<sup>[N 2]</sup> (German pronunciation: [ˈlʊftvaːfə] <sup>ⓘ</sup>) was the aerial-warfare branch of the *Wehrmacht* before and during World War II. Germany's military air arms during World War I, the *Luftstreitkräfte* of the Imperial Army and the *Marine-Fliegerabteilung* of the Imperial Navy, had been disbanded in May 1920 in accordance with the terms of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, which banned Germany from having any air force.

During the interwar period, German pilots were trained secretly in violation of the treaty at Lipetsk Air Base in the Soviet Union. With the rise of the Nazi Party and the repudiation of the Versailles Treaty, the Luftwaffe's existence was publicly acknowledged and officially established on 26 February 1935, just over two weeks before open defiance of the Versailles Treaty through German rearmament and conscription would be announced on 16 March.<sup>[7]</sup> The Condor Legion, a Luftwaffe detachment sent to aid Nationalist forces in the Spanish Civil War, provided the force with a valuable testing ground for new tactics and aircraft. Partially as a result of this combat experience, the Luftwaffe had become one of the most sophisticated, technologically advanced, and battle-experienced air forces in the world when World War II broke out in September 1939.<sup>[8]</sup> By the summer of 1939, the Luftwaffe had twenty-eight *Geschwader* (wings). The Luftwaffe also operated a paratrooper force known as the *Fallschirmjäger*.

The Luftwaffe proved instrumental in the German victories across Poland and Western Europe in 1939 and 1940. Although the Luftwaffe inflicted severe damage to the

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Emblem of the Luftwaffe in silver

<b>Founded</b>	1935
<b>Disbanded</b>	1946 <sup>[N 1]</sup>
<b>Country</b>	<span><span></span></span> <span><span><span></span></span></span> Germany
<b>Allegiance</b>	<span><span></span></span> <span><span><span></span></span></span> Adolf Hitler <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Type</b>	Air force
<b>Role</b>	Aerial warfare
<b>Size</b>	<b>Aircraft:</b> 119,871 <sup>[3]</sup> (total production) <b>Personnel:</b> 3,400,000 (total in service at any time for 1939–45) <sup>[4]</sup>
<b>Part of</b>	<i>Wehrmacht</i>
<b>Engagements</b>	<span><span></span></span> Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) <span><span></span></span> World War II (1939–1945)

## Commanders

<b>OKL</b>	<i>See list</i>
<b>Inspector of Fighters</b>	<i>See list</i>
<b>Inspector of Bombers</b>	<i>See list</i>
<b>Notable commanders</b>	<span><span></span></span> Hermann Göring
	<span><span></span></span> Albert Kesselring
	<span><span></span></span> Robert R. von Greim

## Insignia

### *Balkenkreuz*

