Tanks: Steel Juggernauts Essay, Research Paper

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Tanks have been very influential in warfare ever since the first Great

War. They started out as a way to cross the muck filled trenches of the first

World War to one of the most powerful ways to attack the enemy. The

United States Armed Forces tanks have been some of the greatest of the

wide variety of tanks. The most interesting and powerful of these giants in

the United States arsenal are: the Abrams, the M60, the Sheridan, the

Patton, the Sherman, and the Chaffee models. Some of these tanks are

small and some of them are large but all of these tanks have managed to

strike fear into any country who have dared to oppose the United States at

any given time.

The Abrams was created in the 1970’s to counter the newest generation

of Russian tanks (Lloyd 14). The early models of the Abrams tank were

used primarily for the Cold War against the Soviet Union however few if any

shots were actually fired from there guns. Then in the early 1990’s the

Abrams M1A1 was used against Saddam Hussein and his Iraqi troops in the

Gulf war. The main advantage the Abrams had over the enemy tanks here

was that because of it’s thermal viewer the American troops could see

through the darkest cloud which was the case here due to the burning oil

fields in Kuwaiti (Russell 132).

The three main models of the Abrams tank are the original M1A1 model,

The M1A1(HA) which was nearly identical to the M1A1 with the exception of

the much heavier armor however this tank was primarily used in Europe,

Finally in mid 1992 the follow-up to the M1A1 the M1A2 went into field

testing. This model alot of improvements over the M1A1 to numerous to

mention (Russell 130).

The weapons and armor on most tanks are not unique to their model,

most guns and armor used on a wide variety of tanks. On the Abrams model

for example it has the following weapons: A 105 millimeter tank gun or a

Rheinmetall 120 millimeter smoothbore tank gun, It also has dual 7.62

millimeter machine guns to handle infantry. The armor on this tank is the still

classified British Chobham armor, which is immune to a wide variety of anti-

tank weapons in the Soviet arsenal. (Lloyd 14)

The M60 was developed and put into service around 1959, then later

on in the early 1980’s its life was extended when it was upgraded to the

M60A3 model(Lloyd 17).

The most recent model the M60A3 was used in operation Desert Storm

(Russell 144). However this tank is now being phased out in favor of the

M1A1 Abrams (Lloyd 17).

The M60 model which is very similar to a M26 tank in appearance, was

the original model designed in 1959 (Anson 53). Then following the original

M60 was the M60A1 Patton which had a narrower turret which offered a

greater protection against ballistic projectiles and also had much of its

internal and external equipment and components rearranged (144 Russell).

The weapons on the M60 tanks Consisted of the following : a 105

millimeter tank gun, a 12.7 millimeter anti-aircraft gun, and a 7.62 millimeter

co-axial machine gun. The armor on the M60 models is at a minimum 12.7

millimeters and at a maximum 120 millimeters thick. (Lloyd 17)

The Sheridan tank entered use in 1966 but due to the 152 millimeter

gun/missile launcher and its light-weight construction the firing of the gun on

it would almost result with it looking as if it was going to tip over. Due to that

this light reconnaissance tank is not very useful because its aiming is so

horribly off due to that flaw in construction (Hogg 29). There is only one

model of the Sheridan, the M551 which is plagued by the problem that I have

previously mentioned above.

The amount of firepower this tank has is rather large for how small it is

the weapons consist of the following : The 152 millimeter tank gun/missile

launcher that causes the major problem it has, a 76.2 millimeter co-axial

machine gun, a 12.7 millimeter anti-aircraft gun, and twin smoke discharges

to mark an attack area or to confuse the enemy. The hull of this light tank is

mad of aluminum which is very light yet lacks any armor like capabilities. (39

Lloyd)

The Patton tanks which were mostly of the M48 series were named after

the General Patton. These tanks were created in the 1940’s during the

second World War and used during that period. Then around 1983 they

were upgraded (Luttwak 102).

The M48A5 was created to bring the M48 series up to the standard the

M60 series had set. Then the M48A5K which was what the earlier M48

models were called after their firepower had been upgraded and a new

suspension had been added. Then the M48A5E1 which was a upgraded

M48A5. These upgrades included: full resolution digital fire, a laser range

finder, and a improved day/night sight assembly (Russell 148).

The weapons on the Patton tanks include the following guns : a 90

millimeter M41 tank gun. a 7.62 millimeter M73 CO-axial machine gun, a

12.7 millimeter machine gun. However I the armor on this tank is also

classified. (Russell 150)

The most famous tank of the second World War would most likely be

the Sherman tank, named after General Sherman. This tank still remains in

use in some countries besides the United States to this day. It has seen

action in Korea and Pakistan also (36 Lloyd).

There are numerous models of the Sherman tank but the major ones are

the M4A1, M4A2, and the M4 medium. The M4A1 came from the Lima

Locomotive Works through a contract with Britain in 1942. It was armed with

a 75 millimeter main gun instead of the usual 76 millimeter on this model.

The M4A2 was a modified version of the M4 which used a General Motors

diesel engines instead of the Continental R975 petrol engine used in the

other models. The M4 medium was the follow up to the M3. The M4 medium

tank was also known as the T6 until October of 1941 when it was officially

called the M4 medium. This tank also started out with a 75 millimeter tank

gun but soon changed to a 76 millimeter one. This was the most widely

produced tank of the second World War. (155 Forty)

The weapons on the Sherman tanks consisted of the following : either a

76 millimeter or 75 millimeter tank gun, two 7.62 millimeter machine guns,

and a 12.7 millimeter anti-aircraft machine gun. The armor on the tank was a

minimum of 12 millimeters and a maximum 75 millimeters. (36 Lloyd)

The Chaffee first made its appearance during the end of the second

World War. It was also used alot in the Korean War. Although it is rather old

it remains in front-line service today, however in a modernized form.

Although the newer versions have no amphibious capabilities as one of the

original models did. Now this light tank is primarily used by the Norwegian

army. (37 Lloyd)

The models of this tank that are best known are the M24, the M20 fitted

to a M24, and the T77E1. The M25 was most likely the best light tank that

the Allies including the United States had in World War II. This tank was five

man tank, but was normally manned by only four due to the shortage of

soldiers trained in operating and driving a tank. This remained the standard

light tank for the United States for long after the second World War. Then

the M20 fixed to a M24 came along which had a swimming device made of

fore and aft platoons to make the tank float, also they added grausers to the

treads for better propulsion and rudders so that they were able to steer it in

the water. Then there is the T77E1 gun motor carriage. This was originally

designed as an anti-aircraft mount but the idea was scraped at the end of the

second World War in favor of more original Ideas. (148 Forty)

The weapons and armor of the Chaffee consisted of : a 75 millimeter

M6 tank gun, 12.7 millimeter anti-aircraft machine guns, and two 7.62

millimeter machine guns (both co-axial and bow). The armor was a minimum

of 10 millimeters thick and at a maximum is 38 millimeter thick. (37 Lloyd)

These powerful tanks have helped pave the way to the United States

spot as the number one military power in the world. Even though not all of

these tanks worked as planned it was the attempt that counted the most,

because if they haven’t had any failures the successes would not have been

as sweet as they are. In closing as my title of this paper suggest if you think

about all the things you could throw at a tank and it would keep coming its no

wonder I came up with a name like steel juggernauts.

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