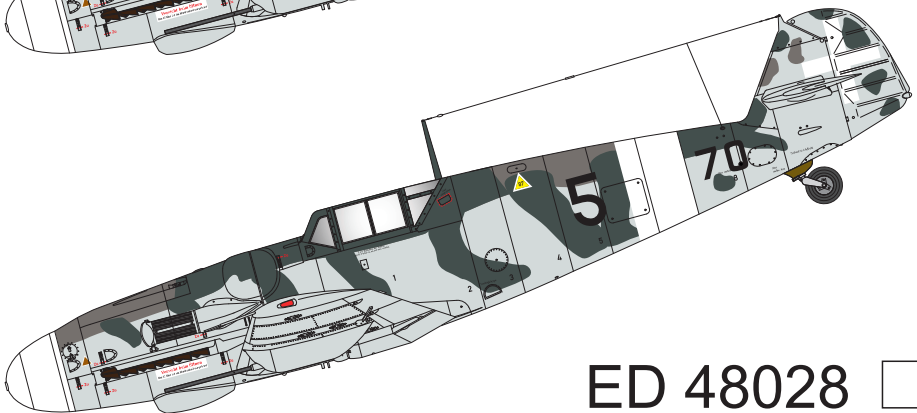
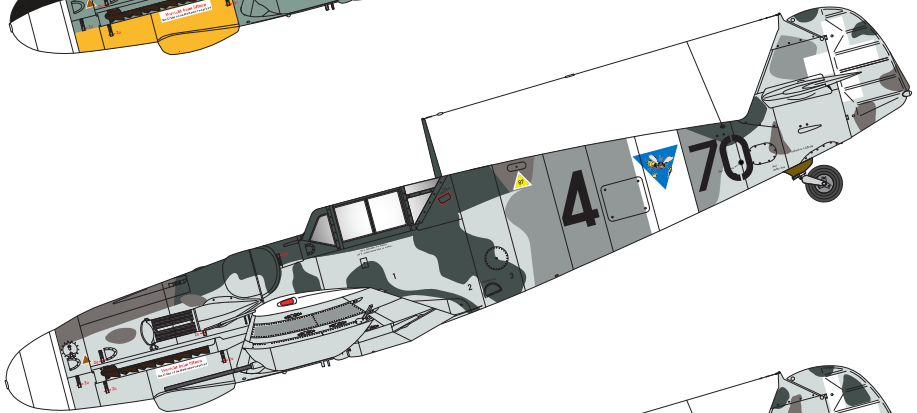
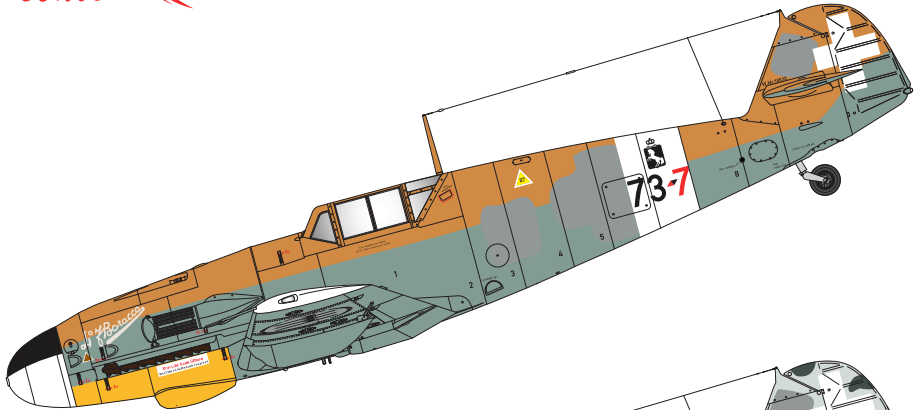




# Italian Gustavs over Rome

Bf 109G in Regia Aeronautica - part 4



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# Bf 109G in Regia Aeronautica

The widespread use of German aircraft in Italian units was brought about, not without hypocrisy, only by the growing evidence of Italian technological and industrial difficulties. To quote but one example, the minutes of the six meetings held up to 12 June 1943 never mention approaching the Germans to obtain modern aircraft from them. This despite the fact as early as March the Italians had admitted that the desired standardisation of production on just two types - a fighter and a bomber, respectively with ground support and heavy fighter variants - would not be possible before 1944. This silence stemmed possibly from embarrassment, or perhaps from the illusion that the need might be temporary. The Germans did not show much enthusiasm either. The idea of delivering Messerschmitts to *Regia Aeronautica*, on which Hitler insisted for political reasons, met the firm opposition of Goering, who believed that this would be equivalent to withdrawing from combat a large number of modern aircraft.

In any case, as early as 27 February 1943, the *Regia Aeronautica* had applied to *Luftwaffe* for „500 aircraft, including 60% fighters and 40% bombers“. By 5 May 1943 these had grown to 300 Bf 109G, 200 Ju87 and Ju88, 50 Me 210, 12 Do 217 and 60 DFS 230 gliders. The *Luftwaffe* raised many objections - both reasonable and unreasonable - but in the end was forced to accept the agreement that Hitler and Mussolini had reached.

Bf 109 deliveries began on 19 April 1943. Before the armistice, the *Regia Aeronautica* received at least 122 aircraft including 15 Bf 109F-4, 6 109G-2, 10 G-4 and 91 G-6. The F were old machines built in 1941 and mostly drawn from German units deployed in Greece. The Gustavs were instead mostly recent, built from February-March 1943 by the Erla, MTT and WNF factories. Almost all were delivered through the *Bari Luftpark* (air depot). The first Italian unit to receive the Messerschmitts was the 150th *Gruppo* (363, 364 and 365 *Squadriglia*), followed for a brief period by two squadrons of the 4th *Stormo* (73 and 84, which soon moved onto the Macchi Mc.205), by the 70th *Squadriglia* of the 23rd *Gruppo* in mid May, and by the 3rd *Gruppo* (153, 154 and 155 *Squadriglia*) at the end of month. The delivery of 23 II./JG 53 aircraft to the 3rd *Gruppo* was duly recorded by the official German photographers.

On 18 May 1943 the 4th *Stormo* received its first two Messerschmitts at Ciampino airfield. This led to a gradual conversion activity, but the unit never became operational on the new fighter and the Bf 109s were soon turned over to the 23rd *Gruppo*.

On 22 May 1943 the 9th *Gruppo* received two Bf 109G-2s from the 10th *Gruppo* and immediately began type conversion and training flights. Unfortunately supplied the Bf 109G-2s were often unserviceable. Till mid of June 1943 the 9th *Gruppo* received four Bf 109G-2s and six Bf 109G-6s in total. On 20 June 1943 all Bf 109Gs from 9th *Gruppo* had been transferred to the 23rd *Gruppo* of the 3rd *Stormo* for the defence of Rome.

The 70th *Squadriglia* received a next dozen of Bf 109G-6s in July. With these it participated actively in the defence of Rome from its base in Carveteri, but by September there remained only a single serviceable Bf 109.

info based on Gregory Alegi & Marco Gueli „Ali Straniere in Italia - Messerschmitt Bf 109 Italiani“ book.



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