

T-72M1

Because Russia's T-72 is the most widely produced tank in the world, and has been improved, upgraded, and has so many options available, it can sometimes be very difficult to decide exactly which variant a particular model is.

The tank first appeared as a simplified T-64 prototype in 1970, is still being produced in several countries, and is still in service in more than 30.

There are thought to be around 55,000 in the world.

It is has been developed in Russia as the T-90, and forms the basis for many MBTs still in development – such as the Tank-EX in India, and the Zulfiqar in Iran.

The hull of the T-72 is also used in other combat vehicles,

including:

- BMPT (on T-90 hull) – Russian

CONFLICTS

THE T-72 has featured in many wars, from the Soviet war in Afghanistan in 1979, to the 2008 conflict between Russia and Georgia in South Ossetia. Others include Lebanon, Sri Lanka, the Iran-Iraq War, both Iraq wars, the Yugoslavian wars (Yugoslavia, Serbia, Croatia, Kosovo), and Macedonia.

heavy convoy and close tank support urban warfare vehicle fitted with two 30mm autocannon, 7.62mg, four Ataka-V anti-tank missiles (which can be fitted with a thermobaric anti-personnel HE warhead) and two 30mm grenade launchers in the forward hull. It has Kontakt-5 armour

- TOS-1 – 30-tube napalm rocket launcher



- BREM-1 – Armoured recovery vehicle with crane, winch, dozer blade, towing equipment

- IMR-2 – Combat engineering vehicle with telescoping crane and pincers, dozer blade/plough, and mine-clearing system.

- MTU-72 – Armoured bridge layer, which can lay a 50t (55 short tons) capacity bridge spanning 18m (60 ft) in three minutes.

SPECIFICATIONS

Designation: T-72M1

Length: 9.53m

Hull length: 6.95m

Height: 2.23m (+ ADMG)

Width: 3.46m

Ground clearance: 0.49m

Ground pressure: 0.83kg/cm²

Combat weight: 45.7 tons without ERA

Crew: 3

Engine: 12-cylinder 780 hp diesel

Gearbox: Manual with 7 forward gears and 1 reverse

Range: 480km (550 with long-range tanks)

Speed: 60km/h

Fording: 1.8m or 5m with preparation

Armament:

125mm main gun, 5 rounds/minute

Ammunition: 44 APFSDS-T, HEAT and

Frag-E, 24 of them in automatic loader

Fire control: Main gun stabilisation, laser rangefinder and infrared searchlight.

Auxiliary weapons:

7.62 PKT co-axial mg, Cyclic rate 650

rds/min, 2,000 rounds carried

Remote controlled NSVT 12.7 Air

Defence MG, Cyclic rate 800 rds/min, 300 rounds carried

Protection: Composite/steel armour.

500mm turret front, 560mm against HEAT.

Applique armour on hull side, over track skirts, and on turret top.

1st or 2nd Generation ERA available.

Arena or Drozd anti-missile systems available.

PAZ NBC detection system.

FVU filtration system.

Internal lining of synthetic material

protects against neutron radiation on some models.

Engine exhaust smoke system.

Smoke grenade launchers on each side of turret.



PRODUCTION

1970

First prototype

1971

Pre-series production

1975

Series production starts

1978

Licence production in Czechoslovakia and Poland

1979

T-72A with laser rangefinder, thicker turret front, additional glacis armour, better engine cooling, and later anti-radiation cladding

1980

T-72M appears. Early export T-72As are called T-72M

1982

Production of T-72M1, later and improved version of T-72A

1984

T-72 production starts in Yugoslavia as the M-84

1985

Production in India (as Ajeya)

1985

ERA retro-fitting starts

1985

T-72B/B1 and T-72BM issued. 'B' has extended turret front, ERA tiles (T-72A have 175 tiles, T-72B 195 tiles or more), stronger engine, and main gun can launch Refleks missile. 'B1' downscaled not to fire the missile. T-72BM has second

generation ERA tiles, and Kontakt 5 on forward side skirts

1987

T-72S/S1 appear, export versions of T-72B/B1, with 155 ERA tiles

1993

T-90 introduced

1994

The Polish PT91 Twardy appears, with a number of improvements and offered for export as the T-72M1Z

■ The T-72 has also been developed as: Lion of Babylon tank (Iraq), M-95 Degman (Croatia), M-2001 (Serbia), Tank EX (India), and TR-125 (Romania).