



M1919 Browning machine gun

Gun, Machine, Caliber .30, Browning, M1919A4	
<div></div> <div>Browning M1919</div>	
Type	Medium machine gun
Place of origin	 United States
Service history	
In service	1919–Present
Used by	See <i>Users</i>
Wars	World War II, Korean War, First Indochina War, Congo Crisis, Vietnam War, Rhodesian Bush War
Production history	
Designed	1919
Produced	1919–1945
Variants	A1–A6; M37
Specifications	
Weight	31 lb (14 kg) (M1919A4)
Length	<div><ul style="list-style-type: none">37.94 in (964 mm) (M1919A4)53 in (1346 mm) (M1919A6)</div>
Barrel length	24 in (609 mm)
Cartridge	<div><ul style="list-style-type: none">.30-06 Springfield (U.S.)7.62 x 51 mm NATO (U.S.).303 British8 mm Mauser</div>
Action	Recoil-operated/short-recoil operation
Rate of fire	400–600 round/min
Muzzle velocity	2,800 ft/s (853.6 m/s)
Effective range	1,500 yd (1,370 m) (maximum)
Feed system	250-round belt

The **M1919 Browning** is a .30 caliber medium machine gun that was widely used during the 20th century. It was used as a light infantry, coaxial, mounted, aircraft, and anti-aircraft machine gun by the U.S. and many other countries, especially during World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. Although it began to be superseded by newer designs in the later half of the century (such as by the M60 machine gun), it remained in use in many North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries and elsewhere for much longer. It is very similar in

design to the larger .50 in (12.7 mm) M2 Machine Gun, which is also a Browning-designed weapon and is still in NATO service.

Many M1919s were rechambered for the new 7.62 × 51 mm NATO round and served into the 1990s, as well as up to the present day in some countries. The United States Navy also converted many to 7.62 mm NATO, and designated them Mk 21 Mod 0; they were commonly used on river craft in the 1960s and 1970s in Vietnam.

History



US soldiers fire a M1919A4 in Aachen

The M1919 was an air-cooled development of the standard US machine gun of World War I, the Browning M1917, as designed by John M. Browning. The weapon originally fired the .50 cal, and later the M2 Ball cartridge contained in woven cloth or metallic link belts, feeding from left to right.

Operation

Loading

Loading was accomplished by inserting the pull tab on the ammunition belt from the left side of the gun (either metal links or metal tab on cloth belts) until the belt holding pawl at the entrance of feedway grabbed the belt and held it in place. The cocking handle was then pulled back (hand palm-up, to avoid thumb dislocation from a potential 'hot-barrel-cooked-off' round, *see below for explanation), and released. This advanced the first round of the belt in front of the bolt for the extractor/ejector on the bolt to grab the first cartridge. The cocking handle was pulled and released a second time. This removed the first cartridge from the belt, advanced the next round into position to be grabbed and moved the first round down into the chamber of the barrel ready for firing. As the bolt goes into battery (ready to fire position) the extractor grabs the next round on the belt that was advanced and is resting in the feedway waiting to be loaded. Every time the gun fires the gun performs the simultaneous operations of ejecting the spent round, loading the next round to be fired into the barrel advancing the belt and grabbing the next round in preparation for loading again.

- The gun's original design was as a watercooled machinegun. When it was decided try to lighten the gun and make it an aircooled gun, its design as a gun that fires from the closed bolt created a potentially dangerous situation. If the gun was very hot from prolonged firing, the cartridge ready to be fired could be resting in a red hot barrel causing the propellant in the round to "cook off"; fire from the intense heat without any warning.



Two Marines with a M1919A4 on Namur Island during World War II

Firing

When the rear of the trigger is pivoted upwards by the operator, the front of the trigger tips downwards releasing the sear, and the sear, in turn, releases the firing pin allowing it to strike the primer of the cartridge

Operational use

Infantry

As a company or battalion support weapon, the M1919 required at least a two-man machine gun team, but in practice, four men were normally involved; the gunner (who fired the gun and when advancing carried the tripod and box of ammo), the assistant gunner (who helped feed the gun and carried the gun, and box of spare parts/tools), and two ammunition carriers.^[1] The original idea was to allow the gun to be more easily packed for transport, and featured a light barrel and bipod when first introduced as the M1919A1. Unfortunately, it quickly became clear that the gun was too heavy to be easily moved, while at the same time too light for sustained fire. This led to the M1919A2, which included a heavier barrel and tripod, and could be continuously fired for longer durations.



A US soldier takes aim with a tripod-mounted M1919A4 in Korea, 1953.

The M1919A4 weighed about 31 lb (14 kg), and was ordinarily mounted on a lightweight, low-slung tripod for infantry use. Fixed vehicle mounts were also employed. It saw wide use in World War II mounted on jeeps, armored personnel carriers, tanks, and amphibious vehicles. The M1919A4 played a key role in the firepower of the World War II US Army infantry company, which unlike other armies, normally had a weapons platoon in addition to its other organic units. The presence of M1919A4 weapons in the weapons platoon gave company commanders additional automatic fire support at the company level, whether in the assault or on defense.^[2]

The A5 was an adaptation of the A4 with a forward mounting point to allow it to be mounted in tanks and armored cars. This, along with the M37 and the Browning M2 machine gun, was the most common secondary armament during World War II for the Allies.

Another version of the M1919A4, the M1919A6, was an attempt to make the weapon into a light machine gun by attaching a buttstock and lighter barrel — 4 lb (1.8 kg) instead of 7 lb (3.2 kg). The A6 version was in fact heavier than the A4 without its tripod, at 32 lb (15 kg), though its bipod made for faster deployment and enabled the machine gun team to dispense with one man (the tripod bearer).^[3] The A6 version saw increasing service in the latter days of World War II and was used extensively in Korea. The A6 variant had a folding bipod



American GIs with the M1919A6 light machine gun.

mounted on the front of the gun, a sheet-metal buttstock, carrying handle, and a tapered barrel. While the modifications were intended to make the weapon more useful as a squad light machine gun, it was a stopgap solution, as the M1919A6 was heavier than the old Lewis gun of World War I, let alone the contemporary light machine guns of other nations.

During the Second World War, two additional variants of the M1919 were adopted by the US military. One version is the coaxial M37 variant, with the ability to feed from either the left or the right of the weapon. The M37 also featured an extended charging handle similar to those on the M1919A4E1 and A5. A trial variant fitted with special sighting equipment was designated M37F.

In the late 1950s, a M1919 designed for remote firing via a solenoid trigger was developed for use in the XM1/E1 armament subsystem was designated M37C. The US Navy later converted a number of M1919A4's to 7.62 mm NATO chambering and designated them Mk 21 Mod 0; some of these weapons were employed in Vietnam in riverine warfare patrols.

During the Six Day War in 1967, Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) used vehicle-mounted M1919A4 guns converted to 7.62 mm NATO on many of their armored vehicles and M3 personnel carriers.

Aircraft

With assistance from firearms engineers at Fabrique Nationale de Herstal^[4], Belgium, the Model 1919 was completely re-engineered into the .30 caliber M2 AN (Army-Navy) aircraft machine gun. The .30 in M2 AN Browning was widely adopted as both a fixed (offensive) and flexible (defensive) weapon on aircraft. Aircraft machine guns required light weight, firepower, and reliability, and achieving all three goals proved a difficult challenge. The receiver walls and operating components of the M2 were made thinner and lighter, and with air cooling provided by the speed of the aircraft, designers were able to reduce the barrel's weight and profile. As a result, the M2 weighed two-thirds that of the 1919A4, and the lightened mechanism gave it a rate of fire approaching 1,200 rpm (some variants could achieve 1,500 rpm)^[4], a necessity for engaging fast-moving aircraft. The M2's feed mechanism had to lift its own loaded belt out of the ammunition box and feed it into the gun, equivalent to a weight of 11 lb (5 kg).^[5] In Ordnance circles, the .30 M2 AN Browning had the reputation of being the most difficult-to-repair weapon in the entire US small arms inventory.^[5]



An Aviation Ordnanceman stationed at the Naval Air Station Corpus Christi installing an AN-M2 Browning machine gun in a PBY flying boat, ca. 1942

The M2 also appeared in a twin-mount version which paired two M2 guns with opposing feed chutes in one unit for operation by a single gunner, with a combined rate of fire of 2,400 rpm. All of the various M2 models saw service in the early stages of World War II, but were phased out in 1943 as hand-trained defensive machine guns became obsolete for air warfare (the .50 in/12.7 mm M2 Browning and 20 mm automatic cannon had replaced the .30 in as offensive air armament as well). The .30 in M2 aircraft gun was widely distributed to other US allies during and after World War II, and in British and Commonwealth service saw limited use as a vehicle-mounted anti-aircraft or anti-personnel machine gun.^[6]

On Soviet aircraft

The .303 variant equipped the Hawker Hurricanes delivered to Soviet Air Forces, during the Great Patriotic War. Soviet airmen compared them to Soviet ShKAS in terms of reliability. "But they often failed due to dust", recalled pilot Nikolai G. Golodnikov. "We tackled the problem glueing percale on all the machine-gun holes, and when you opened fire, bullets went right through. The machine guns became reliable then. They were of low efficiency when fired from distances of 150-300m."^[7]

Other calibers

The same basic weapon was also chambered for the British .303 round, and was used as a basic fighter aircraft gun in fighters such as the Supermarine Spitfire until the widespread introduction of the larger caliber Hispano-Suiza HS.404 cannon, and throughout the war in bombers. Similar versions for a variety of European calibers were delivered by the Belgian gun maker FN (Fabrique Nationale), notably German-standard 7.92 Mauser which was widely used in Eastern Europe; and by Swedish gun maker Carl Gustaf SGF in 6.5x55mm and 8x63mm calibers.

Production

The M1919 was manufactured during World War II by many different companies in the US including the Saginaw Steering Gear division of the General Motors Corporation, Buffalo Arms Corporation, and Rock Island Arsenal. In the UK, production was chiefly by BSA.

Civilian use

The Browning M1919 and M2 aircraft guns remain popular with civilian enthusiasts, who have in some cases fitted their M2 aircraft guns with buttstocks and bipods to allow for use without a tripod or other mount. The modified AN/M2 consists of a butt stock from a US M1 Garand fastened to the receiver of the Browning machine gun, a rear sight typically from a BAR 1918 and an improvised trigger. These conversions are based on field conversions carried out by soldiers in the Pacific Theatre during World War II. A weapon of this type was used by Marine Corporal Tony Stein in the invasion of Iwo Jima, who would posthumously receive the Medal of Honor for his actions during the battle. It had a rate of fire in excess of 1,200 rpm and was nicknamed the "Stinger."^[8]

Variants and derivatives

M1919 variants

In total there were six variants of the basic M1919 machine gun. The original M1919 featured a relatively heavy barrel, attempting to match the sustained fire capability of contemporary water-cooled machine guns. The M1919A1 featured a lighter barrel and a bipod. The M1919A2 was another lightweight development specifically for mounted cavalry units, utilizing a shorter barrel and special tripod (though it could be fitted to either the M1917 or M2 tripods). This weapon was designed to allow greater mobility to cavalry units over the existing M1917 machine gun. The M1919A2 was used for a short period between World War I and World War II after the cavalry had converted from horses to wheeled and tracked vehicles. An improved version of the M1919A2, the M1919A3, was also developed.

However, by and large the most common variant of the series was the M1919A4, which utilized .30-06 M2 Ball ammunition. The M1919A4 was used in both fixed and flexible mounts, by infantry and on vehicles. It was also widely exported after World War II and continues to be used in small numbers around the world. Two variants were developed specifically for vehicular use, the M1919A5, with an extended charging handle, and the M1919A4E1, a subvariant of the M1919A4 refitted with an extended charging handle.

An attempt to make a special variant for the airborne (paratroops). The M1919A6 featured a lighter bipod, a removable buttstock, and was lighter to make it easier for the paratrooper to handle in airdrops.

A specific aircraft version of the Model 1919A4 was manufactured by Browning with a thinner barrel and thinner receiver walls. It was used on US aircraft early in the war, but was replaced by the larger .50 in (12.7 mm) M2 machine gun and relegated to training duties. A derivative of this weapon was built by Colt as the MG40. This weapon is not to be confused with the Browning Machine Gun, Cal. .50, M2, Aircraft, and its full designation is Browning Machine Gun, Cal. .30, M2, Aircraft. The .30 in M2 Browning is sometimes referred to as AN/M2.

M37 and Mk 21

The M37 coaxial machine gun has the ability to feed an ammunition belt from either the left or the right of the weapon, and has an extended charging handle similar to those on the M1919A4E1 and A5. A trial variant fitted with special sighting equipment was designated M37F, while a variant with spade grips, the T152, was also developed but not adopted. A variant designed for remote firing via a solenoid trigger for use in the XM1/E1 armament subsystem was designated M37C. A version of the M37, rechambered in 7.62x51 mm NATO is rumored to have been created, though no examples have been found. There was also a U.S. Navy variant of M1919A4 rechambered in 7.62 mm NATO caliber which was designated as the Mk 21 Mod 0.



Mk 21 in Vietnam

International variants and derivatives



























The M1919 pattern has been used in countries all over the world in a variety of forms and under a number of different designations.

- The Browning Mk 1 and Mk 2 were older-style Commonwealth designations for the .303 caliber Browning machine guns used on the vast majority of British aircraft of World War II at one point or another. The difference between the Mk 1 and Mk 2 versions is unknown, but the weapon visually is quite similar AN/M2 aircraft gun. The post-war designations for these weapons was L3, and they were used by the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia to designate the fixed (A1) and flexible (A2) versions of the M1919A4 in .30-06 caliber. L3A3 and L3A4 denoted sear hold-open conversion of previous L3A1s and L3A2s. The A3 is the modified version of the A1, and the A4 is the modified version of the A2. The Canadians later adopted a separate designation for 7.62x51 mm rechambered M1919A4s for fixed (C1) and flexible (C1A1) applications. The C5 and C5A1 were product improvements of the previous C1 and C1A1 respectively.
- The Browning was produced by FN-Herstal in Belgium as well, being used in, among others, the Fokker D. XXI fighter.
- FN-Browning mle 1938 was the French designation for the FN-built derivative converted to 7.5 mm MAS ammunition. Manufactured in the late 1930s.
- MG A4 is the Austrian designation for the M1919A4, not to be confused with MG4, a South African licence-built version of the M1919A4 in current use with the South African National Defence Forces (SANDF). The MG4 is manufactured by Lyttleton Engineering, Pretoria. Mg M/52-1 and Mg M/52-11 were Danish designations for the M1919A4 and M1919A5 respectively.
- The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) used vehicle-mounted M1919A4 guns converted to 7.62 mm NATO on many of their armored vehicles.
- Ksp m/42 was the Swedish designation for license-built M1919 chambered in 6.5 x 55 mm or 8 x 63 mm, and from about 1975, mostly fitted with barrels in 7.62 x 51 mm. The Ksp m/42B was a lighter version with bipod and shoulder stock (used in a similar way as the M1919A6), chambered in 6.5 x 55 mm and later in 7.62 x 51 mm. The Ksp m/39 was a modification of the air-cooled M-1919 adapted for use in armored vehicles, initially in 8 x 63 mm, but later changed to 7.62 x 51 mm. It could be fed from either the left or the right.
- The Poles developed a copy of the Browning M1919 chambered for 7.92 x 57mm Mauser, designated Ckm wz.32, similar to the earlier Ckm wz.30.

Commercial variants and derivatives

Colt produced a derivative of the M2 aircraft machine gun, the Colt MG40, which shipped in a variety of calibers including the basic .30-06 Springfield and 7mm Mauser.

Users

-  Canada^[9]
-  Chile^[10]
-  Costa Rica^[10]
-  Denmark^[9]
-  Dominican Republic^{[9] [10]}
-  El Salvador^[10]
-  France^[11]
-  Greece^[9]
-  Guatemala^{[9] [10]}
-  Haiti^{[9] [10]}
-  India<ref name="2pai"/>
-  Israel^{[9] [12]}
-  Italy^[9]
-  South Korea^[9]
-  Liberia^[9]
-  Mexico^[9]
-  Panama^[10]
-  Philippines^[13]
-  South Africa^{[9] [14]}
-  Republic of China^[9]
-  Thailand^[9]
-  Turkey^[9]
-  United Kingdom^[15]
-  United States^[9]
-  Uruguay^[10]
-  Vietnam^[9]

See also

- M1917 Browning machine gun
- M2 Browning machine gun
- M73 Machine gun
- Dieudonné Saive

Further reading

- Frank Iannamico, *Hard Rain: History of the Browning Machine Guns*
- Dolf L. Goldsmith, *The Browning Machine Gun*, Vol I & II
- Drabkin, Artem. *The Red Air Force at War: Barbarossa & the retreat to Moscow – Recollections of Fighter Pilots on the Eastern Front*. Barnsley (South Yorkshire), Pen & Sword Military, 2007. ISBN 184415563-3

External links

- Beltfedshooters.com For Beltfed Enthusiasts^[16]
- The Light Machine Gun^[17]
- M1919A4 Enthusiasts and semi-auto rebuilders^[18]
- Gothia Association for Weapon History on the Ksp m/42^[19]
- How machine guns work^[20]
- History of the Browning Machine Gun at browningmgs.com^[21]
- TM 9-2012, a manual covering the M-37 Browning Machine Gun^[22]

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- [8] <http://www.navalorder.org/02-Feb-01%20MistHist.PDF>
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- [21] <http://browningmgs.com/>
- [22] <http://www.scribd.com/doc/29488468/TM-9-2012-M37-Browning>

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