The Handley Page Halifax was the second four-engine bomber aircraft to enter squadron service with the Royal Air Force during World War 2, three months after the Short Stirling. Design of the HP56 started in 1936 to Air Ministry Specification P13/36, originally to be powered by two Rolls-Royce Vulture engines. Because of supply and performance problems with the Vultures, the design was revised to utilise four Rolls-Royce Merlins, becoming the HP57. The all-up weight increased from 26,000 lbs for the HP56 to 45,000 lbs for the HP57.

When the first flight took place at RAF Bicester near Oxford, on 25th October 1939, the weight had increased to 55,000 lbs without gun turrets. Late in 1940 the first operational squadron (No. 35) began forming, receiving the second Halifax prototype on 23rd November for familiarisation. Production aircraft soon followed and the squadron mounted its first operational sortie on the night of 11/12 March 1941 with six aircraft attacking Le Havre.

The Halifax was designed to be built in 12 sub-assemblies, enabling the work to be shared with some factories not used to aircraft production. Final assembly was also dispersed to several factories in the North West of England including English Electric, Rootes and Fairley as well as Handley Page at Radlett. This intense building programme enabled 12 squadrons to be fully equipped by early 1942. Halifaxes went on to drop one quarter of the total Bomber Command bomb tonnage during World War 2. The Halifax was constantly being refined to increase performance and mission efficiency and many variations of turrets, engine intakes, fins and propellers were used.

In December 1942, the Halifax MK.III entered service with RAF Coastal Command in the role of anti-submarine patrols and meteorological reconnaissance flights. Later Halifaxes were modified for paratroop and clandestine agent dropping as well as for radio counter-measures. The Halifax was also the only aircraft capable of towing the Hamilcar heavy cargo glider. At the end of the war, Halifaxes were modified as transports with a detachable paratroop below the fuselage. Coastal Command was also the last Halifax user in 1952. The Halifax MK.II could carry up to 5,000 kg (13,000 lbs) of bombs and had a speed of 407 km/h (253 mph) at 7,591 m (24,895 ft).
Of course we do not pretend to offer the readers a comprehensive guide to the various national symbols presented, but we have selected a number of examples which we believe are of particular interest or importance, especially if viewed from a historical or cultural perspective. The symbols are depicted as they appear on the front pages of newspapers, magazines, and other publications, and are accompanied by brief descriptions which highlight their significance.

Symbols

- The German national flag: The flag of Germany features a white background with a red and gold cross that is divided into four quadrants. The flag was adopted in 1923 and has been used since then. The red and gold colors are derived from the colors of the German Empire and the German Republic.

- The French national flag: The French national flag features a blue background with a white cross that is divided into four quadrants. The flag was adopted in 1794 and has been used since then. The red, white, and blue colors are derived from the colors of the French Revolution.

- The British national flag: The British national flag features a red cross on a white background. The flag was adopted in 1601 and has been used since then. The red cross is derived from the flag of Scotland, and the white background is derived from the flag of England.

- The German national symbol: The German national symbol is a black eagle with a red crest and a yellow beak. The symbol was adopted in 1955 and has been used since then. The black eagle is derived from the symbols of Prussia and Saxony.

- The French national symbol: The French national symbol is a gold crown with a red ribbon. The symbol was adopted in 1792 and has been used since then. The gold crown is derived from the crowns of the French kings, and the red ribbon is derived from the colors of the French Revolution.

- The British national symbol: The British national symbol is a gold crown with a red and blue ribbon. The symbol was adopted in 1601 and has been used since then. The gold crown is derived from the crowns of the French kings, and the red and blue ribbon is derived from the colors of the French Revolution.

- The German national emblem: The German national emblem is a black eagle with a red crest and a yellow beak. The emblem was adopted in 1955 and has been used since then. The black eagle is derived from the symbols of Prussia and Saxony.

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