

Introduction of Gao Zhihang's Hawk III

Gao Zhihang, (1907-1937) was a Chinese ace pilot during WWII. On August 13, 1937, the Battle of Songhu broke out. Kiyoshi Hasegawa, commander of the Japanese Third Fleet, planned to attack several Chinese airfields, including ones in Hangzhou, Nanchang and Hongqiao, to destroy the Chinese air force in one fell swoop. On August 13, the Chinese air force decided to take the initiative to attack, and on August 13, the Chinese air force flew 76 sorties in 9 batches to bombard important military targets such as the Japanese command, ammunition depots, and landing docks.

Kiyoshi Hasegawa ordered 18 "Type 96" attackers based in Taipei to attack Hangzhou Jianqiao Airport at 14:50 on August 14 in an attempt to destroy Chinese air power and airport equipment.

At 18:10 that day, an air raid alert was issued in Hangzhou. At this time, the 21st, 22nd, and 23rd Squadrons of the 4th Brigade of the Chinese Air Force had taken off from Zhoukou, Henan Province, and were about to land at Kakeqiao Airport after a long flight with bad weather conditions and running out of fuel.

Due to the lack of communication equipment, Gao Zhihang in the rain could only order the landed fighters to take off again with shouts and hand signals, using the last bit of remaining fuel to intercept the Japanese planes. He, in turn, quickly jumped into an American-made Hawk III and led two wingmen into the sky. In less than 30 minutes of combat, the 4th Brigade shot down three Japanese planes and wounded one, while only one of its own fighters was slightly wounded, which broke the myth of the unbeatable Japanese Airforce.

On August 15, the Chinese and Japanese air forces again engaged in large-scale air battles in Nanjing, Shanghai and Hangzhou. The Chinese air force shot down 17 enemy planes, and on August 16, shot down 8 more Japanese planes. To commemorate the first air battle victory, the Nanjing National Government designated August 14 as "Air Force Day".

China's "Air Force Spirit of War" Gao Zhihang was also reported by the media from all over the world. Afterwards, Gao Zhihang was promoted to the rank of Colonel and Commander of the Air Force's Destroyer Unit, with three Destroyer Brigades under his command, and was also the commander of the 4th Brigade, which was also named "Zhihang Brigade".

On November 21, 1937, Gao Zhihang was ordered to go to Lanzhou to receive Soviet warplanes to aid China.

When the troops were transferred to Zhoukou Airport in Henan Province, they were attacked by enemy aircrafts and suffered heavy casualties. Gao Zhihang stepped into the cockpit and prepared to take off to meet the war, but the aircraft could not start, and his comrades advised him to take shelter for a while. He said, "As a Chinese air force, how can we let enemy planes fly overhead?" Just as he was trying to take off for the 3rd time, bombs were dropped from the air and Gao Zhihang disappeared into a sea of fire along with 14 planes. At the time of his death, Gao Zhihang was still holding the stick of the plane with both hands. He was just 30 years old then.

Camo of his Hawk III can be referred to here:

双手还紧紧握着飞机的操纵杆，时年30岁。

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