

BMP-2

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The BMP-2 [BMP = Boyevaya Mashina Pyekhoty - Infantry Fighting Vehicle] was fielded in early 1980's as an improved version of the BMP-1 incorporating new turret with more powerful armament [initially designated by US intelligence BMP 1981]. BMP was designed as offensive weapon able to copy with tanks in an assault. BMP-2 retained its advantages: high agility, low silhouette, impressive firepower. It inherited majority of weaknesses of its predecessor too: insufficient ballistic protection, limited internal space (particularly the cramped rear compartment). Firing from infantry weapons on the move has still only limited sense while mounting and dismounting in the field conditions needs well trained soldiers.

BMP-2 (Item 675) has a two man turret with a Shipunov 2A42 30 mm gun, co-axial PKT machine gun and the launcher of second generation SACLOS ATGMs 9M111 Fagot (AT-4 Spigot) or 9M113 Konkurs (AT-5 Spandrel) missiles. The cannon was designed to engage light armoured ground targets, aircraft and helicopters. For the BMP-2 the stabilizer and simple target tracker for 2A42 were developed. The larger turret forced designers to shorten the troop compartment, only two hatches were installed instead of four in the BMP-1 and the number of carried infantrymen drops to six-seven. Each side of the troop compartment has three firing ports with associated roof-mounted periscopes.

The 30mm gun appeared as extremely effective in Afghanistan, where one of weaknesses of Soviet armor was inability to engage targets located above it - a typical scenario in high moun-

tains. The BMP's armour was reinforced by a set of add-on plates, enlarged side skirts etc. Such vehicles, called BMP-2D were not able to cross rivers afloat but it was not crucial in dry Afghanistan. Some attempts were made in mid nineties to improve the firepower of BMP-2 - some vehicles have an externally mounted 30mm AGS-17 automatic grenade launcher. Probably the most radical is installation of two pairs of 9M133 Kornet missiles both sides of the turret. The new FCS with the thermal sight was introduced too. More powerful GTD-23 or GTD-29 may replace the 40 years old UTD-20. New sets of add-on armour can substantially increase the protection of BMP-2 - particularly against hollow charge projectiles.

BMP-2 was produced under licence in Czechoslovakia (BVP-2) and in India (Sarath) while its turret with armament has found even more widespread use: in the BMD-3 (airborne IFV), BTR-90 wheeled IFV and even the Egyptian Fahd-30 vehicle. The BMP-2 is a base of the Soviet recon vehicle PRP-4 (Item 779 introduced into service in 1984) and a range of specialized vehicles in India and Czechoslovakia.

BMP-2 is an equipment of land forces of some NATO countries, all ex-Soviet Republics and a lot of third world armies. It is still an effective weapon and regarding its upgrade potential may fulfill emerging requirements of the battlefield in the near future. It's a pity that Poland resigned of its 62 BMP-2s more than ten years ago.

Producer: KURGANMASHZAVOD (Kurgan - a city in central Russia).

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A Slovak BMP-2 with a gun at max. elevation angle – 74 degrees. Above and right: side view of the Slovak BMP-2 • Słowacki BMP-2