THE GOTHA SEAPLANES: PART 2

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WD12 was a single-engine, unarmed, two-seat, biplane, intended to be used in the maritime reconnaissance role. Only one aircraft, Marine Number 944, was delivered to the German navy but a number were delivered to Turkey via rail to Bulgaria and then transported on to Constantinople.

WD13, a single engine, two-seat, armed patrol seaplane, was designed and built for the Turkish navy. The type is not shown in the Atlas listing and none were used by the German Navy.

WD14, a successful design, was also developed from the WD7 and was a large twin-engine torpedo attack machine. It had a crew of three – the pilot and torpedo man normally sat side by side under the wings but the latter would move into the nose cockpit for torpedo aiming. A gunner was seated in a further cockpit behind the wings. The leading edges of the outer wings (outboard of the engines) were slightly tapered and the complete outboard sections could be folded back toward the fuselage for storage. The angular tailplane was fitted with a one-piece, unbalanced elevator. Twin fins with horn-balanced rudders were fitted as end plates to the tailplane though at least one aircraft of the type had a single central fin. A total of 69 machines were built and these saw extensive use in the Baltic.

Underpowered when fully loaded, the WD14 proved unsuccessful as a torpedo bomber. It needed an extremely skilled pilot, capable of flying the aircraft at a height of 30 feet or less, to make attacks and successfully launch its torpedo. To achieve this, long training was required for both pilot and torpedo man. In operations, it proved wasteful of trained crews and so that role was abandoned and its duty was changed to that of long range reconnaissance. For this, jettisonable fuel tanks were fitted in the torpedo bay. The WD14 again proved unsatisfactory because it was found that it had a tendency to break up after alighting on anything but calm seas. Its final role was, briefly, that of escorting coastal convoys.

The WD15 was a single-engine biplane and was an enlarged version of the WD12 with a more powerful engine, the 260hp Mercedes DIVa, and plywood covering to the fuselage and fin. It was the last single-engine seaplane supplied by Gotha to the German navy and only two were built. We have no record of any operational use.

WD20 was a derivative of the earlier WD14, built to carry long range fuel tanks in the torpedo bay. Only three were built and we have no record of any operational use of this type.

WD22 was similar to the WD14. Three machines of the type were built during early 1918, to be used for investigation of long range reconnaissance and patrol work. They were powered by four tandem engines mounted in two nacelles on the lower wings above the floats. The front pair of these were 160hp Mercedes D.III and the rear pair, driving pusher propellers, were 100hp Mercedes D.I. They were armed with a Parabellum machine gun in both front and rear cockpits.

WD27 was built during 1918 and these were very large long range patrol bombers. Although given a WD designation, they were large enough to have been classified as *Riesen-Seeflugzeuge* – giant seaplanes. We have no record of any operational use.

Two machines of the UWD type were built; G.1, a landplane version, first flew on 27 July 1915 and the UWD twin float seaplane version, early in 1916. Designed by Oscar Ursinus, it was originally intended for reconnaissance and patrol work but ended its days being used for training torpedo aircraft crews. It had a crew of three with a Parabellum machine gun in both the front and rear cockpits.

CAMOUFLAGE AND MARKINGS

In German service, Gotha seaplanes carried the cross marking in the standard positions. Those in Turkish service were initially marked with a white crescent and star on a red field but this was later changed; first to a white-outlined red square and then, later and to avoid confusion with British and French markings, to a white-outlined black square.

A Gotha WD12 in German markings, possibly Marine Number 944. ***:CCI Archive***