



Brazil's German Half Tracks

Exedito Carlos Stephani Bastos relates the use of German SdKfz 7 half tracks in the Brazilian Army 1939-1945

German half-tracks of the Second World War are fascinating vehicles, and whether we see them in films, books, photos or magazines, their style and design are impressive and quite 'daring' for that time. What surprises me, however, is that some of these vehicles were used in Brazil, by the Brazilian Army, during the Second World War, albeit in very small numbers, and not even one has survived to be preserved. These Krauss Maffei built half-tracks had a short life in Brazil and are now almost forgotten, but their existence is officially recorded.

On 28th July 1939, a contract between The War Department of Brazil and the German company, Lokomotivfabrik Krauss & Company I.A. MAFFEI A.G. de Munique [Krauss Maffei of Munich-Allach. Ed] was signed for the supply of 'tractors of artillery.' This contract agreed the purchase of 32, artillery tractors of 7.5 tons tractive effort, designed to tow Krupp 88mm anti-aircraft guns, and eight 7.5-ton tractors, the some

as the previous ones, but with cranes of 2.5 tons capacity, destined for towing Matra workshops.

From this contract the Brazilian Army received only five artillery tractors of the 32 they ordered. They were loaded on a ship in Lisbon harbour, in neutral Portugal, probably in June or July 1940, and were then disembarked shortly afterwards. They stayed in Lisbon harbour for about a year until August 1941, before being loaded into an American ship (or ships) bound for New York, and from there they were transported in Brazilian ships to Rio de Janeiro where they arrived between November/December 1941. A naval blockade had been imposed upon Germany by Britain, so 'departures and landings' were made by changing ships to confuse any inquisitive eyes on the look out for warlike material and because Britain obviously did not want Brazil to import German arms and equipment.



Climbing a gradient on tracks, front wheels off the ground.

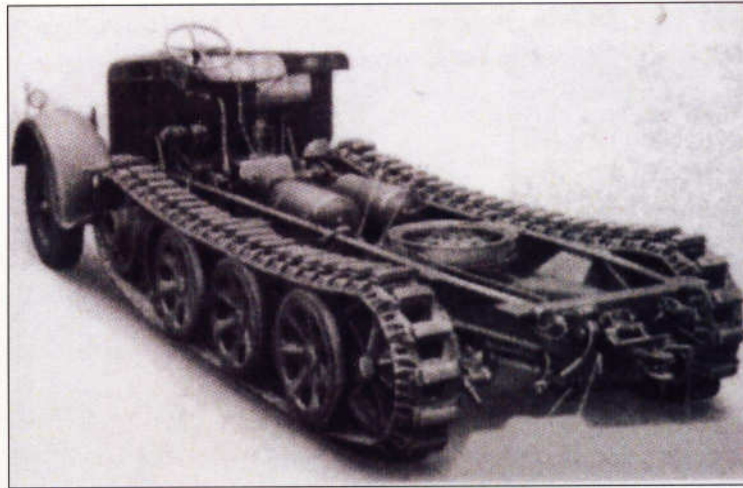
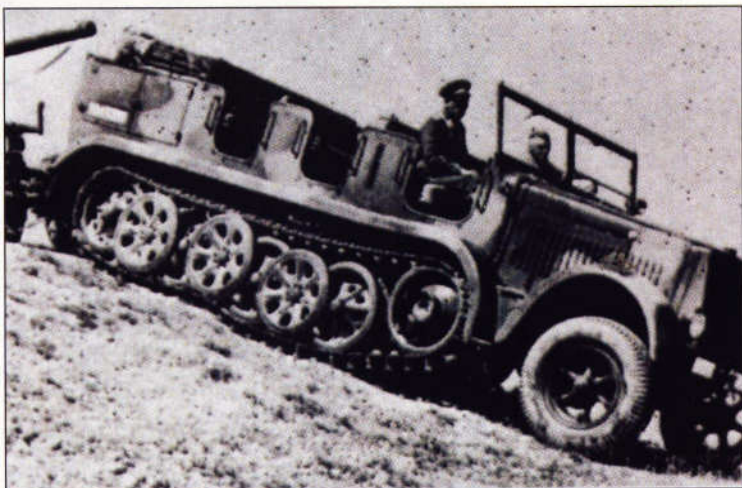
Author's converted Tamiya 1:35 scale SdKfz 7 representing a vehicle of the 1/1° R. A.A. Ae. in Rio de Janeiro. Notice the Army and unit emblems standard in 1942. Photo: the author.

The five SdKfz 7 half-tracked 'tractors' were issued to units of the Brazilian Army; two to the 1/1° R.A.A. Ae. - 1/1° Regiment of Anti-aircraft Artillery in Rio de Janeiro; two to the 1/2° R.A.A. Ae. in Quitaúna, SP, and one to the 1/3° R.A.A. Ae. in Natal, RN, which ended its operations in Fernando de Noronha.

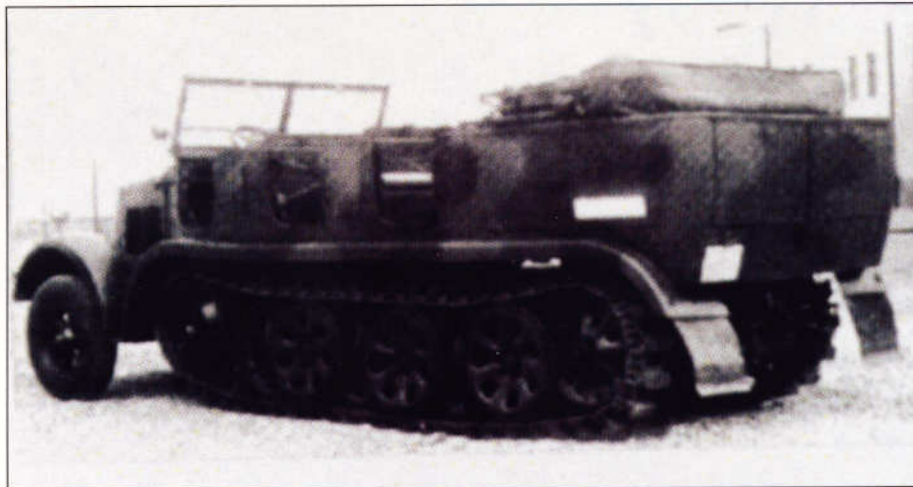
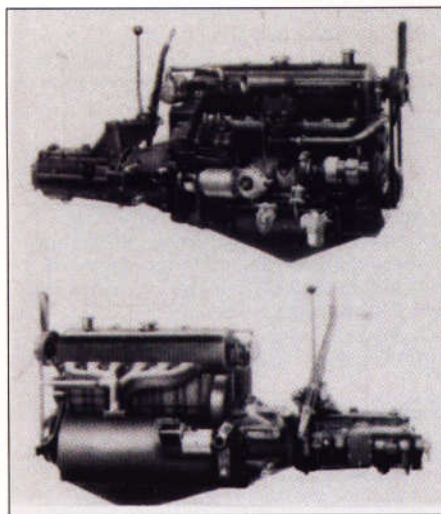
Unfortunately, I could find no photographs of these vehicles in Brazilian Army service; only the manufacturer's documents exist and the photos in the contracts. However, based on information of the colour used for Brazilian Army vehicles during that period, I modelled one of these vehicles using Tamiya's 1:35 scale kit and the photo of my model is reproduced here.

The German military designation for the type was *Sonderkraftfahrzeug 7* (SdKfz 7), and it was considered a versatile vehicle with 12,000 or so units produced by Krauss-Maffei and Hansa-Lloyd (Borgward) between 1934 and 1944. It had a six-cylinder Maybach HL 62 TUK 140 CV water-cooled petrol engine rated at 2,600 rpm. Maximum road speed was 50 km/h, consuming about 80 litres of fuel for each 100 km. This was increased to 160 litres for each 100 km cross country. Weighing 9.7 tons it could tow loads up to 8 tons. The SdKfz 7 had a four forward and one reverse speed gearbox, high-low ration enabling speeds from a 3.5 km/h 'crawl' up to a maximum of 50 km/h on the road. Seating for 11 fully equipped troops was provided and the SdKfz 7 half-tracks supplied to the Brazilian Army were intended to pull the Krupp 88mm C/56 anti-aircraft gun, whilst in the German army they pulled bigger calibre pieces and were used for a multitude of other tasks.

The SdKfz 7 had a very short life in Brazil, because from 1942 onwards the Brazilian Army began to receive equipment from the United States of America under the Lend-Lease agreements. When Germany was defeated in 1945, the contracts already signed between her and Brazil were obviously never going to be fulfilled and the five vehicles



ABOVE LEFT: On test, towing an 88mm gun cross-country. ABOVE RIGHT: The SdKfz 7 chassis; similar to those supplied to the Brazilian Army.



ABOVE LEFT: Maybach BL 62 TUK, engine. ABOVE RIGHT: SdKfz 7 similar to those sold to the Brazilian Army. All photos: Krauss-Maffei AG unless stated otherwise. BELOW: SdKfz 7 body.

already delivered, it seemed, were simply going to finish their days in some junk yard.

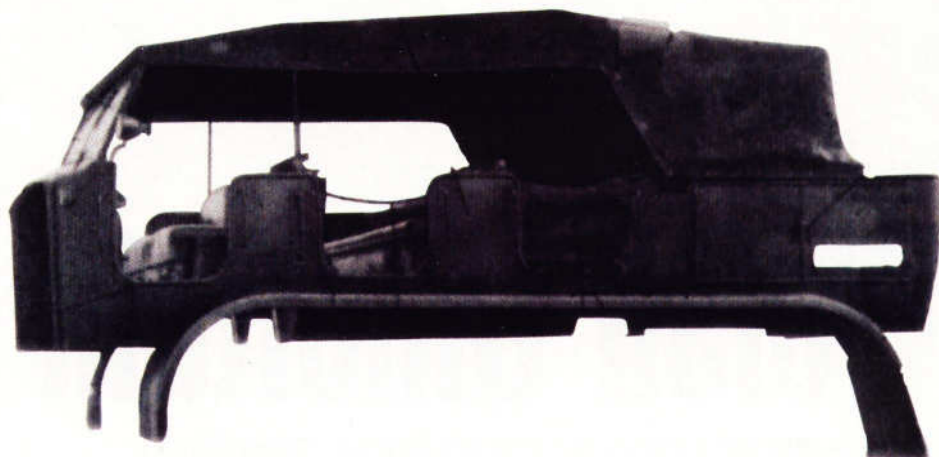
I heard a story that one of these SdKfz 7 half-tracks was being used in the 1970s, during the construction of a tunnel on the BR-040 highway, next to Petrópolis. This vehicle carried an enormous compressor and due to its cross-country capabilities on the mountainous terrain near the tunnel, it was used for supplying the power for drilling the rocks. After this work was completed the SdKfz 7, already old and damaged, was sold for scrap with other vehicles.

Basic Data

Manufacturer: Krauss-Maffei and Hansa-Lloyd
 Crew 11 men
 Weight 9.7 tons
 Length 6.85m
 Height 2.60m
 Width 2.35m
 Engine One Maybach HL 62 TUK, 6-cylinder, water-cooled, petrol.
 Max. speed 50 km/h on roads.
 Range 250 km on roads.
 120 km cross-country
 Fuel capacity 215 litres

Bibliography

Walter J. Spielberger & Hilary L. Doyle, *Halbketten-Fahrzeuge des Deutschen Heeres 1909-45*, Motorbuch Verlag, Germany, 1998.
 John Milsom, *German Half-Track Vehicles of World War Two*, Purnell Book Services Ltd., England, 1975.
 Kurt Rieger, *German Half-tracks in Action*, Squadron/Signal Publications, Armor Number 3, USA, 1972.



Contrato firmado com autorização do Presidente da República dos Estados Unidos do Brasil, entre o Ministério da Guerra e a firma Lokomotivfabrik Krauss & Comp. - I. A. Maffei A. G., Munchen, Alemanha, para o fornecimento de tratores de artilharia ao Exército Nacional, de 28 de julho de 1939. Arquivo Histórico do Exército, Rio de Janeiro, RJ; Anexos ao contrato acima, 1a - Oferta tractor de canhões, 1b - Oferta tractor de oficinas, 6 de fevereiro de 1939 e, 1c - sobresalentes, 23 de junho de 1939. Arquivo Histórico do Exército, Rio de Janeiro, RJ. General Eurico Gaspar Dutra, Refutações às críticas feitas aos contratos Krupp pelo Dr. Virgílio de Melo Franco, no caráter de Interventor Federal junto ao Banco, Alemão Transatlântico. Imprensa Militar, Rio de Janeiro, 1943. Expedito Carlos Stephani Bastos is a

Researcher of Military Subjects of the Nucleus of Strategic Studies of the Social Research Centre of the Federal University of the Juiz de Fora, Brazil.

Translated from the Portuguese by Lúcia Campos Lima

