

Arriving too late to alter the course of World War I, the Fokker D.VII was arguably the finest fighter of the war. Designed by Reinhold Platz, the D.VII competed against a number of other designs during a competition held in early 1918. The aircraft was tested by Baron Manfred von Richthofen, and he found the plane simple to fly, steady in a high-speed dive and possessing excellent pilot visibility. Thanks to the support of the famous "Red Baron", the D.VII was ordered into mass production as Germany's premier front line fighter. However, Fokker was unable to produce D. VIIs fast enough, so the Albatross and the Allgemeine Elektricitäts Gesellschaft (A.E.G.) companies also produced the D.VII. When World War I ended in November 1918, these three companies had built more than 1,700 D.VIIs.



German pilots who flew combat in the D.VII marveled at the plane's high rate of climb and excellent handling characteristics. They also enjoyed the fact the D.VII's service ceiling was higher than most Allied fighter planes. This advantage allowed D.VII pilots to build up speed and energy during an attack run, giving them the luxury of being able to pick and choose their targets. In August 1918, Fokker D.VIIs destroyed 565 Allied aircraft - making the D.VII one of the most feared aircraft of the war.

After the war, the victorious Allies required the Germans to hand over all remaining examples of the D.VII. However, about 120 examples of the type were smuggled into Holland where Fokker set up shop and continued to produce aircraft. The U.S. Army brought 142 D.VIIs back to the United States and used them as Air Service trainers for many years. Twelve D.VIIs were transferred to the U.S. Navy, and the U.S. Marine Corps operated six of these aircraft until 1924. As a result the D.VII influenced the design of several later U.S. Navy fighters, including the Boeing FB-1 which entered service in 1925. Additionally, the Swiss operated a number of D.VIIs well into the 1930s.

