



Type 99A Main Battle Tank's Capabilities on Display

OE Watch Commentary: The Type 99A is an improved variant of the Type 99, China's most advanced and expensive main battle tank (MBT) developed in the 1980s. The accompanying excerpts feature an interview with Captain Jia Yuanyou, a Deputy Commander of a Tank Battalion at an unidentified regiment of the Central Theater Command, about the Type 99A. Jia has previously been lauded as an outstanding armor soldier [铁甲兵王], and given the honor of serving as representative to China's 18th National People's Congress in 2012.

The interview highlights what appears to be redesigned elements of the tank more familiar to those driving cars, with a steering wheel/yoke replacing older tanks' dual-lever system and a stick-shift transmission capable of manual or automatic modes. The pedals also follow a traditional car layout with gas and brake pedals. Jia also praised the 99A's superior mobility, including the ability to tackle higher grades and taller obstacles.

One of the most interesting comments during the interview is Captain Jia's assessment of the Type 99A's armor. He notes that the 99A's combination of traditional armor, an unspecified composite mix and reactive armor bricks, has a performance equivalent to more than 1000mm. Contextually, this appears to mean 1000mm of rolled homogeneous armor (RHA), a standard reference for armor thickness in tanks.

While Chinese armor units appear to be adopting the less-powerful Type 96B MBT due to its lower cost-per-unit, the continued improvements to the Type 99 indicate that the Chinese government still has big plans for its armored units. As they become more fully integrated into combined arms brigades across China (a major cultural and organizational shift from previous division-level units), MBTs will continue to be a major part of the PLA ground forces' strength. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

“Our reactive armor makes our tank's protective performance against armor piercing and armor-piercing reach more than 1000 mm.”



ZTZ-99A MBT.

Source: Tyg728 [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], from Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ZTZ-99A_MBT_20170902.jpg.

Source: “[中国新闻] “零距离” 体验中国最先进主战坦克——99A主战坦克 | CCTV中文国际 ([China News] Face-to-Face with China's Most Advanced Main Battle Tank—the Type 99A),” CCTV-13, 9 November 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7u2IMmpEx5w>

(Translator's Note: This is an interview aired on CCTV-13 on 9 November 2018. The interviewer and CCTV host Wang Yan is being introduced to the Type 99A MBT by Captain Jia Yuanyou, a Deputy Commander of a Tank Battalion at an unidentified regiment of the Central Theater Command.)

Jia Yuanyou: Our [Type] 99A Tank is equipped with an advanced integrated electronic information systems. This system gives our tank internal and external command communication capabilities, cooperation and target search and attack control capability and the real-time acquisition of our battlefield situation.

Wang Yan: Captain Jia, we've just discussed information capabilities. Can you explain a little about [the tank's] firepower? The 125mm smoothbore cannon in front of us represents the main firepower of the tank, correct?

Jia Yuanyou: In fact, the most advanced is the fire control system of our tank vehicle just mentioned. This fire control system gives us the ability to fire regardless of whether the target is moving or stopped, and the gun has high elevation and pitch capabilities, as well as full 360 degree rotation.

Wang Yan: Captain Jia, you introduced us to firepower and information power. Can you introduce the armor protection of the 99A?

Jia Yuanyou: In general, the protection of our tanks in the traditional sense is based on armor. The armor of the 99A tank has the body armor of the tank itself and a layer of composite armor...

[Wang Yan and Jia Yuanyou duck inside the tank]

Wang Yan: Can you give us a brief introduction to the layout of the tank?

Jia Yuanyou: The small steering wheel in front of you is the steering of the tank. The previous tank used our traditional [dual lever] control system. Then on the right side of your body this is our shift lever. It has two modes, manual or automatic. Foot pedals control the throttle speed and brakes. In fact, it is just like operating a personal car. The engine of our 99A tank is very powerful, dramatically increasing the off-road performance of the tank. Its climbing performance, including the angles and height of obstacles it can climb are much higher than our old tanks.