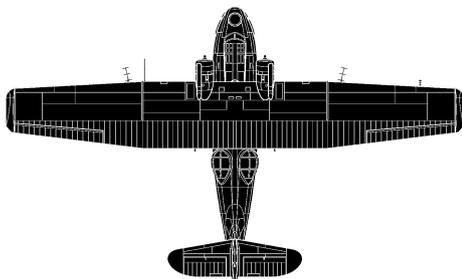


# Airpower Classics

Artwork by Zaur Eylanbekov

## PBY Catalina



The US Navy PBY Catalina was by far the most-produced and most-important flying boat or seaplane in history. It provided stellar service throughout World War II in many roles, flying in all US armed services and in the fleets of many nations. USAAF's version was known as the OA-10A. Consolidated Aircraft Co. designers gave it a rugged structure and a high-wing configuration that allowed it to operate in rough seas. The PBY-5A amphibian, introduced in 1939, was even more versatile than its predecessors.

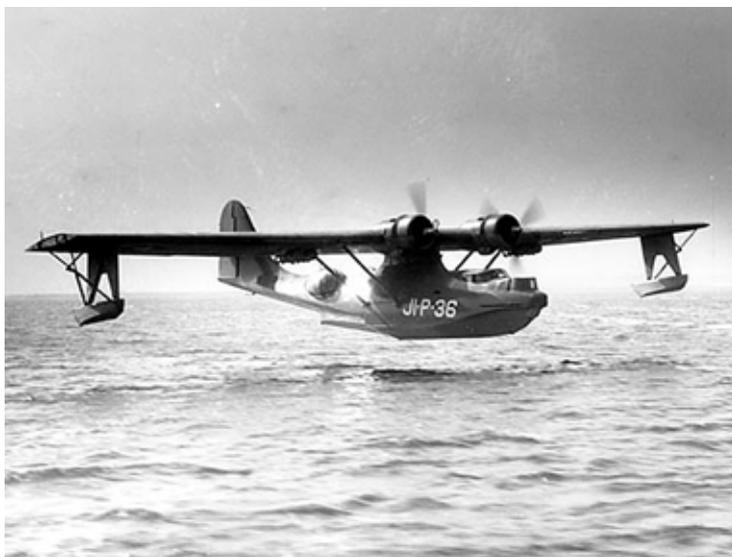
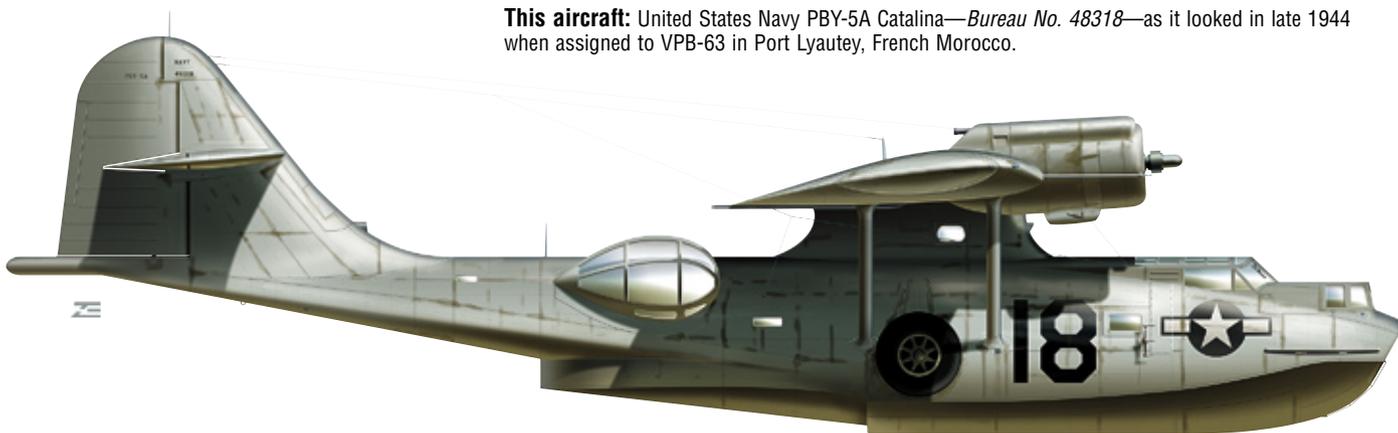
The PB in the acronym PBY denoted "patrol bomber," while the final letter, Y, signified its builder, Consolidated, in naval parlance. The Catalina was all metal, except for a few fabric-covered areas, and so was far cleaner in design than previous Navy patrol airplanes. It had a semicantilever, strut-braced, pylon-mounted

wing, and retractable wing-tip floats. Amazingly successful in its original roles as a long-range patrol bomber, the Catalina also excelled in anti-submarine warfare, air-sea rescue, landing assault forces, mine-laying, reconnaissance, convoy escort, and transport work.

The Catalina's long range brought it into prominence in many historic actions, including the sighting of the German battleship *Bismarck*, the sighting of the Imperial Japanese fleet in 1942 at Midway, its torpedo attacks against that fleet, and suppression of German U-boats with constant surveillance and attack. The Cat's most highly regarded achievements were its "Dumbo" air-sea rescue efforts, when it would descend to the sea to scoop up downed airmen, even under intense hostile fire.

—Walter J. Boyne

**This aircraft:** United States Navy PBY-5A Catalina—*Bureau No. 48318*—as it looked in late 1944 when assigned to VPB-63 in Port Lyautey, French Morocco.



*The ocean was its landing strip.*

### In Brief

Designed by Consolidated ★ built by Consolidated, Boeing, Canadian-Vickers, others ★ first flight May 19, 1936 ★ crew of eight ★ two Pratt & Whitney R-1830 engines ★ number built 4,051 ★ **Specific to PBY-5A:** max speed 179 mph ★ cruise speed 125 mph ★ max range 2,545 mi ★ armament, three .30 cal machine guns, two .50 cal machine guns ★ max load, 4,000 lb of bombs, depth charges, mines, torpedoes ★ weight (max) 35,300 lb ★ span 104 ft ★ length 63 ft 10 in ★ height 20 ft 2 in.

### Famous Fliers

**Medal of Honor:** Nathan Gordon. **Victoria Cross:** John Cruickshank (RAF), David Hornell (RCAF). **Notables:** Knefler McGinnis, Leonard B. Smith, Howard Ady, Thomas Moorer, L. J. Birchall, Adrian Marks, Jacques Cousteau, Philippe Cousteau.

### Interesting Facts

Built in at least 25 variants ★ served in some 30 air forces ★ used engine exhaust as de-icing mechanism—a first ★ named by the RAF ★ mounted first US air action of World War II (helping attack a Japanese midget sub at Pearl Harbor) ★ flew first round-the-world flight by seaplane ★ nicknamed Cat, Black Cat, Canso, Nomad, Pig Boat, P-Boat.