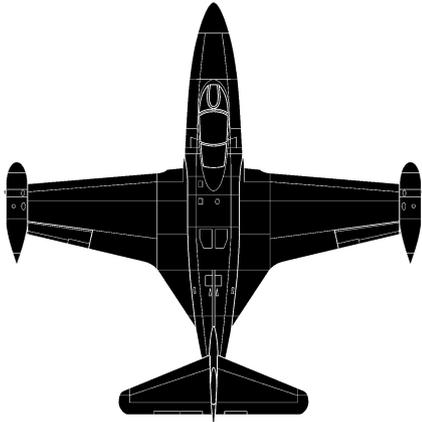


F9F Panther



The straight-wing F9F Panther was one of the Navy's first successful jet-powered aircraft and the most important Navy-USMC tactical system of the Korean War. When that conflict broke out on June 25, 1950, the Grumman-built fighter-bomber constituted a majority of Navy carrier-based aircraft. The Panther served with distinction in the hands of Navy and Marine Corps aviators.

Since 1943, Grumman had worked on versions of a jet-powered fighter. Its great success came with the XF9F-2. The Navy ordered three prototypes of the aircraft. Its rugged, all-metal fuselage was built in three sections, with the engine mounted aft for easy service and wings in the midsection. The fighter was easy to fly and quite maneuverable. Because of insufficient fuel space in its wings and fuselage, designers added

permanent 120-gallon wingtip tanks, giving it the range equivalent to piston-engine fighters. The first F9Fs were carrier-qualified with VF-51, going aboard USS *Boxer* in September 1949.

Only a few months later, on July 3, 1950, the fighter entered combat in Korea—the first Navy aircraft to do so. Panthers were used mainly as attack aircraft, their relatively slow speed being offset by ruggedness and maneuverability. The Panther became the signature Navy aircraft of the war, and its success led to its conversion into a swept-wing derivative, the F9F Cougar.

—Walter J. Boyne



This aircraft: Navy F9F-5 Panther—BuNo #126034—of VF 781 as it looked in November 1952 when deployed aboard USS *Oriskany* off the coast of Korea.

In Brief

Designed, built by Grumman ★ first flight Nov. 21, 1947 ★ crew of one or two (trainer) ★ number built 1,385 ★ **Specific to F9F-5:** one Pratt & Whitney J48 turbojet engine ★ max speed 579 mph ★ cruise speed 481 mph ★ max range 1,300 mi ★ armament four 20 mm cannon, two 1,000-lb bombs ★ weight (max) 18,721 lb ★ span 38 ft ★ length 38 ft 10 in ★ height 12 ft 3 in.

Famous Fliers

Notables: Neil Armstrong, John Glenn, A. B. Metsger, Walter Spangenberg, Ted Williams. **Other Combat:** William Amen, Eldon Brown, William Lamb, John Middleton, Robert Parker, Leonard Plog, David Rowlands, Royce Williams. **Test Pilot:** Corwin Meyer.

Interesting Facts

Flew 78,000 sorties in Korean War ★ scored first air-to-air Navy kill (North Korean Yak 9 on July 3, 1950) ★ downed five Soviet MiG-15s off Vladivostok (not officially credited) ★ appeared prominently in films "Men of the Fighting Lady" (1954) and "The Bridges at Toko-Ri" (1954) ★ became first Navy aircraft to use ejection seat in combat ★ was first jet aircraft used by Blue Angels (1949-1955) ★ flown by Argentine Air Force against rebel forces in the 1960s.



A landing signal officer on board USS *Boxer* (CVA-21) brings in an F9F from a combat mission over North Korea.