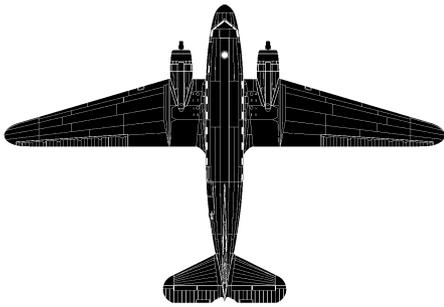


C-47 Skytrain



The C-47 Skytrain transport, commonly and lovingly referred to as the “Gooney Bird” by its crews, was a bright star of World War II. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower pegged it as one of the four weapons most critical to victory (with the bazooka, jeep, and atomic bomb). It was long-lived, serving also in the Korean War and Vietnam War. In the latter, it took on the attack role as the AC-47 “Spooky” gunship, a highly successful venture.

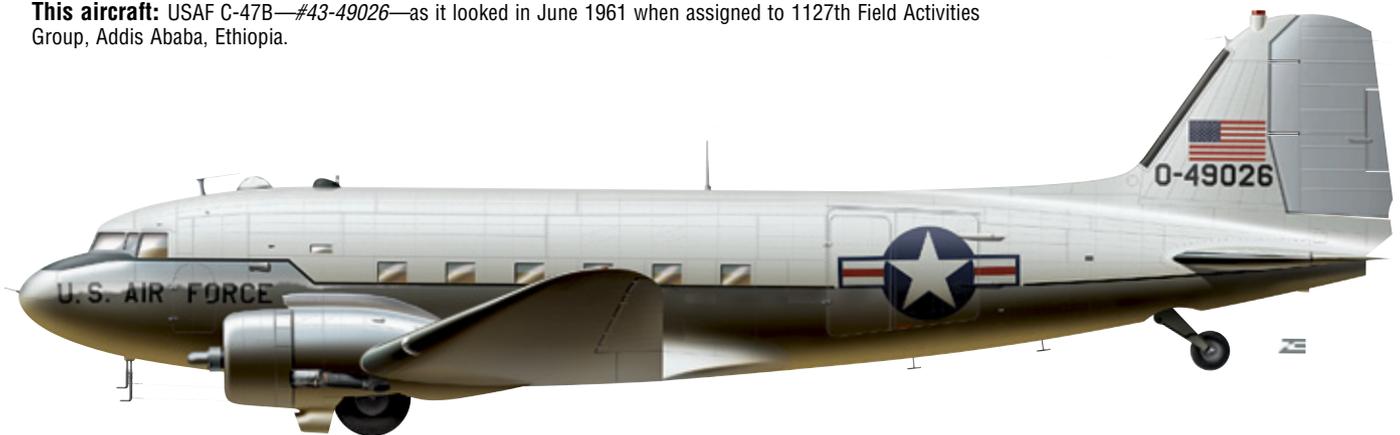
Douglas derived the C-47 from its DC-3 civilian liner, whose speed and range revolutionized air transport in the 1930s. It was unquestionably the top piston-engine transport in history and arguably the most important transport, period. The all-metal, low-wing, twin-engine aircraft featured retractable landing gear and controllable pitch propellers. Its structure and wings were

immensely strong. When war came in the 1940s, the Army Air Forces adapted it to carry troops, haul cargo, tow gliders, and drop paratroopers.

In World War II, the Gooney Bird was a mobility system par excellence. It seemingly was everywhere. It hauled supplies over the towering Himalayas to supply Allied forces. During the July 1943 invasion of Sicily, C-47s towed hundreds of gliders and dropped 4,381 paratroopers in a single day. The Normandy Invasion of June 6, 1944, saw the aircraft drop 60,000 paratroopers and tow several thousand CG-4 gliders. Its service continued after that war. C-47s were used extensively in the 1948-1949 Berlin Airlift. In one notable Korean War achievement, C-47 crews flew 4,689 casualties out of the Chosin Reservoir area in five days.

—Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: USAF C-47B—#43-49026—as it looked in June 1961 when assigned to 1127th Field Activities Group, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.



USAF photo



Air Force C-47 and Navy Douglas R4D aircraft unload at Tempelhof Airport during the Berlin Airlift.

In Brief

Designed, built by Douglas Aircraft ★ first flight Dec. 17, 1935 ★ number built approx. 22,000 (USAF 10,654; Japan 2,500 under license; USSR 8,882 under license) ★ crew of three (pilot, copilot, flight engineer-loadmaster) ★ max load 27 troops or 10,000 lb of cargo ★ armament none ★ **Specific to C-47B:** two Pratt & Whitney R-1830-90C/D Twin Wasp radial engines ★ max speed 232 mph ★ cruise speed 160 mph ★ max range 1,513 mi ★ weight (loaded) 25,200 lb ★ span 95 ft ★ length 63 ft 9 in ★ height 16 ft 11 in.

Famous Fliers

Medal of Honor: John Levitow (Vietnam, in AC-47). **Notables:** Many, including John Alison, Walter Boyne, Jack Frye. **Test pilots:** Dan Beard, Frank Colbohm Jr. (flight engineer), Carl Cover Jr., Fred Herman, Ed Stineman Jr., D. W. Tomlinson, Elling Veblen.

Interesting Facts

Kept same basic DC-3 specs throughout its history ★ awarded the 1935 Collier Trophy ★ built under license by Fokker (Holland), Amtorg (USSR), Nakajima (Japan), and Airspeed (Britain) ★ nicknamed, variously, “Gooney Bird,” “Dak,” “Tabby,” “Spooky,” “Puff the Magic Dragon” ★ featured as ski-equipped system in 1951 sci-fi film “The Thing From Another World” ★ appeared (as C-53 Skytrooper) in airdrop sequences of 1977 film “A Bridge Too Far” ★ one tested as a glider, after removal of engines.