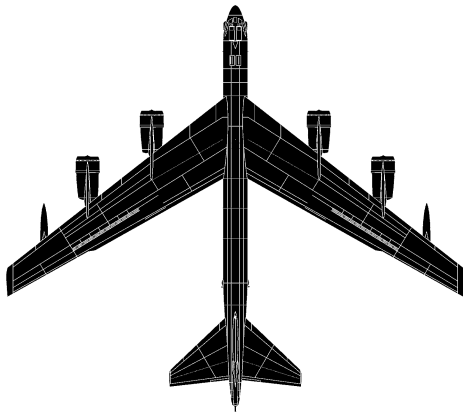


B-52 Stratofortress



The huge, long-range B-52 bomber indisputably rates as the most capable and versatile warplane in history. From the Cuban Missile Crisis and Arc Light and Linebacker II in Vietnam to the Gulf War, Iraq War, and Afghanistan today, the Boeing Stratofortress has been the indispensable combat aircraft. The B-52 is now in its sixth decade of service. First employed as a high-altitude deliverer of free-fall nuclear weapons, it has been constantly evolving in tactics, weaponry, and missions to meet every challenge in many different flight regimes.

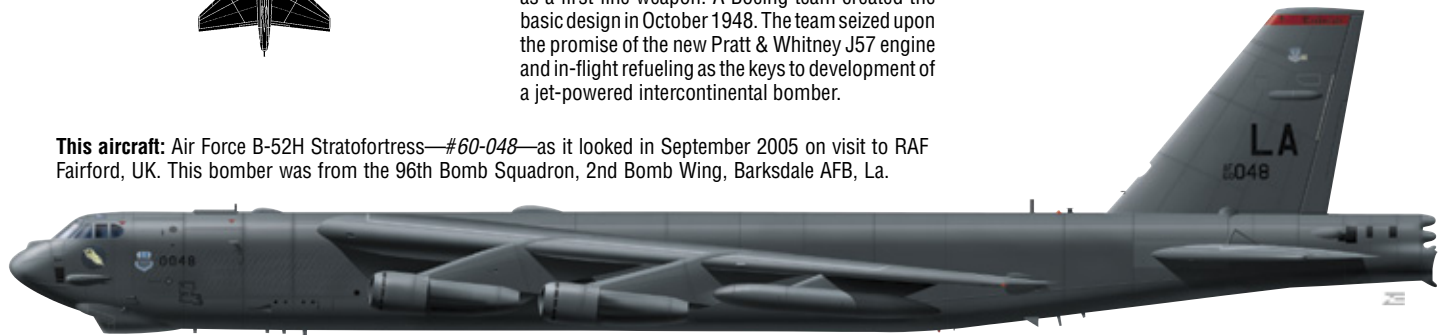
The all-metal, shoulder wing B-52 defined the concept of an aerial platform, for new equipment, modifications, and changes in tactics have kept it as a first-line weapon. A Boeing team created the basic design in October 1948. The team seized upon the promise of the new Pratt & Whitney J57 engine and in-flight refueling as the keys to development of a jet-powered intercontinental bomber.

First deployed in 1955, the B-52 experienced some initial technical problems but rapidly became the primary bomber in the Strategic Air Command fleet. Production concluded in 1962 when the final B-52H—the last model—rolled off the line.

Numerous upgrades and refittings have kept it combat-worthy. It can perform strategic attack, close air support, air interdiction, offensive counterair, and maritime operations. In fact, never in history has a single combat aircraft served so well, for so long, in so many ways. The B-52 will remain in front-line service until 2040.

—Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: Air Force B-52H Stratofortress—#60-048—as it looked in September 2005 on visit to RAF Fairford, UK. This bomber was from the 96th Bomb Squadron, 2nd Bomb Wing, Barksdale AFB, La.



USAF photo

A Boeing B-52 takes off.

In Brief

Designed, built by Boeing ★ first flight April 15, 1952 ★ number built 744 ★ crew of five (commander, pilot, radar navigator, navigator, EW officer) ★ armament early models, four .50 cal guns; H model, one 2 mm gun ★ **Specific to B-52H:** eight Pratt & Whitney TF-33P-3/103 turbofan engines ★ armament one 20 mm gun, eventually removed ★ max load 70,000 lb of nuclear and/or conventional munitions (guided or gravity bombs, PGM, ALCM) ★ max speed 650 mph ★ cruise speed 525 mph ★ max range 8,800 mi ★ weight (loaded) 488,000 lb ★ span 185 ft ★ length 159 ft 4 in ★ height 40 ft 8 in.

Famous Fliers

Air Force Cross: James McCarthy, John Mize. **Combat record:** R. J. Smith (506 missions). **Notables:** William Eubank, Robert Huyser, Curtis LeMay, Earl O'Loughlin, Joseph Pitts. **Test Pilots:** Chuck Fisher, Tex Johnston, Guy Townsend. **Others:** Dale Brown (novelist), Robert Certain (President Ford's minister), Tom Jones (astronaut).

Interesting Facts

Nicknamed "Buff," for Big Ugly Fat Fellow (in polite terms) ★ featured in many films ★ begun as a scaled-up B-29 bomber with six turboprop engines ★ stripped of tandem seating at insistence of Curtis LeMay ★ carried the X-15 on experimental flights in the 1950s ★ modified for low-level tactics ★ became key aircraft in SAC's "Chrome Dome" airborne alert concept in 1961 ★ dropped its first bombs in Vietnam War in June 1965 ★ flew more than 126,000 combat sorties over South Vietnam ★ delivered 40 percent of all weapons in 1991 Gulf War ★ flew 16,000-mile round-trip mission to launch 35 ALCMs at the opening of Desert Storm ★ set record for nonstop, around-the-world flight in 1957 nonrefueled nonstop flight of 12,532 miles (1962) ★ two B-52s can monitor 140,000 sq mi of ocean surface in two hours.