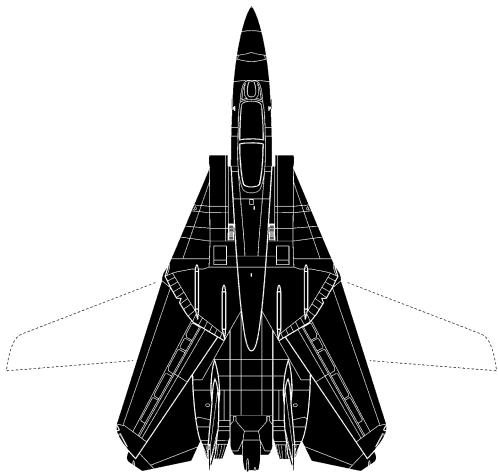


F-14 Tomcat



The F-14 Tomcat was the US Navy's frontline interceptor-fighter for more than three decades. A two-seat, supersonic, twin-engine, variable sweep-wing aircraft, the Grumman-built Tomcat starting in 1974 provided fleet air defense for carrier battle groups and, late in its long career, precision strike against ground targets. Though retired from US service, it is still active in Iran's air force.

The F-14 Tomcat was designed as both air superiority fighter and a long-range interceptor, specifically to deal with the threat of long-range Soviet aviation and cruise missiles. Its variable geometry wings moved automatically during flight. For high-speed intercept, they swept back; they swung forward at lower speed. In the cockpit, tasks of navigation, target acquisition, electronic countermeasures, and weapons employment were divided between pilot and the radar intercept officer.

The Tomcat also sported a huge radar and heavy, long-range Phoenix missiles. Many disliked its original TF-30 powerplant; Secretary of the Navy John F. Lehman Jr. called it a "terrible engine" and moved to replace it.

The F-14 boasted a credible operational history, starting in the final days of the Vietnam War. The F-14 scored its first air-to-air kills in US Navy service in August 1981, when two Tomcats shot down two Libyan Su-22 fighters over the Gulf of Sidra, and followed up in the same area in 1989, when it downed two Libyan MiGs. It saw considerable action over Lebanon, Persian Gulf, Balkans, and Iraq. It was also used to great effect by Iran in its 1980-88 war with Iraq. The US supplied Iran before the fall of the Shah and rise of the hostile Islamic Republic.

—Robert S. Dudney with Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: US Navy F-14D Tomcat—BuNo 164348—as it looked in late 2001 when assigned to VF-213 and deployed aboard USS *Carl Vinson* in the Arabian Sea.



In Brief

Designed, built by Grumman ★ first flight Dec. 21, 1970 ★ number built 712 ★ crew of two (pilot, radar intercept officer). **Specific to F-14D:** two General Electric F110-GE-400 turbofan engines ★ armament one 20 mm Vulcan six-barrel Gatling cannon; up to six AIM-54 and/or AIM-7, in addition to two AIM-9 air-to-air missiles ★ load, 14,599 lb of JDAM, Paveway, Mk 80, Mk 20 ordnance ★ max speed 1,544 mph ★ cruise speed 460 to 633 mph ★ max range 1,841 mi ★ weight (loaded) 61,000 lb ★ span 64 ft spread and 38 ft swept ★ length 62 ft 9 in ★ height 16 ft.

Famous Fliers

US Navy: Dale Snodgrass (Navy Fighter Pilot of the Year, 1985) Hank Kleemann and Dave Venlet (first air-to-air victory), Kara Hultgreen (first female carrier-based fighter pilot), Blake Coleman and Dave Lauderbaugh (final carrier launch), Chris Richard and Mike Petronis (final flight), Timothy Dorsey and Edmund Holland (accidentally shot down USAF RF-4).

Iran: Jalil Zandi (ace, eight confirmed, three probable victories, Iran-Iraq War). **Test pilots:** Robert Smyth (first to fly), William Miller.

Interesting Facts

Glamorized in hit 1986 Hollywood film "Top Gun" ★ flew just 23 months after award of contract ★ launched successful AIM-54 Phoenix missile attack against test target 124 miles distant ★ able to land with wings fully swept back ★ once fired six missiles in 38 seconds, scoring four direct hits ★ became first US fighter designed to incorporate lessons of Vietnam War combat against MiG fighters ★ suffered many compressor stalls and pilot ejections during tests ★ remains largest and heaviest US fighter ever to fly from an aircraft carrier ★ named "Tomcat" in honor of Vice Adm. Thomas F. Connolly, who sold it to Congress ★ dubbed "Ali-Cat" in Imperial Iranian Air Force.

Navy photo by Photographer's Mate 3rd Class John E. Woods



At sea aboard USS *Kitty Hawk*, March 19, 2002.