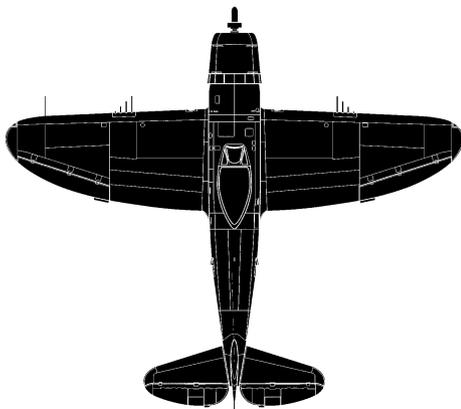


# Airpower Classics

Artwork by Zaur Eylanbekov

## P-47 Thunderbolt



The P-47 Thunderbolt, known as the “Jug” and beloved by its pilots, was built to be an interceptor, but it became the dominant USAAF close air support fighter of World War II. The versatile Republic Aviation combat aircraft featured heavy armament and a phenomenally rugged structure, all of which helped it wreak havoc on enemy forces—in the air or on the ground, in Europe or the Pacific. Although somewhat overshadowed in the public mind by the glamorous P-51 Mustang, the P-47 had then and still has today a fanatically loyal following.

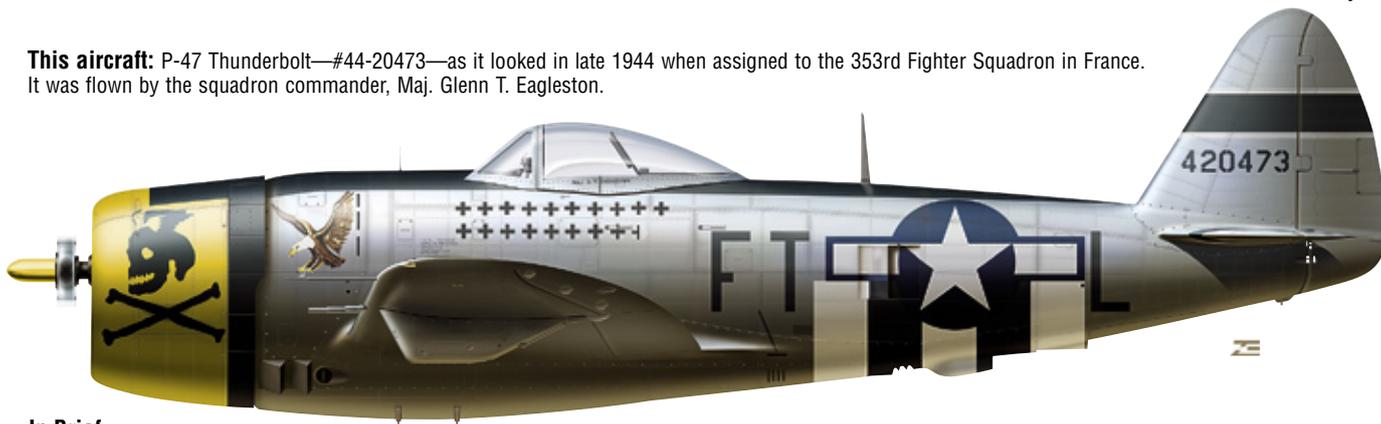
The Jug was an outgrowth of years of aviation work by aeronautical pioneer Alexander P. de Seversky. It was designed by a team led by Alexander Kartveli, who built it around the potent new Pratt & Whitney R-2800 engine. The 12,000-pound prototype was to that point in history the heaviest single-engine USAAF fighter ever built.

Weight and performance both went up over time. The 56th Fighter Group undertook development work as a unit. The P-47 initially was thought to have poor climb and maneuverability, but it had great diving capability. Water injection, new propellers, and other improvements increased its combat capability, and ever larger drop tanks extended its bomber escort range.

The P-47 entered combat on April 8, 1943 in Europe. Eventually, it saw action in every war theater. When sufficient numbers of air combat Mustangs arrived in theater, the P-47s would specialize in close air support. Jugs flew more than 546,000 combat sorties. They were credited with damaging or destroying almost 12,000 enemy aircraft in the air or on the ground, 9,000 locomotives, and 6,000 armored vehicles. Through fire and flak, its loss rate was less than one percent per sortie, a tribute to its great strength.

—Walter J. Boyne

**This aircraft:** P-47 Thunderbolt—#44-20473—as it looked in late 1944 when assigned to the 353rd Fighter Squadron in France. It was flown by the squadron commander, Maj. Glenn T. Eagleston.



### In Brief

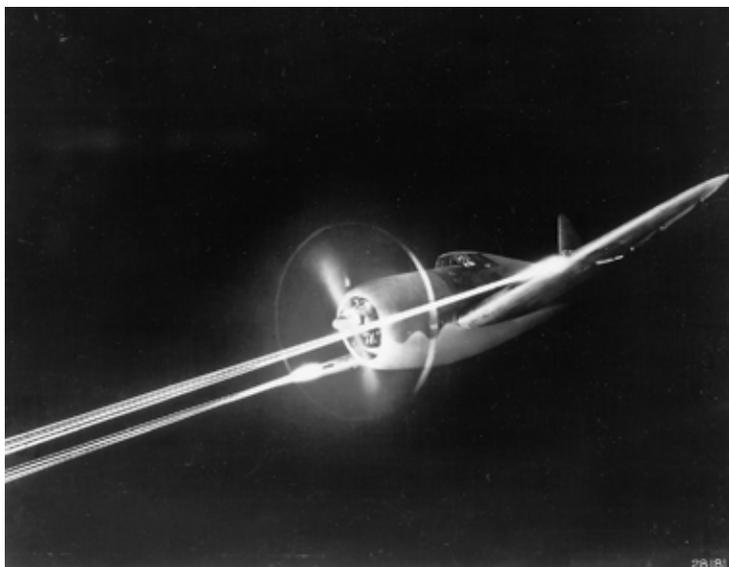
Designed by Republic ★ built by Republic, Curtiss-Wright ★ first flight May 6, 1941 ★ crew of one ★ number built, 15,683 ★ **Specific to P-47D:** one Pratt & Whitney R-2800 radial engine ★ armament eight .50-cal machine guns, two 1,000-lb bombs, 10 rockets ★ max speed 428 mph ★ cruise speed 350 mph ★ max range 475 mi ★ weight (loaded) 19,400 lb ★ span 40 ft 9 in ★ length 36 ft 1 in ★ height 14 ft 2 in.

### Famous Fliers

**Medal of Honor:** Neel Kearby (WWII), Raymond L. Knight (WWII), George Davis Jr. (Korea). **Aces:** Gerald W. Johnson, Donald Blakeslee, Fred Christensen, Glenn Duncan, Francis Gabreski, Dominic Gentile, Herschel Green, Walker Mahurin, David Schilling, Hubert Zemke, Duane Beeson, William Dunham, James Goodson, Robert Johnson. **Notables:** Carroll McColpin, Benjamin O. Davis, Jimmy Doolittle.

### Interesting Facts

Built in greater numbers than any USAAF fighter ★ 5,222 lost in action ★ launched by catapult from carriers in action near Saipan ★ led to XP-72 and F-84 Thunderjet ★ more than 40 variants ★ featured in 1948 film “Fighter Squadron” ★ often confused with German FW 190 in combat ★ flown by air forces of Soviet Union, Nationalist China, five European allies, and 13 Latin American-Caribbean nations ★ named “Jug” either for its rotund shape or as short for “juggernaut.”



**A Thunderbolt blazes away.**