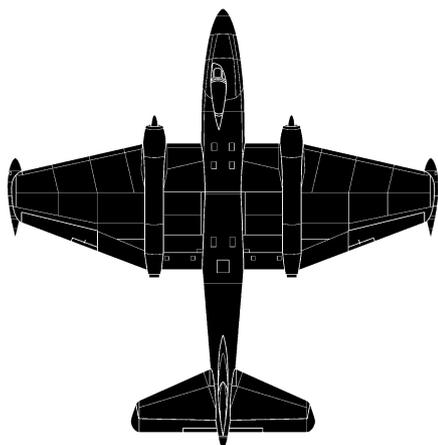


Airpower Classics

Artwork by Zaur Eylanbekov

Canberra



The jet-powered Canberra was the mainstay of the Royal Air Force's postwar light bomber force, serving an astounding 55 years. It replaced the Mosquito and handled a variety of roles—tactical bombing and photographic, electronic, and meteorologic reconnaissance. USAF acquired its own variant, the B-57, which was built by Martin as the first foreign military aircraft produced in the US since 1917.

The English Electric Canberra was an all-metal, midwing monoplane with its jet engines mounted in the wing structure. EE designers changed the swept wings of the original design to a more unconventional design, in which wings were broad and squared off. It had a pressurized cabin and excellent maneuverability. Given its great

speed and ability to reach very high altitude, Canberra carried no defensive armament. It was built in more than 20 versions, and served in 38 RAF squadrons. When the Korean War revealed USAF needed to replace its B-26 light bomber, the Canberra filled the role. Variations served in the Vietnam War and remained in the USAF inventory until 1982.

RAF Canberras saw action in the Suez Crisis and Malayan Emergency, and the aircraft was used by both sides in the India-Pakistan wars of 1965 and 1971. The Argentine Air Force used Canberras in the 1982 Falkland Islands War. For the RAF, the later PR9 reconnaissance variant saw action in the 2003 Iraq War and in Afghanistan in 2006. It was finally retired by the RAF in June 2006.

—Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: Canberra B.Mk6 as it appeared in 1976 when assigned to No. 51 Squadron, RAF Wyton, Britain. This aircraft was modified for the Zabra intelligence project.



The Canberra was a multirole standard bearer.

In Brief

Designed by English Electric ★ built by EE, Handley Page, Short Brothers (RAF); Martin, General Dynamics (USAF); Government Aircraft Factory (RAAF) ★ first flight May 13, 1949 ★ crew of two or three ★ number built 1,352 (RAF 901; USAF 403; RAAF 48) ★ bomb load 8,000 lb ★ **Specific to B. Mk 6:** two Rolls Royce Avon RA.7 Mk 109 turbojet engines ★ armament none ★ max speed 541 mph ★ cruise speed 450 mph ★ max range 3,380 mi ★ weight (loaded) 55,000 lb ★ span 63 ft 11 in ★ length 65 ft 6 in ★ height 15 ft 7 in.

Famous Fliers

Air Force Cross: Larry Mason (Vietnam War). **Record-setter:** Roland Beamont, first unrefueled jet airplane trans-Atlantic flight. **Test pilot:** O. E. Tibbs. **Notables:** Chuck Yeager, Nguyen Cao Ky, Robert Mikesh, Robert Herres, Donald Kutyna, Barry Goldwater.

Interesting Facts

Entered fleet as RAF's first jet-bomber ★ flew 1953 spy mission over USSR's Kapustin Yar rocket launch site ★ nicknamed Cranberry, Caterpillar, Marrow ★ still serves as NASA's WB-57F weather aircraft, achieving altitudes exceeding 80,000 ft ★ exported to Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Ethiopia, France, India, New Zealand, Pakistan, Peru, Rhodesia, South Africa, Sweden, Venezuela, West Germany ★ flew in special projects "Tropic Moon," "Heartthrob," "Patricia Lynn," "Diamond Lil."