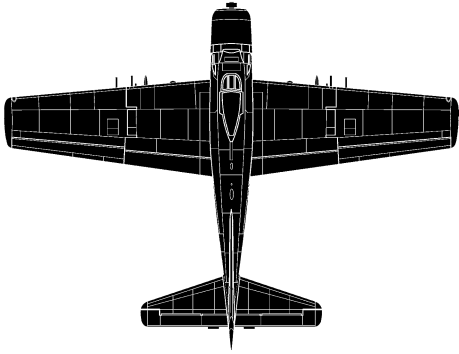


Airpower Classics

Artwork by Zaur Eylanbekov

A-1 Skyraider



The Air Force's A-1 Skyraider was the final incarnation of an attack airplane that flew for three US services, under two names, in two wars. Some consider it the best prop-driven ground support aircraft ever built. To human eyes, it was not a feast, but the A-1 was the heart and soul of USAF's legendary air commando operations.

This aircraft, designed in 1944, began life as the Navy's AD-1 Skyraider, with subsequent models designated through AD-7. The "AD" was employed brilliantly by both the Navy and Marine Corps throughout the Korean War. Redesignated in 1962 as the A-1, it was the Navy's top attack airplane until 1967. In 1963, USAF modified 150 into A-1Es for use by the 1st Air Commando Wing. In the 1960s jet-age Air Force, the prop-driven Skyraider was a throwback, but it was essential.

In the beginning, the A-1E had dual controls, because pilots were deemed advisors and Vietnamese pilots ostensibly were performing the combat duties. When USAF took an active role, the Skyraider was flown as a single-seater.

A rugged, flying dump truck, the A-1 attacked the Viet Cong in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. The A-1's ability to haul large bomb loads, absorb heavy ground fire, and stay up for many hours suited this task perfectly. When it covered rescue operations, it flew under the call sign "Sandy." By 1973, the US Air Force had turned over all of its remaining A-1s to the South Vietnamese Air Force, but Hanoi's military takeover two years later put an end to the Skyraider's long combat career.

—Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: A-1E Skyraider—#52-132673—as it looked in the late 1960s when it was assigned to the 1st Special Operations Wing's 4407th Combat Crew Training Squadron at Hurlburt Field, Fla.



In Brief

Designed, built by Douglas ★ first flight March 18, 1945 ★ crew of two ★ number built 3,180 (USAF, USN, USMC) ★ **Specific to A-1E:** one Wright R-3350 18-cylinder engine ★ armament four 20 mm cannons, 8,000 lb of bombs, rockets, napalm ★ max speed 325 mph ★ cruise speed 240 mph ★ max range 1,500 mi ★ weight (loaded) 24,872 lb ★ span 50 ft ★ length 40 ft ★ height 15 ft 10 in.

Famous Fliers

Medal of Honor: Maj. Bernard F. Fisher and Lt. Col. William A. Jones III (Vietnam War) **Air Force Cross:** Maj. Thomas A. Campbell, Maj. Thomas E. Dayton, Maj. Dean E. DeTar, Col. John S. Hamilton, Maj. James C. Harding, Lt. Col. Ralph S. Hoggatt, Capt. Jackson L. Hudson, Col. Roy A. Knight Jr., Capt. John E. Lackey, Maj. Richard L. Mehr, Capt. Ronald E. Smith, Maj. Robert E. Turner, Col. Robert F. Wilke (Vietnam) **Future Chief of Staff:** Gen. Michael J. Dugan **Other notables:** Gen. Lance L. Smith, Gen. Henry Viscellio Jr., Col. Eugene P. Deatrick Jr., Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky.

Interesting Facts

Designed in single night at Statler Hotel, Washington, D.C. ★ nicknames included Able Dog, Sandy, Spad, Hobo, Firefly, Big Gun, Zorro, Old Miscellaneous, Fat Face, Flying Dump Truck ★ 191 USAF models lost in Vietnam ★ featured in 1997 documentary "Little Dieter Needs to Fly" ★ missions included attack, close support, reconnaissance, electronic warfare, early warning, and search and rescue ★ ejection used extraction rockets connected to parachute harness.



In Vietnam, A1Es head to the fight.