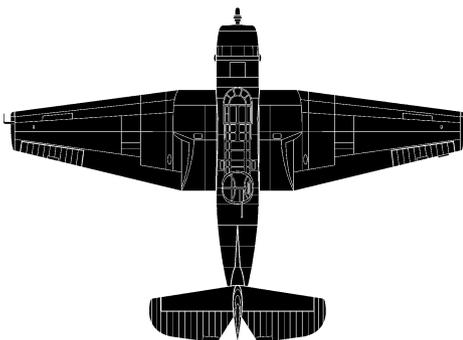


Airpower Classics

Artwork by Zaur Eylanbekov

TBF/M Avenger



The TBF/M Avenger was the deadliest naval attack aircraft of World War II, despite a disastrous combat debut at the Battle of Midway in June 1942. Six were employed in that epic battle. Five were shot down and the sixth was badly damaged. Even so, the Avenger proved to be a tough bird, able to absorb massive damage that would bring down an ordinary aircraft, and it went on to star in all of its subsequent engagements.

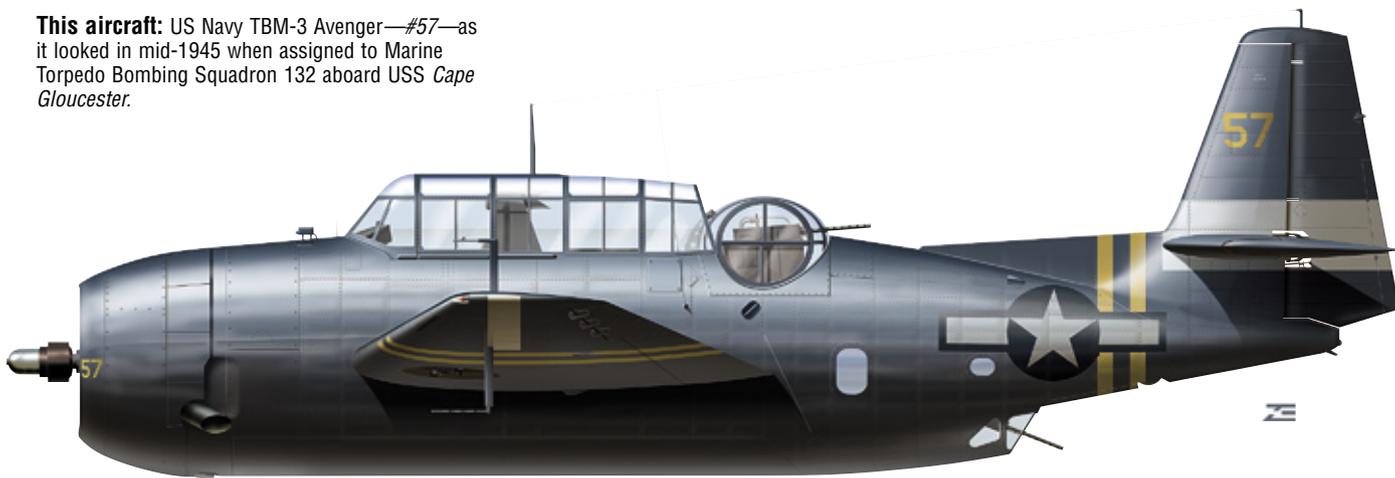
On April 8, 1940, Grumman won a Navy competition to replace the Douglas TBD Devastator. The Avenger's good flying characteristics and rugged structure maintained Grumman's "Iron Works" reputation. Also, it was the first design to feature a new wing-folding mechanism, highly useful in maximizing storage space on an aircraft carrier.

Mass orders followed—so many that, in 1942, General Motors set up its new Eastern Aircraft Division by combining the production facilities of five automobile plants. GM built the TBM Avenger, while the Grumman plant built the TBF Avenger.

Atlantic operation from escort carriers kept German U-boats submerged and away from the convoys. The Avenger sank numerous Japanese cargo vessels and warships, including carriers and cruisers. It was responsible for sending to the bottom two of the largest battleships ever sunk—the *Yamato* and the *Musashi*. More than 30 submarine kills were attributed to Avengers. Over time, the Avenger assumed other duties. The Avengers had a huge impact on the Japanese fleet and therefore played a major role in the US victory in the Pacific.

—Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: US Navy TBM-3 Avenger—#57—as it looked in mid-1945 when assigned to Marine Torpedo Bombing Squadron 132 aboard USS *Cape Gloucester*.



In Brief

Designed by Grumman ★ built by Grumman, General Motors ★ first flight Aug. 1, 1941 ★ crew of three—pilot, lower gunner, turret gunner-radio operator/bombardier ★ one Wright R-2600 engine ★ number built 9,839 ★ **Specific to TBM-3:** max speed 276 mph ★ cruise speed 153 mph ★ max range 1,000 mi ★ armament, four .50 cal machine guns, one .30 cal machine gun ★ bomb load, up to 2,000 lb ★ weight (max) 18,250 lb ★ span 54 ft 2 in ★ length 40 ft 11.5 in ★ height 16 ft 5 in.

Famous Fliers

Military Notables: George P. Brown, Al Coffin, Albert Earnest, Langdon K. Fieberling, Edward Huxtable, Charles M. Jett, Harold Larsen, W. D. Luton, Warren Omark, Benjamin Tate, Jesse Taylor. **Other Notables:** George H. W. Bush (41st President), Richard Boone (actor), Paul Newman (actor).

Interesting Facts

Unveiled in public on Dec. 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor Day ★ built in 12 models, more than 30 variants ★ nicknamed Chuff, Pregnant Beast, Turkey, and (in Royal Navy) Tarpon ★ flown in World War II by US Navy, US Marine Corps, Royal Navy, Royal New Zealand Air Force ★ featured in 1944 Hollywood film, "Wing and a Prayer" and as Flight 19 in the 1977 film "Close Encounters of the Third Kind."



Quartet of Avengers over the Pacific.