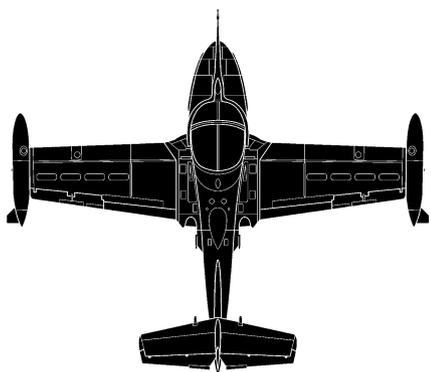


A-37 Dragonfly



The USAF A-37 Dragonfly was perhaps the most underestimated aircraft of the Vietnam War. Its mix of accuracy, reliability, and maneuverability was ideal for the war in Southeast Asia. Derived from the Cessna T-37 Tweet trainer, the A-37 became an effective replacement for the Douglas A-1 Skyraider ground-attack aircraft, which was suffering high losses.

After evaluating two T-37Cs in the attack role, the Air Force asked Cessna for two prototype YAT-37D aircraft. Each was to be equipped with two GE turbojet engines, stronger wings, huge 95 gallon wingtip tanks, a 7.62 minigun, improved communications systems, and tougher landing gear.

A test program converted some 39 T-37Bs into A37-As with only minor changes. The A-37A

Dragonflies also were well-armed, able to drop bombs, napalm, and cluster munitions. These so-called "Super Tweets" could also fire miniguns and unguided rockets.

In the Combat Dragon evaluation program, 25 A-37As were sent to the 604th Air Commando Squadron at Bien Hoa AB, South Vietnam. Missions included forward air control, ground attack, helicopter escort, and night bombing. A-37A successes led to procurement of 577 newly built A-37Bs—first flown in 1967—with much stronger airframes and bigger engines. A probe-and-drogue refueling system was added, extending both range and loiter time. The Dragonfly flew more than 160,000 sorties, with only 22 losses to combat.

—Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: USAF A-37B Dragonfly—#73-1090—in 1991 when assigned to 412th Flight Test Wing, Air Force Flight Test Center, Edwards AFB, Calif.



In Brief

Designed, built by Cessna ★ first flight Oct. 22, 1963 ★ crew of one or two (pilot and observer) ★ number built/converted 596 ★ **Specific to A-37D:** two J85-GE-17A turbojet engines ★ armament one GAU-2B/A nose-mounted minigun and hard points for M134 minigun, 20 mm cannon, 30 mm cannon, AIM-9 Sidewinder ★ load seven 70 mm FFAR, napalm tanks, four 500-lb Mk 82 bombs, SUU-14 bomblet dispenser ★ max speed 507 mph ★ cruise speed 490 mph ★ max range 920 mi ★ weight (loaded) 14,000 lb ★ span 35 ft 10 in ★ length 28 ft 3 in ★ height 8 ft 10 in.

Famous Fliers

Notables: John Blaha, Stumpy Bowen, John Bradley, Gene Bywater, Lon Holtz, Lloyd Langston, Robert Macaluso, Ollie Maier, Richard Martel, Wayne Moorhead, Lou Weber. **Test Pilots:** Bob Hagan, Hank Waring.

Interesting Facts

Nicknamed "Super Tweet" ★ survived collisions with trees and still returned to base ★ flown by Air National Guard until 1990s ★ remains in service in South America ★ used by both Ecuador and Peru in 1995 border war ★ served with South Korea's aerobatic team ★ used by total of 14 air forces ★ captured aircraft flown by North Vietnam Air Force in war with China ★ could conserve fuel by flying on only one engine.



An A-37A firing rockets in Vietnam.

USAF photo