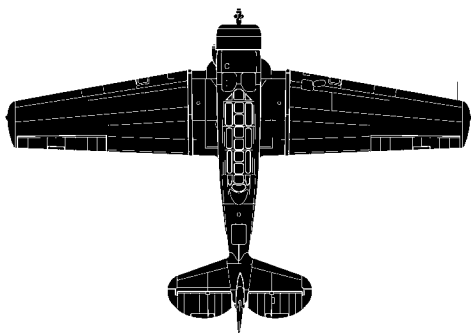


Airpower Classics

Artwork by Zaur Eylanbekov

AT-6 Texan



One of the most widely used aircraft of all time, the World War II-era AT-6 Texan was the airplane in which all US Army Air Forces pilots and many Navy and Allied pilots got their advanced training. It was an ideal “classroom.” A clean, cantilever monoplane, the Texan advanced trainer posed a significant challenge to a student pilot trying to make the transition from basic trainer to first-line aircraft. The AT-6 was complex, with flaps, controllable-pitch propeller, and retractable landing gear and difficult stall and spin characteristics. Its pilots could train in strafing, aerial combat, and bombardment.

Early in World War II, demand for the AT-6 soared, and some 60 models were built for specialized needs. The Navy called it the “SNJ,” and the Royal Air Force called it the “Harvard.” USAAF, though, flew two-thirds of the Texans. North American played many

variations on the trainer theme. Derivatives served in many wars on many continents in the fighter, attack, bomber, reconnaissance, and forward air controller roles.

In 1949, USAF and the Navy gave the design a new lease on life by modifying 2,068 into T-6G models. The Texan also saw action in the Korean War as a FAC, flying 40,354 “Mosquito Missions” in which they spotted and marked enemy troops and guns. The Texan was acquired by the air forces of more than 30 nations, including postwar Germany and Japan. Australia, Canada, and Sweden all built it under license. While the Texan left USAF duty in the late 1950s, Brazil and Venezuela flew it into the 1970s. It is said that the AT-6 trained several hundred thousand pilots in 34 different countries over a period of 25 years.

—Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: US Army Air Forces AT-6C-10-NT Texan #42-43925—X-151—as it looked while based at Luke Airfield, Ariz.



In Brief

Designed and built by North American ★ first flight 1935 (prototype) ★ crew of 2 (student, instructor) ★ single P&W radial engine ★ number built 15,495 ★ **Specific to AT-6A:** max speed 210 mph ★ cruise speed 145 mph ★ max range 629 miles (loaded) ★ armament, two .30 cal. machine guns ★ weight (max) 5,155 lb ★ span 42 ft ★ length 29 ft ★ height 11 ft 9 in.

Famous Fliers

Most of USAAF's World War II aces ★ Many Allied and Navy aces of World War II ★ Many Air Force aces of Korean War ★ U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers.

Interesting Facts

Nicknamed “Pilot Maker” ★ repainted models used to depict Japanese Zeros in 1970 film “Tora! Tora! Tora!” ★ redesignated twice, from BC-1 to AT-6 (1940) and from AT-6 to T-6 (1948) ★ Last T-6 used by an air force (South African AF) retired in 1996 ★ France called its T-6s “Tomcats” ★ C model built partly of plywood (to conserve materials) ★ used as combat aircraft in conflicts in Latin America, Africa, Mideast, Southeast Asia.



AT-6 Texans in flight over Miami on Nov. 8, 1946.