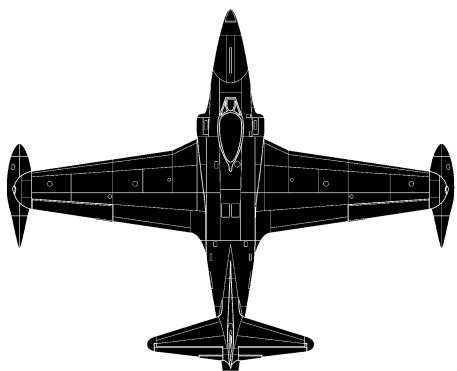


Airpower Classics

Artwork by Zaur Eylanbekov

F-80 Shooting Star



The Shooting Star was America's first operational jet fighter. Though it began life in World War II as the P-80, it was renamed the F-80 two years before the US went to war in Korea. It was the first product of the later-renowned Lockheed Skunk Works, headed up by Clarence L. "Kelly" Johnson. Johnson's team needed just 139 days to design and build the first jet aircraft, which went on to propel dozens of pilots into careers as top Air Force leaders.

Plagued initially by a high accident rate, the F-80 became a workhorse aircraft, both in aerial combat and air-to-ground operations. The Shooting Star was the first Air Force aircraft to exceed 500 mph in level flight, first US jet airplane to be manufactured in large quantities, and the first Air Force jet aircraft to

be used in combat. The Army Air Forces conceived it as a high-altitude, air superiority fighter to defeat German Me-262 adversaries, but the fighter did not see action until Korea.

In the Korean War, it made history in the close support role, armed with rockets, bombs, napalm, and machine guns. USAF's F-80C pilots flew more than 15,000 sorties in the first four months of the war. On Nov. 8, 1950, 1st Lt. Russell J. Brown, flying an F-80C, shot down a MiG-15 in the world's first jet vs. jet fighter combat (some Soviet sources dispute this claim). Though the F-80 was soon replaced by the swept-wing F-86 Sabre, the F-80 continued with ground attack, air defense, and photoreconnaissance. It had helped usher in the "jet age."

—Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: F-80B-5-LO—#45-8568—as it looked in late 1947 when assigned to USAF's 94th Fighter Squadron.



In Brief

Designed, built by Lockheed ★ first flight Jan. 8, 1944 ★ crew of one ★ number built 1,731 ★ **Specific to F-80C:** one Allison J33 turbojet engine ★ armament six .50-cal guns and either two 1,000-lb bombs or 10 5-in rockets ★ max speed 580 mph ★ cruise speed 437 mph ★ max range 1,380 mi ★ weight (loaded) 16,856 lb ★ span 39 ft 11 in ★ length 34 ft 6 in ★ height 11 ft 4 in.

Famous Fliers

Medal of Honor: Richard I. Bong (killed in crash of August 1945 acceptance flight); Charles J. Loring Jr. **Notable:** Fred Borsodi, Frederick C. Blesse, Albert Boyd, Vermont Garrison, Mervin E. Gross, Donald Hillman, Bruce K. Holloway, Robin Olds, Bryce Poe II, David C. Schilling, Russell E. Schlee, Charles E. Yeager.

Interesting Facts

Flown by the Acrojets, first USAF jet aerobatic team ★ made first overflight of Soviet Union May 10, 1949 ★ 277 F-80Cs shot down or otherwise lost in Korean War ★ operated by Navy as well as USAF ★ flown by air forces of Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay, Yugoslavia ★ served as basis for later F-94 interceptor and T-33 trainer ★ called (as prototype) *Lulu Belle* and *Green Hornet*.



Shooting Stars in rocket-assisted takeoff.