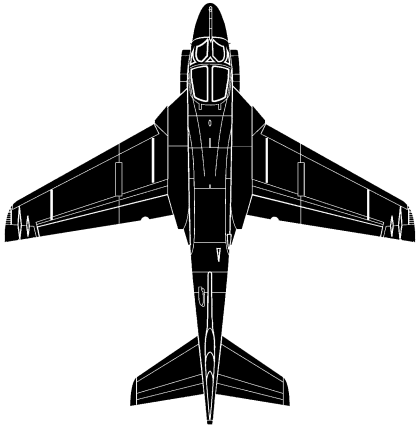


A-6 Intruder



For the Navy and Marine Corps, the A-6 Intruder holds the title of “best attack aircraft ever.” The Grumman aircraft put in more than 34 years of intense service in a wide variety of roles in many wars. It was extraordinarily successful, whether flying from US Navy carriers at sea or from aircraft bases on land. Form followed function in the Intruder, depriving it of beauty but endowing it with tremendous capability.

The striking success of Korean War-era attack aircraft, when combined with huge advances in electronics, prompted the Navy in the late 1950s to call for an all-weather, treetop-level, long-range subsonic attack airplane. Grumman won the competition with its twin-engine A2F-1, later the A-6A. The bulbous forward fuselage provided

room for the pilot and the navigator-bombardier in slightly staggered side-by-side seating, along with the massive electronic suite. A fixed refueling probe was mounted on the nose. The A-6, with five hardpoints, carried the heaviest bomb load of any carrier aircraft. It could carry nuclear weapons, too, and the Intruder’s adaptability allowed it to undertake many other roles.

Navy and Marine Corps squadrons were flying the A-6 by 1963, and operations in Vietnam began in 1965. There, its heavy bomb load and low-level, all-weather capability made it invaluable. The A-6, however, was sent into the thickest of air defenses, and 84 were lost. The Intruder would go on to serve in virtually every US conflict, major or minor, until its retirement in 1997.

—Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: USMC A-6E Intruder—*BuNo #152908*—as it looked in summer 1974 when part of VMA(AW)-224 at NAS Brunswick, Maine.



In Brief

Designed, built by Grumman ★ first flight, April 19, 1960 ★ crew of two (pilot, bomb-nav) ★ two Pratt & Whitney J52 turbojet engines ★ number built 693 ★ **Specific to A-6E:** max speed 644 mph ★ cruise speed 474 mph ★ max range 3,245 mi ★ armament, AIM-9 air-to-air missiles ★ load, some 18,000 lb of bombs, missiles, rockets, mines ★ weight (max) 60,400 lb ★ span 53 ft ★ length 54 ft 9 in ★ height 16 ft 2 in.

Famous Fliers

Vietnam War: William Carr. **Notables:** Donald Boecker, Charles Bolden, Dan Brandenstein, Lyle Bull, Robert Cabana, J. K. Davis, Richard Dunleavy, Donald Eaton, William Fallon, William Fitch, Fredrick Hauck, Mark Kelly, John Lehman Jr., James Symonds. **Test Pilots:** Chuck Sewell, Robert Smyth. **Author:** Stephen Coonts.

Interesting Facts

Attracted design proposals from Bell, Boeing, Douglas, Grumman, Lockheed, Martin, North American, Vought ★ entered combat July 1, 1965, flying against Hanoi targets ★ nicknamed “Double Ugly,” “Iron Tadpole,” “Drumstick” ★ carried every type of US and NATO air-to-ground weapon ★ designed to have downward-swiveling jet nozzles for STOL, but never applied ★ fitted with wingtip-mounted speed brakes ★ featured in a 1986 Stephen Coonts novel, *Flight of the Intruder*, and 1994 sequel, *The Intruders* ★ appeared in 1991 John Milius film, “Flight of the Intruder.”



An Intruder comes in for a landing on the deck of USS Constellation.