

Republic 84 Thunderjet: The Thunderbolt of the Cold War

The Republic 84 Thunderjet and its successor, the F-105 Thunderchief, were iconic fighter-bombers of the Cold War era. These aircraft played a pivotal role in the United States Air Force's strategic and tactical operations, seeing combat in the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

History and Development

The Republic 84 Thunderjet was conceived as a replacement for the P-47 Thunderbolt, the legendary fighter-bomber of World War II. In 1948, the United States Air Force issued a specification for a new aircraft capable of delivering nuclear weapons at supersonic speeds. Republic Aviation, led by renowned aircraft designer Alexander Kartveli, responded with its XF-84H design.



Republic F-84 Thunderjet & F-105 Thunderchief

by Greg Goebel

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 3049 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 70 pages
Lending : Enabled

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The XF-84H prototype first flew in February 1949. It featured a sleek, swept-wing design, a powerful Allison J35 turbojet engine, and an advanced fire-control system. After successful flight tests, the USAF ordered the production of the F-84 Thunderjet.

Design and Variants

The Republic 84 Thunderjet was a single-seat, single-engine fighter-bomber. It had a high-mounted, swept-wing with a 35-degree angle of sweepback. The aircraft was powered by an Allison J35 turbojet engine, providing 5,200 pounds of thrust.

The Thunderjet featured a distinctive "stinger" tail, which housed a braking parachute. It was armed with six .50 caliber machine guns and could carry up to 4,000 pounds of bombs, rockets, or napalm.

Several variants of the Thunderjet were produced, including the F-84B, F-84D, F-84E, and F-84F. Each variant incorporated improvements in engines, avionics, and armament.

Operational History

The Republic 84 Thunderjet entered service with the USAF in 1950. It saw extensive combat in the Korean War, where it flew close air support, bombing, and reconnaissance missions.

In 1954, the F-84 Thunderjet was succeeded by its more advanced successor, the F-105 Thunderchief. The Thunderchief was a larger, faster, and more powerful aircraft, capable of carrying a heavier payload.

The F-105 Thunderchief became the workhorse of the USAF's tactical airpower during the Vietnam War. It flew over 20,000 combat sorties, delivering more than 2 million tons of bombs and rockets on enemy targets.

Legacy and Impact

The Republic 84 Thunderjet and F-105 Thunderchief were significant aircraft in the history of American aviation. They embodied the cutting-edge technology and strategic thinking of the Cold War era.

The Thunderjet and Thunderchief played a crucial role in maintaining American air superiority and deterring potential adversaries. Their versatility, firepower, and speed made them formidable tools of war.

Today, the Republic 84 Thunderjet and F-105 Thunderchief are preserved in museums and private collections around the world. These iconic aircraft serve as a reminder of the Cold War's technological advancements and the courage and skill of the pilots who flew them.

Detailed Information

Republic 84 Thunderjet

* **Length:** 38 feet 9 inches * **Wingspan:** 33 feet * **Height:** 13 feet 1 inch * **Weight:** 16,000 pounds * **Speed:** 650 mph * **Ceiling:** 45,000 feet * **Range:** 600 miles

F-105 Thunderchief

* **Length:** 66 feet 8 inches * **Wingspan:** 39 feet 11 inches * **Height:** 19 feet 8 inches * **Weight:** 33,000 pounds * **Speed:** 1,300 mph * **Ceiling:** 52,000 feet * **Range:** 1,000 miles

Variants and Production

Republic 84 Thunderjet

* F-84A: Prototype * F-84B: Initial production variant * F-84C: Night fighter variant * F-84D: Improved variant with more powerful engine * F-84E: Strike variant with increased payload capacity * F-84F: Final variant with improved avionics and armament

F-105 Thunderchief

* F-105A: Initial production variant * F-105B: Improved variant with more powerful engine * F-105C: Nuclear strike variant * F-105D: Wild Weasel variant for anti-air warfare * F-105F: Two-seat training variant * F-105G: Improved variant with better avionics and armament

Production Numbers:

* F-84 Thunderjet: 4,493 units * F-105 Thunderchief: 833 units

Operators

* United States Air Force * Air National Guard * United States Navy (evaluation only) * West Germany (F-105G) * Taiwan (F-105D)

Combat Record

Korean War:

* Thunderjets flew over 80,000 combat sorties * Destroyed over 6,000 enemy aircraft * Delivered over 1 million tons of bombs

Vietnam War:

* Thunderchiefs flew over 20,000 combat sorties * Delivered over 2 million tons of bombs and rockets * Lost over 380 aircraft to enemy fire

The Republic 84 Thunderjet and F-105 Thunderchief were trailblazing aircraft that played a pivotal role in the United States Air Force's operations during the Cold War. Their speed, firepower, and versatility made them formidable weapons of war, feared by their adversaries.

Today, these iconic fighter-bombers continue to fascinate enthusiasts and historians alike, serving as a testament to the ingenuity and courage that shaped the history of aviation.



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