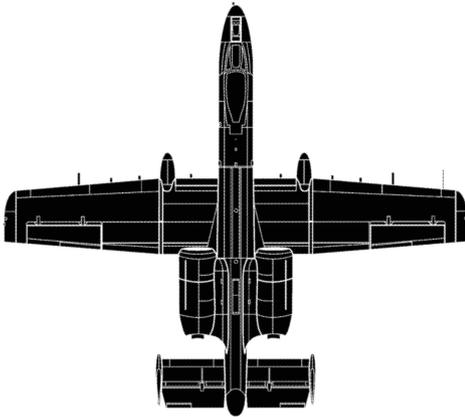


## A-10 Thunderbolt II



The A-10 Thunderbolt II dates to 1967, when USAF began an A-X program to develop a dedicated close air support aircraft. The service wanted its new fighter to be uncomplicated, able to absorb massive battle damage, easy to maintain, operable from unimproved strips with heavy ordnance loads, and cheap. Speed and sleekness were not must-haves. The result—Fairchild Republic's plain but now-famous Warthog—proved to be all the Air Force wanted, and more.

This rugged, twin-engine, straight wing aircraft was optimized to destroy Soviet armor. It was built around General Electric's 30 mm GAU-8 cannon, its main weapon, though it employs Maverick missiles and bombs, too. With excellent maneuverability at low speed and altitude, the A-10 is highly accurate

and survivable. It can loiter in a battle area for long periods. Expected to fly low-and-slow missions in high-threat areas, the A-10 was given a "bathtub" of titanium armor to shield the pilot and critical parts. Most systems are redundant and protected. The A-10A was the first and only type ever built, but all A models have been upgraded to a more advanced A-10C configuration.

Though the A-10 was built to meet the Soviet armor threat, it proved its mettle in the 1991 Persian Gulf War and since that time has played a key role in every major US combat action. In this work, it has shown itself to be exceptionally tough, surviving multiple direct hits—even loss of control surfaces—while remaining flyable.

—Robert S. Dudley with Walter J. Boyne

**This aircraft:** This aircraft: USAF A-10—#80-0228—as it looked in 2001 when assigned to the 74th Fighter Squadron, Pope AFB, N.C.



### In Brief

Designed, built by Fairchild Republic ★ first flight May 10, 1972 ★ number built 716 ★ crew of one ★ two General Electric TF34-GE-100A turbofan engines. **Specific to A-10A:** offensive armament, one 30 mm GAU-8A multibarrel cannon ★ defensive armament up to four AIM-9 Sidewinders ★ load up to 16,000 lb of bombs and munitions, including up to six AGM-65 Mavericks ★ max speed 439 mph ★ cruise speed 387 mph ★ max range 620 mi ★ weight (loaded) 50,000 lb ★ span 57 ft 6 in ★ length 53 ft 4 in ★ height 14 ft 8 in ★ service ceiling 30,500 ft.

### Famous Fliers

**Air Force Cross:** Paul Johnson. **Mackay Trophy:** Scott Markle. **Silver Star:** John Cherrey, Raymond Strasburger. **Distinguished Flying Cross:** Kim Campbell, Scott Campbell, Aaron Cavasos, Bob Efferson, Jeffrey Fox, Michael Meier, Aaron Palan, Jeremiah Parvin, Richard Pauly, Keith Wolak. **POW:** Richard Storr. **Notables:** Mark Welsh III (CSAF), Martha McSally (first USAF woman in air combat, first woman to command USAF fighter squadron), Robert Swain (first A-10 air-to-air victory), Chad Hennings (Dallas Cowboys, College Football Hall of Fame). **Test pilot:** Howard "Sam" Nelson.

### Interesting Facts

Nicknamed and universally known as the Warthog ★ contains many parts (engines, vertical stabilizers, landing gear) that can be used on left or right sides ★ can fly without one engine, one tail, one elevator, and half a wing ★ developed in response to heavy aircraft losses in Vietnam War ★ took over FAC role (OA-10) in 1989 ★ sports 1,200 lb of titanium armor shielding cockpit and vital systems ★ first USAF aircraft built exclusively for CAS ★ fires 4,000 cannon rounds per minute ★ first aircraft with all engines powered by a biofuel blend ★ can open and lock landing gear using only wind and the pull of gravity ★ fires armor-piercing shells of depleted uranium.



USAF photo by A/C Ryan Callaghan

An A-10 Warthog under a sun shade at Moody AFB, Ga.