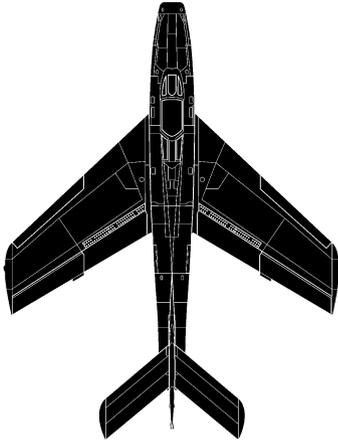


F-84



The F-84, USAF's first postwar tactical aircraft, had an odd double identity. It began as the Thunderjet, a subsonic straight-wing fighter-bomber. Later, it became the Thunderstreak, a sleek swept-wing machine. USAF wanted a low-cost way to upgrade the Thunderjet's performance. They were, in effect, two decidedly different aircraft.

Straight-wing F-84s began entering service in 1947. The aircraft pioneered the use of air refueling for fighters and was equipped to carry tactical nuclear weapons. Thunderjets entered the Korean War in December 1950. They escorted bombers, tangled with MiGs, and played a bigger and bigger role in ground attack. These F-84s were used on two significant 1953 raids on dams, knocking out North Korean power. Even before the war began, though, USAF was trying to upgrade the aircraft.

To save time and money, Republic gave the basic F-84 a new tail and swept wings. Performance barely improved, though. Problems included severe stall pitch-up woes, engine flameouts, and unrecoverable flat spins. Had the Korean War not erupted when it did, the whole program might have been canceled.

Little by little, however, Thunderstreak performance improved. Both SAC and TAC operated the F-84F as a nuclear bomber. It also was NATO's front-line fighter-bomber throughout the 1950s. A reconnaissance version, the RF-84F Thunderflash, also did respectable service. USAF finally retired the fleet in 1964.

—Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: An F-84F—#52-6455—as it looked in fall 1961 when assigned to 113th TFS, Indiana ANG, Terre Haute, Ind.



In Brief

Designed, modified by Republic ★ built by Republic, GM ★ first flight Feb. 28, 1946 ★ crew of one ★ number built 7,168 ★ one turbojet engine ★ armament six .50-cal machine guns ★ **Specific to F-84E:** armament load, up to 2,000 lb of ordnance ★ max speed 620 mph ★ cruise speed 485 mph ★ max range 1,485 mi ★ weight (loaded) 15,227 lb ★ span 36 ft 5 in ★ length 38 ft 6 in ★ height 12 ft 7 in ★ **Specific to F-84F:** armament load, up to 6,000 lb of ordnance ★ max speed 685 mph ★ cruise speed 535 mph ★ max range 1,900 mi ★ weight (loaded) 27,000 lb ★ span 33 ft 7 in ★ length 43 ft 5 in ★ height 15 ft 5 in.

Famous Fliers

Notables: Richard Bach, Ed Kenny (Bendix Trophy 1954), David Schilling, Hub Zemke. **Record setters:** Robert Scott and Richard Hill, average 672 mph in transcontinental flight. **Thunderbirds Pilot:** Jack Broughton.

Interesting Facts

Used in first nonstop jet aircraft crossing of Atlantic (1950) ★ was first one-seat fighter-bomber to carry a nuclear weapon ★ chosen as original Thunderbirds aircraft ★ flown by NATO allies Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Turkey ★ intended for use as "Ficon" (fighter conveyor) parasite fighter with B-36 ★ saw combat in Korea and in 1956 Suez Crisis (French F-84Fs) ★ required long takeoffs, high landing speeds ★ set US national speed record of 611 mph in 1946 ★ last USAF straight-wing jet fighter-bomber.



An F-84E attacks a ground target with rockets.