

NAVAL AVIATION News

MARINE CORPS WARBIRDS IN KOREA

The Korean War marked a period of transition for Naval Aviation forces as jet aircraft began to prove themselves in combat for the first time. Like the Navy, the Marine Corps operated a composite force of jet and propeller-driven planes, some of which are represented in this poster.

AD Skyraider

The AD-1 Skyraider was the first single-seat dive-bomber produced for the U.S. Navy. The elimination of the second crew member saved weight which could then be used for load carrying. Airframe weight and complex structure was eliminated and allowed ordnance loads of up to 8,000 pounds to be carried on 15 external strongpoints. Depending on the model, the AD was also equipped with either two or four 20mm aircraft cannons. Reflecting the versatility of the basic design, there were 20 different production modifications to the aircraft throughout its service with the Navy and Marine Corps.

F2H Banshee

The F2H Banshee was designed strictly as a fighter aircraft. To extend the range of the F2H-2, it was configured with a lengthened fuselage and fixed wingtip fuel tanks. Due to the lengthened fuselage and increased speed of the -2, some were equipped with nose radomes and a camera installation in the nose for photoreconnaissance. It was this version that was flown by the Marines in Korea.

F3D Skyknight

The F3D Skyknight was a twin-engine all-weather jet fighter developed shortly prior to Korea and flown by the Marine Corps. It was unique with its side-by-side seating for the pilot and radar operator and the under-wing location of the jet engines. Before the days of ejection seats, the Skyknight had a novel tunnel from the cockpit to the bottom of the fuselage to facilitate bailout at high speed. An F3D, equipped with four aircraft cannons, made the first jet-to-jet night kill. Later versions were equipped to carry air-to-air missiles in addition to the cannons.

F2H-2P Banshee



F9F-2B Panther



AD Skyraider



F4U-4 Corsair

F4U Corsair

Designed as a fighter aircraft, the F4U Corsair gained fame against the Japanese Zero during WW II. The aircraft was subsequently modified with the addition of bomb racks, 20mm cannons and aircraft rocket armament, and had the capability to operate as a fighter-bomber during daylight and darkness. Marine F4U-4s flew the first strike in support of the First Marine Brigade defending the Pusan perimeter in Korea. In response to the low-level close-air-support missions in Korea, a few aircraft were built with increased armor protection from below and two additional bomb/rocket stations under the wing. Flown by the Marines, these Corsairs were designated the AU-1.

F7F Tigercat

The XF7F-1 Tigercat was ordered in June 1941 with the intention of being operated from the forthcoming 45,000-ton carriers of the *Midway* class. This was to become the first twin engine tricycle undercarriage Navy fighter. Designed to operate in the ground support role, it was heavily armed with four 20mm cannons in the wing root and four .50 caliber machine guns in the nose. A fuselage rack could carry a 1,000-pound bomb, and wing stations were provided later for aircraft rockets. Technical problems and changing requirements led to production delays so that the aircraft never got into combat. Produced as a single-seat fighter, a two-seat night-fighter and a photoreconnaissance aircraft, the Tigercat saw combat in Korea until replaced by the F3D Skyknight.

F9F Panther

The F9F-2 Panther entered the Marine Corps just prior to the Korean War and was the only Marine day jet fighter operating in Korea. Marine Fighting Squadron 311 arrived at Yonpo on 7 December 1950 and soon commenced operations in support of the Eighth Army in the Chosin Reservoir area. A second Marine F9F squadron was added in February 1952, which had later versions of the aircraft. While these Panthers did yeoman service, and there were five versions produced, they were soon replaced with a new swept-wing model, the Cougar.



F7F Tigercat



F3D Skyknight

This poster was produced by Naval Aviation News (Sep-Oct 03) as part of the Naval Aviation in the Korean War series. It highlights a selection of aircraft and is not intended to be all-inclusive. Special thanks to Major John Elliott, USMC (Ret.) for his assistance.