



# FACT SHEET

## U.S. Air Force Fact Sheet DOUGLAS A-26B

The A-26B was the production version of the [XA-26B](#) prototype. The Army Air Corps ordered three prototype aircraft in mid-1941, each designed for a specific role. The first, [XA-26](#), was a light attack bomber with a clear nose section for a bombardier's compartment. The second, [XA-26A](#), was a night fighter with radar equipment housed in a solid nose. The last prototype ordered, XA-26B, was designed as a ground attack aircraft and featured a solid nose with a 75mm cannon. The Army was pleased with the performance of the XA-26B and ordered the aircraft into full scale production with only relatively minor changes. One notable change was the deletion of the large propeller spinners, which were removed because the engine didn't get sufficient cooling airflow with the spinners in place.

Initially, all A-26Bs were to have 75mm cannons mounted in the nose; however, the Air Corps couldn't decide on a standard armament and changed configurations several times. An early concept for the A-26B was to include a modular nose which could be configured in one of several ways, but this proved impractical. Because of the delay in making a decision, early block A-26Bs came off the assembly line with different weapons arrangements and were used for weapons testing. The most common arrangement was a 75mm cannon mounted in the right side of the nose complimented by two .50-cal. machine guns in the left side of the nose. Some aircraft were fitted with either one or two 37mm cannons and up to four .50-cal. machine guns.

Testing showed the cannons to have a slow rate of fire in addition to being prone to jamming in flight. Combat reports from operational units showed the cannon to be difficult to maintain also. Because of these problems, the Army Air Corps decided to delete the cannon from production aircraft. The initial replacement arrangement consisted of six .50-cal. machine guns in the nose -- two on the right side and four on the left. In later blocks, the nose armament was increased to eight .50-cal. machine guns arranged in two vertical rows.

The A-26B had many changes and improvements incorporated into the design while in production. Changes were based in part on data gathered after testing various armament configurations built into early block A-26Bs. Combat reports received from operational units also had a great influence on changes.

One major change was the decision to use only .50-cal. machine guns and eliminate both the 75mm and 37mm cannons from further production aircraft. There were two primary reasons for this decision. First, the cannon had a relatively slow rate of fire, was prone to jamming, and an inadequate supply of ammunition could be carried for a mission. Second, the logistic support was much easier with a single, very common .50-cal. machine gun -- ammunition and replacement parts were plentiful. The initial standard nose armament configuration consisted of six .50-cal. machine guns, two mounted on the left side of the nose and four more on the right.

For ground attack missions, the A-26B could be fitted with four wing-mounted gun pods, each carrying a pair of .50-cal. machine guns. The dorsal barbette (top remote turret) could be used for strafing missions and gave the A-26B a total of 16 .50-cal. machine guns available for ground attack (six nose, eight wing and two turret).

Another change incorporated into the A-26 production line was a canopy update. The original design consisted of a heavy canopy framework which limited side, upwards and backwards visibility. An emergency exit hatch was built into the top right side of the canopy; however,

since the pilot sat on the left side of the cockpit and the hatch was hinged on the forward edge it was very difficult for the crew to use this hatch for emergency exit in flight (the slipstream would keep the hatch shut). A two-piece bubble canopy, hinged at the outer edge and latching in the middle, replaced the flat top version and solved most of the problems with the original design. Pilot vision was greatly improved and many early production A-26Bs were retrofitted with the new style canopy.

The A-26B continued to evolve on the production line as improvements were incorporated into the design. Some early production aircraft were used for testing various weapons configurations. Later block production aircraft included a standard six gun nose and a redesigned canopy. Operational combat unit reports showed the A-26B should be more heavily armed for ground attack missions, so the six gun nose was upgraded to an eight .50-cal. machine gun arrangement. The outboard wings were modified to include six .50-cal. machine guns (three per side). With the wing guns mounted internally rather than in external pods as on earlier block aircraft, the aircraft could increase its firepower with 5-inch rockets mounted on wing racks. With the twin .50-cal. dorsal barbette locked forward, the aircraft had 16 forward firing .50-cal. machine guns, up to 14 5-inch rockets and 4,000 pounds of bombs (6,000 pounds of bombs if bombs were mounted on the wings in place of the rockets).

With the end of World War II, all A-26 construction contracts were canceled; however, the plane remained in service as the Army Air Force's primary light attack bomber. In late 1945 Buzz Numbers were introduced and the A-26 was coded AC. The Buzz Number was a two letter code followed by the last three digits of the aircraft tail number. The purpose of the code was to aid in identification of the aircraft when flying at low level. In 1948 the USAF dropped the attack designation and re-designated the aircraft B-26. The [Martin B-26](#) was out of service by this time, so there was no naming conflict. The Buzz Number was changed to BC to reflect the designation change from attack to (light) bomber.

The B-26 was the primary light bomber used by the USAF into the early 1950s and saw extensive service in the Korean War. The B-26 was used primarily in air interdiction missions.

Type	Number built/ converted	Remarks
A-26B	1355*	Light attack bomber

\* 1355 A-26Bs were built and accepted by the Army Air Force; however, at least 25 more were completed but never delivered to the AAF. These aircraft (on canceled contract AC-21393) were direct delivered from the factory to the Kingman reclamation center (RFC) beginning in October 1945. Serial numbers known are 44-34754 to 44-34775; 44-34777 to 44-34779. (Source: Individual Aircraft Record Cards stored at the AFHRA)

#### TECHNICAL NOTES:

**Armament (Typical for early block A-26B):** Two .50-cal. machine guns in a dorsal barbette, two .50-cal. machine guns in a ventral barbette and various combinations of forward-firing weapons: 75mm cannon, 37mm cannon and .50-cal. machine guns, plus provisions for 6,000 lbs. of bombs (4,000 lbs. internal and 2,000 lbs. external on wing racks); **(Typical for early/mid block A-26B):** Two .50-cal. machine guns in a dorsal barbette, two .50-cal. machine guns in a ventral barbette, and six forward-firing .50-cal. machine guns in the nose, plus provisions for 6,000 lbs. of bombs (4,000 lbs. internal and 2,000 lbs. external on wing racks), aircraft could be fitted with up to four wing-mounted gun pods each housing a pair of .50-cal. machine guns; **(Typical for late block A-26B):** Two .50-cal. machine guns in a dorsal barbette, two .50-cal. machine guns in a ventral barbette (sometimes omitted in favor of an extra fuel cell), eight forward-firing .50-cal. machine guns in the nose, and six .50-cal. machine guns in the wings, plus provisions for 6,000 lbs. of bombs (4,000 lbs. internal and 2,000 lbs. external on wing racks, 14 5-inch rockets could be carried in place of the wing-mounted bombs

**Engines:** Two [Pratt & Whitney R-2800-27](#) radials of 2,000 hp each

**Span:** 70 ft. 0 in.

**Length:** 50 ft. 0 in.

**Height:** 18 ft. 6 in.

**Weight:** Approx. 35,000 lbs. gross takeoff weight

**Maximum speed:** 355 mph

**Cruising speed:** 284 mph

**Range:** 3,200 miles maximum ferry range

**Service ceiling:** 22,100 ft.

**Crew:** Three (pilot, navigator/cannon loader, gunner)

**Serial numbers:** 41-39100 to 41-39151; 41-39153 to 41-39192; 41-39194; 41-39196 to 41-39198; 41-39201 to 41-39599; 43-22252 to 43-22303; 43-22305 to 43-22307; 43-22313 to 43-22345; 43-22350 to 43-22466; 44-34098 to 44-34753

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