



FACT SHEET

U.S. Air Force Fact Sheet NORTHROP AT-38B TALON

The U.S. Air Force originally ordered the T-38A Talon in the 1950s as an advanced, supersonic flight trainer. The Talon's maneuverability also made it useful as a trainer, fighter lead-in, and as the first in a series of aggressor aircraft.

Before the Lead-in-Fighter Trainer (LIFT) program began in 1975, new pilots went directly from the T-38s they flew in Undergraduate Pilot Training (UPT) to the advanced fighters of an operational fighter squadron. The LIFT program reduced the training load on new pilots because they could learn fighter basics in a familiar aircraft. Also, since the AT-38B was much less expensive to operate than a fighter, the LIFT program reduced costs. The LIFT program ended in 1993 when the USAF incorporated this type of training into UPT.



DAYTON, Ohio -- Northrop AT-38B at the National Museum of the United States Air Force. (U.S. Air Force photo)

Modified with a weapons pylon and a gunsight, the Talon became the AT-38B (LIFT). AT-38Bs could carry gun pods, rockets or practice bombs, and trainee pilots learned basic combat maneuvers and air-to-ground weapons delivery in them.

The USAF's relatively low air-to-air kill ratio in the Southeast Asia War led to the creation of the very successful "aggressor" air-to-air combat training program in 1973. Mimicking Soviet tactics, USAF aggressor pilots flew T-38As against other USAF fighter pilots flying frontline USAF fighters. In 1976 the similar, but more capable, Northrop F-5E began replacing the T-38A as the USAF's aggressor.

The museum's AT-38B flew as a lead-in-fighter trainer until its retirement in 1991. It came to the museum in 1999 and was placed on display in 2004.

TECHNICAL NOTES:

Armament: Weapons pylon carrying a SUU-20 bomb/rocket dispenser, a SUU-11A/A 7.62mm gun pod, or an AF/B37K-1 bomb container

Engines: Two General Electric J85-GE-5A turbojets of 3,850 lbs. thrust each with afterburner

Maximum speed: 812 mph

Ceiling: 45,000 ft.

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