

The Republic F-105 Thunderchief is one of America's most important, yet often overlooked, aircraft of the 1950s and 1960s. Envisioned by the great engineer Alexander Kartveli, the F-105 was a brutally large, powerful and effective fighter/bomber. Employed over Vietnam in a role for which it had not been designed, the F-105 Thunderchief (commonly known as the "Thud") flew more missions than any other type of American aircraft in Southeast Asia -- and suffered more losses than any other type.

The F-105 was born as Advanced Project 63 in 1951. Designed as a replacement for the F-84 Thunderjet, Advanced Project 63 was a single-seat, high speed nuclear attack bomber carrying a single tactical nuclear bomb carrier in its internal bomb bay. The powerful Pratt & Whitney J-75 turbojet engine enabled the F-105 to fly faster than the speed of sound at very low altitudes. The first F-105 prototype flew on October 22, 1955 and delivery of the new aircraft followed soon afterward. Though hamstrung by a series of maintenance problems, by 1964 the F-105 had become the U.S. Air Force's premier fighter/bomber. The F-105B was used for a short time by the Air Force Thunderbirds (F-105 aerobatic routines were possibly the loudest air show performances ever put on). Shortly after the Gulf of Tonkin incident in August 1964, F-105s flew their first combat missions over Vietnam. Over the next five years, the "Thud" conducted countless low-level, low-speed tactical bombing missions, and although not meant to be a fighter, F-105s (mostly the F-105D model) brought down no less than 25 MiG fighters over Vietnam.

The two seat F-105F model was introduced in 1963 as a combat proficiency trainer. Equipped with additional armor plate, a secondary flight control system, improved ejection seats and electronic counter measures (ECM) pods, the F-105F was a natural selection for the Air Force's Wild Weasel program which began in 1965. Wild Weasels were used to hunt enemy surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites and radar-guided anti-aircraft guns. F-105Fs flushed out these weapons by allowing themselves to be used as bait; a very critical, but often costly role. Other F-105Fs were modified to jam Communist radio communications and to conduct low-level precision bombing strikes in bad weather or at night. These missions were later turned over to the more advanced F-111.

The F-105F on display serial number 63-8343 is on loan from the National Museum of the United States Air Force. It is painted in the colors and markings of the 457th Tactical Fighter Squadron of the 301st Tactical Fighter Wing, based at Carswell Air Force Base. It was retired in 1981.

ENGINE	Pratt & Whitney J75-P19W turbojet 26,500 lbs. of thrust
ARMAMENT	One M-61 20mm cannon and 14,000 lbs. of ordnance
WING SPAN	34 feet, 11 inches
LENGTH	67 feet
HEIGHT	20 feet, 2 inches
MAX TAKEOFF WEIGHT	54,580 pounds
CREW	2
MANUFACTURED BY	Republic Aviation
TOTAL BUILT	833
TOTAL EXISTING	Unknown
FIRST BUILT	1955
MUSEUM'S AIRCRAFT BU	1064
ON DISPLAY AT	Cavanaugh Flight Museum, Addison Airport (KADS), Dallas, Texas
MAXIMUM SPEED	848 m.p.h. (at sea level)
RANGE W/EXTERNAL TANKS	1,600 miles
SERVICE CEILING	47,800 feet