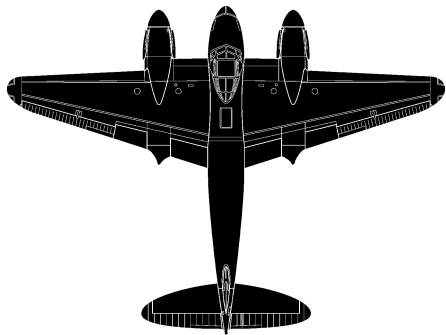


Airpower Classics

Artwork by Zaur Eylanbekov

Mosquito



The Royal Air Force Mosquito proved to be perhaps the most versatile aircraft of World War II. This de Havilland product—a light bomber that could outrun many fighters—starred in many roles, including those of fighter, bomber, fighter-bomber, night fighter, torpedo attack, reconnaissance, minelayer, pathfinder, trainer, and high-speed transport. No aircraft frustrated the Luftwaffe as much. It ranged over European skies day and night, keeping the air raid sirens blaring. The aircraft's high speed and low radar signature let it operate in relative safety so that it posted the lowest loss rate (.7 percent) of any British bomber.

Britain initially rejected the de Havilland concept of a clean, low-drag, all-wood, unarmed warplane, but Air Chief Marshal Wilfred Freeman, the RAF armament chief, supported the project and authorized the first contract in 1940. Work proceeded quickly on three prototype aircraft,

one each for bomber, night-fighter, and photo-reconnaissance versions. Powered by two Rolls Royce Merlin engines, the Mosquito's design adapted quickly to different missions.

The Mosquito entered combat in May 1942 and served with distinction in almost every theater of war. Even the US Army Air Forces used Mosquitos for photo and electronic reconnaissance, chaff dispensing, special operation missions, and bomber scout work. The Mosquito was famous for mounting pinpoint attacks on special German targets—the first of which (Sept. 25, 1942) hit Gestapo headquarters in Oslo and destroyed German records of the Norwegian resistance. These early raids proved the basic principle that, in an air war, speed is life. Even the vaunted German FW 190 struggled to keep up with the Mosquito.

—Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: Royal Air Force Mosquito B Mk IV as it looked in early 1943, when assigned to No. 139 Squadron at RAF Marham in Britain.



In Brief

Designed by de Havilland ★ built by de Havilland, Airspeed, Percival, and Standard ★ first flight Nov. 25, 1940 ★ crew of two ★ number built 7,781 ★ two RR Merlin V-12 engines ★ **Specific to F. B. Mk VI:** max speed 380 mph ★ cruise speed 325 mph ★ max range 1,270 miles ★ armament four 20 mm cannons ★ bomb load, 2,000 lb or 1,000 lb and eight 60-lb rockets ★ weight (max) 22,300 lb ★ span 54 ft 2 in ★ length 40 ft 11 in ★ height 15 ft 3 in.

Famous Fliers

Victoria Cross: Leonard Cheshire. **RAF Aces:** Robert Braham, Branse Burbridge, Peter Green, J. W. Allan, Charles Scherf, John Cunningham, "Dam Buster" leader Guy Gibson. **Other notables:** Sidney Cotton, Bill Edrich, Geoffrey de Havilland Jr., John de Havilland, Kirk Kerkorian, Boleslaw Orłowski.

Interesting Facts

Featured one-piece wing made almost entirely of wood ★ used by some 20 air forces ★ landed on an aircraft carrier (first British twin-engine aircraft to do so) ★ made specialized pinpoint attacks on German prisons, Gestapo headquarters ★ claimed 600 victories as night fighter ★ shot down 600 V-1 buzz bombs ★ flown by Israel in 1956 Suez War ★ nicknamed "Mossie," "Wooden Wonder" ★ featured in 1964 film "633 Squadron" (with Cliff Robertson) and 1969 film "Mosquito Squadron" (with David McCallum).



Americans studied the Mosquito's stability and control.