

# US AIR FORCE AIRCRAFT

## Lockheed A-12 Blackbird

Initially flown in 1962, Blackbirds performed sensitive reconnaissance missions while flying at speeds over Mach 3. The aircraft was the creation of Lockheed's famous "Skunk Works" division, headed by Clarence "Kelly" Johnson. Single-seat Blackbirds flew at altitudes up to 100,000 feet (30,480 meters). Its top recorded speed was 2,269 mph (3,651 kph). Fewer than 50 were built. The early A-12s were used for CIA surveillance missions until 1968. Later YF-12s and SR-71s served through the 1990s in reconnaissance and test missions for the Air Force and NASA.



This A-12 was the first production unit. It served as a radar-test example early in 1962 at the secret base Area 51. A special radar signature-lowering paint covered its mostly titanium airframe, which incorporated carbon fiber composites. Two massive Pratt and Whitney J-58 turbo-ramjets each with 32,000 pounds of thrust were used only in the Blackbird. The adjacent starter cart uses two Buick 401 cubic-inch Wildcat powerplants of 350 horsepower each, engines akin to the V-8 engines of American "muscle cars" of the era.

This aircraft and its starter cart, both displayed on the flight deck, are on loan from the National Museum of the United States Air Force.

## General Dynamics F-16 Fighting Falcon

The ineffectiveness of U.S. fighters during the Vietnam War (1964–75) prompted the development of a new fighter airplane for the U.S. Air Force. Entering service in 1978, the F-16 Fighting Falcon (nicknamed "Viper" after the "viper" fighters in the 1970s science-fiction television series *Battlestar Galactica*) has gone through different variants and is still in production by Lockheed Martin. Well over 4,000 have been built and are flown by no fewer than 27 air forces worldwide.



The single-seat F-16 is a compact, highly maneuverable fighter whose bubble canopy affords the pilot virtually unobstructed visibility. It can fly 1,320 mph (2,125 kph) at heights of more than 55,000 feet (15,240 meters). The seat angle is reclined from the usual 13 degrees to 30 degrees, increasing the pilot's gravity force tolerance up to 9 Gs. Extremely responsive flight control is achieved through a computer-assisted "fly-by-wire" system rather than the usual mechanical cables and hydraulic linkage controls.

In 1991, this F-16A was deployed by the New York National Guard to the Persian Gulf in support of Operation Desert Storm. It is restored, displayed in those squadron colors on the flight deck, and is loan from the National Museum of the United States Air Force.