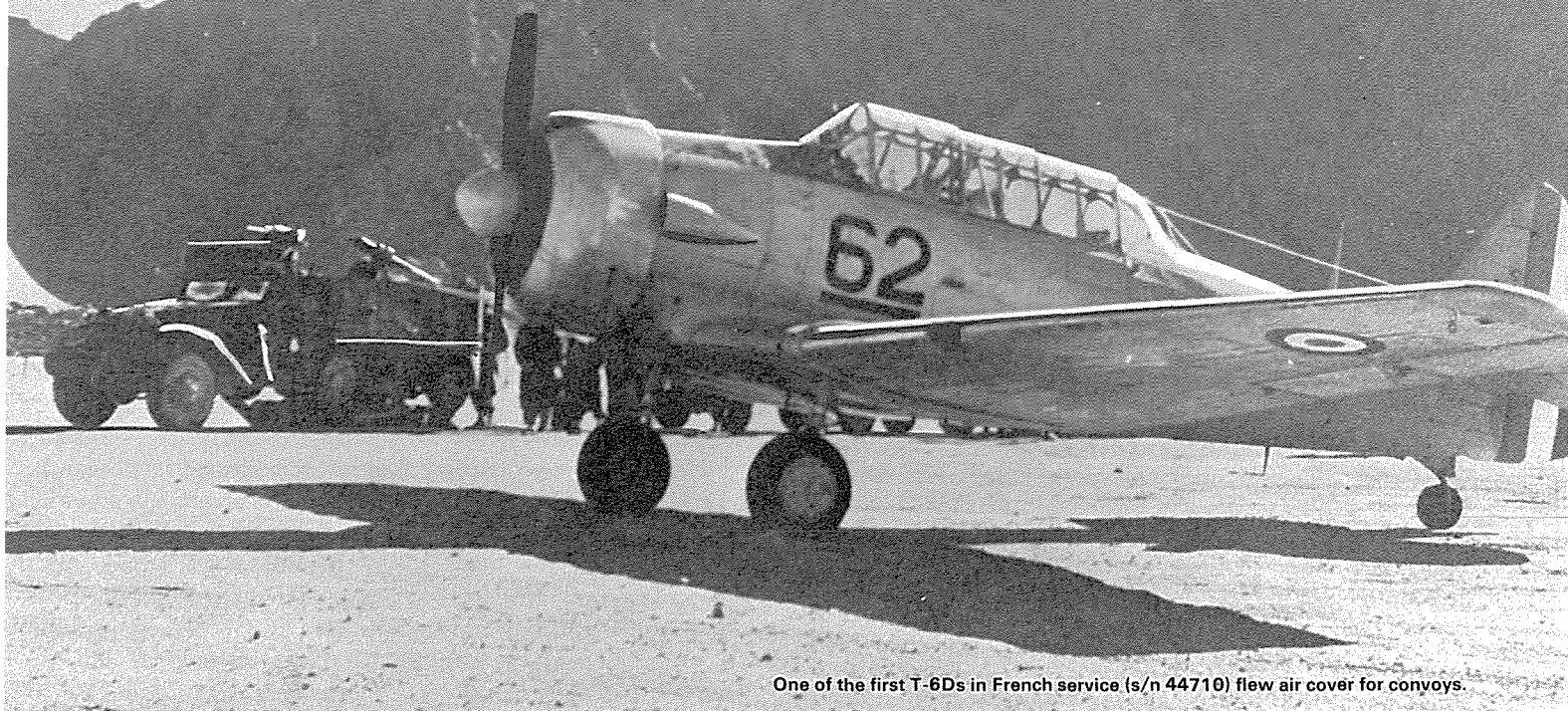




One of the first T-6Ds in French service (s/n 44710) flew air cover for convoys.

Texan Warriors

T-6 Aircraft in French Service

by V.E. Ferry

Art redrawn by Don Williams

More than 17,000 training aircraft were manufactured by North American Aviation between 1935 and 1944. The progenitor of the series was the NA-16, built in April 1935, at the NAA plant in Dundalk, Maryland. The BT-9 (NA-19) was the first trainer to be produced in numbers with the first order being placed in October 1935. Various versions were built to the specifications of a number of customers. The BT, basic trainer, series expanded into the BC, basic combat, and AT, advanced trainer. The last advanced trainer was built in 1944 as the AT-6F. In 1949 a remanufacture and modification program was initiated. The first batch of 750 trainers emerged from the NAA Downey, California, facility as T-6G and LT-6G aircraft. All had been assigned new serial numbers. A similar modification program was started in the Columbus, Ohio, and Long Beach, California, plants of NAA in 1951. In 1952 NAA opened a facility in Fresno, California, where the remaining T-6Gs were completed. Approximately 2000 AT-6s were returned to service as T-6G aircraft with the USAF and NATO training schools.

In 1955 the T-6Gs were retired from service with the USAF, and by 1956 all the RAF and USAF Harvard/Texan planes had been retired from the training role to that of liaison duties, or

had simply been put into long-term storage. A great many were sold commercially.

However, the French Armée de l'Air kept on operating large numbers of North American trainers as late as 1969. Some of these had been in service since 1939. The French NAA trainers were numbered as follows:

- 30 Harvard II from the RAF in 1949 for the training schools in France,
- 119 T-6D in 1951 from USAF under MAP in Morocco,
- 51 Harvard III (45 USAF, 6 RCAF) in 1951 under MAP in Morocco,
- 56 SNJ for Aeronavale in 1952, under MAP in Morocco,
- 693 T-6G between 1956-59, with armament for service in — Algeria,
- 949 aircraft total.

It was in 1943 that the first T-6s entered service with the French Air Force in Syria, when three RAF Harvards were with a training school. In late 1944 the RAF presented two other Harvards to the Blida school in Tunisia. The Harvard/Texan trainers did not appear in appreciable quantities in France before 1949.

TRAINING OF ACTIVE SERVICE CREWS

The Cognac Basic School in France began operations in 1944, after the liberation, with Tiger Moth, BT-9 Norths, Arado, Sipa and Nord 1000 trainers, the pilot graduating to operational units. This school was complementary to training received by French students in America, Canada and Britain. As all these foreign programs proved to be too costly for wartorn France, the training of pilots in these countries as well as Cognac was soon stopped.



Harvard IV s/n 51-17157 coded "H-10" at the BE 707 near the end at 1959.

Opened on 1 January 1949, the Marrakech Morocco School took over the functions of Cognac. In 1951 the first T-6Ds began to arrive in numbers (up to 135) to expedite the training of the new pilots. The course comprised 24 weeks of air time and six weeks of ground time. The school graduated 200 pilots per annum, as some 50 aircraft could be flown any one day. The school was moved to Cognac in 1961 following the Moroccan decision to seek independence from France.

Cognac then reopened in September 1961 and the Texans remained in service there till 1965 when they were replaced by Fouga Magister 170 jet trainers. A second school at Salon de Provence in Southern France operated a few Harvard IIs from 1949 to 1952, when all trainers there became Sipa 11 or 12.

A transition school was formed at Marrakech in 1943 to retrain the fighter pilots of the Vichy Air Force, before their posting to operational units on American (P-39, P-40) or British (Spitfire) aircraft. In April 1943 a "Fighter Section" had been formed at Marrakech with a number of Norths (BT-9s) and of Curtiss 75s. Students, many of whom had fought during the Battle for France, were graduated after only 25 hours of flying on these two aircraft types.

In January 1944, because of the great number of American, British and French warplanes on the field, it was decided to move the school and the 108 trainers to Meknes. The fighter transition school there was capable of graduating 30 students every 45 days. In September 1945 there were 210 trainers of various types at Meknes, including Norths and T-6s. By 1953 only three types of aircraft remained (MS-475, T-6, T-33). In 1954 all propeller-driven machines were retired from service. It is known that 49 T-6Ds were received at Meknes between October 1951 and April 1952 and that some remained there for secondary duties until 1958. Following the revision of the military agreement with the new state of Morocco, the school was transferred to Tours, France, in 1961.

Other schools that operated North American planes were the Instructor's Schools formed at Marrakech and at Cazaux in 1949. The Aulnat Instructor's School, established in 1960, retained its T-6Gs until 1963, when they were replaced by Fouga jet trainers.

The Rochefort and Saintes Mechanics Schools had a number of non-airworthy T-6s for the training of technical personnel in the '50s.

The Cazaux Test Centre had a number of T-6s for liaison duties in the '50s, as did some of the operational squadrons, to

use when it was judged preferable not to fly on a first-line-of-defense aircraft.

TRAINING OF RESERVE CREWS

No. 330 Light Aviation Crew Instruction Centre was established at Aulnat in January 1956 to train teams that were to take part in the police operations in Algeria. This Centre was soon moved to Reghala near Algiers. There the pilots were trained to fly propeller-driven aircraft with their navigator/observers. The main function of the Centre in the '50s was to train the crews of the recently established Ground Support Light Squadrons (Escadrille d'Aviation Legere d'Appui, or EALA) to operational status. At least 12 such squadrons were formed at Reghala to fly T-6G aircraft.

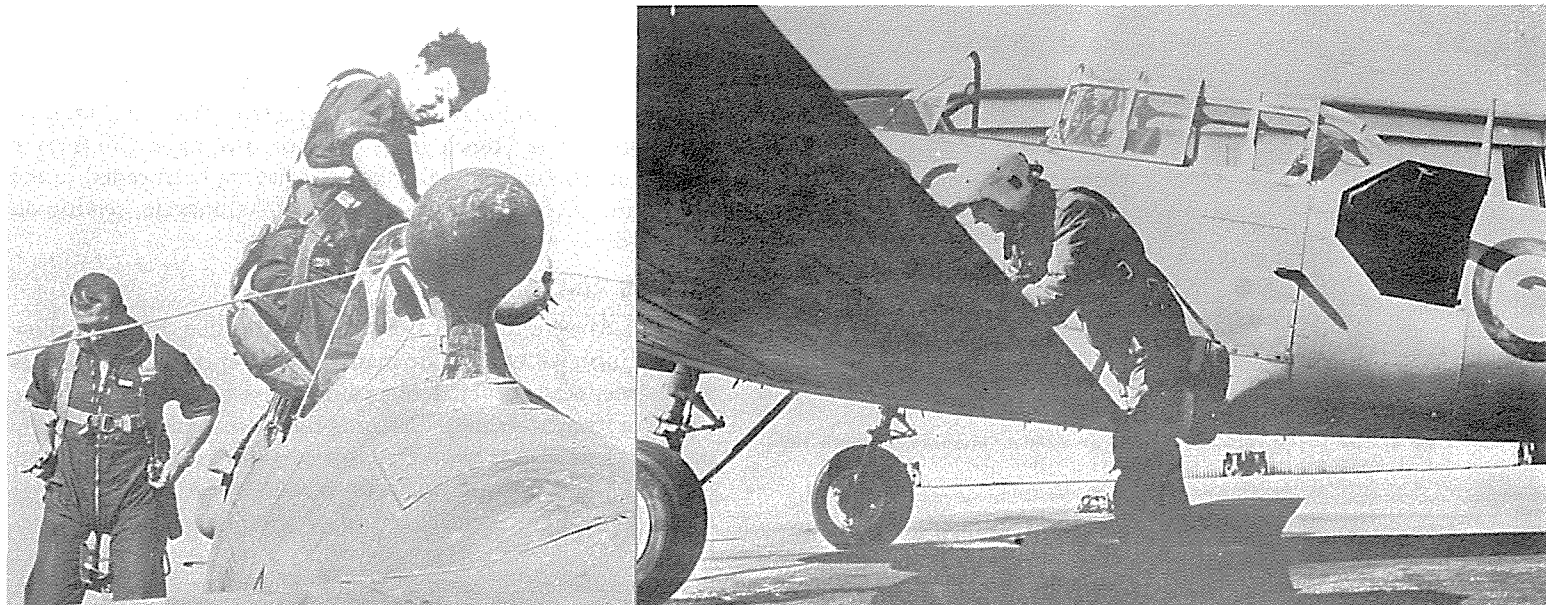
At Blida, the No. 320 Light Aviation Training Centre refamiliarized aircrews with the T-6G. The crews were trained in low altitude flying, formation flying, machine gun and rocket firing.

The Reserve Officer School at Caen had also a number of T-6Gs between 1958 and 1962 to keep these officers current on the type.

Ordinary Reserve Training Centres were formed in all French Air Regions to constitute a reserve of ground attack squadrons in the event of a general mobilization, or that a subversive war develop. These were to be able to carry out tactical support missions. The curriculum was also designed to teach non-flying personnel in the service and maintenance of T-6 planes, to form autonomous regional units should the necessity arise. Eleven such centres were created across France between 1951 and 1953. The designation of these units was changed in 1956 to Tactical Light Aviation Reserve Squadrons (Escadrilles de Reserve d'Aviation Legere d'Appui, or ERALA). They were attached to the local Army Command and were to prepare themselves to undertake wartime missions in Algeria. These missions were to include

Formation of T-6s at Cognac in April 1961.





Crews preparing for missions aboard T-6G aircraft. A maximum of 30 Texan-equipped EALA squadrons were operational 1955-1962.

observation, photo-recon, ground attack, bombardment, strafing and rocket firing sorties. The ERLAs were disbanded in 1949.

OPERATIONAL SERVICE

The growing operations to maintain order in Algeria forced the Armée de l'Air to increase the means available by creating a Ground Support Light Aviation Command, and by equipping the first units formed under this appellation with training aircraft then in service. Thus a number of Morane 733 "Alcyon," Sipa 12 and 21, NAA T-6D trainers were quickly transformed and armed before being sent to Algeria in 1956. The T-6s of the Marrakech School were likewise modified, beginning in April 1956. It was decided to standardize on the NAA type and to order additional T-6s as they were better suited for this type of operation than the French planes. The exigencies of the anti-guerrilla warfare rapidly guided the units to respond to the following operational necessities:

- close cooperation between air and ground elements,
- observation and reconnaissance elements being able to quickly call tactical aircraft and ground attack units.

The light aircraft were operationally used in 1956 following the creation of the Light Aviation Command, to operate alongside the Fighter, Bombardment and Transport Commands.

The first ERLA activated suffered from a lack of aircraft, as the majority of the T-6Ds in service were needed for training, principally in Morocco. Besides, the T-6Ds were not really suited for warlike operations; only one 7.62mm calibre machine gun could be installed, with a light bomb load under the wings.

It was at this period that large numbers of USAF T-6Gs were offered for sale. These machines were better suited to fulfill the missions now clearly defined by the French High Command: for ground attack, reconnaissance, observations, convoy protections, border patrols, patrols of the restricted zones.

ORDERS AND DELIVERIES

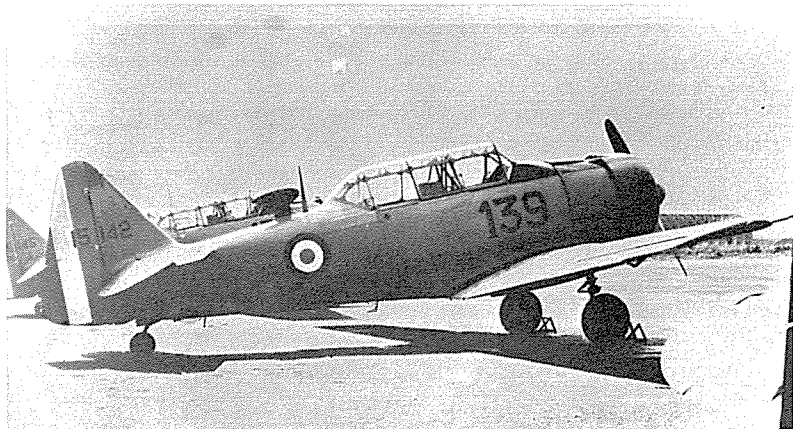
In March 1956, France ordered a first batch of 150 T-6Gs from America at a unit price of \$2,000. They were delivered begin-

ning in October at Bordeaux by U.S. Navy carriers, where they were reassembled, revised and modified. This included the addition of armor, new armament and new radio equipment. The following month a second batch of 150 Texans was ordered, soon followed by other orders, so that by late 1958, close to 600 T-6Gs were in service, this not taking into account the hundred or so stricken-off-strength for various reasons. All these were modified at the Bordeaux installations, adding armor and armament as all were to be used for tactical operations in Algeria, and not for training. Deliveries of the modified Texans began in May 1957 to the squadrons already operational.

The T-6G was an uncomplicated aircraft, simple to fly and easy to maintain in the field. Its powerplant, structural solidity and load-carrying ability made it much more suited for its intended use than the lighter Morane 733, Sipa 12 and 121 trainers then in service. Furthermore, an endurance of nearly five hours and a high cruising speed gave the Texan a shorter time to and from the target and a longer loitering time over the combat area. Its one drawback was its armament which was too light to be truly effective in ground attack missions. To obviate this deficiency the single nose-mounted 7.62mm machine gun was replaced by four 7.5mm MAC guns mounted in two pods under the wings, with rockets and bombs. Operating from 2,600 ft. (800 m) strips, the "Tomcats," as the Texans were referred to because of the distinctive snarl of their powerplants, soon became popular with the ground troops.

Unfortunately, all this extra armament, radio equipment for ground-air communications and armor for the crew overloaded the aircraft, making flying delicate, especially in mountainous areas, in spite of the 600-hp engine. The French began to look for a more powerful aircraft. Their choice was the North American T-28 "Trojan," another type being retired from American service. It first became operational with the Armée de l'Air in 1959, under the name "Fennec." [The Fennec is a small foxlike mammal with very large ears native to North Africa.]

The T-6 pilots were all experienced, active service military men, posted for a one-year tour from their units. They formed 75 percent of all the pilots of the EALA squadrons, the other 25



T-6G s/n 51-15142 with code "139" at Meknes, Morocco, 25 April 1956.

percent being made up of reserve pilots recalled to duty (ERALA trained) or recent graduates from the training schools. All had been through T-6 operational training units at Blida and Reghala. The observers, also experienced military men, had been through a week's course at Caen.

OPERATIONS

The Armee de l'Air in Algeria came under the command of the 5th Air Region, responsible for air operations over the whole of French North Africa. The squadrons were grouped into three Ground Support Light Aircraft Groups (GALA) covering eastern Algeria (No. 1), western Algeria (No. 2) and central Algeria (No. 3). A maximum of 30 Texan-equipped EALA squadrons were operational during the period 1955-1962. During 1959, as the T-28s were becoming operational, 14 "escadrilles" were paired into seven "escadrons." Four of these re-equipped with Fennecs, the three others retaining the T-6Gs. A T-6G EALA "escadrille" was made up of 12 aircraft plus one as a backup. Ten of the original 24 squadrons remained operational until early 1962, when they were disbanded following the conclusion of the Algerian war.

During their operational career the T-6D and T-6G EALAs lost 255 crewmen. Flying hours totaled 742,530, 75 percent being operational. In January 1956 the number of operational missions was less than 1,000, but by March 1957 the EALAs had a tally of over 10,000 missions. The 26 EALAs in service in 1958 carried out 106,512 missions during their first 10 months of operations, flying from 72 different strips, accumulating a total of 115,000 flying hours.

With the end of the war in Algeria and the movement of the Moroccan schools to France, the T-6s were retired from operational service and returned to France to become trainers, before being replaced by Fouga Magister jets. The Texans were next put into storage, a few were sold to private owners while many others were scrapped. Foreign governments such as India, Morocco, Tunisia and Spain purchased the majority in 1965 to expand their own air arms. A number of T-6s had previously been ceded by France to Portugal in 1961, and at least 12 were purchased by Air France in 1965 for the training of future airline pilots. A small number were even returned to the USAF, possibly to serve as a source of spares, as these are believed to have been shipped as detached parts.

After October 1964 some ex-French Texans reappeared as warplanes one last time, over Biafra and the Congo.

NAVY TEXANS

The SNJs delivered to Aeronavale beginning in 1952 were only used as trainers. They formed the materiel of various Aeronavale training and liaison units in Morocco. After 1961 and the departure of the French from Morocco, the naval pilots were trained at Air Force schools, the SNJs having been ceded to the Moroccans. A few were retained by the Aeronavale, serving on various duties until finally retired in 1971.

CODES AND MARKINGS

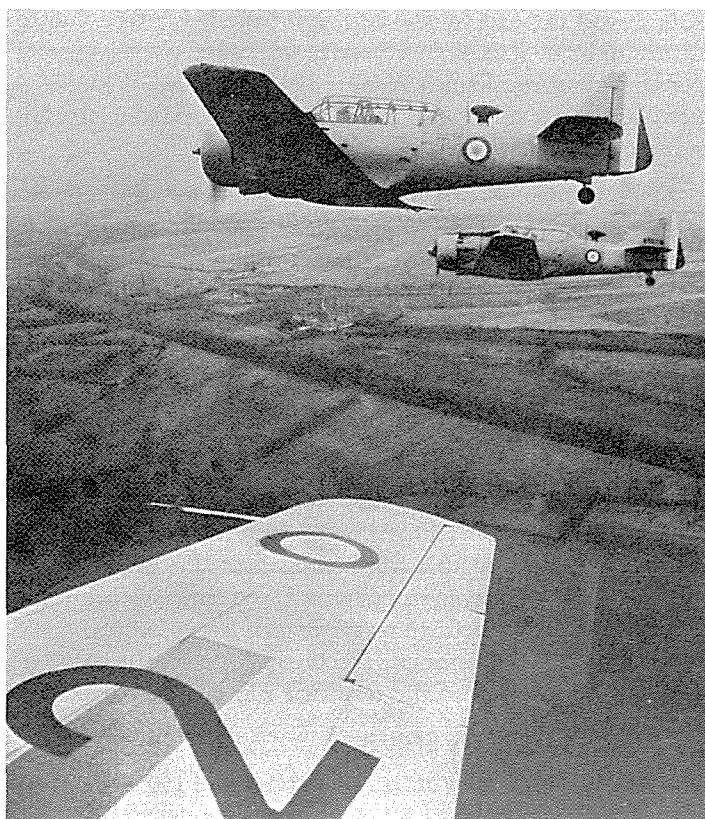
The T-6s were received from America in their Trainer Yellow overall finish with anti-glare matte black over the nose. Spinners were sometimes painted a solid color or given a two-color scheme (spiral or straight stripes). The wing tips were sometimes brightly painted. Some units had very artistic markings on their planes; like EALA 13/72 displaying a shark mouth; EALA 5/72 a tiger mouth; EALA 8/72 a black lightning bolt along the entire fuselage.

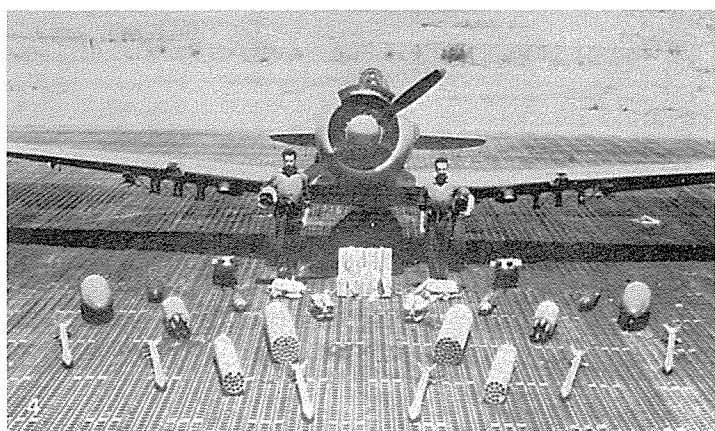
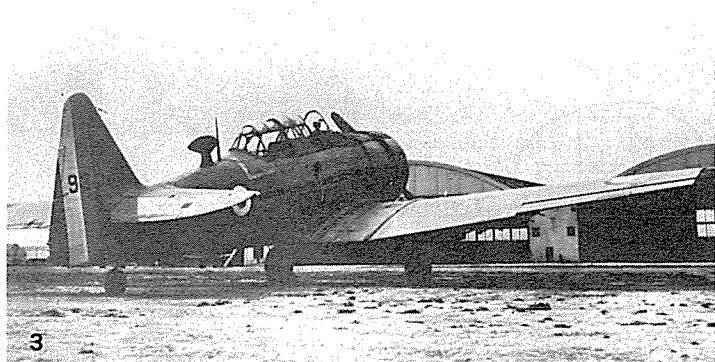
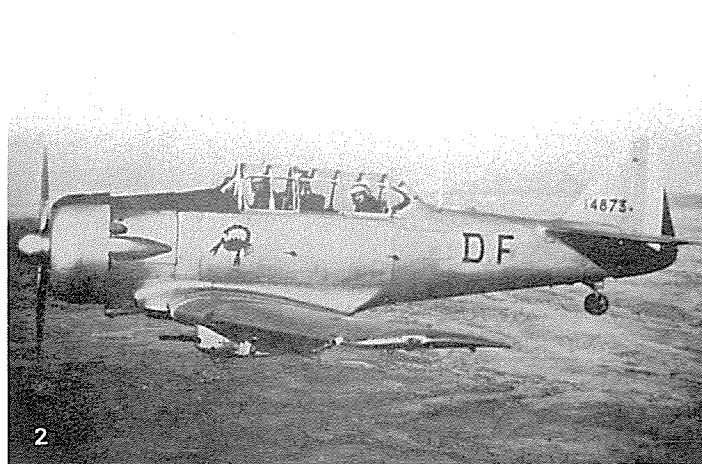
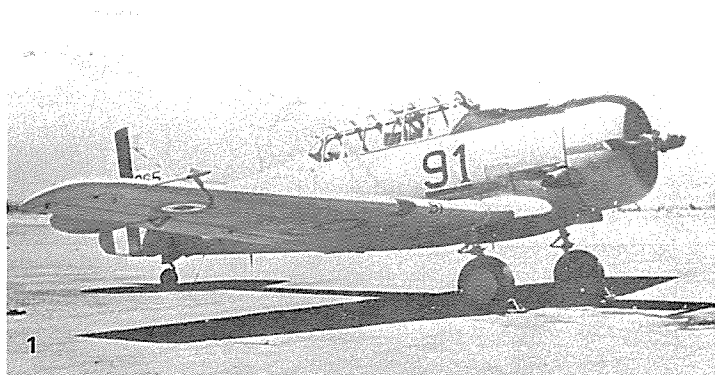
During the summer of 1958 all colorful markings were removed from the planes engaged in Algeria. They were stripped of all yellow paint and redone in aluminum, retaining the anti-glare black panel over the nose, the cocardes and squadron insignias. Some T-6s had long spanwise yellow panels on wing upper surfaces.

Originally the cocardes were in the usual six positions, but the fuselage ones were soon deleted as they were found to be a perfect aiming point for enemy ground fire. The colorful tricolor rudders also disappeared from use for the same reason, being replaced by a small rectangular French flag on the fin, above the serial number.

Usually the squadron insignias were on the fuselage, below the pilot's cockpit, but they were also found on the rear fuselage in place of the cocardes, and sometimes on the center or tip of

T-6Gs in flight over France in 1963.





1. T-6D s/n 44-80968 at Telergma in 1956.
2. T-6G on patrol 28 February, 1961.
3. T-6G s/n 93080 of EALA 3/72, in 1957.
4. The T-6G was capable of carrying a variety of ordnance on underwing hardpoints.



the fin. Rarely were the insignias painted on the engine cowlings.

The small black serial numbers were the original RAF, RCAF or USAF numbers.

The T-6 training schools used numbered codes exclusively. These consisted of a large number on the sides of the fuselage, usually below the pilot's cockpit, but sometimes on the rear fuselage and on top and bottom surfaces of the right wing. This number had no connection with the serial number, but rather with the radio call number.

The five Texan groups at Marrakech had call numbers in multiples of 26 as such:

- F-TEIA to Z, No. 1 to 26,
- F-TELA to Z, No. 27 to 52,
- F-TEPA to Z, No. 53 to 78,
- F-TEQA to Z, No. 79 to 104,
- F-TERA to Z, No. 105 to 130.

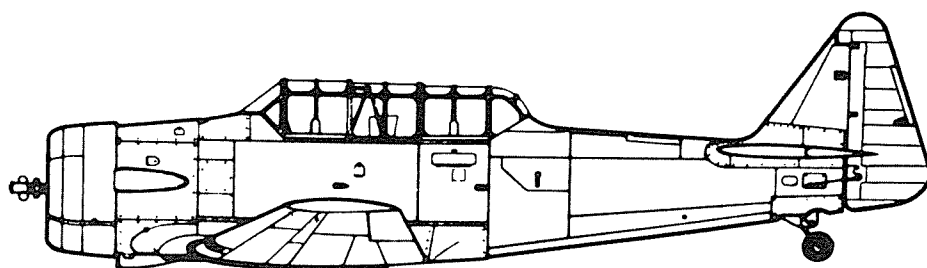
Thus T-6 No. 102 was F-TEQX.

At Marrakech the T-6s displayed the letter "H" (possibly for Harvard) before the call number. Thus H26 was Harvard Mk IV, number 51.17119, code F-TEIZ. The T-6Ds which had a nose-mounted machine gun had the call number underlined in black. Ex: 62 was F-TEPJ.

Many of the T-6Ds at Marrakech had the school insignias painted on a blue band on each side of the engine cowling.

The Salon School flew ex-RAF Harvard Mk IIB with their original markings; aluminum paint overall with yellow bands around the rear fuselage aft of the cocarde and around the wings outboard of the cocardes. The rudder was painted tricolor but only above the elevators. Sometimes the radio call sign was on the fuselage as: FX 322, "AI."

The Cazaux School had a marking system similar to that of the Salon School, except as concerns the radio call sign which was painted on the fuselage, of two letters separated by a black dash; O-H for T-6 serialised FT 333 with code F-TEOH; or O-O for FX 322 with code F-TEOO.

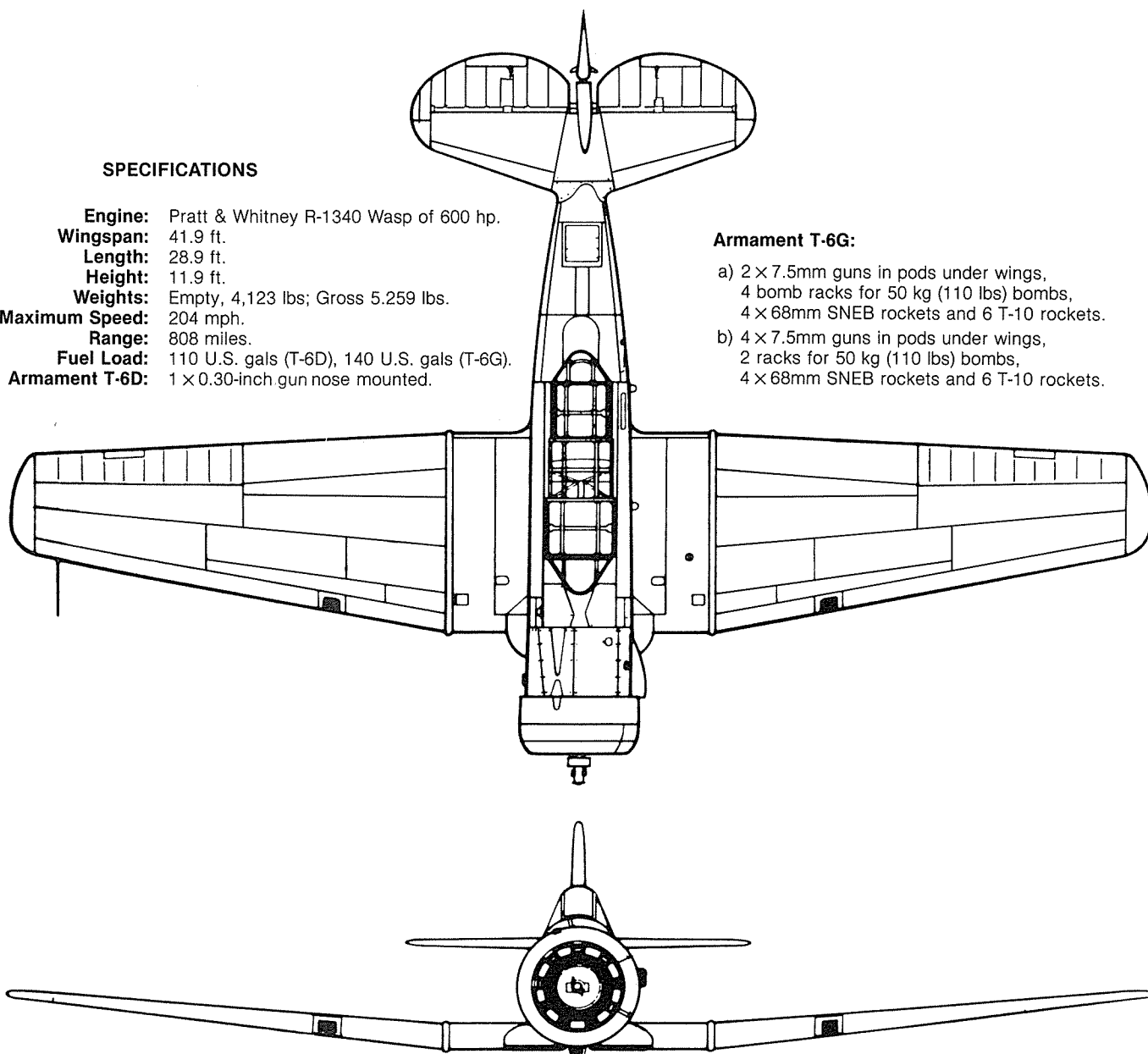


SPECIFICATIONS

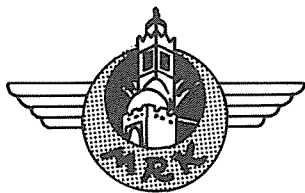
Engine: Pratt & Whitney R-1340 Wasp of 600 hp.
Wingspan: 41.9 ft.
Length: 28.9 ft.
Height: 11.9 ft.
Weights: Empty, 4,123 lbs; Gross 5,259 lbs.
Maximum Speed: 204 mph.
Range: 808 miles.
Fuel Load: 110 U.S. gals (T-6D), 140 U.S. gals (T-6G).
Armament T-6D: 1 x 0.30-inch gun nose mounted.

Armament T-6G:

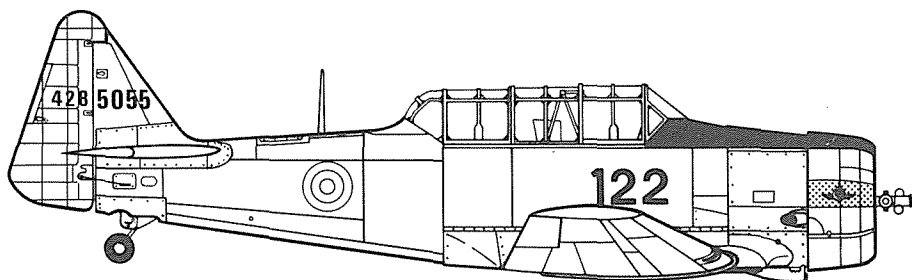
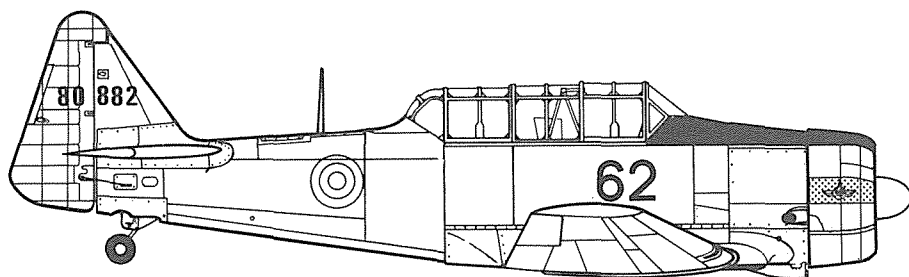
- a) 2 x 7.5mm guns in pods under wings,
 4 bomb racks for 50 kg (110 lbs) bombs,
 4 x 68mm SNEB rockets and 6 T-10 rockets.
- b) 4 x 7.5mm guns in pods under wings,
 2 racks for 50 kg (110 lbs) bombs,
 4 x 68mm SNEB rockets and 6 T-10 rockets.



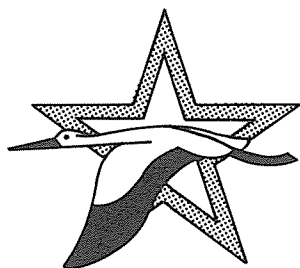
T-6D THREE-VIEW



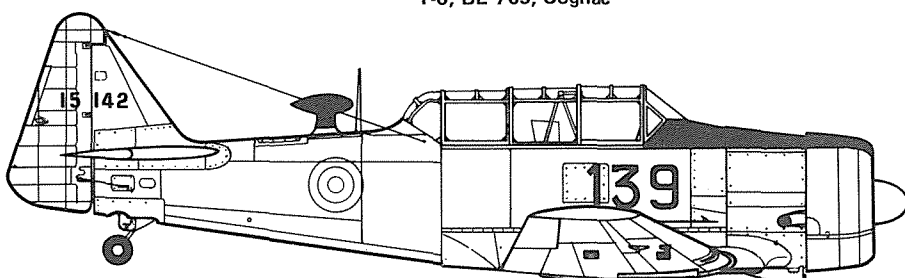
BE 707 - Marrakech



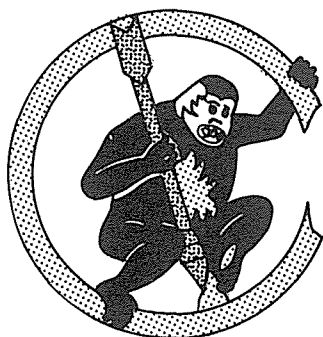
T-6, BE 709, Cognac



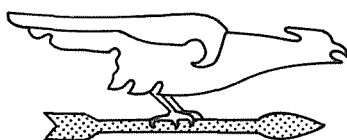
BE 705 - Tours



T-6G, BE 708 based at Meknes



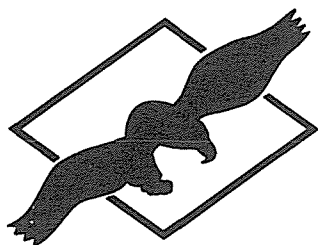
CIAL 320



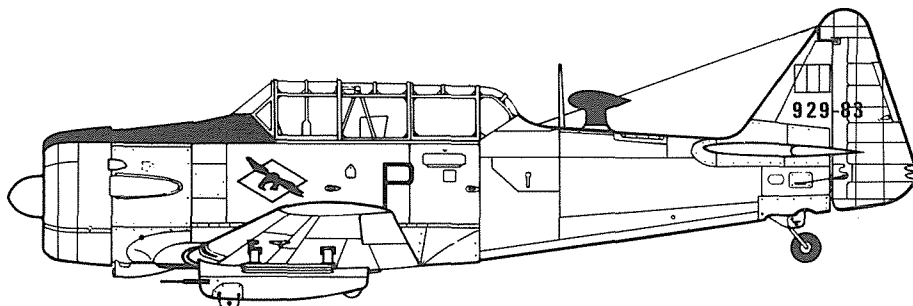
ERALA 2/40



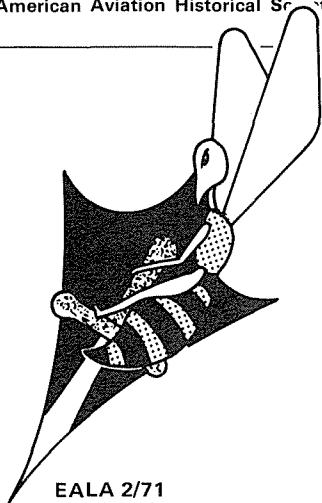
ERALA 5/40



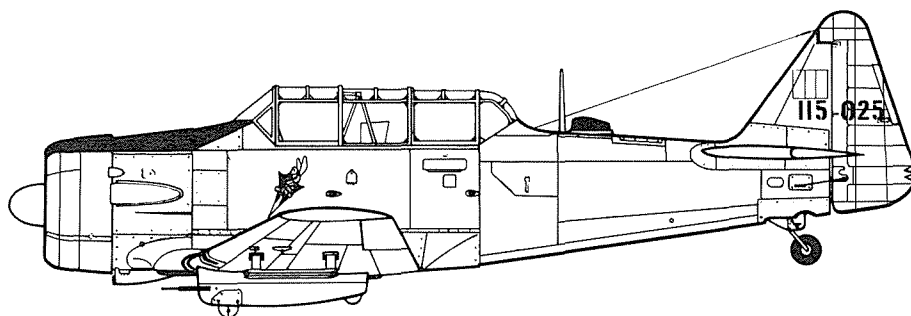
ERALA 1/40



T-6G, ERALA 1/40



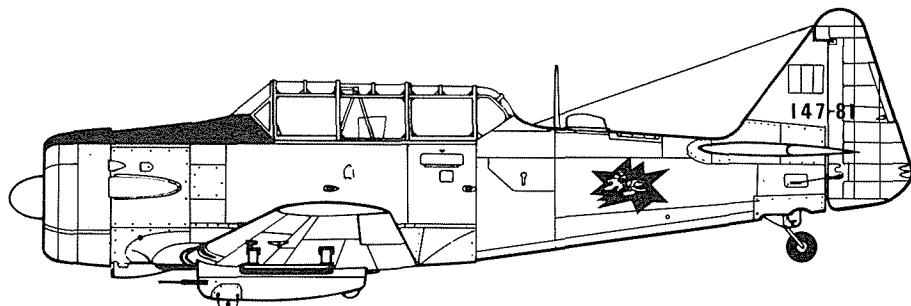
EALA 2/71



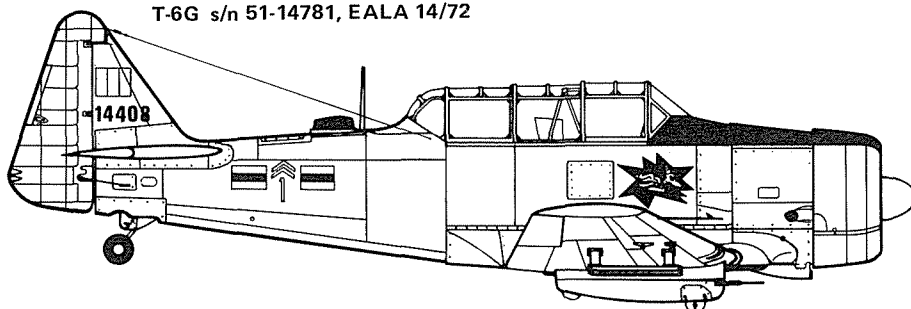
T-6G s/n 51-15025, EALA 3/1



EALA 14/72



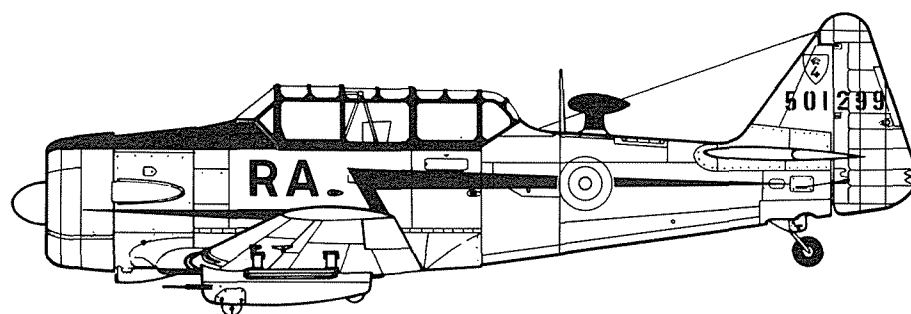
T-6G s/n 51-14781, EALA 14/72



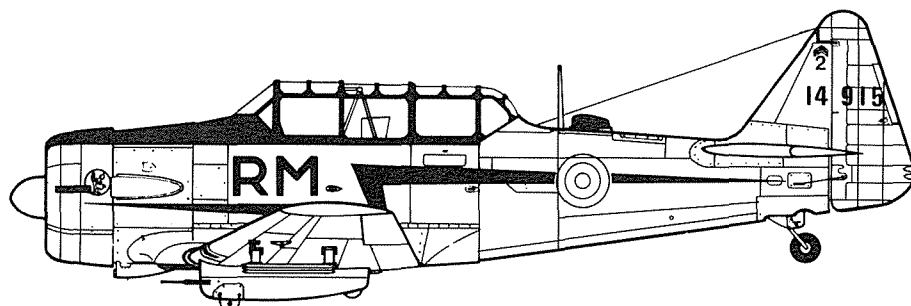
T-6G s/n 51-14408, EALA 3/1



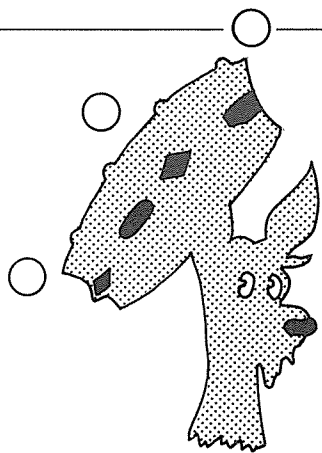
EALA 8/72



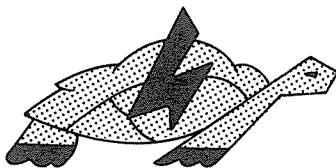
T-6G s/n 50-1299, EALA 8/72



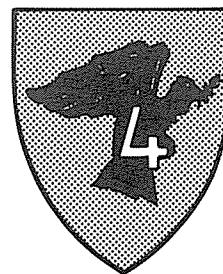
T-6G s/n 51-14915, EALA 8/72



EALA 2/2



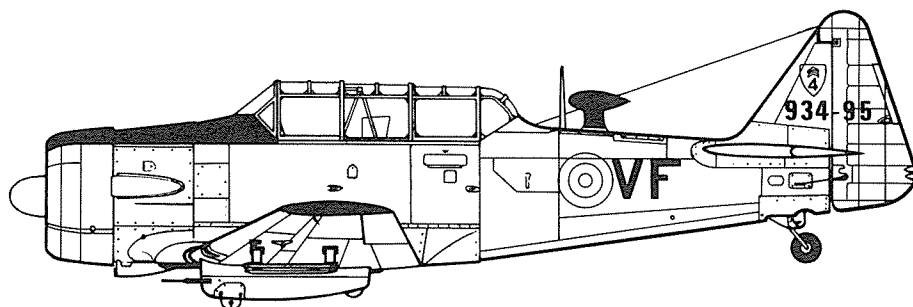
EALA 5/70



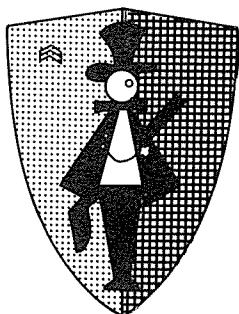
EALA 7/70



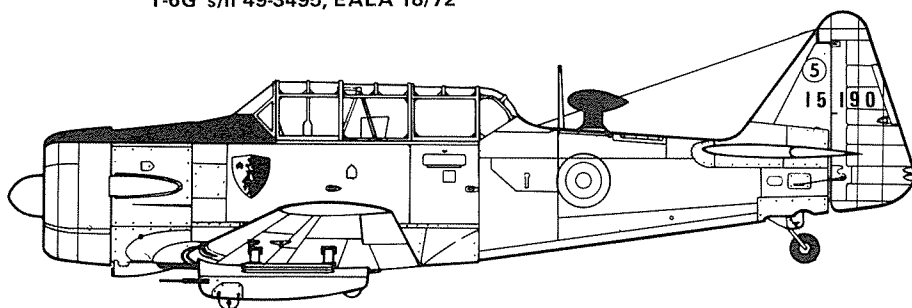
EALA 18/72



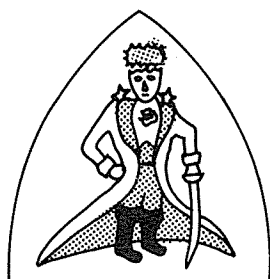
T-6G s/n 49-3495, EALA 18/72



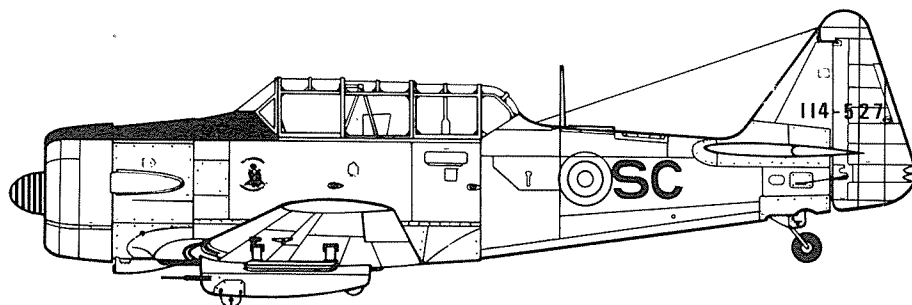
EALA 2/72



T-6G s/n 51-15190, EALA 2/72



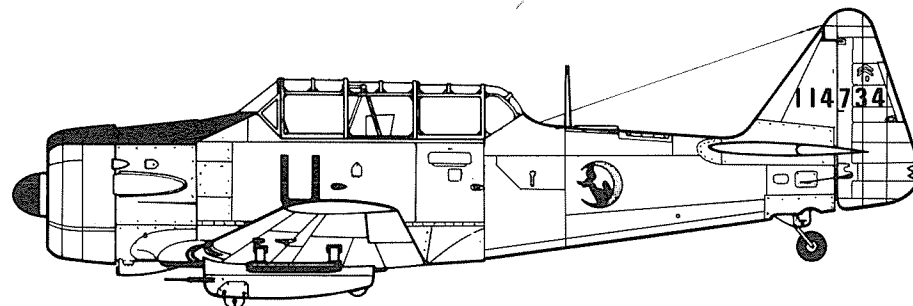
EALA 9/72



T-6G s/n 51-14527, EALA 9/72



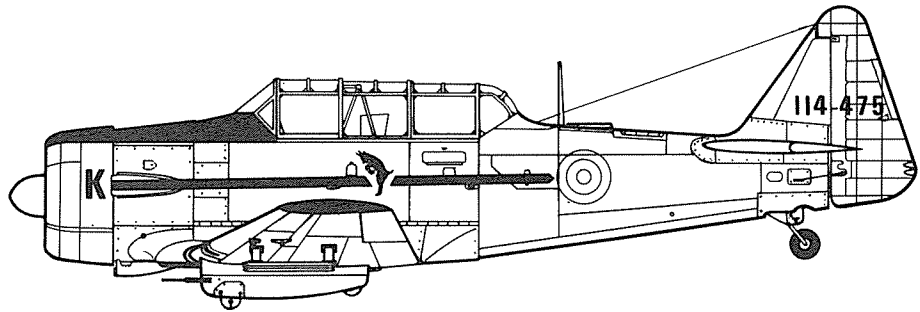
EALA 6/70



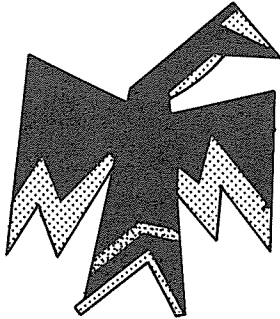
T-6G s/n 51-14734, EALA 3/9



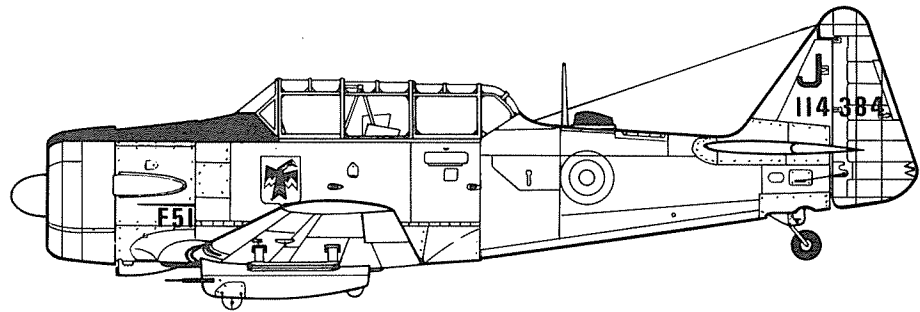
EALA 3/72



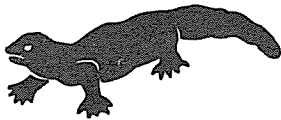
T-6G s/n 51-14475, EALA 3/72



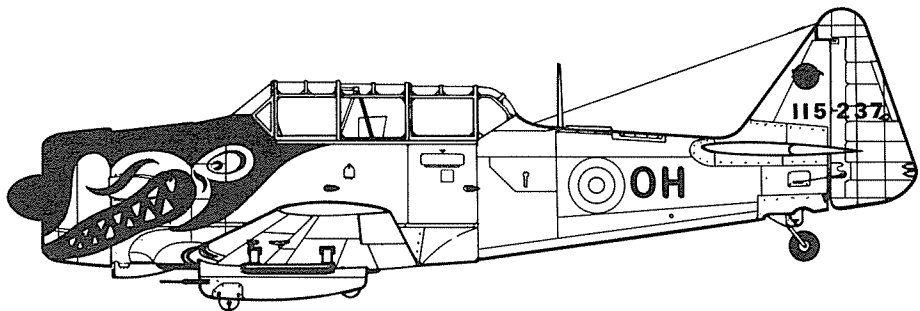
EALA 6/72



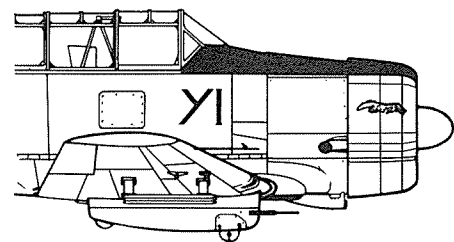
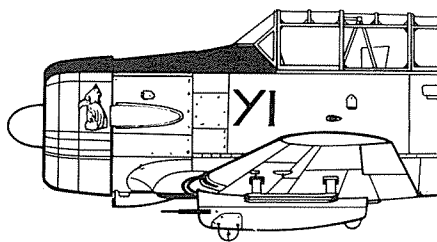
T-6G s/n 51-14384, EALA 6/72



EALA 5/72



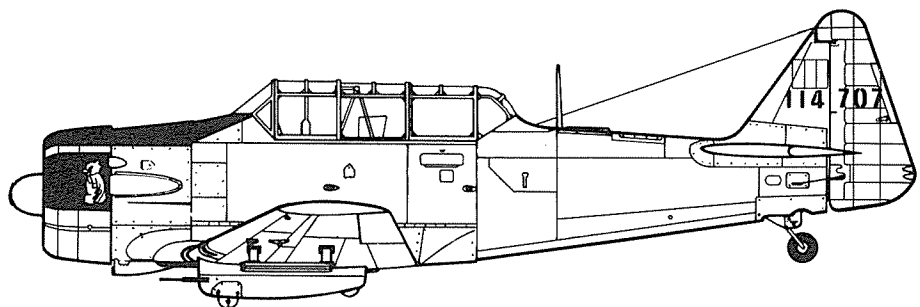
T-6G s/n 51-15237, EALA 5/72



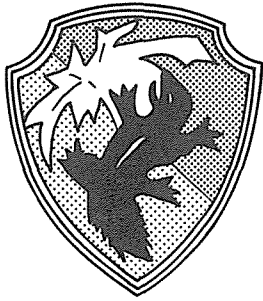
Variations in decoration



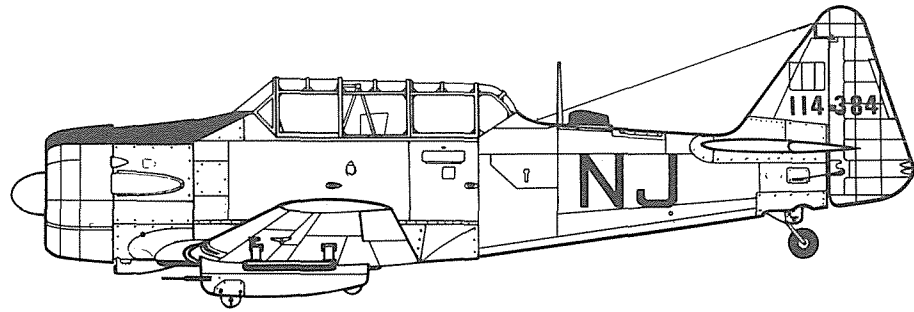
EALA 15/72



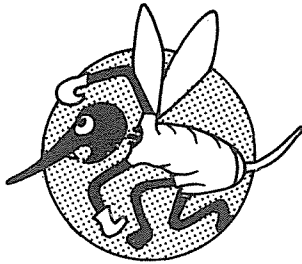
T-6G s/n 51-14707, EALA 3/12



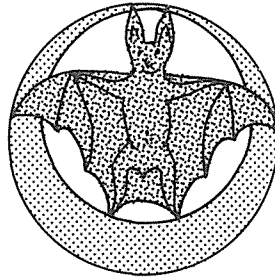
EALA 4/72



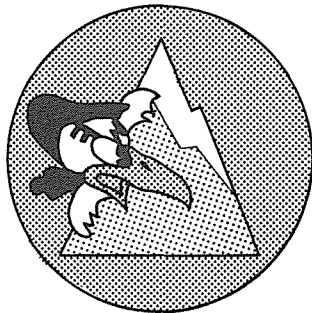
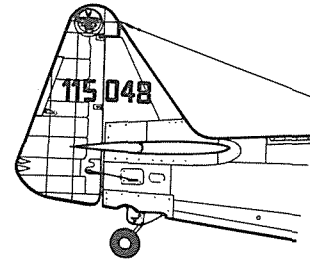
T-6G s/n 51-14384, EALA 4/72



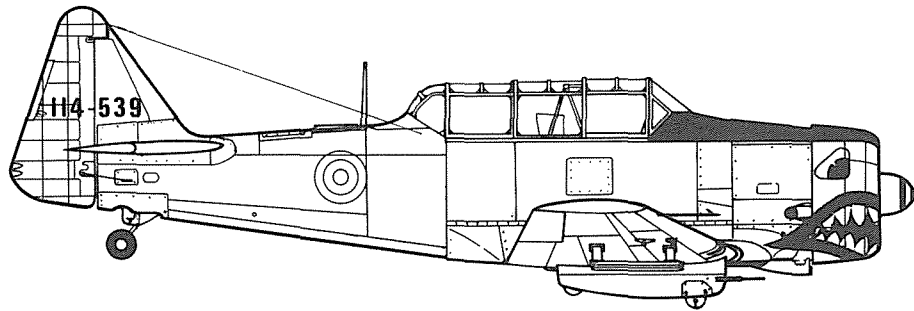
EALA 12/72



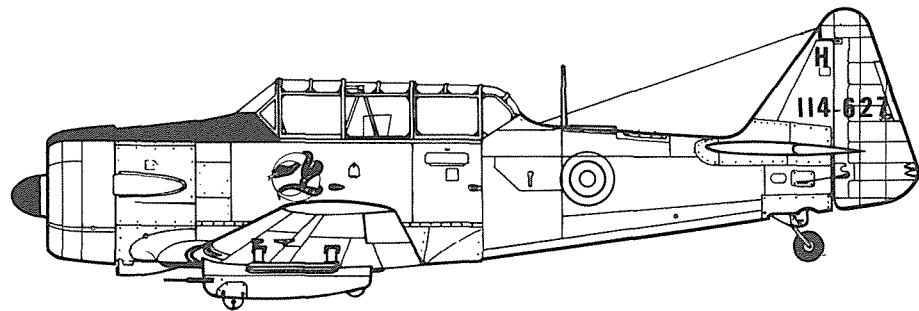
EALA 10/72



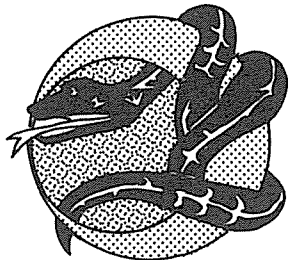
EALA 13/72



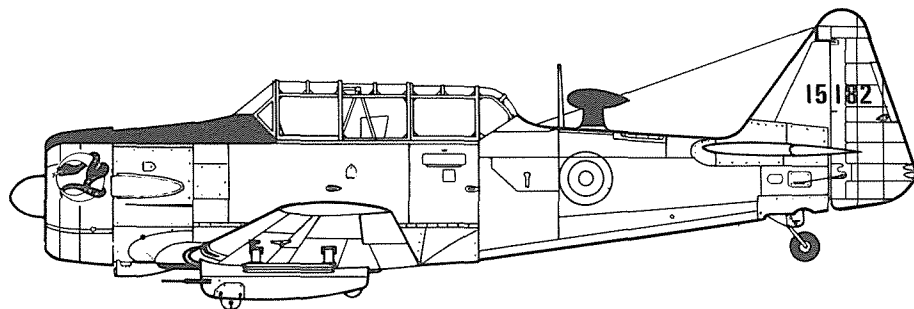
T-6G s/n 51-14539, EALA 13/72



T-6G s/n 51-14627, EALA 16/72



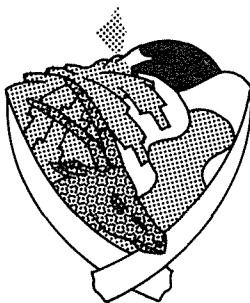
EALA 16/72



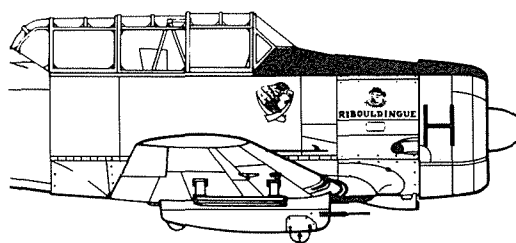
T-6G s/n 51-15182, EALA 16/72



EALA 1/73



EALA 2/73



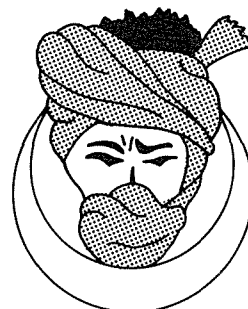
Detail of 52-8230



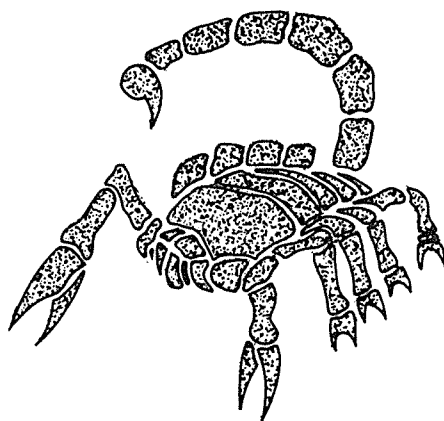
EALA 3/73



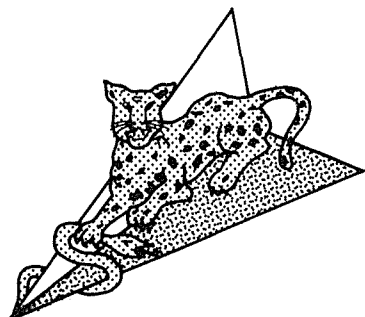
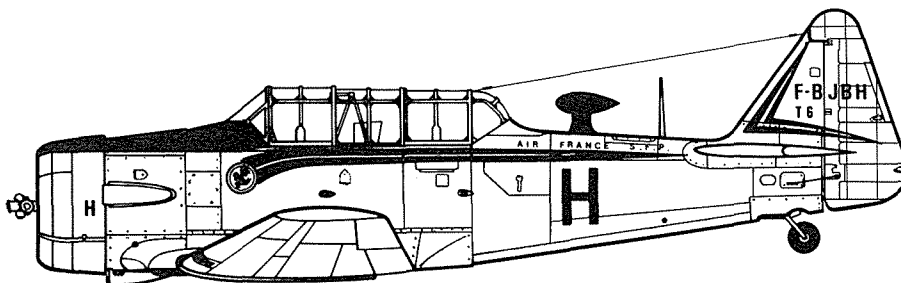
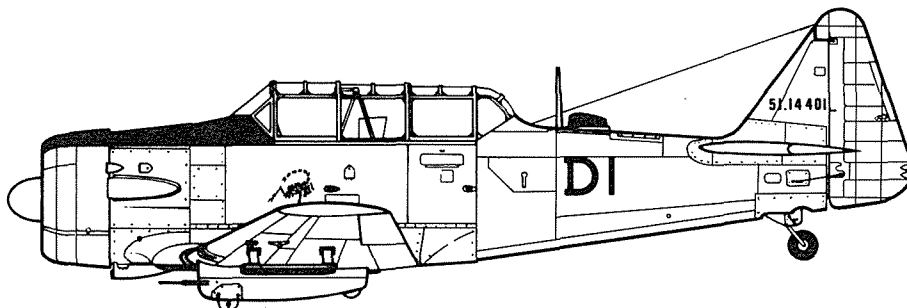
EALA 4/73



EALA 5/73



EALA 19/72



EALA 11/72



EALA 3/71