



P-61 Black Widow Units of World War 2 (Combat Aircraft)

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The first aircraft to be purposely designed as a radar-equipped nightfighter, Northrop's P-61 Black Widow was heavily influenced by early RAF combat experience with radar-equipped aircraft in 1940/41. Built essentially around the bulky radiation Laboratory SCR-720 radar, which was mounted in the aircraft's nose, the P-61 proved to be the largest fighter ever procured for frontline service by the USAAF. Twin-engined and twin-boomed, the Black Widow was armed with a dorsal barbette of four 0.50-in Browning machine guns and four ventrally-mounted 20 mm cannon. After initial structural and radar problems, the aircraft was finally issued to a frontline unit (the 481st NFG) in March 1944, and bot ETO and Pacific squadrons went into action almost simultaneously that spring - the honor of scoring the first kill went to the 6th NFS on 6th July 1944. Some 704 Black Widows were built in three distinct variants by Northrop, and the type saw action as a night intruder operating against ground targets as well as in its designated role. This volume features all the frontline users of the might P-61, and includes many first-hand accounts from pilots and gunners who saw action in the Pacific, Mediterranean and Western Europe.

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