

Grumman F-9 “Cougar”

The Hickory Aviation Museum’s TF-9J Bureau # 142985 is on loan from the National Museum of Naval Aviation. It came from the Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama. It was one of the few combat fighters of its time to be redesignated as a training aircraft.



Role	Fighter Aircraft
National origin	United States of America
Manufacturer	Grumman
First flight	20 September 1951
Introduction	December 1952
Retired	1974 United States Navy
Status	Retired
Primary users	United States Navy United States Marine Corps Argentine Navy
Number built	1988
Propulsion	1 × Pratt & Whitney J48-P-8A turbojet
Unit cost	<\$2M (1955)
Developed Into	Grumman F-9F Panther

The Grumman F9F/F-9 Cougar was an aircraft carrier-based fighter aircraft for the United States Navy. Based on Grumman's earlier F9F Panther, the Cougar replaced the Panther's straight wing with a more modern swept wing. Thrust was also increased significantly. The Navy considered the Cougar an updated version of the Panther, despite having a different official name, and thus Cougars started off from F9F-6 upward. Prototypes were quickly produced by modifying Panthers, and the first (XF9F-6) flew on 20 September 1951. The aircraft was still subsonic, but the critical Mach number was increased from 0.79 to 0.86 at sea level and to 0.895 at 35,000 ft (10,000 m), improving performance markedly over the Panther. Instead of using conventional ailerons for roll control; the F9F-6 uses spoilers on the upper surfaces of the wing. Wing fences were soon added and the spoilers extended from the fences to the tips of the wing. The rudder pedals controlled the part of the rudder below the horizontal tail surface, while the upper portion of the rudder was controlled by a yaw damper. This allowed the Cougar to fly safely and easily without the upper portion of the tail.

<p>General characteristics</p> <p>Crew: 1</p> <p>Length: 40 ft 11 in (12.47 m)</p> <p>Wingspan: 34 ft 6 in (10.52 m)</p> <p>Height: 12 ft 4 in (3.76 m)</p> <p>Wing area: 300 ft² (27.87 m²)</p> <p>Empty weight: 11,483 lb (5,209 kg)</p> <p>Loaded weight: 16,244 lb (7,368 kg)</p> <p>Fuel capacity: 919 US gallons (3,480 L)</p>	<p>Performance</p> <p>Maximum speed: 654 mph (568 knots)</p> <p>Cruise speed: 541 mph (470 knots, 870.4 km/h)</p> <p>Range: 932 mi (810 nmi,) without added tanks</p> <p>Armament</p> <p>Guns: 4 × 20 mm (0.79 in) M3 cannon, 190 rounds per gun</p> <p>Rockets: 6 × 5 in rockets; Missiles: 4× AIM-9 Sidewinder, Bombs: 2 × 1,000 lb bombs</p>
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Operational history

The first F9F-6s were assigned to fleet squadron VF-32 at the end of 1952. The First F9F Cougar squadron to actually deploy was VF-24, assigned to the USS *Yorktown* in August 1953 but arrived too late to the Korean theater to participate in the air war. The only version of the Cougar to see combat was the TF-9J trainer (until 1962, F9F-8T). Detachments of four Cougars served with US Marines Headquarters and Maintenance Squadron 11 (H&MS-11) at Da Nang and H&MS-13 at Chu Lai, where they were used for fast-Forward Air Control and the airborne command role, directing airstrikes against enemy positions in South Vietnam between 1966 and 1968. F9F-8s were withdrawn from front-line service in 1958–59, replaced by F11F Tigers and F8U Crusaders. The Naval Reserves used them until the mid-1960s, but none of the single-seat versions were used in the Vietnam War.

The TF-9J had a long service with the U.S. Navy, but the proposed Cougar modification (re-engined with a J52 engine) was rejected, and the Navy selected the TA-4F Skyhawk. The last Cougar was phased out when VT-4 re-equipped on February 1974. A F9F-8T, BuNo 14276, is displayed at the National Museum of Naval Aviation, Pensacola.

Transcontinental speed record

Despite missing the Korean war, the Navy put the F9F Cougar to good use setting the transcontinental crossing record on April 1, 1954. Three pilots from fleet squadron VF-21 completed the 2,438-mile flight in under four hours with LCdr. F.X. Brady setting the quickest time of 3 hours 45 minutes and 30 seconds. This was the first time the distance had been covered in under four hours. The three F9F-6 aircraft refueled over Kansas from a North American AJ Savage, using an experimental refueling probe mounted on the nose.

Blue Angels

The U.S. Navy's flight demonstration team, the Blue Angels flew four different variants of F9Fs from the F9F-2 Panther to the F9F-8. The Blue Angels replaced their six F9F-5 Panthers with six F9F-6s in 1953. This was short lived however and the Navy subsequently took them for fleet use without actually using the planes in an air show. They F9F-6s were then replaced with overhauled F9F-5s until 1954 when the Blue Angels switched to the F9F-8. The Blue Angels used the F9F-8 until 1957 they were replaced by the Grumman F11F-1 Tiger, although one two-seat F9F-8T was retained for press and VIP flights.

Argentina

The only foreign air arm to use the F9F Cougar was the Argentine Naval Aviation, who also used the F9F Panther as well. Two F9F-8T trainers were acquired in 1962, and served until 1971. The Cougar was the first jet to break the sound barrier in Argentina. ¹One aircraft (serial 3-A-151) is on display at the Naval Aviation Museum (MUAN) at Bahía Blanca, while the other was sold to an owner in United States.

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