

DOUGLAS AIRCRAFT TA4-J 'SKYHAWK'

NAS KINGSVILLE 1969-1994

The Douglas A-4 Skyhawk is a carrier-capable ground-attack aircraft designed for the Navy and Marine Corps. The delta winged, single turbojet-engined Skyhawk was designed and produced by Douglas Aircraft Company, and later McDonnell Douglas. It was originally designated the A4D under the Navy's pre-1962 designation system.

The aircraft was of conventional post-World War II design, with a low-mounted delta wing, tricycle undercarriage, and a single turbojet engine in the rear fuselage, with two air intakes on the fuselage sides. The tail is of cruciform design, with the horizontal stabilizer mounted above the fuselage. Armament consisted of two 20 mm (.79 in caliber) Colt Mk 12 cannons, one in each wing root, with 200 rpg, plus a large variety of bombs, rockets, and missiles carried on a hardpoint under the fuselage centerline and hardpoints under each wing (originally one per wing, later two).

The Skyhawk proved to be a relatively common U.S. naval aircraft export of the postwar era. Due to its small size, it could be operated from the older, smaller World War II-era aircraft carriers still used by many smaller navies during the 1960s. These older ships were often unable to accommodate newer USN fighters such as the F-4 Phantom II and F-8 Crusader, which were faster and more capable than the A-4, but significantly larger and heavier than older naval fighters.

The Navy operated the A-4 in both Regular Navy and Naval Reserve light attack squadrons (VA). Although the A-4's use as a training and adversary aircraft would continue well into the 1990s, the Navy began removing the aircraft from its front line attack squadrons in 1967, with the last one being retired in 1975.

The A-4 Skyhawk was introduced to a training role in the two-seat TA-4J configuration replacing the TF-9J Cougar as the advanced jet trainer. The TA-4J served as the advanced jet trainer in white and orange markings for decades until being replaced by the T-45 Goshawk. Additional TA-4J Skyhawks were assigned to Instrument Training RAGs at all the Navy "master jet bases" under RCVW-12 and RCVW-4.

The Skyhawk was used for training at NAS Kingsville for 23 years (1969 to 1993). All three training squadrons (VT-21, VT-22 and VT-23) utilized the Skyhawk for training student aviators.



General Characteristics

Crew: 1 (2 in OA-4F, TA-4F, TA-4J)
Length: 40 ft., 3 in.
Wingspan: 26 ft., 6 in.
Height: 15 ft.
Wing area: 259 ft²
Empty weight: 10,450 lbs.
Loaded weight: 18,300 lbs.
Max takeoff weight: 24,500 lbs.
Powerplant: 1× Pratt & Whitney J52-P8A turbojet, 9,300 lbf

Performance

Maximum speed: 673 mph
Range: 1,700 nmi (2,000 miles)
Service ceiling: 42,250 ft.
Rate of climb: 8,440 ft/min.
Wing loading: 70.7 lb/ft²
Thrust/weight: 0.51
g-limit: -3/+8 g