



The Douglas A-26 was the fastest bomber in the USAAF inventory, and went on to serve the US and Allied nations for many years. It was conceived as a replacement for the company's A-20 "Havoc/Boston", as well as the North American B-25 "Mitchell" and Martin B-26 "Marauder" medium bombers.

Development began in 1940, led by the prolific Edward Heinemann, with the XA-26A prototype taking to the air on July 10, 1942. In June 1942, the contract was amended to include a second prototype, the XA-26B, with forward-firing guns installed in a solid nose. Extensive testing resulted in a standard arrangement of six .50 caliber machine guns. Weapons capacity was rated at 6,000 pounds of internal and external stores - a full ton more than the Marauder.

Invaders first saw combat on June 23, 1944, with the Fifth Air Force in the Pacific. They also served in the European theater, starting in September 1944. A total of 1,355 B-models were produced at Douglas plants in Long Beach, CA and Tulsa, OK.

Later in development, the A-26C featured a glassed-in nose compartment for the bombardier and higher-rated, water-injected R2800 engines. A strengthened wing allowed it to carry an additional 2,000 lbs of bombs or up to 14 five inch rockets, along with six wing mounted .50 caliber machine guns. Douglas delivered 1,091 C models.

Post-war (re-designated B-26) Invaders flew day and night interdiction missions in Korea. Even more powerful and heavily armed K models, known as "Counterinvaders," flew interdiction in Vietnam.

As further proof of its adaptability, many surplus Invaders were converted to business use, with a passenger compartment in place of the bomb bay. Its high cruise speed made the A-26 the fastest executive transport available prior to the Learjet.

