

CORSAIRS vs. COMMUNISTS

KOREA IS VIEWED AS THE FIRST MAJOR JET WAR. HOWEVER, MANY PISTON-ENGINE AIRCRAFT ON BOTH SIDES — INCLUDING VOUGHT CORSAIRS — SAW LOTS OF ACTION INCLUDING AERIAL COMBAT

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When the subject of the air war in Korea comes up, most military aviation enthusiasts immediately think of the air battles over “MiG Alley” between USAF North American F-86 Sabres and Communist Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG 15s. That was undoubtedly its most exciting and “glamorous” side, but there was a lot more to it.

One of the most interesting aspects of the three-year Korean air war was the amazing

variety of aircraft, pilots, and air forces that fought it. It really transitioned the air arms involved from the piston-engined warplanes of World War II to the jet air forces of the Cold War.

The main task of the majority of Korean War fighters — piston- and jet-engine — was not air-to-air combat, but rather air-to-ground attack/interdiction, in direct support of the ground forces. Most of the many participating fighter types other than the F-86 and the MiG-15 also saw some aerial combat, scoring a few victories and suffering some losses, but those encounters were typically defensive in nature, occurring in the course of their primary, fighter-bomber, assignments. (It should be noted that during the war’s last year the F-86 was also utilized as a fighter-bomber.)

The most numerous of the piston-engined fighters that saw action in Korea were the North American F-51D Mustang and the Vought F4U Corsair, both of which had

When it came to the Korean War, the image that came to mind when the Corsair was mentioned was of a mud-splattered, bomb carrying fighter that was hitting the front lines hard in order to protect American and UN troops. With right rudder cranked in, the pilot of this VMF-323 F4U-4 breaks away from the camera plane in order to display its prodigious underwing load.



VMF(N)-513 flight suit patch.

