

TAKING THE WAR TO HITLER

THE USAAF AND RAF WOEFULLY LACKED AN EFFICIENT LONG-RANGE FIGHTER THAT COULD EFFECTIVELY ESCORT BOMBERS DEEP INTO GERMANY. THE NORTH AMERICAN P-51B MUSTANG WOULD BE THE ANSWER. HOWEVER, CREATING THE FIGHTER WOULD BE A LONG AND DIFFICULT PROCESS

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is an excerpt from the new book *P-51B Mustang*, which may be ordered from an advertisement elsewhere in this issue.

Beginning on 9 March 1943, Materiel Command approved the first purchase order for Materiel Change Request C-258 to the NA-102 P-51B-1-NA Specification. MCR C-258-1 provided the authority to start on the "Cockpit Enclosure — Sliding [P-51D] Bubble Canopy" for the NA-106 P-51D-NA airframe. The next day,

drawing 106-00001, "Three-View General Arrangement," was released, dated 10 March 1943. It showed both the bubble canopy and the increased aileron throw of +/-10, 12, and 15 degrees, which were also included for all P-51B/C Series Mustangs.

Project Change Order C-258, dated 16 March, stated "Covers design of a sliding enclosure to replace the hinged canopy. As the enclosure will consist entirely of an external canopy fairing, this change includes reduction in height and re-fairing of the fuselage from the cockpit aft."

On 8 April,

in the C-258 project logs, it was noted that the engineering for Cockpit Enclosure-Sliding (P-51D) was complete, and further noted that the design was being studied for fabrication requirements on the 15th. Following completion of shop drawings, the P-51D "mock-up was started on 19-5-43."

The first mention in the project logs for P-51B-1-NA modification was on 19 June, as C-258-2 "Rework P-51B-1-NA ship No. 10 [43-12102], Installation of Sliding Enclosure. Rework ship in Dept. 9." Similarly, the entry for C-258-3 was "Rework a NA-102 Fuselage for NA-106 Static Test. Fuselage delivered on 17 July." The C-258 log comments on 19 June were more extensive regarding the tasks required to complete the installation of the cockpit enclosure, namely: A new enclosure being developed to provide rear vision for the pilot. This involves a complete change in structure above the upper longeron from the firewall aft to the empennage fillet, with a new windscreen and a one-piece plexiglass canopy with a travel of about 22-in. This necessitates removal of the radio shelf and rearrangement of the radio equipment and some changes to the electrical system, and relocation of propeller anti-icing tank.

On 5 July, the C-258 entry stated

As production increased at Inglewood, work went into three shifts to guarantee a constant flow of P-51Bs to the combat fronts. With cowlings removed, a mechanic checks for the source of a leak as the engine is run-up. Note the complete lack of ear protectors — which must have resulted in deafness later in life.