



GREAT KODACHROMES OF SURPLUS
MILITARY AIRCRAFT BEFORE THEY BECAME
MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR WARBIRDS



Built as Douglas A-26B-50-DL USAAF 44-34313, this aircraft was quickly snapped up when offered for surplus sale in 1959 at Davis-Monthan AFB. Registered N5457V, it was almost immediately tanked and went to work as a fire-bomber with Aero Atlas. As typical, it went through several companies and was being operated with Butler Aircraft as Tanker 16 (the rudder had just been recovered and the "1" had not yet been added) when photographed in 1970. The plane had been fitted with "STOL" wingtips. It eventually went to Conair as C-GHLK and in 1990 was obtained by the Canadian Warplane Heritage and was flown enthusiastically at airshows until 2000 when it was obtained by Invader enthusiast David Lane as N119DR. In 2011, it was obtained by Black Crow Aviation and restored into its Korean War configuration as N4314. Recently sold to Poland, it is on the East Coast waiting for a new engine to be installed prior to making the transatlantic flight.

After being sold surplus in a 1959 auction at Davis-Monthan AFB, North American TB-25N 44-30187 received the civil registration N9170Z on 15 January 1960. The aircraft immediately gravitated to Florida and — as with any surplus aircraft like a B-25 in that area — was viewed by the Feds with some suspicion. Going through four owners in a very short time period, the Mitchell was painted overall white with an extremely large N number on the sides of the fuselage. The last registered owner was something called Borinquen Imports with a business address in San Juan, Puerto Rico. As can be seen in our photograph, the B-25 came to grief while landing in an open field in Nicaragua on 21 July 1963. It appears the aircraft came in at a high rate of speed, the nose gear collapsed, and the forward fuselage violently dug into the ground. We have no idea about the purpose of the flight and its mission is open to conjecture. We also do not know about injuries to the crew but, as can be seen, there was extensive damage to the cockpit area. The cattle in the field seem to have little interest in the new arrival.



Crop-dusters and fire-bomber operators rarely threw anything away and this photograph of Grumman AF-2S Guardian N9995Z proves that fact. Little-known in military service, a few Guardians were sold surplus and went on the civilian register for use as fire-bombers. Converted by Aero Union in Chico, California, the small Guardian fleet was relatively effective but as the government began to frown on the operation of single-engine heavy air tankers, the Guardians were phased out. Now, things get a little confusing. There is a Guardian on display at Pima Air and Space Museum finished in the markings of N9995Z Tanker 21 but this is actually BuNo 129233/N9994Z that was never tanked. The FAA registry notes that N9995Z went to Jimmy Leeward for restoration to flying status and considerable progress was made on returning the Guardian to the sky before Jimmy's tragic death. N9995Z is now noted as being with Skylar Burchinal in Texas and being offered for sale in "near" flying condition.