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Sent: Thursday, May 29, 2008 9:59 AM
Subject: The USAF P-59 - From Craig 29May2008 (AVIA-WO-FAA)

Americas First Jet Aircraft

[TOP SECRET in 1941]



This is America's first jet airplane -- the P-59 first flown in Oct.1942. Volunteers have spent the last 10 years restoring this airplane, and they put the wings back on last weekend just in time to be on static display at an air show this weekend. In 1942, this was a Top Secret project located at Edwards AFB. When the dry lake flooded, they had to transport it by road so it was disguised with a dummy wooden propeller on the front and covered with a shroud.



There is also the story behind the hats. On one test flight the jet was spotted by pilots getting checked out in P-38s operating from Van Nuys Airport. When the P-38 pilots reported seeing an airplane with no propeller, their account met with skepticism but the story kept circulating, so on a subsequent flight the test pilot of the P-59 dressed up in a gorilla mask, put on a derby hat and smoked a cigar. He then made a point to fly next to the P-38 pilots and waved at them. When the P-38 pilots got back to the base, they told everyone about the plane with no propeller flown by a gorilla wearing a derby and smoking a cigar. The result of their report was total disbelief, so the airplane remained a secret until after the war.





1942 Cockpit & Inst. Panel photo:
Really Hi-Tech in **1942** !



Comparison to a **2008** F-18 Cockpit, below !
Only 66 years later !
95% Digital (all Glass) w-a Heads-Up- Display





The restoration crew has special shirts, and derby hats. Maybe they will have gorilla masks by this weekend?



General characteristics

Power plant Two General Electric J31-GE-5 turbojets

Thrust 907 kg 8.89 kN

Max. speed 413 mph 664 km/h

Range: normal 240 miles 386 km

ext. tanks 520 miles 836 km

Wingarea 386 sq ft 35.86 sq m

Weight empty 7,940 lb 3,600 kg

max. takeoff 12,700 lb 5,760 kg

Wingspan 45.5 ft 13.88 m

Length 38.85 ft 11.84 m

Height 12.3 ft 3.76 m

Armament One 37 mm cannon, three 12.5 mm machine guns;
under wings 2x 450 kg bombs or 8x 27 kg rockets

Date deployed to active service: 1944

Number built 66 (incl. three training XF2L-1 for US Navy)

