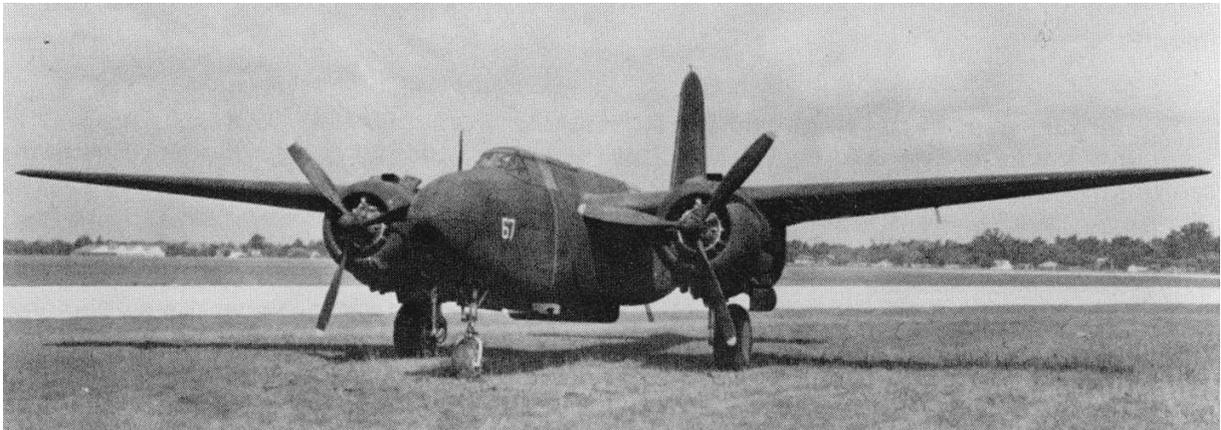


# Douglas P-70

**History:** The P-70 was a night fighter conversion of the successful Douglas A-20/Boston light attack bomber developed in the period just before World War Two. It arose out of British experience in using Boston conversions carrying the new AI Mk.IV radar sets mounted in them to intercept German bombers over Britain. Even before the United States joined the war it saw the need for a radar equipped night fighter and began development of the Northrop P-61. However it also needed something to fill that gap while that interceptor was being developed and so decided to try an adaption of the A-20 following the British example.

The first P-70s had the bomb racks and all defensive armament removed, the radar mounted in the nose with the glazing simply painted over, and a tray of four 20mm cannon mounted centrally under the fuselage. The success of these modifications led the USAAC to decide, on 15 October 1940, to modify a further 59 A-20s into P-70s. After this four more versions of the P-70 were produced: the P-70A-1 that was a converted A-20C with six or eight .50 calibre machine guns mounted in the nose and the radar set mounted in the bomb bay, the P-70A-2 that was A.20Gs converted in the same way, the P-70B-1 that was an A-20G fitted with the new SCR-720 radar in the nose with two gun pack mounted on the fuselage sides with three 50 calibre machine guns each and finally the P-70B-2 that were A-20Gs and -Js similarly fitted. Most P-20B2s did not have armament fitted.



Only about 280 P-70s were converted from A-20s. They equipped a number of early American night fighter squadrons sent for overseas service but they were not very successful. The squadrons sent to North Africa converted to Bristol Beaufighter night fighters and others that went to Italy converted to P-61s before they began operations. Several squadrons that were sent to the Pacific War did see operations with P-70s but they were too slow and could not climb quickly enough to intercept Japanese night raiders. As Japanese air activity subsided the P-70s were used as intruders.

The P-70s were not successful as night fighters and scored only two kills during the entire war. However they were valuable in giving the United States experience in operating night fighters and in giving aircrew experience in night fighter operations so that when the P-61s did arrive they were quickly put to good use. Most P-70s didn't even leave the United States and many of them spent their entire time flying with training units, often without any armament fitted.

**Data:** two-seat night fighter. *Engines* two Wright R-2600-11 radial engines of 1,193kW (1600hp). *Wing span* 18.69m (61ft 4in). *Length* 14.63m (48ft). *Maximum take-off weight* 9654kg (21,283lbs). *Maximum speed* 529km/h (329mph). *Range* 1706km (1060miles).

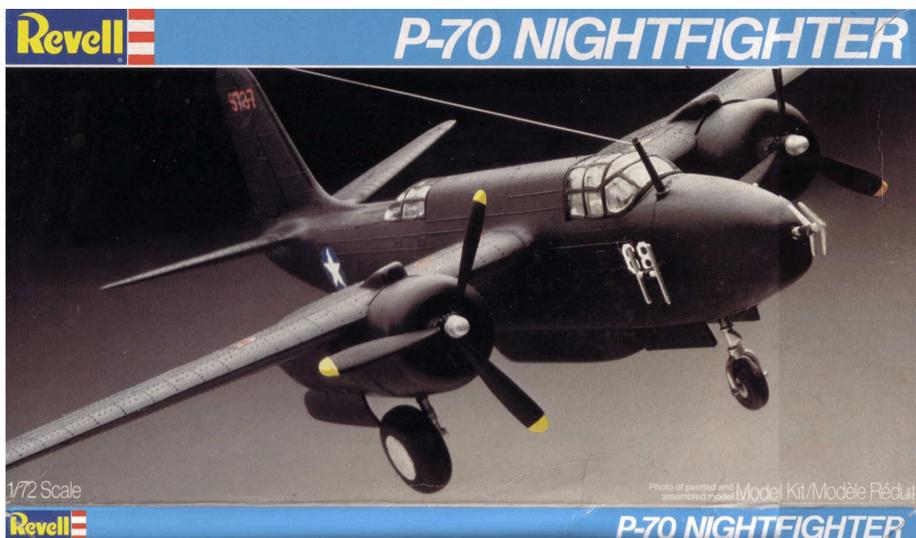
*Armament* 4 20mm cannon.

**The kit: Revell 1:72**

I bought this kit only because I happened to have the cockpit canopies for it in a Falcon set of United States canopies. It comes from an early period in Revell's history when they released a range of kits that were, for their day, well advanced on the Airfix standard. However, by today's standard these kits are best described as 'ordinary'. This doesn't mean that they are unmakeable, just that if there is something more recent available you'd be better off making it. Not that I'm aware of any other kit of the P-70, but since Revell clearly converted theirs from an A-20 kit you wouldn't have much trouble doing the same from a more recent kit, the cannon tray under the fuselage would be the only challenging item, and that wouldn't be too difficult.

Of the five versions of the P-70 that Revell could have made they chose the first version with the ventral gun pack so less tampering with other parts was necessary. As with most kits of this vintage cockpits are limited to a seat and an uncomfortable little man so the real modeller would make up something to fill the void. I didn't. Some bits do need some attention to make them a little more realistic, including the exhausts that I drilled out to help give that little touch of verisimilitude. The most disappointing part of the kit is the transparencies because they are not high enough. If you used them you'd have to take about an eighth of an inch off the upper fuselage and doing that would leave you with a model that lacks that lanky look that the A-20 family had. This is where the Falcon replacement canopies came in and, with a bit of careful trimming and fitting they were much better than Revell's originals.

The most difficult part of the whole process is making the radar antennae, in theory at least a simple enough job. All you need is a bit of stretched sprue and an amazingly steady hand to fit the incredibly tiny and fragile pieces of plastic together. I was tempted to use the kit parts just to make life



easy but I was forced to do the right thing because one of the side antennas was missing from the kit. I've always avoided these hand made antennas because of the endless grief I'd had in trying to glue the tiny bits together but this time, with a bit of inspiration, I decided the problem was in holding the parts together while the glue did its work, so the problem was in getting them to stay together. The solution was a bit of sticky tape and some superglue. The results weren't bad, but far from perfect, but I experimented with this process and eventually came up with some fairly decent antennas. Now my problem is that they are so fine I can hardly see them and tend to knock them around when handling the model.

There can be nothing easier than to paint a flat black model, all kinds of imperfections can lay beneath it's cover. Since the Falcon canopies are so thin I also painted a strip of decal sheet as I did the model and then used it, cut into thin strips, to make the canopy framing for the model. I also experimented with a reel of Ezline I'd recently bought for the radio antenna. It turns out to be flat rather than round but it went on very easily in comparison to using stretched sprue for this kind of thing. The end result is an intriguingly interesting version of the A-20 series.