

# 70th Anniversary of the Canadair Sabre 1 First Flight



It was on August 9, 1950, that the first single-engine Canadair Sabre 1 jet fighter made its first flight. In 1948, the Canadian government placed its first order for North American F-86 Sabre fighter to built under licence by Canadair Limited. Canadair designated the aircraft the CL-13, but its official designation was the Canadair Sabre (the RCAF never called the aircraft the CF-86)

The prototype Sabre 1 was assembled at Cartierville Airport from US-made components and powered by General Electric J47-GE13 engine installed in American-built F-86s. With the outbreak of the Korean War in the summer of 1950, the Royal Canadian Air Force increased its order for Sabre fighters with a total of 350 General Electric-powered Sabre Mk 2 delivered starting in the spring of 1951.

The RCAF wanted the more powerful Canadian-made Avro Orenda jet engine developed in Malton, Ontario to power later versions of the Sabre (as well as the Avro CF-100 interceptor).

The single Sabre 3 prototype powered by a 6,000 lb. thrust Orenda 3 flew for the first time on June 4, 1952 and was used by Jacqueline Cochran at Edwards Air Force Base in California in May 1953 to set a number of speed records and to become the first female pilot to break the sound barrier.

The first production Sabre 5 powered by the 6,600 lb thrust Orenda 10 flew on July 30, 1953 and the first Sabre 6 powered by a 7,275 lb thrust Orenda 14 engine flew on October 19, 1954. These aircraft featured several modifications to accommodate the larger diameter Orenda engine and improve aircraft performance including power assisted flight controls, leading edge devices and a larger wing.

The Canadair Sabre was more maneuverable and climbed faster than the F-86 manufactured by North American, with the Sabre 6 having the best performance. During the 1950s and early 1960s, it was considered one of the best fighter aircraft for dog fight combat. It remained in military service until 1971 with the Pakistani Air Force.

Canadair built 1,815 Sabre fighters at Carterville Airport between 1950 and 1959 and developed a large Canadian supply chain to support high volume production. The RCAF operated the Sabre until 1969, and Canadair Sabres also served with the air forces of at least 10 other countries: Columbia, Greece, Honduras, Italy, Pakistan (via Iran), Philippines (via the UN in the Congo), United Kingdom, United States, West Germany, and Yugoslavia.

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