

B-17G Texas Raiders



Texas Raiders was an American Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress, a Douglas-Long Beach built B-17G-95-DL. The Commemorative Air Force's Gulf Coast Wing "Texas Raiders" group maintained and flew the aircraft. She was hangered at General Aviation Services, which is located at Conroe-North Houston Regional Airport in Conroe, Texas. She was destroyed in a mid-air collision with a P-63 Kingcobra during an air show at Dallas Executive Airport, Texas, during the early afternoon on November 12, 2022. This article needs additional citations for verification. Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources.

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Early history :

The plane was built in 1944 by Douglas Aircraft Corporation at the Long Beach, California, plant under license from Boeing. On July 12, 1945, she was delivered to the U.S. Army Air Forces as B-17G-95-DL 44-83872. Number 44-83872 was one of the last 20 B-17s built by Douglas. On July 21, 1945, all 20 were transferred to the U.S. Navy to serve as PB-1W Patrol Bombers. 44-83872 was assigned the U.S. Navy Bureau of Aeronautics Number 77235. The Navy used PB-1Ws as the original Airborne Warning and Command System or AWACS aircraft, as well as for electronic countermeasures, anti-submarine warfare and hurricane hunters. The Navy sealed up the bomb bay doors and installed 300 gallon wing-mounted drop tanks and the AN/APS-20 Seasearch radar equipment in a bulbous housing below the former bomb bay. Radio direction finder (RDF), instrument landing system (ILS), and long range navigation (LORAN) was also installed at this time. She was not painted, but waxed to prevent corrosion, and kept her original Browning M2 machine guns. In January 1955, VW-1 phased out PB-1W operations for the new Lockheed PO-1W and WV-2 (Navy versions of the EC-121 Warning Star) based on the Lockheed Constellation airframe. January 1955 BuNo 77235 was placed in Flyable Storage Status until officially retired from Naval service on August 25, 1955, with 3257 hours flying time accrued. It was one of the last B-17s left in service at the time and one of only 3 PB-1Ws saved from the scrapyard or scavenging. Aero Service Corporation bought BuNo 77235 for \$17,500 and on October 1, 1957, was registered as N7227C and then used as an aerial surveying platform. She was sold in 1961 and used as an aerial photographic aircraft by ACS Inc. until September 22, 1967.

Commemorative Air Force ownership :

The Commemorative Air Force (CAF), known as the Confederate Air Force before 2001, acquired the plane for \$50,000. She was white with a large United States flag on the tail. Assigned to the Gulf Coast Wing by the CAF in 1972, the plane underwent many changes to put her back to the B-17 G model configuration that flew with the United States Army Air

Corps in the European Theatre of Operations under the "Mighty" Eighth Air Force. She was named Texas Raiders during her first CAF restoration in the 1960s as a memorial to Texas aviators who served. Texas Raiders also underwent a \$300,000 restoration and rebuild project from 1983 to 1986, and later underwent a lengthy and costly main spar replacement project, started in 2001 due to FAA Airworthiness Directive # 2001-22-06 citing corrosion in the wings. The most recent refurbishment cost approximately \$200,000 to complete. Texas Raiders took to the air once again on October 13, 2009, still painted in the combat colors commemorating the U.S. Army Air Corps 8th Air Force, 1st Air Division, 381st Bombardment Group (Heavy), 533rd Bombardment Squadron's plane "hull number" X. The 381st Bombardment Group was formed at Pyote Air Force Base and was assigned to Ridgewell Airfield in Essex, England, about six miles from Haverhill. Texas Raiders returned to flight again on October 14, 2009, and then debuted at her "home airshow", Wings Over Houston, later that month. March 2010 found Texas Raiders relocating to a spacious hangar at the Tomball Jet Center in David Wayne Hooks Memorial Airport (KDWH) in Tomball, Texas. The heavy bomber relocated again in March 2017 to General Aviation Services at Conroe North Houston Regional Airport in Conroe, Texas.

Texas Raiders rejoined the air show circuit in 2010, just in time to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the first flight of the B-17. She traveled to the world-renowned Experimental Aircraft Association EAA AirVenture Oshkosh airshow, where she was featured in AeroShell Square. She also participated in the Gathering of Fortresses at the Thunder Over Michigan air show, and as a tribute to the unit that she memorialized, appeared at the 381st Bomb Group's reunion.

In 2012, she participated in the airshow at Dyess Air Force Base. Texas Raiders was hosted by the 436th Training Squadron, which is the unit whose lineage goes back to the 88th Reconnaissance Squadron that Texas Raiders commemorated while performing in the Tora Tora Tora act. In 2015, Texas Raiders traveled to Washington D.C. to participate in the Arsenal of Democracy, a flyover that commemorated the 70th anniversary of the allied victory in Europe in World War II.

The Gulf Coast Wing of the CAF commissioned a complete new paint job and brand new nose art for Texas Raiders in late 2016.

