

# **PATRIOTS POINT**

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**A-4C SKYHAWK**  
**Douglas**

Delivered in 1956, the A-4 Skyhawk answered the Navy's call for an attack aircraft that could be carrier based in the maturing jet age. Designed with minimal size and weight in mind, the A-4 was so compact and storage friendly there was no need for folding wings. It would service in service until final retirement in 1975.

Launched from American aircraft carriers in southeast Asia the A-4 was the Navy's primary light bomber in the early years of the Vietnam War, striking enemy targets in the north. Many skilled and heroic pilots sat at the controls of the A-4 with more than a few of them fondly recalling Skyhawk as one of the greatest attack aircrafts ever built.

## **Patriots In the Cockpit**

Among the heroic American pilots held captive in the notorious North Vietnamese prisoner of war camps, two A-4 pilots stand-out.

Lt. Cmdr. John McCain was shot down over Hanoi on October 26, 1967, the right wing of his Skyhawk torn apart by a surface to air missile. Upon arrival at the infamous "Hanoi Hilton," McCain refused to provide his captors with information and was subsequently and repeatedly beaten. When the North Vietnamese learned his father, John S. "Junior" McCain, was commander of all U.S. forces in Vietnam he was offered a chance to go home. He refused. McCain remained in captivity until March 14, 1973. McCain retired from the Navy in 1981 and the following year he was elected as a member of Congress representing the State of Arizona. McCain was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1986.

Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Navy Vice Admiral James Stockdale endured unspeakable torture for nearly eight years as a prisoner of war in Hanoi. Stockdale's A-4 was downed by a surface to air missile on September 9, 1965. As the highest ranking naval officer held prisoner Stockdale was routinely tortured and beaten. In defiance of his captors, Stockdale created a secret code to communicate with fellow prisoners. In the process, he gave American captives a sense of hope and strength. When told by his captors he would be paraded in front of foreign media, Stockdale, according to his Medal of Honor citation...

*"...deliberately inflicted a near mortal wound to his person in order to convince his captors of his*

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*willingness to give up his life rather than capitulate. He was subsequently discovered and revived by the North Vietnamese who, convinced of his indomitable spirit, abated their employment of excessive harassment and torture of all prisoners of war."*

Among his duties following military retirement, Stockdale came to Charleston, South Carolina in the late 1970s to serve as President of The Citadel. James Bond Stockdale died on July 5, 2005. Though many Americans remember him as Ross Perot's reluctant Vice Presidential running mate in 1992, Vice Admiral Stockdale will go down in history as one of the most heroic and revered patriots of our time. We invite you to [visit the official site for Admiral Stockdale](#) to learn more.

**Type:** carrier-based attack aircraft

**Bureau Number:** 149623

**NMNA ID:** 2005.068.001

**Powerplant:** 1 Pratt & Whitney J52-P8A turbojet, 9,300 lbf (10,000+ USMC A-4M and OA-4M) (41 kN)

**Maximum speed:** 585 knots (673 mph, 1,077 km/h)

**Climb rate:** 8,440 ft/min (43 m/s)

**Range:** 1,700 nm (2,000 mi, 3,220 km)

**Service ceiling:** 42,250 ft (12,880 m)

**Weights:** empty 10,450 lb (4,750 kg); loaded 18,300 lb (8,318 kg); max takeoff 24,500 lb (11,136 kg)

**Armament:** 2× 20 mm (0.787 in) Colt Mk 12 cannon, 100 rounds/gun; 4 AIM-9 Sidewinder missiles

**Dimensions:**

Length: 40 ft 3 in (12.22 m)

Wingspan: 27 ft 6 in (8.38 m)

Height: 14 ft 11 in (4.57 m)

Wing area: 259 sq ft (24.15 m<sup>2</sup>)

*This aircraft is on loan from the National Museum of Naval Aviation at Pensacola, FL*