

Profile provided by Warbird Alley, with permission of Buck Wyndham

PROFILE: Grumman TBF Avenger

(Variants/Other Names: General Motors (Eastern Aircraft) **TBM** Avenger)

HISTORY:

First flown on 1 August 1941, the three-seat Grumman **TBF-1** Avenger torpedo-bomber entered US Navy service just in time to participate in the Battle of Midway in June 1942. During its World War II lifespan, the Avenger design changed very little, and this allowed it to be built in huge quantities. Demand for the airplane was so great that the General Motors Company was also contracted to build it, under the designation **TBM-1**, beginning in September 1942.

Over 1,000 TBF/TBMs (initially called **Tarpon Mk I**, and later designated **Avenger Mk I**) were also used by the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm in both Atlantic and Pacific theaters. The Avenger was also used by the Royal New Zealand Air Force.

The second major variant was the **TBM-3**, which featured strengthened wings to allow rockets and radar pods to be carried. A large percentage of the TBM-3s were delivered with their large dorsal turrets removed.

The Avenger's torpedo-delivery capability had a huge impact on the Japanese fleet during the war, and its rugged simplicity made it highly resistant to enemy air defenses. After the war, the Avenger continued to find niches in naval aviation. The US Navy maintained it as a search-and-rescue aircraft, an all-weather night bomber, an electronic countermeasures platform, a Carrier On-Board Delivery (COD) aircraft, and a target tug.

In 1953, the Royal Navy began acquiring anti-submarine warfare versions of the Avenger under the Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP). These aircraft were designated the **Avenger AS Mk IV** or **AS Mk V**, and were used in the ASW role until the introduction of the [Fairey Gannet](#) in 1955. Avengers were also exported under MDAP to France, Japan, Canada, and the Netherlands.

Unbelievably, some Avengers continued earning their keep until more than sixty years after their debut. Until recently, at least one aerial firefighting operation used Avengers as firebombers and/or fire spotters over the woods of Canada. Many more have found their way into the caring hands of collectors and warbird museums.

NICKNAMES:

Chuff, Turkey, Pregnant Beast, Tarpon (RAF).

SPECIFICATIONS (TBM-3):

Engine: 1,900hp Wright R-2600-20 radial piston engine

Weight: Empty 10,545 lbs., Maximum Takeoff 17,895

Wing Span: 54ft. 2in.

Length: 40ft 11.5in.

Height: 15ft 5in.

Performance:

Maximum Speed at 16,500ft: 276mph

Climb Rate: 2060 feet per minute

Ceiling: 30,100ft

Range: 1000 miles

Armament:

- Two 12.7mm (0.5 in.) forward-firing machine guns
- One 12.7mm (0.5 in.) dorsal-mounted machine gun
- One 7.62mm (0.3 in.) ventral-mounted machine gun
- Up to 2,000lb of bombs in bomb-bay
- Wing-mounted rockets / drop tanks / radar pod

NUMBER BUILT: 9,836 (7,546 by General Motors)

NUMBER STILL AIRWORTHY: 42