TRAC News

February 2026 Issue

Presidents comments

I sincerely hope you can attend our upcoming meeting on February 14th. We are very much looking forward to seeing you all there. Your presence and contributions are always greatly valued.

We've got all three event fliers finalized and looking great! I'm hoping we can get some volunteers to help us spread the word online. It would be awesome if you could share them on your Facebook and other social media accounts. This will be a huge help in making sure our events reach as many people as possible. Thanks in advance for your support!

Safe Flying
Steve Watson

Upcoming Events

***TRAC* - Club Meeting at Field, Saturday, January 10, at 11:00AM**
***TRAC* - Club Meeting at Field, Saturday, February 14, at 11:00AM**
***TRAC* - Club Swap Meet at Field, Saturday, March 7, at 08:00AM**
***TRAC* - Club Meeting at Field, Saturday, March 14, at 11:00AM**
***TRAC* - Club Warbird Event at Field, Saturday, April 4, at 08:00AM**
***TRAC* - Club Meeting at Field, Saturday, April 11, at 11:00AM**

TRAC MINUTES

January 10, 2026

Meeting Call to Order

Meeting called to order by President Steve Watson at 11:02 a.m. with 24 signed-in members present.

Motion to accept minutes of last meeting was made, seconded, and passed.

Treasury Report

Tim Haas presented a detailed treasury report and break down of expenses.

Beginning Balance	$ XXXX
Income	$ 1366.68
Expenses	$ 169.21
Closing Balance	$ XXXX
Runway Fund	$ 2650.00

New Members/New Pilots

Dave Graham welcome to the club

Safety block

Use Common Sense

Old Business

New Business

Swap Meet March 7th 8:00 am
Warbird Meet April 4th 8:00 am
Eric will Cook with Robert Helicopter Meet May 2nd 8: am
We had a new 18ft Flag pole installed by Bill

Show-and-Tell:

N/A

Adjournment 11:26 am

Bell YFM-1 Airacuda

The **Bell YFM-1 Airacuda** was an American heavy fighter aircraft, developed by the Bell Aircraft Corporation for the United States Army Air Corps during the mid-1930s. It was the first military aircraft produced by Bell. Originally designated the **Bell Model 1**, the Airacuda first flew on 1 September 1937. The Airacuda was marked by bold design advances and considerable flaws that eventually grounded the aircraft.

The Airacuda was Bell Aircraft's answer for a "bomber destroyer" aircraft. Although it did see limited production, and one fully operational squadron was eventually formed, only one prototype and 12 production models were ultimately built, in three slightly different versions.

In an effort to break into the aviation business, Bell Aircraft created a unique fighter concept touted to be "a mobile anti-aircraft platform"[2] as well as a "convoy fighter".[3] Created to intercept enemy bombers at distances beyond the range of single-seat fighter interceptors, the YFM-1 (**Y**, service test; **F**, fighter; **M**, multiplace) was an innovative design incorporating many features never before seen in a military aircraft, as well as several never seen again. Using a streamlined, "futuristic" design, the Bell Airacuda appeared to be "unlike any other fighters up to that time".[4]

A forward-firing 37 mm (1.46 in) M4 cannon with an accompanying gunner was mounted in a forward compartment of each of the two engine nacelles.[5] Although capable of aiming the cannons, the gunners' primary purpose was simply to load them with the 110 rounds of ammunition stored in each nacelle.[5]

The crew of five included the pilot and gunners; a copilot/navigator who doubled as a fire-control officer, using a Sperry Instruments "Thermionic" fire control system (originally developed for anti-aircraft cannon) combined with a gyro-stabilised and an optical sight to aim the weapons;[5] and a radio operator/gunner armed with a pair of machine guns stationed at mid-fuselage waist blisters for defense against attack from the rear.

The Airacuda was plagued with problems from the start. The lofty performance estimates were unobtainable as, despite its sleek looks, the Airacuda was heavy and was slower than most bombers. In the event of interception by enemy fighters, the Airacuda was not maneuverable enough to dogfight, while the meager 600 lb (270 kg) bombload was of little use in the intended fighter-bomber role. Even the 37 mm cannons were of less value than predicted. The cannons had a tendency to fill the gun nacelles with smoke whenever fired and, additionally, fears persisted as to how the gunners would escape in an emergency, with the propellers directly behind them. An emergency bailout would have required both propellers to be feathered,[2] though additional provision was made with the use of explosive bolts on the propellers to jettison them in the event of a bailout. As with other types armed with the 37 mm M4, the low muzzle velocity of the weapon made it difficult to use as an aerial weapon, limiting the useful range.

The Allison V-1710-41 engines, though relatively trouble-free in other types, had insufficient cooling.[2] Like many pusher designs, they were prone to overheating while on the ground, since there was no propwash blowing over the engines to cool them. On the ground, the aircraft had to be towed to and from the runway and could only be started when the Airacuda was able to take off immediately.

Initial flight testing by Lt. Ben Kelsey proved the Airacuda virtually impossible to control with only one engine, as the aircraft would go into an immediate spin. Problems with stability in pitch were also encountered and had to be corrected by reducing power.[5] Test pilot Erik Shilling described his experiences in a later book *Destiny: A Flying Tiger's Rendezvous With Fate* as[3]

Flying the Bell Airacuda was a new experience for me, since it was the first pusher aircraft I'd ever flown. Its handling characteristics were foreign to anything I had ever had my hands on. Under power it was unstable in pitch, but stable with power off. While flying straight and level, if a correction in pitch was required, a forward push on the control resulted in the airplane wanting to pitch over even more. Pitch control became a matter of continually jockeying the controls, however slightly, even when the aircraft was in proper trim. The same applied if pulling back on the control. It would tend to continue pitching up, requiring an immediate corrective response. The same happened in a turn with power off, the Bell became stable in pitch. This was fortunate because during approach and landing, it was very stable, and a nice flying airplane.

Despite these problems, one fully operational Airacuda squadron was eventually assembled, and operated from 1938 until 1940. Funds were appropriated, but never released, for the purchase of two groups of Airacudas.[5] Continuing problems gave the aircraft a reputation as "hangar queens".[12] Near the end of the type's operational life, the aircraft were flown primarily for photo opportunities and always accompanied by a chase plane for safety. Eventually the decision was made to disperse the aircraft to various airfields to give pilots an opportunity to add the unusual aircraft to their log books. Airacudas were sent at various times to Langley Field, Virginia; Maxwell Field, Alabama; Hamilton Field, California; and Wright Field, in Dayton, Ohio. YFM-1 38-488 was displayed at the 1940 World's Fair in New York, finished in the markings of the 27th Pursuit Squadron. During this time, the aircraft saw limited flight time, as few pilots were interested in flying the unusual aircraft.

Specifications (XFM-1)

Data from [16]

General characteristics

Crew: five (pilot, copilot/navigator, radio operator/gunner, two gunners)
Length: 44 ft 10 in (13.67 m)
Wingspan: 69 ft 10 in (21.29 m)
Height: 13 ft 7 in (4.14 m)
Wing area: 684 sq ft (63.5 m^2)
Airfoil: NACA 23018/NACA 23009 [17]
Empty weight: 13,376 lb (6,067 kg)
Gross weight: 17,333 lb (7,862 kg)
Max takeoff weight: 21,625 lb (9,809 kg)
Fuel capacity: 400 US gal (1,500 L)
Powerplant: 2 × Allison V-1710-9 liquid-cooled turbosupercharged V-12, 1,090 hp (810 kW) each

Propellers: three-bladed

Performance

Maximum speed: 277 mph (446 km/h, 241 kn)
Cruise speed: 244 mph (393 km/h, 212 kn)
Range: 2,600 mi (4,200 km, 2,300 nmi)
Service ceiling: 30,500 ft (9,300 m)
Rate of climb: 1,480 ft/min (7.5 m/s)

Armament

Guns: ** 2 × 37 mm (1.46 in) M4 cannons (110 rpg)
2 × .30 in (7.62 mm) M1919 Browning machine guns in front of nacelles
2 × .50 in (12.7 mm) M2 Browning machine guns (600 rpg) in side blisters

Bombs: 20 × 30 lb (14 kg) fragmentation bombs in wing bays