Northrop P-61 A/B Black Widow

The Northrop P-61 was a night fighter designed and built by Northrop Aircraft in the United States. It was the world's first operational jet-powered fighter and the first jet-powered combat aircraft to enter service. The P-61 was developed to counter the threat posed by the German Heinkel He 219 Uhu, a nightfighter that used jet propulsion.

**Specifications**
- **Type:** Nightfighter
- **Manufacturer:** Northrop Aircraft
- **Powerplant:** 2 x Allison T38-A-1 Turbojet engines
- **Performance:**
  - Cruise speed: 588 km/h (365 mph)
  - Maximum speed: 676 km/h (420 mph)
  - Range: 1,800 km (1,110 miles)
- **Weights:**
  - Empty weight: 2,956 kg (6,500 lbs)
  - Maximum takeoff weight: 6,252 kg (13,780 lbs)
- **Armament:**
  - 4 x 20mm cannons
  - 2 x 12.7mm machine guns

**Description**
The P-61 was designed with a long fuselage and a swept-back tail, allowing it to fly at high speeds and altitudes while maintaining stability. The aircraft had a unique tandem cockpit layout, with the pilot seated in the rear and the navigator/gunner in the front. This arrangement was later adopted by other aircraft in the P-61 family.

**Operational History**
- **First Flight:** April 21, 1943
- **First Combat:** December 1943
- **Production:** Total of 251 aircraft built
- **Service:** U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force
- **Significance:** P-61s were used in the Aleutian Islands and the Pacific Theatre, playing a significant role in the defense against Japanese bombers.

**Engine**
The P-61 used the Allison T38-A-1 Turbojet engine, which was a significant advancement in jet engine technology at the time. The engine was later replaced by the more powerful Allison T38-A-2, improving the aircraft's performance.

**Conclusion**
The Northrop P-61 A/B Black Widow was a significant step forward in the evolution of night fighters. Its success in combat operations highlighted the potential of jet-powered aircraft and set the stage for future developments in aviation technology.
Verwendete Symbole / Used Symbols
P-61B-1-NO, 42-39468, "Moonlight Serenade", 13th AF, 550th NFS, Morotai Island, November 1944

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P-61A-1, 42-5524, "Midnight Mickey", 7th AF, 6th NFS, Saipan, December 1944

[Diagram of a P-61 Black Widow aircraft with various parts labeled]