NAVAL AVIATION NEWS **naval aircraft**

SABRELINER

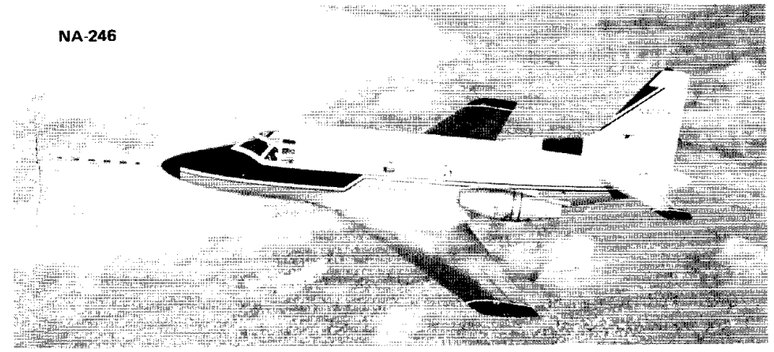
Regularly seen at all naval air stations and long familiar to all NFOs graduating from the training command are the attractive T-39/CT-39 *Sabreliners.* The *Sabreliner* traces its lineage to a 1956 U.S. Air Force requirement for a light twin-jet UTX (utility/trainer). The Air Force required prototypes for evaluation, along with commercial certification of whatever aircraft were selected for procurement.

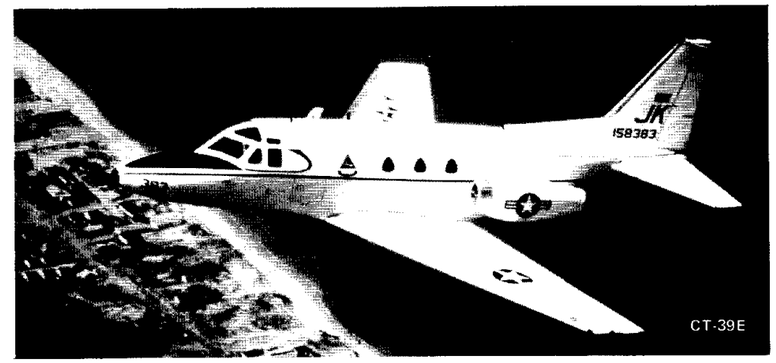
From this came the North American NA-246 *Sabreliner* prototype. The *Sabreliner* was selected as the winner of the Air Force competition in 1958. Production T-39As differed from the prototype in many details, principally in having the GE J85s of the NA-246 replaced by P&W J60s. Certified by FAA, the T-39As were largely used as utility transports by the Air Force and the civilian models became successful commercial business jets. Addition of fighter-type radar for special training led to the Air Force T-39B with Navy orders following in 1961 for 42 similar T-39Ds (ordered as T3J-1s) having Navy fighter-type radar.

In 1967, the need for small transports in WestPac to handle high priority cargo and personnel led to the lease/purchase of seven commercial *Sabreliner* Series 40, which carried their commercial registration as well as Navy BuNos. By the time their purchase was completed, they were designated CT-39Es. When additional *Sabreliners* were required for Navy and Marine Corps use, the stretched commercial Rockwell (North American had merged with Rockwell and is now part of Rockwell International) Series 60 *Sabreliners* were purchased, becoming CT-39Gs. Like the Es, they are powered by P&W JT12 jet engines – commercial versions of the J60.

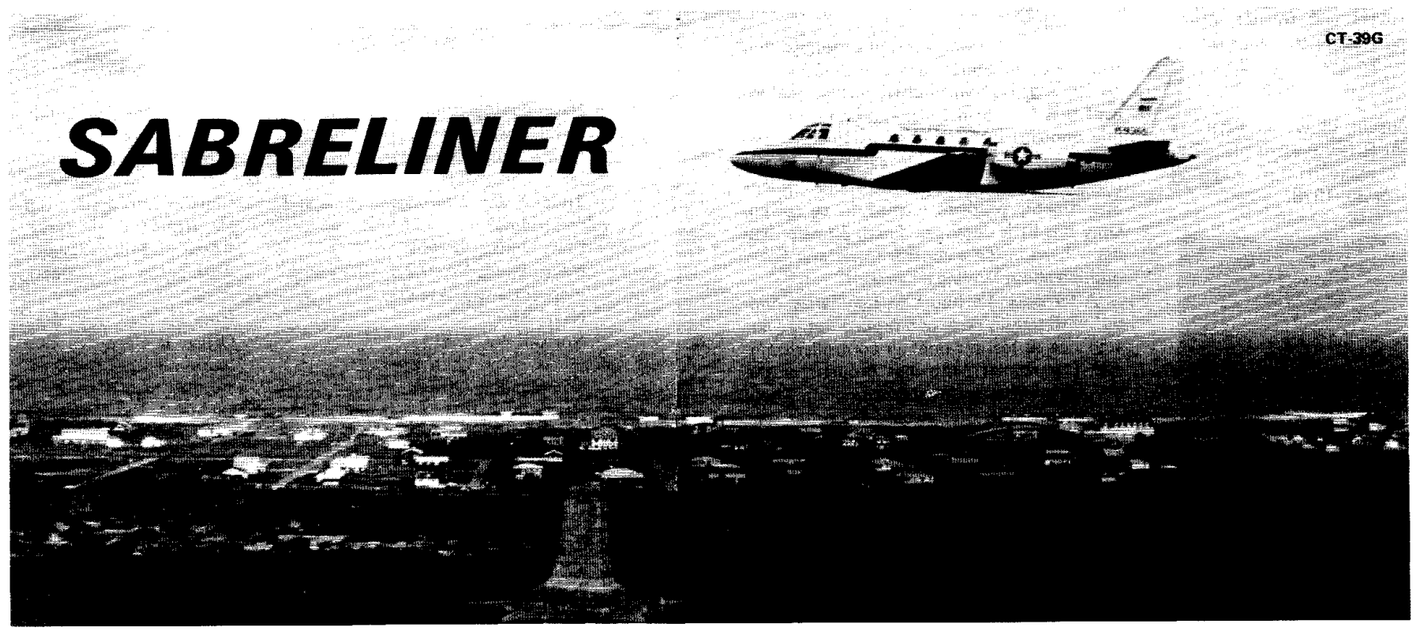
The T-39s continue in wide service, many of them thanks to NARF Pensacola's extensive rebuilding. In addition to their original assignments, several serve special roles for R&D and other projects. In their many roles, both military and civil, *Sabreliners* will be around for years to come.

NA-246



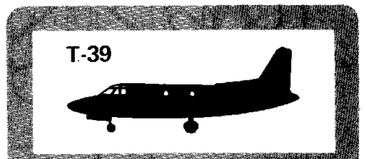
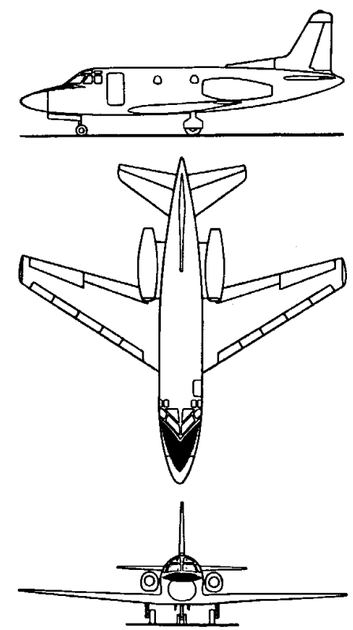


CT-39E



CT-39G

T-39



Length	
T-39D	
CT-39G	
Span	
Height	
Engine	
T-39D	two P&W J60-P-3A
CT-39E,G	two P&W JT12A-8
Maximum speed	
T-39D	
CT-39G	
Service Ceiling	
T-39D	
CT-39G	
Maximum range	
T-39D	
CT-39G	
Crew/passengers	
T-39	
CT-39G