

Stinson L-1 “Vigilant”

The Stinson L-1 Vigilant was the original “L-bird.” In 1942, the U.S. Army Air Corps changed their aircraft naming scheme from “O” for observation to “L” for liaison, and the L-1 was born.

The aircraft first flew on July 15, 1940. It was conceived as the Stinson model V-74 in a competition for a two-seat light observation aircraft. The Army gave it the designation YO-49 during evaluation exercises. Used throughout the world, in Europe, Africa, Asia, and Alaska, the L-1’s primary missions included supply, transport, and medical evacuation. Of the 324 aircraft built, only a handful remain.

The L-1 was the largest L-bird used in WWII. It was heavier and significantly harder to service than the other L-birds and, as a result, was gradually phased out by lighter aircraft that followed it.