

P-80 Brings New Air Record Back to U. S.

MUROC, Calif., June 20.—(AP)—An army jet plane, the P80-R, has regained the world speed record for the United States—at 623.8 miles per hour.

Striking but 50 feet above the Mojave desert near Muroc army airfield, Col. Albert Boyd of Abbeville, S. C., guided the Lockheed-built fighter yesterday on four runs over a 1.56 mile (three kilometer) course. The average topped by 7.8 mph the 616 mph mark set by a British Gloster Meteor jet plane September 7, 1946.

Must Be Certified
With the wind, the P80-R reached speeds of 632.5 and 630.5 mph. The upward runs were made at 617.1 and 614.7 mph.

The record will not be official until certified by the Federation Aeronautique International in Paris. Official observers, however, pointed out that the new mark was made over the standard course and according to all other international speed rules.

It was the first time in 24 years that the United States moved into the top position, although a P-84 jet moved the mark up from 606 to 611 mph, the same day the British announced 616 mph.

Busy Pilot
The pilot, Colonel Boyd, is chief of the flight test division of the air force's air material command at Wright Field, Ohio. Although aloft only 21 minutes during the entire procedure, he had his hands full.

"It keeps you busy as hell," Colonel Boyd declared. "There are so many things to do and so many instruments to watch. You have water injection to turn on and off for more power. And you must not exceed the prescribed altitude and must keep on the course."

"But it's a great feeling to set a new record."

The last time an American pilot held the speed record, Lockheed said, was in 1923, when Lieut. Al Williams flew a Curtiss racer at 387 mph.

The P80-R alternately bucked and rode a 10-mile wind, but "Colonel Boyd's superb precision flying minimized the adverse affect of the wind and drew every last mile of speed from his plane," Colonel S. A. Gilkey, Muroc base commandant, commented.

For spectators, Colonel Gilkey said, it "was pretty much a case of here she comes and there she goes. We could pick up his smoke trail way out across the desert, then suddenly his plane would flash across the course so fast you could hardly follow it."

Lockheed spent nearly a year preparing the plane for the record assault, sharpening leading edges and streamlining or reducing all external features. The P80-R was powered by a new Allison 400 turbo-jet engine.

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