

SIX OUT

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THE END OF AN ERA



GENERAL DYNAMICS PHOTO

On 30 May 1988, the F-106 DELTA DART ended an era by completing exactly twenty-nine years of Fighter-Interceptor Squadron (FIS) operations. The first two F-106s arrived at the 539th FIS, McGuire AFB, NJ on 30 May 1959. The F-106 has been flying for over 31 years since the first flight of the "Big Six" at Edwards AFB, CA on 26 December 1956. The big interceptor made the record books when, on 15 December 1959 Major Joe Rogers strapped on number 56-0467 and set a single engine speed record of 1,525.95 mph. This record still stands today. Because the 539th was initially involved in Category III testing, the first FIS to stand alert with the DART was the 498th at Geiger Field, WA. This was in the fall of 1959. The "Six" was assigned to 21 squadrons in active air defense operations.

The F-106 was originally designed to work with the Semi-Automatic Ground Environment (SAGE) air defense system of the Air Defense Command. The SAGE system coupled with the F-106s MA-1 electronic guidance and fire control system was quite a match-up. The DART on any given intercept mission could be computer controlled with the pilot only required to take off and land the aircraft. As the SAGE system was being deactivated in 1983, the modernized Joint Surveillance System/Region Operations Control Center (JSS/ROCC) took over to compute the best courses of intercept for our air defense forces. The MA-1 system has gone through 60 changes over the years keeping the F-106 a first-line interceptor in the JSS/ROCC system.



Weapons in the F-106 included the Hughes FALCON series missiles and the GENIE rocket. The latest F-106 armament, carried internally, consisted of one AIR-2A GENIE rocket and four AIM-4F/G FALCON missiles. A 20mm M-61 VULCAN gun option (SIX-GUN) was developed in the early 1970s to give greater effectiveness in the target arena along with a "Bubble" canopy.

DELTA DARTs were involved in numerous deployments through the years. The WHITE SHOES deployments to Alaska started with the 318th and 498th squadrons on 15 July 1963 and ended with the 84th FIS on 2 October 1970. February 1968 saw the 318th begin the COLLEGE CADENCE deployments to Korea. These ended in May 1970 as the 95th FIS returned home to Dover AFB, DE. The first

intercept of three Russian BEAR bombers by CONUS based F-106s was made by the 27th FIS from Loring AFB, Me on 13 May 1969. These were called COLLEGE SHAFT missions. COLLEGE SHAFT missions involved intercepts of Russian bombers staging from Soviet bases flying in the corridor west of Iceland down to Cuba. The 48th started these deployments in May 1963 with their arrival at the Paris Air Show. Later, the "Six" proved its worth by participating in RED FLAG missions at Nellis AFB, NV as the aging DART showed it could still compete in the "ACT Arena." RED FLAG operations for the F-106 ended with the deployment of the 186th FIS of the Montana Air National Guard (ANG) on 8 November 1986. Of the 340 production F-106s, only 12 were not assigned to fighter-interceptor squadrons.



The Air National Guard ushered in their F-106 era with the arrival of DARTS in Montana on 3 April 1972. Six ANG units flew the "Six." It was the 177th Fighter-Interceptor Group (FIG), 119th FIS of the New Jersey ANG that closed out F-106 squadron operations. An F-106 "DART-OUT" was hosted by Colonel Richard C. Cosgrave, Commander, 177th FIG and the personnel of the Group on 10 and 11 June 1988. Guest speakers included Astronaut Gordon Cooper, Lt Col Dick Stultz, and Marty Isham. It was quite a "Six-Out." Maximum Sierra Hotel to all.

New Jersey figures quite prominently in the history of the DELTA DART ... NJ started "Six" FIS operations, NJ won the last F-106 competition in WILLIAM TELL '84 and NJ rung down the curtain on DART FIS operations on 1 August 1988, 1010L when F-106As 59-0043 and 046, along with F-106B, 59-0149 took off for Davis-Monthan AFB.

Because of the F-106's speed and endurance plus its availability, the DELTA DART was selected as the chase aircraft for the B-1 program. The first F-106 arrived for this

program on 10 October 1986. Aircraft number 57-2513 was flown to the North American Aircraft Operations (NAAO) at Palmdale, California on that date. Currently, six DARTS are flying chase with eight having been assigned. The chase aircraft is to fly with the B-1B during its checkout flights. Chase aircraft maintain 100 to 500 feet clearance with the bomber. From this vantage point the chase pilot will be able to spot any external problems of which the crew might not be aware. Generally, only two chase flights are needed to cover a single B-1B acceptance flight. This program is scheduled to last into the fall of 1990. A special thanks to Chief Master Sergeant Jon May for the tour and information.

The final chapter in the career of this distinguished interceptor is currently being written. The conversion of the F-106 to drones will write this last episode. Former DART drivers who have remained in the interceptor business will probably soon be hunting their old mounts. But, when the "Big Six" is gone, she most certainly will not be forgotten.

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