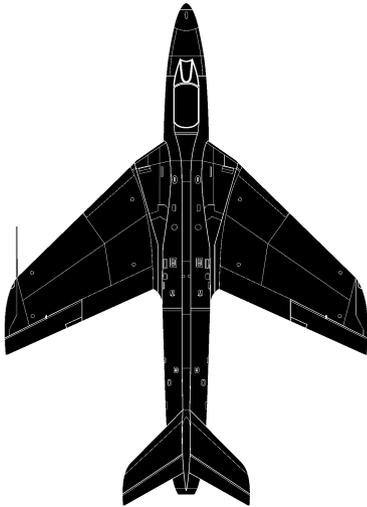


## Hunter



The sleek transonic Hunter was a mainstay of frontline RAF operations in the 1950s and 1960s. The Hawker Siddeley fighter-and-attack aircraft was highly popular abroad, too, serving in 21 non-British air arms. It began life as the RAF's premier fighter. Then, as it was phased out of that role in the 1960s, it began a second career as the RAF's main ground-attack aircraft.

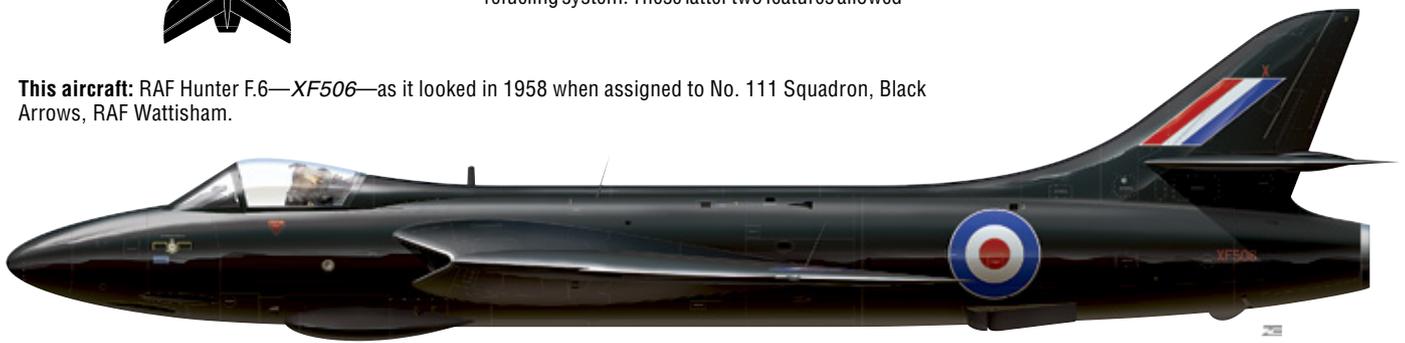
The Hunter was a conventional all-metal type, with a leading edge wing sweep of 35 degrees. Though the aircraft had a long teething period—many problems had to be fixed—the eventual fighter proved easy to fly. It was RAF's first high-speed jet aircraft equipped with radar and fully powered flight controls. All of its 30 mm guns were carried in one detachable gun pack. It had a pressurized refueling system. These latter two features allowed

ground crews to turn the aircraft in seven minutes. Hunter began its second act as the FGA.9 attack aircraft in 1960, a move whose physical changes, however, compromised its speed.

The Hunter gained perhaps its greatest fame as the demonstration aircraft of the Black Arrows, the RAF's first aerobatic team, and the Blue Diamonds, its successor. More importantly, however, the Hunter proved able in combat, first in Britain's 1956 Suez invasion and later in RAF operations in Indonesia. Iraqi Hunters fought in both the 1967 and 1973 Mideast wars. Kenya, Rhodesia, and Somalia all used Hunters in local wars. And India's Hunters flew against China in 1962 and Pakistan twice (in 1965 and 1971).

—Robert S. Dudley with Walter J. Boyne

**This aircraft:** RAF Hunter F.6—XF506—as it looked in 1958 when assigned to No. 111 Squadron, Black Arrows, RAF Wattisham.



### In Brief

Designed, built by Hawker Siddeley ★ first flight July 20, 1951 ★ number built 1,972 ★ crew of one to two ★ **Specific to Hunter F.6:** one Rolls Royce Avon 207 turbojet engine ★ armament four AIM-9 Sidewinders, four 30 mm cannons ★ munitions load up to 7,400 lb of bombs, rockets, missiles, including AGM-65 Maverick ★ max speed 715 mph ★ cruise speed 500 mph ★ max range 445 mi ★ weight (loaded) 24,600 lb ★ span 33 ft 8 in ★ length 45 ft 11 in ★ height 13 ft 2 in ★ service ceiling 50,000 ft.

### Famous Fliers

**Record setter:** Neville Duke (world speed record, 1953). **RAF notables:** John Tumlilty (killed in 1956 six-jet accident), Roger Topp (leader, Black Arrows), Brian Mercer (leader, Blue Diamonds), Alan Pollock (flew Hunter under top span of Tower Bridge, April 5, 1969). **Other notables:** King Hussein bin Talal of Jordan; Saiful Azam (Pakistani pilot, flying Jordanian and Iraqi Hunters, downed two Israeli fighters in 1967 War). **Test pilots:** Duncan Simpson, John Sowrey.

### Interesting Facts

Set world speed record (1953) of 727.63 mph ★ flown by two RAF demonstration teams—Black Arrows and Blue Diamonds ★ served in RAF and Royal Navy ★ suffered major mishap (1956) when six Hunters ran out of fuel and crashed ★ sported under-cockpit blisters nicknamed “Sabrinās,” after voluptuous starlet ★ ordered by, but withheld from, Castro's Cuba ★ used by aero teams of Belgium, India, Jordan, Singapore, Sweden, Switzerland ★ flown by Jordan against Syrian tanks in 1970 Black September war ★ bombed palace of Chile's president Salvador Allende in 1973 coup ★ exported to 21 nations, including nine Arab states ★ featured in films “The Sound Barrier” (1952), “High Flight” (1957), and “Machuca” (2004) ★ flown in more than 25 major variants.



*The Hawker prototype aircraft.*