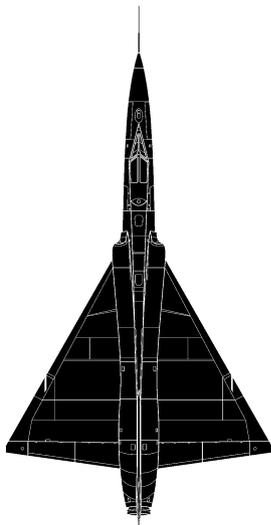


Airpower Classics

Artwork by Zaur Eylanbekov

F-106 Delta Dart



In the world of airpower, it was called the “Ultimate Interceptor,” and rightly so. The USAF F-106 Delta Dart offered the fullest and best expression of a design line that began with the pre-World War II delta wing work of Alexander Lippisch in Germany and extended down through the Convair XF-92 and F-102 Delta Dagger aircraft.

The F-106 was envisaged as a specialized, all-weather, missile-armed interceptor optimized to shoot down bombers. With a larger engine, an “area ruled” fuselage, and the excellent (if difficult to maintain) Hughes fire-control system, the Convair-built “Six,” as it was also called, defended US skies for 29 years. The all-metal aircraft featured wings with a 60 degree sweep. Pilots considered it a delight to fly.

The first F-106A entered service with the Air Defense Command’s 498th Fighter Interceptor Squadron at Geiger AFB, Wash., in July 1959. The Delta Dart was modified over the years with new

ejection seats, canopy, and armament. Moreover, it was fitted with the MA-1 electronic guidance and fire-control system, which operated with the SAGE (Semi-Automatic Ground Environment) defense system. The SAGE system allowed the F-106 to be flown automatically from wheels up on takeoff to flareout before touchdown.

Four F-106 units were deployed to the Far East, but they never engaged in combat. The fighter was retired as an interceptor in the Air Force in 1988, but was flown for a few more months by Air National Guard squadrons. The aircraft was then modified to become the QF-106 drone. The F-106 was the primary all-weather interceptor aircraft for the United States Air Force from the 1960s through the 1980s. It turned out to be the last such dedicated interceptor in USAF service.

—Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: F-106A—#59-0060—as it looked while in service with 159th FIS, 125th FIG, Florida ANG, Jacksonville, Fla., circa 1980.



In Brief

Designed, built by Convair ★ first flight Dec. 26, 1956 ★ crew one or two ★ number built 340 ★ **Specific to F-106A:** one Pratt & Whitney J75 turbojet engine ★ armament one AIR-2 Genie rocket with nuclear warhead; four internal AIM-4 or AIM-26 Falcon AAMs ★ max speed 1,525 mph ★ cruise speed 650 mph ★ max range 1,275 mi ★ weight (loaded) 39,195 lb ★ span 38 ft 3 in ★ length 70 ft 9 in ★ height 20 ft 3 in.

Famous Fliers

Notable: Jack Broughton, author of *Going Downtown*. **Record Setter:** Joseph Rogers, world speed record of 1,525.96 mph in a Delta Dart at 40,500 ft in December 1959. **Test pilot:** R. L. Johnson. **Et Cetera:** Gary Foust, who on Feb. 2, 1970 ejected from an F-106 that subsequently landed by itself.

Interesting Facts

Supercruised (achieved supersonic speed without afterburner) at low altitude ★ had external tanks rated for supersonic flight ★ used to train astronauts ★ equipped with faulty ejection seats that caused deaths of several pilots ★ “scrambled”—went from alert to takeoff—in under three minutes.



An F-106 Delta Dart intercepts a Soviet Tu-95 Bear.