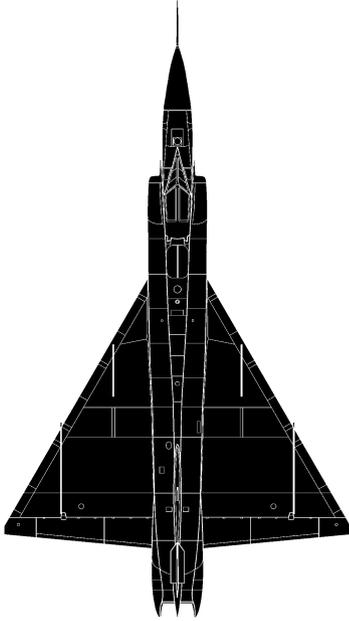


Airpower Classics

Artwork by Zaur Eylanbekov

F-102 Delta Dagger



The F-102 was the world's first supersonic all-weather jet interceptor and the US Air Force's first operational delta-wing aircraft. Consolidated Vultee led the nation in exploiting the delta-wing concept pioneered by Alexander Lippisch in Germany, with the first production item being the beautiful, sharp-edged Delta Dagger.

The YF-102 was a scaled-up version of the XF-92 experimental aircraft, but its first flight was a disappointment; it was not able to achieve supersonic flight, as anticipated. During a four-month-long major rework, the design was modified to conform to Richard T. Whitcomb's Area Rule. The fuselage was lengthened and reduced in diameter at the mid-section. "Whitcomb bodies" were added to the

rear fuselage and a P&W J57 engine was installed. The revised YF-102A achieved supersonic flight on Dec. 21, 1954. The Air Force gave a production go-ahead, and the fighters rolled out.

The F-102 became the backbone of Air Defense Command, an outfit charged with engaging and defeating any intruding Soviet bombers. Production F-102s initially received the sophisticated Hughes MG-3 fire-control system, but this was later updated. The fighter served briefly during the Vietnam War as bomber escort, FAC, and ground attack. They were armed with air-to-air missiles housed in an internal weapons bay. The F-102 served ably until it was finally retired in 1976.

—Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: F-102A-90-CO—#57-0775—as it appeared in 1969 when assigned to California Air National Guard's 196th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron, Ontario Arpt., Calif.



In Brief

Designed, built by Convair ★ first flight Oct. 24, 1953 ★ crew of one ★ number built, 1,000 ★ **Specific to F-102A:** one PW J57 turbojet engine ★ armament six AIM-4 air-to-air missiles; 24 2.75-in rockets ★ max speed 825 mph ★ cruise speed 606 mph ★ max range 1,000 mi ★ weight (loaded) 31,500 lb ★ span 38 ft 1 in ★ length 68 ft 3 in ★ height 21 ft 2 in.

Famous Fliers

Notables: Frederick Blesse, Jack Broughton, William Campenni, Stephen Croker, William Evans, Patrick Gamble, Jimmy Jumper, Iven Kincheloe, John Michael Loh, David McCloud, James McInerney, Billy Minter, Michael Short, Harrison Thyng. **Other notable:** George W. Bush (43rd President). **Test pilot:** Richard Johnson.

Interesting Facts

Nicknamed "the Deuce" ★ designed without a gun (first for a USAF fighter) ★ became world's first operational supersonic delta-wing aircraft ★ used often in Vietnam War as a FAC aircraft ★ suffered combat losses (15) during SE Asian War, but only one air-to-air loss ★ flown by Turkey's air force in combat over Crete ★ converted after combat service to QF-102A piloted drones and PQM-102A unmanned drones ★ led to F-106 Delta Dart and some aspects of the B-58 Hustler.



Three Delta Daggers head out.