

ZIPPER



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INTERNATIONAL F104 SOCIETY

TURKEY

F-104SSSSSsss.

While studying the subject about the role of the F-104S within the Turkish Air Force we decided to ask our Turkish member Serhat Guvenc for help. He was very glad to help us in this interesting subject and he wrote down the following story about the role of the Spagetti 104 in Turkey.

The story about the F-104S Starfighter within the Turkish Air Force, written by our Turkish member Serhat Guvenc.

"The F-104S began to figure in Turkish military procurement plans at the heyday of Turkish military operations in Cyprus. These operations took their toll on the TUAF fleet. To sustain the force levels, a stop-gap aircraft was needed. Although Turkey had two squadrons of F-4E "Phantom II" on order, the delivery schedule ruled out an early deployment of F-4 squadrons.

Among others, thus two conditions pretty much dictated the supplier for the stop-gap aircraft. First, the aircraft had to be already in TUAF inventory so that existing infrastructure, support facilities, training and operating procedures could be utilized with minimum or no modification. Second, the manufacturer had to be willing and able to start deliveries immediately. These two conditions almost singled out Aeritalia-built F-104S as the choice. The manufacturer already notified TUAF that an initial batch of six fighters could be diverted from Italian Air Force stocks to Turkey as soon as an agreement was signed.

Turkey decided to buy F-104S Starfighters. The 142 Filo in 4 AJU Murted was named the first squadron to receive F-104S. The 142 transferred its F/TF-102A Delta Daggers to 182 Filo, another Murted resident, in anticipation of the arrival of the F-104S.



One of Turkish Air Force F-104S aircraft landing here at Murted late 70s when the aircraft did not yet wear AJU-serials on their fuselage. (Murted, late 70s, collection Serhat Guvenc)

The 142 Filo was slated to receive the first 18 F-104S under BORA I project. The F-104S fighters were ferried by Turkish pilots from Italy to Turkey. Due to the tension between Turkey and Greece, rather than seeking overflight permission from Greece, TUAF charted an unusual course crisscrossing the Mediterranean. The first leg of the ferry flight ended in Tobruk, Libya. The aircraft were then flown to Turkey from Libya. With the F-104S, 142 Filo switched to FGA from interceptor role.

(142. Filo received its first F-104S on December 18, 1974 and last F-104S on May 10, 1975. Number 142 Filo transferred its F/TF-102As to 182 Filo on January 15, 1975. Official ceremony for conversion to F-104S was held on March 14, 1975.)

The US arms embargo prompted Turkey to look for additional fighters in the aftermath of the Cyprus conflict. TUAF decided to go for another squadron of F-104S. Number 9 AJU Balikesir was to host this second squadron. In October 1975, the 193 Filo was activated to receive F-104S. A second batch of 18 (+4 attrition replacements) F-104S was ordered under BORA II project. These F-104S Starfighters were also ferried via Tobruk, Libya. Indeed, one ferry flight of three F-104S encountered heavy sandstorm over Libya. One Zipper was heavily damaged upon landing right in the eye of the storm and was subsequently returned to Aeritalia for repair. The 193 received its first F-104S in January 1976. Shortly afterwards, the Filo was amalgamated into the 192 Filo which recently dispersed its F/RF-5A/Bs to other F-5 operators in Turkey. Thus 9 AJU standardized on a single type - F-104 with both and G and S versions in service.

(193 Filo was re-activated on October 21, 1975. The first two F-104S for the 193 Filo were received on January 21, 1976. Number 193 Filo was renumbered (merged into) 192 Filo on July 1976.)

In 1980, each AJU (Ana Jet Ussu: Main Jet Base) was slated to specialize on one aircraft type. Thus, the 142 Filo transferred its F-104S to 191 Filo in Balikesir. The 142 Filo reverted to interceptor role with ex-Klu F-104Gs (in AWX configuration) which were delivered in 1980.

191 Filo had been long-time operator of F-104G in strike role. During the Cyprus conflict, Washington asked Ankara to dismantle all nuclear weapons on strike aircraft, a request that practically marked the end of QRA for the Turkish F-100 and F-104 pilots. Because of the US arms embargo, Turkey did not allow the return of nuclear weapons to Turkish squadrons. When, in 1980, TUAF decided to resume the strike role, number 191 Filo handed its nuclear capable MAP F-104Gs to 141 Filo to augment the 141 Filo fleet in the strike role. During this reshuffling the 191 received the ex-142 Filo F-104S in FGA role.

In the 1980s, the TUAF received a wealth of hand-me-down Starfighters from its NATO allies. The TUAF F-104S fleet was in the meantime fast dwindling due to attrition. These two factors resulted in concentration of all surviving F-104S fighters in 191 Filo in 1983. The 192 re-equipped with F/TF-104Gs received from Norway, Belgium and Germany. This diversity in 192. Filo's fleet was put an end with the arrival of ex-German Starfighters in large numbers.

During the rest of their career, the F-104S remained a prerogative of the 191 Filo. When retired in 1993 TUAF F-104S Starfighters logged 2500 to 3000 flight hours on average each and were surprisingly survived by much older F-104Gs and CF-104s.



F-104S 6868/9-868 taxiing out for a mission at Balikesir. It still wears the original Italian F-104S camouflage scheme. Aircraft 6859/9-859 in the background already has adopted the Turkish brown-green-khaki colorscheme. (Balikesir, early 80s, Collection Serhat Guvenc)

A number of reasons accounted for this early retirement of the Turkish F-104S fleet. In the first place, as mentioned above, the F-104S was a stop-gap aircraft and never intended to form the backbone of the TUAF. Only 40 examples were purchased to equip two Filos. Although appreciated for its superior avionics and power-plant over the F-104G, in terms of build-quality and reliability, the F-104S was found inferior to F-104G.

High attrition rate and reliability problems caused sharp declines in the number of operable aircraft. Therefore, all F-104S were first transferred to form a single squadron, and when the number of operable aircraft dropped below a certain level, the entire fleet was retired.

Although F-104S offered an edge over the F-104G in avionics and engine, the choice of F-104G and particularly CF-104 also reflected a choice of availability and supportability over such qualities.

Because as opposed to ever shrinking F-104S fleet, Turkey received plenty of F-104Gs and CF-104s and huge-stocks of free spare-parts to support both fleets. Thus edge the F-104S offered over the F-104G or the CF-104 did not justify the extra cost of supplies and spare parts for the former. The Zipper's days in Turkish service were numbered anyway as the F-16C/Ds began to emerge out of assembly lines at TAI in the late 1980s. Finally, although featured provisions for AIM-7 Sparrow/Aspide AAMs, Turkish F-104S remained gun-fighters throughout their career with their gun-bays always occupied by M-61 Vulcan gun rather than additional avionics for Sparrows or Aspides."



Two F-104S aircraft (6862 and 6868) in storage at Akhisar. In the meantime the aircraft have very likely been scrapped. A very unhappy ending!! (Akhisar, 6 Februar 1996, Serhat Guvenc)

The 40 aircraft delivered to Turkey can be found beneath. The overview mentions all the aircraft, their Turkish fiscal-year serials, the delivery dates, the last unit code or if crashed before 1980 the unit they flew with when being lost. Each line ends with information about the fate of each aircraft (as far as known).

6851/74-6851	dd 181274	142filo	cr 120875 Beypazari
6852/74-6852	dd 191274	9-852	wfu 280486 (accident)