

With the 'Team Target' nickname of the 82nd ATRS emblazoned across the top of its tail fin, QF-4E Phantom II 72-1477 is in the foreground of this trio of Holloman-based drones.



to both system developers and the military services about the ability of various weapons to respond to current and foreseeable threats.

In February 1992, Tracor Flight Systems (now part of BAE Systems) won a USAF contract to design and develop the conversion of F-4 Phantom IIs into the next generation FSAT (Full Scale Aerial Target) drone, the QF-4, designed to replace the QF-106. The first production example was delivered to the 82nd ATRS at Tyndall on October 31, 1995. Since then, BAE Systems has been the single source for conversion.

As a consequence of the increased demand for QF-4s, the output of the

Regeneration Program at Davis Monthan AFB has been doubled from about 12 to 24 Phantoms annually. AMARC's internal goal is to have the Phantoms ready for delivery to BAE Systems in a cycle of 80 days, whereby Air Force Materiel Command has a target of 109 days to have the aircraft ready.

Holloman 'Spooks'

During the last three decades, the main mission of Det 1 has primarily been the provision of full-scale aerial target support to the WSMR for Department of Defense research, development and test programs. As such, Det 1, operating its

own fleet of FSATs, has primarily played a vital part in surface-to-air test programs of the MIM-72 Chaparral, MIM-23 Hawk, MIM-104 Patriot and many more. Today, Det 1 has between 15 and 24 QF-4s in its inventory, depending on the requirements of the OT&E and DT&E programs being run. Unlike the Tyndall-based unit, Det 1 does not operate any sub-scale aerial targets (SSATs), as only the US Army employs these at WSMR.

Since the beginning of drone operations, civilian contractors have been involved — in a deal between the USAF and Lockheed Martin, the latter is responsible for ensuring that the aircraft are made mission-ready, takes care of the maintenance and provides pilots as well as operators to control the aircraft remotely.

Det 1 manages all the operations of the QF-4 fleet as part of this contract, thereby monitoring the level of performance of the contractors at unit level. Looking at it from this perspective, commanding a unit like Det 1 is like running a business. A total of 26 people are attached to the unit, of whom 12 are technicians responsible for keeping the fleet of 15 to a maximum of 24 aircraft working. Given the number of missions that the unit flies, in an equivalent active duty unit, there would probably be five times as many maintenance personnel per aircraft.

below: The last 'Wild Weasel' F-4G to undertake a manned flight is framed by one of its drone brethren on the Holloman ramp. Serial 69-0303, now a QF-4G, carries large 'Pharewell F-4G' titles on its fuselage sides. (Richard Cooper)

