



Det 1

82nd ATRG

To fully test and evaluate anti-aircraft missile systems, there is no substitute for the real thing. At Holloman AFB the 82nd Aerial Targets Squadron's Detachment 1 operates a fleet of QF-4s to provide developers and operational units with a supply of targets.



Above: A 'Heritage' jet leads two regular squadron F-4Es. The aircraft retain their original camouflage, with bright orange panels added to enhance conspicuity in the target role.

Left and top: As well as its regular jets, Det 1 has two specially painted 'Heritage' aircraft for air show appearances. The aircraft are painted in authentic colours from the Phantom's glorious past, although the paint is glossy to reduce wear on the finish and to allow maintainers to keep up the pristine appearance.

Remotely-controlled aircraft have been used as aerial targets since the late 1930s, and during World War II small numbers of manned aircraft were converted for target and flying-bomb tasks. After the war, radio-controlled Fortresses flew through mushroom clouds from atomic tests, and the use of the drone for target practice, missile tests, reconnaissance and other tasks grew in importance.

In 1951 Sperry Gyroscope converted eight Shooting Stars into QF-80 drones under the Bad Boy programme, initiating the era of the jet drone. Many more QF-80s followed, and after them came the QF-86 Sabre, QF-100 Super Sabre, PQM-102 Delta Dagger and QF-106 Delta Dart.

To operate the USAF's growing drone fleet the 82nd Tactical Aerial Targets Squadron was