



aircraft are tested by BAE Systems QF-4 FSAT Program Manager and Test Pilot, Lt Col Bob Kay (USAF Ret), before they are ferried to Tyrdall.

There the drone systems are checked, first on the ground, which is concluded by a Systems Acceptance Flight Evaluation (SAFE) flight. During these missions, all the systems are checked with the emphasis placed on checking the remote control functions. By signing off the SAFE flight, the aircraft is accepted, formalising the fulfilment of BAE's contractual obligations.

That is also the moment that the aircraft changes from being an Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC) asset to become an Air Combat Command (ACC) asset. Those aircraft planned for use with Det 1 are then ferried to Holloman, where they stay until they meet their end over the white dunes of the White Sands Missile Range.

82nd ATRS mission

Today the focus of the 82nd ATRS mission is to provide tactically realistic targets for air-to-air missile tests and evaluations, while Det 1 provides targets to support evaluation of mainly surface-to-air defence systems.

Obviously, in order to effectively test a missile, it is better accomplished by actually shooting at targets representative of real threats.

For this reason, the 82nd ATRS uses a fleet of Sub-Scale Aerial Targets like the BQM-34 Firebee and MQM-107 Streaker. While SSAIs are more cost effective than real aircraft, they are significantly smaller and have a limited payload capability (if any), thus limiting the types of threats they can simulate. This is the main reason why the USAF continues to bring back to life a sizeable fleet of Phantoms to act as full-scale drones.

The QF-4s are not only the last Phantoms in US service, but are also the only Full Scale Aerial Targets (FSATs) in current use. As well as being able to fly supersonic at high altitude, they offer full command and control capability through normal flight manoeuvres that can be configured for specific mission profiles. As such, FSATs can be used for a wide range of tests, measurements or evaluations, ranging from radar acquisition tests, electronic countermeasures (jamming) evaluation, infrared measurements/tests, radar cross section evaluation, decoy effectiveness, manoeuvre analysis, electronic warfare, warhead effectiveness, eval-

Det 1's fleet varies between 15 and 24 aircraft, and mostly consists of QF-4Es. The last of the QF-4Gs are still in use, although they are in the process of being expended or withdrawn. In the view above, the line-up on the left includes five of the ex-Wild Weasel aircraft. In the near future the ex-reconnaissance QRF-4C will make a return to the drone world, with two undergoing conversion in 2005.

uation of tactics and readiness of air and ground units.

Holloman AFB

Initially named Alamogordo Army Air Field, Holloman AFB was named as such on 13 January 1948, in honour of the late Colonel George V. Holloman, a pioneer in guided missile research. The proximity of White Sands Missile Range (WSMR), America's largest range and proving ground, made it only logical that a dedicated aerial targets squadron was established at Holloman.

Long before the establishment of Detachment 1, 82nd TATS at Holloman Air Force Base in 1981, the base had already written its name into the annals of aerospace history through a series of pioneering rocket missile and aviation tests in the 1950s and 1960s. With the arrival the 49th Tactical Fighter Wing and its F-4 Phantom IIs on 1 July 1968, a new era began in the Tularosa Basin with fighter aircraft training and operations continuing for the next three decades. In 1977 the 49th transitioned to the F-15 Eagle.

In 1992, Holloman Air Force Base again garnered national attention when the F-117A Nighthawk made its new home at Holloman. On 1 May 1996, the German Air Force Tactical Training Center (TTC) was established with the 20th Fighter Squadron providing aircrew training for the F-4E. The first contingent of German Tornados arrived in March 1996.

From its establishment the main mission of Det 1 has been to provide full-scale aerial target support to the White Sands Missile Range for Department of Defense (DoD) research, development and test programmes. As such Det 1 – operating its own fleet of FSATs – has played a vital part in primarily surface-to-air missile test programmes, like MIM-72 Chaparral, MIM-23 Hawk, MIM 104 Patriot and many more.

Today Det 1 exclusively operates the QF-4 in the FSAT role, having received its first aircraft