



FACT SHEET

U.S. Air Force Fact Sheet

MCDONNELL DOUGLAS RF-4C PHANTOM II

In the early 1960s, the USAF recognized the need for more tactical reconnaissance aircraft to reinforce the [RF-101s](#) then in service. The USAF chose a modification of the F-4C fighter. The RF-4C development program began in 1962, and the first production aircraft made its initial flight on May 18, 1964. The Air Force officially accepted a total of 499 RF-4Cs.

The RF-4C can carry a variety of cameras in three different stations in its nose section. It could take photos at both high and low altitude, day or night. The RF-4C carried no offensive armament, although during the last few years of its service some were fitted with four [AIM-9 Sidewinder](#) missiles for defense.

The 16th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron became the first operational unit to fly the RF-4C. In October 1965 that unit deployed to Southeast Asia to provide photographic reconnaissance of the growing conflict in South Vietnam. In the following years, RF-4Cs flew reconnaissance missions around the world, including Desert Shield/Desert Storm in Iraq in 1990-1991. The Air Force retired all of its RF-4Cs by 1995.

The RF-4C on display was delivered to the USAF on Sept. 9, 1965. It served in Vietnam, Japan, Korea, Europe, Cuba and the Middle East. During Desert Shield/Desert Storm, this aircraft flew a total of 172 missions, more than any other F-4 aircraft. When flown to the museum in May 1994, it had more than 7,300 hours of flying time.

TECHNICAL NOTES:

Engines: Two [General Electric J79](#)-GE-15s of 17,000 lbs. thrust each

Maximum speed: 1,384 mph

Range: 1,632 miles without aerial refueling

Ceiling: 55,200 ft.

Span: 38 ft. 5 in.

Length: 62 ft. 10 in.

Height: 16 ft. 6 in.



DAYTON, Ohio -- McDonnell Douglas RF-4C Phantom II at the National Museum of the United States Air Force. (U.S. Air Force photo)

Click here to learn more about the [McDonnell Douglas RF-4C](#).

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