



### Hunter F.4 Operations

While the re-equipment of 13 squadrons with Hunter 4s within a period of just 15 months was nothing short of remarkable, equally impressive was the fact that the two Hunter OCU had been able to train a sufficient number of young pilots - many of them only around twenty years of age when they joined the squadrons, and of no lesser importance was the training in parallel of ground crews at the technical schools. More senior pilots, who had already flown with operational squadrons, mainly converted to the new aircraft at squadron level; the lack of a two-seat dual-controlled Hunter trainer at this stage in the conversion process proved to be no handicap and obviously the Hunter's docile handling characteristics greatly contributed to this situation.

Due to the low modification standard of early Hunter F.4s and of ground crews having to get used to the new aircraft, serviceability was often rather poor with the consequence of fewer flying hours

per squadron than expected. Also aircraft had to go to the Command Maintenance Unit at RAF Bückeburg for various modifications such as extending the cartridge chutes of the Aden cannon and fitting belt link collectors; later modifications relating to the "follow-up" tailplane and to the Avon 115 engine were also performed at Bückeburg. It appears, though, that the learning curve as far as servicing at squadron level was concerned was quite steep, and also modifications at the CMU were of a more basic nature and did not require aircraft to be away for extended periods of time. The combined effect was a considerable improvement in serviceability and the number of flying hours steadily increased. Other modifications and equipment, such as the addition in late 1956 of Rebecca 8 (a navaid) and Green Salad (a device which enabled the pilot to home on to aircraft using electronic jamming equipment) were also progressively introduced. Another important mod, which was effected at about this time permitted all four Aden

*An early delivery to 26 Sqn at Oldenburg, autumn 1955 Hunter F4 WW268 'T' still without link collectors or extended cartridge chutes. The squadron markings are also incomplete with the Springbok's head yet to be applied to the white disc centred between the green, black, and yellow rectangles on the nose. (P.Fehlauer)*

cannon to be fired simultaneously.

The monthly war exercise between No.2 Group - which comprised the northern airfields such as Jever and Oldenburg - against No.83 Group - including southern airfields such as Brüggen and Geilenkirchen - could see up to 60 aircraft airborne at one and the

*Hunter F4 WW663 'H', the aircraft chosen by the C.O. of 14 Sqn as his personal mount and therefore adorned with his rank pennant below the cockpit, photographed on the hardstanding outside the squadron hangar on 18 March 1957 and evidently to a high modification standard. Unusual among RAF Hunters is the unpainted natural metal rear fuselage, and this feature appears to be unique to a small number of 2TAF Hunter 4s in 1956/57. (Air Cdr B. B. Batt)*

