



This 1958 photo shows Eleven Sixty-Three in the markings of the 27th F.I.S. (via Marty Isham)



Eleven Sixty-Three in the markings of the 526th F.I.S., photographed on arrival at Soesterberg AB, Holland, October 30, 1963. (Author's Collection via Johan Ragay)



This 1965 photo shows 56-1163 in the markings of the 32nd F.I.S. Fin band was green with white borders, (Author's Collection via Johan Ragay)

Eleven Sixty Three

by John F. Vadas

F-102A-65-CO, serial number 56-1163, was the 380th F-102A produced for the Air Force. It was "manufactured by [the] Convair Division of General Dynamics Corporation, San Diego, Calif., and [was] delivered to the Air Force on June 26, 1957."¹ Unlike many of the early production F-102As, Eleven Sixty-Three rolled off the final

assembly line complete with the extended vertical fin for roll stabilization, the redesigned split speed brakes for decreasing landing distance, and the externally mounted splitter vanes forward of both intake ducts to stabilize airflow to the engine.

The first assignment for the new interceptor was the 27th Fighter Interceptor Squad-

ron (F.I.S.), Griffiss AFB, New York. It remained with this unit for 27 months. During September 1959, Eleven Sixty-Three was temporarily reassigned to the San Antonio Air Material Area at Kelly AFB, Texas, for retrofit of the externally mounted arrestor hook and external fuel tank system. Upon completion of retrofit in March 1960, Eleven Sixty-Three was flown to Brookley AFB, Mobile, Ala., and assigned to the Mobile Air Material Area for repainting and preparation for sea shipment to Europe.²

In July 1960, 56-1163 was assigned to the U.S. Air Forces in Europe (USAFE). Its first duty assignment was with the 86th Air Division, 526th F.I.S., Ramstein AB, Germany. During the next three years, Eleven Sixty-Three made several trips to Wheelus AB, Lybia, for missile practice, and was also assigned temporary duty with the 496th F.I.S., Hahn AB, Germany. In October 1963, Eleven Sixty-Three was reassigned to the 32nd F.I.S., Soesterberg AB, Holland, for its first of two tours of duty with this unit. It was during this time frame that the European-based F-102s were being modified with the new "infrared target acquisition"³ system, and inter-theater reassignments were frequent to keep interceptor units at maximum strength. For this reason, Eleven Sixty-Three was reassigned to the 525th F.I.S., Bitburg AB, Germany, in February 1964, and served with that squadron until October of that year. During October 1964, Eleven Sixty-Three was again assigned to the 32nd F.I.S. for its second tour of duty with that unit. This was its last reassignment within the European theater of operations.

In October 1965, the 32nd F.I.S. participated in *William Tell*, the worldwide interceptor meet held at Tyndall AFB, Fla. Two of the many significant events surrounding this participation was that the 32nd F.I.S. became the first USAFE squadron to fly its own assigned aircraft on an overwater deployment for a competition, and the first overseas entry to win *William Tell*. Because of its excellent maintenance record Eleven Sixty-Three was one of the six aircraft from the 32nd F.I.S. deployed for this historic event.

The exact date is unknown, but during 1966 the grey paint and green squadron fin colors of the 32nd F.I.S. were removed and the aircraft was camouflaged.

In July 1969, the 32nd F.I.S. ceased operations with the F-102A. The unit was reequipped with the F-4E and redesignated the 32nd Tactical Fighter Squadron (TFS). During this month, Eleven Sixty-Three was flown back to the United States and reassigned to the 101st Fighter Group, 132nd F.I.S., Maine Air National Guard, at Dow AFB. The assignment was a short one, however, because this unit ceased operations with the F-102A in November of that year and reequipped with the F-101 *Voodoo*.⁴

Eleven Sixty-Three was transferred to the 125th Fighter Group, 159th F.I.S., Florida Air National Guard, at Jacksonville, Fla. Upon arrival the aircraft received the squadron identification number "15" which was painted on both sides of the vertical fin in white numerals. Eleven Sixty-Three remained with the 159th F.I.S. almost five years. When the unit reequipped with the F-106 in August 1974, the aircraft was placed in storage and cocooned at Davis-Monthan AFB, Ari2.

In March 1979, after four and a half years in the Arizona desert, Eleven Sixty-Three was pulled from storage and spent the next four months being returned to flyable condition. The aircraft was flown to the Sperry conversion facility at Litchfield, Ariz., in June 1979, and converted to a QF-102A man-rated drone. While at Sperry the vertical fin and wingtips were painted red, and Eleven Sixty-Three received the Factory Aircraft Designation (FAD) sequence number "743." Conversion to drone status took another four months. In October 1979, 56-1163 was flown to the Air Defense Weapons Center, Tyndall AFB, Fla. Once at Tyndall, the aircraft was brought up to full PQM-102B drone configuration by Sperry's on-site engineers.

Eleven Sixty-Three flew four operational sorties as a target drone. Sortie dates were: Dec. 3, 1981; Dec. 10, 1981; and Feb. 4, 1982.⁵ During the fourth sortie on Feb. 18, 1982, Eleven Sixty-Three received a fatal hit from an air-to-air missile and was destroyed in flight over the Gulf of Mexico. The airframe had been in the inventory almost 25 years.

REFERENCES:

1. Letter received from Judy G. Endicott. Sept. 7, 1982.
2. Letter received from David Menard, Mar. 5, 1983.
3. Lindsay T. Peacock, "Convair F-102 Delta Dagger," *Military Aviation Review*, Feb. 1978, p. 11.
4. Letter received from David Menard, Mar. 5, 1983.
5. Letter received from Lincoln K. Parker, Oct. 18, 1982.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

M/Sgt. John Vadas has been on active duty with the U.S. Air Force for 19 years. He has logged over 6000 hours as a Flight Engineer on C-141A and E-4A/B aircraft. Sgt. Vadas has earned a B.A. degree in history from Bellevue College, and is working on a Master's degree from Embry-Riddle University. He is married and has one daughter.

John has a Research Project on the PQM-102A/B in the works and anyone with information or photos to share should contact him at: 2218 Joyce Circle, Bellevue, NE 68005. All loaned material will be copied and returned promptly.



Eleven Sixty-Three in July 1974, while assigned to the 159th F.I.S., Florida Air National Guard. (Author's Collection via Bill Curry)



Eleven Sixty-Three had been in storage at Davis-Monthan for seventeen months when this photo was taken in January 1976. (Author's Collection via Ben Knowles)



56-1163 being returned to flyable condition at Davis-Monthan AFB, June 1979. Note the new rudder. (Author's Collection via Ben Knowles)



A weathered Eleven Sixty-Three in PQM-102B markings at Tyndall AFB, Florida, August 1980. (Author's Collection)