

Aircraft on loan

With the creation of NATO it became apparent the France would need some modern combat aircraft sooner or later. In anticipation of this the Mutual Aid Defence Program and the US Offshore Procurement Program joined forces and supplied France with a number of F and TF100 Super Sabres together with a number of T33 trainers, some of which went to Belgium. There was also finance for indigenous types such as Mystere IVs. British-built Meteor night-fighters may also have been included .

In 1975 it was time for the F100s and T33s together with the Mystere IVs to be returned to the US Government as had been agreed. And so they were flown into Sculthorpe and the pilots were returned home in Nord Noratlases. This was an unusual sight in this part of the world, although some thought that they were C119 Boxcars which were similar and familiar in the 1950s and 60s.

Because of the estimated scale of this operation, the USAF drafted in MSgt. Mike Weirs to oversee the operation. Denmark was also returning F100s and T33s as well as a number of F104 Starfighters. These were repainted with Turkish markings and the flown out by Turkish pilots, creating an interesting set of movements of aircraft - C130s, Transalls, and C47s.

On arrival the French aircraft were de-activated. Some were dismantled and then sold for scrap at £1600! Some went as static exhibits to museums, forever remaining the property of the USAF. A few remained parked up for some years before it was decided what to do with them, they were in the way when two squadrons from Marham arrived for their temporary stay in 1978

This interesting episode saw French aviators at Sculthorpe for the first time since they had been there in 1943!