





FS36176  
Testors MM 2036  
Humbrol N/A  
Gunze Sangyo N/A  
Xtracrylics XA1157

FS36251  
Testors MM 1794  
Humbrol N/A  
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Xtracrylics XA1132

Natural Metal

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### Saudi Arabian F-15S

Following the end of the Gulf War, the government of Saudi Arabia sought to reduce its dependency on foreign forces by boosting its own. In particular, the Saudis wanted to acquire more and better strike fighters to supplement the Panavia Tornado IDS that equipped Nos 7 and 66 Squadrons. Impressed with the results achieved by USAF F-15Es in the Gulf War, the Royal Saudi Air Force made it clear that they favored the Strike Eagle.

However, the prospect of sales of the F-15E to Saudi Arabia aroused quite a bit of opposition in the USA. The pro-Israel lobby felt that the sale of such an advanced warplane to Saudi Arabia represented too great a threat to the security of the state of Israel. For most of 1992, it appeared that authorization of the sale of F-15E derivatives to Saudi Arabia would not be forthcoming. However, McDonnell Douglas, its suppliers, and their unions were a powerful lobby in their own right, since the F-15 program involved more than 2000 suppliers in 47 states, employing as many as 40,000 people. In addition, it was clear that European competitors would be more than willing to provide advanced combat aircraft to Saudi Arabia if McDonnell Douglas was not permitted to do so. President George Bush eventually decided to let the sale go forward. However, the aircraft sold to Saudi Arabia were to be downgraded versions of the F-15E Strike Eagle, designated F-15XP (XP for export).

On December 23, 1992, McDonnell Douglas announced that it had received a \$122 million contract from the USAF to begin ordering materials for 72 F-15XPs for Saudi Arabia. A letter of offer and acceptance for the 72 aircraft was signed on May 10, 1993. By this time, the designation for the

F-15XP had been changed to F-15S (S for Saudi Arabia).

The F-15S is based on the F-15E airframe. However, since many of the avionics systems of the USAF F-15E are deemed too sensitive for export, the F-15S for Saudi Arabia were fitted with less-sensitive F-15C/D systems. For example, the F-15S has an APG-70S radar that is "detuned" from the capabilities of the APG-63 of the F-15C/D, and does not have the ability to do computerized ground mapping. It has only 60 percent of the bandwidth of the APG-63 and is limited to only 16 rather than 32 channels. The AWG-27 programmable armament control set was reprogrammed to prevent the carriage of certain weapons systems, and the hands-off automatic terrain following mode was deleted from the ASW-51 autopilot. A ring laser gyro INS was provided, but the military-grade GPS system was eliminated, although the Saudis have added a commercial-grade GPS system. Some sensitive ECM systems are replaced with older equipment or are deleted altogether. The nuclear weapon wiring fitted to USAF F-15Es was deleted. Some initial reports indicated that the F-15S would not be provided with the ability to carry conformal fuel tanks and their associated weapons pylons, but this turned out not to be the case. Saudi Arabia received 48 downgraded versions of the Martin Marietta LANTIRN system known as AAQ-19 Sharpshooter, as well as the AAQ-20 Pathfinder, which is a simplified version of the AAQ-13 Nav Pod. The AAQ-20 is not compatible with the AGM-85 Maverick air-to-ground missile, and has some air-to-air features deleted.

The electromagnetic countermeasures suite is considerably less-capable than that provided for the USAF F-15E and deliberately "downgraded" to limit its capability against US systems but still make it good enough to be effective against Soviet-built threats.

The engines of the F-15S is a pair of Pratt & Whitney F100-PW-229 turbofans, each rated at 29,100 lb. s.t. with afterburner.



Asymmetric ECM Housings Specific to the F-15S

It had been reported that 48 of the F-15Ss were optimized for the air-to-ground mission, with the remainder being optimized for the interception role. However, it now appears that the RSAF has not dedicated any of its F-15Ss to the intercept role.

The fabrication of the first Saudi F-15S (USAF serial 93-852, RSAF serial 5501) began in October of 1993, and assembly began ten months later. The first RSAF F-15S took off on its maiden flight on June 19, 1995 from St Louis Lambert International Airport with test pilots Gary Jennings and Charles Van Gordon at the controls. It stayed up in the air for one hour and 12 minutes. It was initially unpainted, but was later provided with camouflage and USAF serials on the outside of the fins. The aircraft was rolled out in RSAF colors on September 12, and officially handed over to Saudi government officials. Production was planned at a rate of one per month, with the 72nd and last F-15S being delivered in 1999.

The F-15S serves with 55 Squadron based at King Khaled AB, Khamis Muayshayt, and with 92 Squadron, based at King Abdul Aziz AB, Dhahran.

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