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"Slatted" F-4S: first for MAG-31 and 'Corps

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Marine Aircraft Group (MAG)-31's first "slatted" F-4S "Phantom" arrived at Marine Fighter Attack Squadron-251 last week

The F-4S is a modified version of the F-4J "Phantom." The "S" incorporates two major changes: a more advanced weapons system, and moveable slats on the front edge of the wings. The F-4S is another in the long line of improvements to the original F-4 "Phantom" that was delivered to Marine Corps aviation units in 1962.

According to Mr. Bill Smith, head of the logistics management branch, Naval Rework Facility, North Island, Calif., where modifications are being done, "The three "slatted" F-4S's are the first versions to be delivered to any unit in the Marine Corps."

Five years of testing and development have gone into improving the weapons control system in the most recent F-4. The more advanced system offers an intercept capability giving the pilot a view of the entire area surrounding his plane.

The moveable metallic maneuvering slats run the full length of the front portion of the wings. They are designed to greatly increase the F-4's in-flight turning capability, according to a McDonnel Douglas Corporation report. The report also states that the alterations will significantly increase the aircraft's turning capabilities. It will also lower the approach speed, making it easier to land on an aircraft carrier.

With these modifications, aircrews at '251 expect a more effective weapon for close air combat. Major Ray Thacker, executive officer of '251, was one of the first pilots to fly the "slatted" version. According to him, "It is a very smooth flying plane. Pilots won't have to learn any new controls, because all the new systems are automatic. With the changes, it has a better turning radius, and is more stable at high angles of attack. It gives us the ability to raise the nose higher and fly at slower air speeds."

If everything goes as planned, all of '251's planes will be altered by summer of next year, according to Royal Air Force Flight Lieutenant "Mac" McKendrick, assistant operations officer at '251. No completion date has been set for the rest of the planes in MAG-31's arsenal, but they will be done sometime in the future.

Photo by Sgt. D. A. Blake

"SLATTED" F-4S — The "slats" on the front portion of the new F-4S "Phantom's" wing are divided into three portions. The slats and an advanced weapons control system make the F-4S more effective in close air combat than the F-4J.