

## Mirage F1AZ Operational Colour Schemes:

On delivery to the SAAF, the Mirage F1AZ fleet was finished in a scheme of Buff and Dark Green upper surfaces, with light grey under surfaces. Most of the fleet were painted in France, using French paints resembling the required SAAF scheme. The aircraft carried the typical Dassault Mirage camouflage scheme, but that of the F1AZ's differed from the scheme on the F1CZ's. The final nine aircraft were rushed out from France to avoid them being caught up in an arms embargo, and they arrived with some areas unpainted on them. These aircraft had their final camouflage applied in the paint hanger at the SAA technical facilities on the then Jan Smuts Airport. Most of the Mirage F1AZ's had a matt finish applied to them, both those delivered fully painted and the final number finished locally. The fleet carried a matt finish for their whole service career in the SAAF, apart from aircraft 229, which in later years had a semi-gloss or satin finish applied to it. The light grey lower surface colour was soon found to be unsuitable for the local conditions and the colour was replaced by a light blue colour, which gave better camouflage properties. The camouflage colours all had sharp edges applied to them. Two aircraft, 229 and 233 carried this scheme for their entire careers in the SAAF. These two aircraft were often used by the Test Flight and Development Centre for trials. Note that some of the aircraft initially had the old 1 Squadron badge, as applied to the Sabres, applied to their tailfins, before the final badge in the circle were applied to the fleet. Two aircraft with this were 217 and 223.



**Mirage F1AZ 221 in the Buff, Dark Green and Light Blue Colour scheme. Note the matt finish of the scheme.**



**Mirage F1AZ 217, with the original 1 squadron emblem applied to the tailfin.**

During the first few years of Mirage F1AZ deployments to the Border War areas, the aircraft retained the camouflage scheme as discussed above. The aircraft retained their full national and squadron markings during the operations.



*Mirage F1AZ 231, photographed at AFB Ondangwa, during Operation Protea.*



*Mirage F1AZ 229, showing the satin or semi-gloss finish that the aircraft had towards the end of the service careers of the Mirage F1AZ fleet. The aircraft already had the new Eagle-Castle insignia applied when she was photographed here.*





Two Mirage F1AZ's received experimental air superiority schemes, based on that applied to the Mirage F1CZ fleet. Aircraft 243 had a two colour scheme applied, like the Mirage III CZ fleet, while 244 had a scheme applied, using three different colours. These were the only two aircraft so finished, and the scheme were not accepted as suitable for the Mirage F1AZ. On 243 the fuselage was in a Medium Grey colour, which was a mix of PE Blue and Highveld Grey, with a Mirage Grey diamond pattern applied to the aircraft. On 244, the fuselage was in Port Elizabeth Blue, while the diamond was in Mirage Grey and the nose, wing and fin tips in Highveld Grey. The SAAF did not make use of the FS Standard as used in America. The SAAF colours were designed, and the paint specifications were prepared in the country by the South African Bureau of Standards. The paints therefore carried the SABS paint codes, not FS or British Standard numbers. The ICN numbers for the three colours were Highveld Grey; ICN 8010-18-417-4773, PE Blue; ICN 8010-18-417-4743 and Mirage Grey; ICN 8010-18-417-4774. A close FS number for Highveld Grey is FS 36251, for Mirage Grey FS 36076 and for PE Blue FS35164.



**Mirage F1AZ 244 finished in the air superiority colour scheme, using three different colours.**



**The 1 Squadron Mirage F1AZ's photographed at AFB Grootfontein during November 1987. Note that Mirage F1AZ 244 is present in the line-up.**



On 25 February 1988, after an unsuccessful intercept by Cuban MiG-23's against a three ship formation of Mirage F1AZ's lead by Cmdt Rankin, the Officer Commanding 1 Squadron, the analysis of a radio intercept clearly showed that the Cuban pilots had observed the Mirages visually due to the light tone

of the Deep Buff camouflage colour. He took a command decision and the buff areas of the camouflage on the aircraft, were over sprayed with Dark Earth in the hanger at AFB Grootfontein, that same evening.

When the squadron finally stood down from operations on 2 March 1988, all the Mirage F1AZ deployed at Grootfontein were flown back to their base at AFB Hoedspruit. Here the remainder of the fleet were officially resprayed with a Dark Earth and Dark Green camouflage scheme. The old pattern was used and the colours were applied in a matt finish, basically the same as that on the Impala Mk 2 fleet at the time. The Dark Green colour was also now finished with a feathered edge. There were, however, a few aircraft that did not receive the darkened camouflage finish. One of these was Mirage F1AZ 229, which kept the original colours.



***Mirage F1AZ, 231, seen here in the Dark Earth and Dark Green camouflage scheme. The lower surfaces retained their light blue finish.***



***Mirage F1AZ, 234, seen here in the Dark Earth and Dark Green and light blue camouflage scheme finish.***



A project was registered to design a new camouflage scheme for the Mirage F1AZ fleet and the result of this was the final scheme where the upper surfaces were in Dark Earth and Dark Green, with the remainder of the aircraft in a dark blue-grey colour, called Mirage Grey. This was also one of the colours used in the Mirage F1CZ air superiority camouflage scheme. The first aircraft that the author observed with this finish was Mirage F1AZ 220, at AFB Grootfontein, during August 1988. At the time, the two sides of the vertical fin, were in different finishes, in order to select the final scheme. The author had the opportunity a short while later, to photograph this aircraft at the home base at AFB Hoedspruit.



***The right-hand side of Mirage F1AZ 220, showing the overall Mirage Grey fin. This was accepted in the final pattern.***

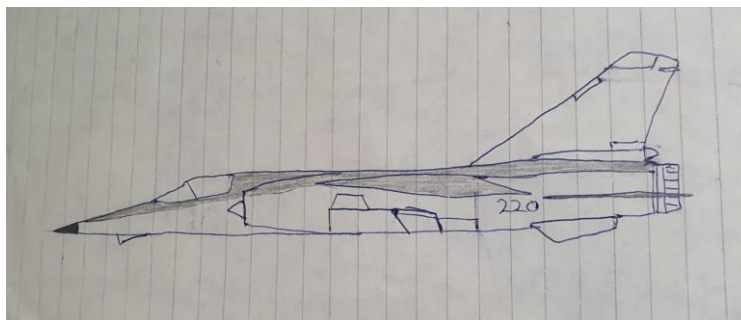


The left-hand side of Mirage F1AZ 220, showing the camouflaged fin.

G.P.S. 81/143299

MIRAGE F1AZ 220 - GETV 16/2/88

- 1) FIN: LEFT - GREY  
RIGHT - CAMOUFLAGE
- 2) MISSILE RAILS + MISSILES: LT PAIN GREY
- 3) BELLY TANK ALCON: GREY
- 4) AERIAL PANELS ON FIN: LT GREY
- 5) PARACHUTE HOUSING PLUG: NAT METAL
- 6) MARKINGS: STD W/AFRE A/C  
CASTLES ONLY ON FUSELAGE  
RED WARNING STRIPES ON WINGS AND TAILPLATES  
SERV BADGE ON RIGHT SIDE OF FIN (NORMAL COLOURS)  
NORMAL BLACK "BEY AF KEEP OFF" ON WINGS
7. RED INTAKE COVERS AND RED CLOTH COVER AROUND TAILPIPE.



The author's original text and sketch made of Mirage F1AZ when observed at AFB Grootfontein for the first time.



*Mirage F1AZ 220, in her final colour scheme, photographed at AFB Hoedspruit in October 2010.*



### **Pylons and Rocket pods:**

The Mirage F1AZ carried two pylons under each wing. They were Alkan 915/916 (inboard) and CLB-30 (outboard) pylons. The Alkan pylons could be used with underwing fuel tanks or underwing stores such as bombs or rocket pods. The aircraft could carry four Matra 155 rocket pods under the wings, each containing eighteen 68mm rockets. These could be armed with a variety of heads, such as anti-personnel (AP), anti-armour (AT), high explosives (HE), incendiary (I) or a mixture of these. The rocket pods on the Mirage F1 had cones bolted to the rear of the pod to protect the lower surfaces of the wings, which were quite thin on the Mirage F1AZ. These were usually in a sky blue colour. The pods were either natural metal or camouflaged in Buff and Dark Green. During flight enroute to the target, the nose of the pod was covered with a fibre cone to reduce the drag of the rockets and improve the fuel consumption during the flight.



***The Alkan 915/6 and CLB-30 pylons of the Mirage F1AZ.***



***The Alkan 915/6 and CLB-30 pylons of the Mirage F1AZ.***



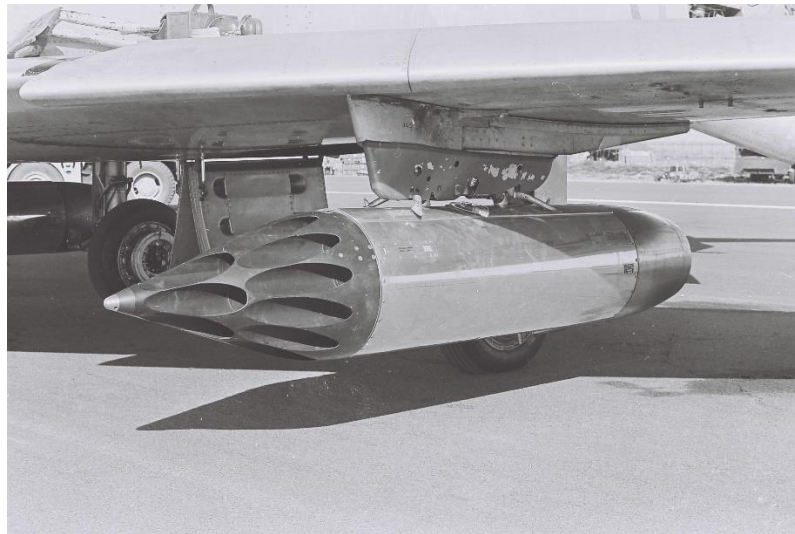
***A Mirage F1AZ armed with four 68mm Matra 155 rocket pods below the wings.***



*The CLB-30 pylon as used on the outboard stations of the Mirage F1AZ.*



*A cut through display of the 68mm rockets used in the Matra 155 pods.*



*A Matra 155 rocket pod, fitted to a Canadair CL-13B Sabre Mk 6 of the SAAF. The rear cone was replaced by a different variant on the Mirage F1AZ pod.*



*A Mirage F1AZ at AFB Ondangwa, armed with four Matra 155 rocket pods below the wings. Note the cones that cover the front of the pods.*

*Piet van Schalkwyk*

*17-07-2021*

