



Mirage IIICZ

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Country of origin: France

Manufactured as: Dassault-Breguet Mirage IIIC

First flight: 17 November 1956 (Mirage III-001)

Service period with SAAF: 1963 until 1990

Served with: 2 Squadron

Role: Interceptor, with ground attack as a secondary role

Power plant: One SNECMA-Atar 09B turbojet, delivering 4,250 kg (9,370 lbf) dry thrust, 6,000 kg (13,230 lbf) with afterburner)

Max take-off mass: 11,800 kg (26,455 lb)

Max speed: Mach 2.1 at 12,000 m (40,000 ft)

Max range: 1,200 km (738 mi, 646 nmi)

Armament: 2 x DEFA 30mm cannons with 125 rounds each, one Matra R530 missile under the belly, two Sidewinder AIM-9B infra-red air-to-air missiles under wingtips. Later V3B missiles were used.

Ground attack role: 36 x 68mm rockets and 4 x 250kg bombs, or 36 x 68mm rockets and one AS-30 air to ground missile or 8 x 250kg bombs.

Accommodation: Pilot

Operational History

Sixteen Mirage IIICZ were operated by 2 Squadron at AFB Waterkloof. South Africa was amongst the earliest foreign customers, having initially ordered a batch of 16 Mirage IIICZ as the main South African air combat aircraft. New weapons including the Nord Aviation AS-20, Matra R530 and Sidewinder missiles were also acquired. In addition, three Mirage IIIBZ two-seater trainers were bought. More aircraft were later acquired, including 16 Mirage IIIEZs, three Mirage IIDZ two-seaters and four Mirage IIRZ photo-reconnaissance aircraft. During the early 1970s, South Africa reportedly held negotiations with Dassault to secure a licence to produce the Mirage III, the Mirage V and the Mirage F1.

However, much like Israel, South Africa was isolated by a French arms embargo after the passing of United Nations Security Council Resolution 418 in November 1977. The South African Air Force launched an ambitious rebuild programme for its Mirage III fleet, soliciting Israeli technical assistance to convert existing airframes into the Atlas Cheetah.

Further information

Barcode 1: Mirage 3 CZ "black widow" in flight



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