



# The Japan Air Self-Defence Force

*A photo-feature by Katsuhiko Tokunaga*







*Above: This 306 Hikotai F-4EJ Kai is one of those exchanged by the squadron for the F-15J in 1996/97. 306 and 303 Hikotai (already an F-15 unit) are based at Komatsu on the western coast of Japan's main island, Honshu.*

*Centre left: In addition to the JASDF's baseline F-4EJs, the RF-4EJ fleet has also undergone the Kai upgrade programme. The chief elements of this include a new Texas Instruments AN/APQ-172 radar (replacing the APQ-99), IR linescan, INS, new radios and digital cockpit displays.*

*Left: The JASDF acrobatic team, 'Blue Impulse', is based at Matsushima AB, alongside the Mitsubishi T-2 and regular Kawasaki T-4 trainers of 21 and 22 Hikotai. 'Blue Impulse' transitioned from the T-2 to the T-4 in 1995/96.*

*Right: The JASDF's dedicated aggressor force is the Hiko Kyodotai, which flies F-15s from Nyutabaru, on the southernmost island of Kyushu. This unit swapped the T-2 for the F-15.*







Above: These F-4EJ Kais are flown by 302 Hikotai - the combat element of Nansei Koku Konseidan (Southwestern Composite Air Division), based at Naha AB, Okinawa. 302 Hikotai also operates T-33As and T-4s, for squadron liaison/support tasks. It shares Naha with the Queen Airs and T-33As of a dedicated command support flight unit.

Left: In June 1996, 306 Hikotai painted up this F-4EJ Kai to mark the squadron's transition to the F-15J - the last JASDF squadron to make that change.

Below: 304 Hikotai is part of 8 Kokudan (Air Wing), Seibu Koku Homentai (Western Air Defence Force), based at Tsuiki AB on the northern coast of Kyushu. The squadron operates F-15Js, with T-4s in support.







Above: Newly arrived F-15CJs formate with surviving F-4EJ Kais of 306 Hikotai, in January 1997. Note the differences in schemes between the two Phantoms. The F-4 remains an important element in the JASDF inventory, with over 100 on strength (plus nearly 40 RF-4EJ Kais).

Below: The Hiko Kyodotai operates F-15DJs in the aggressor training role. It shares its Nyutabaru base with 202 Hikotai (F-15C/DJ) and 301 Hikotai (F-4EJ Kai).

Right: The black panther badge marks this Mitsubishi F-1 as an aircraft of 8 Hikotai (3 Kokudan), based at Misawa alongside sister squadron 3 Hikotai. Both units operate F-1s, with T-2s and T-4s in support







Above: Tsuiki-based 6 Hikotai has the maritime attack role with the Mitsubishi F-1, as part of 8 Kokudan, Western Air Defence Force. It is pictured here with an F-15CJ of 304 Hikotai. 6 Hikotai transitioned to the F-1 from the F-86F in 1980; in 1990, 304 transitioned from the F-4EJ to the F-15.



Left: 201 Hikotai (seen here) and 203 Hikotai are part of the Chitose-based 2 Kokudan. This wing, and Misawa-based 3 Kokudan, make up Hokubu Koku Homentai (Northern Air Defence Force). The two squadrons of 3 Kokudan both operate F-1s.

Below: These Mitsubishi F-1s of 3 Hikotai (3 Kokudan) are armed with the F-1's primary weapon, the Type 80 ASM-1 anti-ship missile. The missile entered service in 1983 and has a 50-km (31-mile) range with a 150-kg (330-lb) HE warhead.







Above: The F-1 is the first type slated for replacement by Japan's new indigenous fighter, the F-2 (FS-X). In the meantime, it is likely that some F-4EJ Kai Phantoms will be roled to take over the maritime strike mission.

Below: Fuji's veteran T-1 trainer survives with 13 Hiko Kokudan (Flying Training Wing) at Asiya. The first T-4s arrived at this unit in 1996 and the T-1 will have been retired by 1999.

Right: The JASDF ordered 169 F-15CJs and 44 F-15DJs, and the final deliveries from Mitsubishi are imminent. Seven front-line units fly Eagles (plus the Hiko Kyodotai and the JASDF test unit).







Above: Sengyū Kenkyūhan ('Blue Impulse') is formally attached to 21 Hikotai which is based alongside 22 Hikotai as part of 4 Kokudan, at Matsushima. These two squadrons fly a mix of T-2s and T-4s. Along with 31 and 32 Hikotai (both flying T-4s), 1 Kokudan, they make up the JASDF's Koku Kyoku Shudan (Air Training Command), headquartered at Hamamatsu.



Left: The Mitsubishi F-2 (FS-X) is an advanced development of the Block 40 F-16C, which will replace the JASDF's F-1/T-2s. This, the first aircraft, made its maiden flight on 7 October 1995. Plans are to acquire 83 single-seat F-2s and 58 F-2B trainers.

Right: Japan is a member of the exclusive club of nations which operate the Boeing 747-400 as a transport for their head of state (the others are the USA and Brunei). In JASDF service two 747-47Cs are operated by 701 Hikotai, based at Chitose, as the Rinji Tokubetsu Koku Yusotai (Special Air Transport Group).



Below: Another Boeing type is unique to JASDF service - the E-767. The first of the JASDF's four AEW&C-configured 767-27CERs flew on 9 August 1996 (with its radar installation in place). It will be handed over in March 1998.







Above: The Fuji T-3 serves with 11 and 12 Hikotai Kyoijudan, based at Shizuhamma and Hofu, respectively. The T-3 is the JASDF's primary trainer and was originally developed for the JMSDF as the KM-2 (itself based on the Beech T-34). A total of 50 was acquired from 1978 and none has been lost.

Right: The Kawasaki T-4 is intended to replace the JASDF's remaining T-33s (approximately 40) and all its T-2s (85). Deliveries began in 1988. The T-4 serves with dedicated training units and front-line squadrons.



Above: The JASDF followed the USAF's lead and acquired the Raytheon Beechjet T-400 as a crew trainer. Ironically, the Beechjet was developed from Japan's own Mitsubishi Diamond 'biz-jet'.

Right: The first T-4 made its maiden flight on 29 July 1985 and is the collective product of Fuji, Mitsubishi and Kawasaki.



Above: Studies have commenced to find a 'C-X' replacement for the Kawasaki C-1 transport, which entered service in 1973. Today, 27 aircraft equip two squadrons.

Below: The first two of nine U-4s (Gulfstream IVs) on order were delivered on 24 February 1997. The cargo door-equipped U-4s will replace Beech Queen Airls.





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Above: A variety of NAMC YS-11s soldier on with the JASDF. This is one of the handful of basic transport Y5-11s that serve with 402 Hikotai at Iruma, as part of 2 Yuso Kokutai (Air Transport Group).

Below: Kawasaki-Vertol KV-107s are in use with a single JASDF unit, the Koku Kyunandan (Air Rescue Wing), which provides detachments around the country.



Above: Heavily-modified Hawker 800s (BAe 125-800s) were acquired from 1995 for maritime patrol and SAR duties. A total of 27 (U-125As) has been ordered. A navaid calibration version of the U-125 is also in use.

Below: A single EC-1 electronic warfare support aircraft is operated by the Denshi Kunrentai (EW/ECM flight) from Iruma AB. The same unit also flies an active-duty YS-11E jammer.







Above: The JASDF's dedicated SAR unit (Kpku Kyunandan) operates a large mixed fleet of KV-107s, CH-47Js and, as seen here, Mu-2Ss and UH-60Js.

Below: The elongated nose, with search radar, marks this as one of 25 Mitsubishi Mu-2Ss in service. A smaller number (four) of Mu-2J calibration aircraft are also used.



Above: Japan's 13 E-2C Hawkeyes are operated by 601 Hikotai, based at Misawa. Like the other specialist EW or ECM units, this AEW&C squadron is a direct reporting element of Koku Sotai (Air Defence Command).

Below: Specially modified NAMCYS-11E/E-Kai/ELs act as EW aggressor trainers for other units and EW crew trainers in their own right.



Below: This rich mix of JASDF aircraft in formation includes a C-1 leading two F-4EJs (302 Hikotai), two T-2s, a single F-15CJ (304 Hikotai), two T-4s (early production aircraft in TRDI/Hiko Keihatsu Jikkendan marks), and a T-33A.

