

# SAMURAI RHINOS

André Jans shares his impressions from a great trip to the “Land of the Rising Sun”. All photographs by the author.



License built “Mitsubishi” F-4 Phantom II 67-8378 is seen slowing down in Nyutabaru with its parachute brake fully deployed. Note the MER attached to the centerline station instead of the 600gal HPC tank.

**A**lthough the Japanese Air Self Defense Force (JASDF) have used the F-4EJ Phantom in front line units for years, the end of their operational life is approaching. A recent Japanese Defense Budget plans to phase out the ‘Samurai’ Spooks starting in 2008. The absence of a current OCU unit is proof the end is on its way.

From an establishment of six operational interceptor squadrons in 1981, only three fighter interceptor units (and a test flight) remain equipped with the upgraded F-4EJ “Kai” Phantom. The original delivered F-4EJ Phantoms (140) were pure interceptor aircraft as post Second World War regulations forbid offensive capacity within

the JASDF. The upgraded “Kai” version kept the type current for in the 1990’s, adding an air to ground mode. This included the new AN/APG-66J pulse-Doppler radar, an AN/APZ-79 IFF system, new central computer and other upgrades. The “Kai” version is able to operate with free fall Mk.82/84 bombs and the Mitsubishi ASM-1 anti

ship missile. Although renamed “Kai”, this name is not used in daily operations, as all remaining F-4EJ’s are “Kai” upgrades.

### Recon Spooks

Besides the three fighter interceptor squadrons (8, 301, and 302



F-4EJ Kai 07-8434 is seen on its way to the last-chance area in Nyutabaru AB. Note the inert Mitsubishi developed AAM-3 “Type 90” IR air-to-air missile on the inner wing pylon.



All aircraft of 301st Hikotai wear a two-tone camouflage, consisting of grey FS 36320 and FS-36375. F-4EJ Kai 37-8313 is seen departing Nyutabaru AB in June 2006.

The large 'animal' head nose-art of F-4EL Kai 37-8319 is a troll from Japanese tales.

Another "Rhino" of 301st Hikotai is seen leaving Nyutabaru AB en route to the exercise area. The Japanese airbase with its F-15 aggressor squadron has the same status as Nellis AFB used for "RED FLAG" exercises in the US.

