

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

FMA 1A 58 PUCARA A-515/ZD485/9245M
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 83/A/1159

- 1975 One of 70 Pucara reconnaissance and counter insurgency attack aircraft delivered to Argentine Air Force (Fuerza Aerea Argentina) by early 1982 as A-515, one of 35 Pucararas allotted to *Grupo 3 de Ataque (III Brigada Aerea)*, with total airframe hours of 762.05 by 22nd March 1982. Built by Fabrica Militar de Aviones (FMA), Argentina; constructor's number 018. Originally intended for export to Mauritania as M4/5T MAB. These Pucararas saw early operational use against guerilla groups operating in northwest Argentina. The Grupo 3 base was at *Base Aerea Militar Reconquista*, Santa Fe. Photo of A-515 on pre Falklands sortie from this base; Air International April 1996 p.248.
- 15 May 82 As part of the Argentine force invading the British held Falkland Islands, A-515 was one of the 12 Pucararas flown to the Falklands on or after this date, as one of the five attrition replacement aircraft flown from Rio Gallegos, Santa Cruz to Stanley Airport on 27/28 May, where a darker green/brown camouflage scheme more appropriate to operations in the Falklands had been crudely applied over the lighter standard scheme, though A-515 was repainted at III Brigade Aerea's Reconquista Air Base, using Fiat car paint, in tan and light green, and undersides and upper tail unpainted, initially with yellow stripes on tail and wings, which were later overpainted with sand paint . Thus it was one of the last Pucararas to reach the islands to reinforce the *Escuadron Aeromovil Malvinas*. This force received 24 Pucararas, all of which were destroyed or captured. When initially deployed to Rio Gallegos, Santa Cruz before flying east to the Falklands some distance opposite, A-515 and other Pucararas were deployed and used for armed reconnaissance flights over the Argentine coast to prevent any British Special Forces attacks on mainland bases. Colour photo of A-515 at the IX Brigada Aerea base at Comodoro Rivadavia, Chubut (perhaps during north-south Ferry Flight from Reconquista) – Wings of the Malvinas p.116.
- 10 June 82 Pucararas A-515, A-522 and A-536 flew the last Pucara mission of the war, against British artillery positions and troops on the northern side of Mount Kent and Murrell Ridge on East Falkland, the FIERRO escadrille taking off at 08.28, returning at 08.45, having attacked with rockets and guns, A-515, flown by Lt Morales, receiving hits from small arms fire. The Pucararas remaining on the Falklands did not fly there again.

- 14 June 82 Surrender of Argentine forces; Captured by British Forces at Stanley (renamed BAM Malvinas by the Argentines) in lightly damaged but airworthy condition with underwing rocket pods fitted - one of only 3 or 4 Pucarás still airworthy in the Falklands at the end of the campaign. Photos - Falklands - The Air War (016864) p. vii. And Wings of the Malvinas (Rivas) p.111; The Aviation Historian Issue No 8 p.22. Formally written off by Fuerza Aerea Argentina on 9th August 1982.
- 10 Jul 82 Airlifted by 18 Squadron Chinook ZA707 to the SS Atlantic Causeway in Port William.
- 12 Jul 82 Shipped back to the UK onboard the Atlantic Causeway, via San Carlos Water the following day.
- 27 Jul 82 Ship arrived at Devonport naval dockyard.
- 1 Aug 82 Following offloading and stripping down, and taken by road to A&AEE Boscombe Down. To MoD (PE) Air Fleet at A&AEE for extensive restoration (using Beagle Bassett wheels, for instance), followed by limited flying trials/handling evaluation as the only captured Pucara to be flown in the UK.
Allotted RAF serial ZD485, which together with RAF roundels was painted over the original Argentine camouflage scheme.

Airframe surveyed and damaged and missing parts replaced.
- 22 Feb 83 Taxying trials
- 28 Apr 83 The flight trials began; first flight in UK. Spares provided by A-549 (ZD486) and A-533 (ZD487). Flown by A&AEE 'A' Squadron pilot Squadron Leader Russell (Russ) Peart and also S/Ldr Tony Banfield for some 25 hours.
Photos - Aeroplane Monthly May 1983 p.244; Air International July 1983 p.37 and Nov 83 p.245; Flypast Feb 1984 p.43; Air International April 1996 p.248; The Aviation Historian Issue No 8 p.24.
Trials included take offs from grass, on which it performed well. It was flown in simulated combat against many types including the Sea Harrier commanded by David Morgan, and proved to be a robust and capable aircraft, other than being criticized for a lack of air conditioning, although no useful function for such a type in the RAF could be envisaged.

For Peart logbook, see DoRIS microfilm copy, X004-2326/032. Includes the following flights;

28 Apr 83 First flight – handling assessment. (45 minutes).

9 May 83 Two flights – asymmetric handling and engine relights; pilot S/Ldr Banfield (1.50 hrs)

13 May 83 To Larkhill Ranges (1.30 hrs)

19 May 83 Handling assessment (1.15 hours)

20 May 83 Operations from grass. (40 minutes)

3 Jun 83 Operations from grass; pilot S/Ldr Allen; 40 minute flight.

7 Jun 83 Two flights, including further operations from grass. Total 90 minutes.

10 Jun 83 Take off and landing assessment. 35 minute flight – crew John Davis and Russ Peart.

11 Jun 83 Air Display - ETPS open day. Five minute flight. Photo taxying – The Aviation Historian Issue No 8 p.23.

23 Jun 83 Simulated attacks on rapier missile system. One hour flight.

27 Jun 83 ‘1v1’ combat against Puma helicopter. 45 minute flight.

28 Jun 83 ‘1v1’ combat against Sea King helicopter. 45 minute flight.

7 Jul 83 Low level trials. 40 minute flight.

11 Jul 83 Air Display, NAS Yeovilton. 1.10hr flight.

12 Jul 83 Fighter affiliation vs. two F4 Phantoms. 1.10hr flight.

18 Jul 83 used for air-air combat trials vs 899 NAS Squadron Sea Harrier FRS.1 XZ459 flown by Flt Lt David Morgan . Photo – The Aviation Historian Issue No 8 p.29.

21 Jul 83 Performance Assessment and delivery to RAF Greenham Common.

23/24 Jul 83 Appeared in the static display at the 1983 International Air Tattoo at RAF Greenham Common, after being flown there on the 21st July. Photos - Scale Models International Jan 1984 p.48; Wrecks and Relics – The Album p.57; The Aviation Historian Issue No 8 pp.28 - 29.

25 Jul 83 Returned to Boscombe Down, making a landing on grass. 20 minute flight, after some 25 hours of trials..

9 Sep 83 Flown from Boscombe Down to Aerospace Museum, RAF Cosford, Salop, where the incomplete A-528 was also displayed Oct 1982-May 85; (Following disposal by the RAFM A-528 is now at the Norfolk & Suffolk Aviation Museum, Flixton, and A-522 is at the NEALSM, Sunderland ; A-549/ZD487 with the Imperial War Museum)
Photo as delivered – The Aviation Historian Issue No 8 p.30.

Since repainted into original Argentine light camouflage scheme colours.

23 Aug 95 Allotted instructional serial 9245M

3 Aug 98 Donated to RAFM by MoD. Remains on display at Royal Air Force Museum, Cosford.

TEXT; ANDREW SIMPSON

© ROYAL AIR FORCE MUSEUM 2014