Republic
(R)F-84E Thunderjet
Royal Norwegian Air Force
History
In 1951, the Royal Norwegian Air Force started receiving the F-84 Thunderjet, and a total of 209 aircraft were eventually operated until their retirement in 1960, making the F-84 the most numerous type of jet fighter ever operated by the RNAF. Six aircraft were of the F-84E type – the remaining were F-84Gs. This compendium deals with the F-84E type which were eventually equipped with cameras and operated as (R)F-84Es in the photo reconnaissance role.

The F-84Es were delivered on 10th September 1951, and were assigned to 334 Squadron at Sola. They were phased out in November 1956 and struck off charge 18th December the same year. During this short period, the aircraft were rotated between several squadrons, including 330, 331, 332, 334, 336, 338 and 717.

No. 1 Photo Reconnaissance Flight was originally established on 9th August 1949 at Gardermoen with three Spitfire PR Mk.XI. The Spitfires were phased out in April 1954, and the RNAF wanted the Lockheed RT-33A to replace them. Instead, the air force was scheduled to receive the RF-84F Thunderflash in 1956. As an interim solution it was decided to modify the six F-84Es to the photo reconnaissance role. No. 1 Photo Reconnaissance Flight was thus re-commissoned with the modified Thunderjets – designated (R)F-84E - at Sola 5th May 1954, though placed under the administrative umbrella of 338 Squadron rather than becoming an individual unit. When 338 Squadron moved to Ørland only one month after the re-commissioning of “the recce flight”, No.1 PRF moved to 334 Squadron’s dispersal. When 334 Sqn. was posted to Bodø, the flight remained at Sola. On 20th October 1954 the flight was renumbered 717 Photo Reconnaissance Flight. The first RF-84Fs were received on 20th April 1956 and on 30th July the unit achieved squadron status and was renamed 717 Squadron.

Type descriptions
The F-84E was planned to be the last straight-wing variant of the Republic F-84 series. However, extensive problems with the development of the swept-wing F-84F Thunderstreak, coupled with the USAF’s
need for a fighter bomber with the capability of delivering nuclear weapons, lead to a contract for Republic to build an interim straight-wing fighter-bomber based on the F-84E. The resultant type was designated F-84G, and eventually this would be built in higher number than any other F-84 variant.

The F-84G differed from the F-84E by using the 5600lb. thrust Allison J35-A-29 engine, while the earlier variant was powered by the Allison J35-A-17D with 5000lb. of thrust. Externally this would make the jet pipe of the F-84G slightly shorter than the F-84E. The F-84G was equipped with autopilot and an in-flight refuelling receptacle in the left wing, making it compatible with the Boeing Flying Boom system. To feed the more powerful engine, a pair of blow-in auxiliary air intakes were installed in the lower fuselage beneath the cockpit. The modification was eventually retrofitted to early production examples. The F-84E and early production F-84Gs had 4 slots in
51-9578 T3-X displays the perforated air brake. Note that the ladder has the text “717 SKV” although the unit not yet has squadron status. (via Per-Jarle Sogn)

Republic (R)F-84E-30 Thunderjet, S.No. 51-9582, T3-Y of No.1 Photo Reconnaissance Flight, attached to 338 Squadron at Sola 1954. White squadron marking with black border on nose and tip tank and Sola flash on tail fin.

Republic (R)F-84E-30 Thunderjet, S.No. 51-9553, T3-U of 717 Photo Reconnaissance Flight at Sola 1956. Light blue unit marking on nose and tip tank, the same colour as used for the background of the RNAF squadron crests. The nose also has red tape covering the gun ports, beneath the paint (!).
the air brake, late production G-models had the air brake perforated by 42 holes.

**Fletcher recce pods**
The (R)F-84Es, were equipped with two K.24 51¼” focal length cameras in a modified Fletcher fuel tank on the left wingtip. The apertures had to be set manually before take off, as had the camera position to either “forward vertical” or “forward left oblique”.

Some of the early F-84Gs carried Fletcher fuel tanks on the wing tips, while serving with 334 Sqn, though without the camera equipment. The Fletcher tanks and lack of auxiliary intakes make them easily mistaken for the (R)F-84E recce aircraft when studying photos.

For modelling the (R)F-84E, the Fletcher fuel tanks can be taken from a T-33 model kit. The recce pod can easily be modified from the fuel tank by sanding the window area flat and make an opening for the window or use a piece of black decal. A recce pod is available in 1/72 scale from Model Art, but this set has only the single pod for the left wing, so a Fletcher tank has to be taken from a T-33 kit for the right wing anyway.

**Colours and markings**
When attached to 338 Squadron, the Thunderjets of “the recce flight” were painted in the white and black squadron markings of the parent unit, but with code

(R)F-84E 51-9576 T3-Z devoid of any unit markings. Note the longer jet pipe of the F-84E. (via PerEinar Jansen)
letters T3. Following 338 Sqn’s posting to Ørland, and the Flight’s subsequent transfer to 334 Sqn., the aircraft retained the 338 Sqn. colours and T3 code from earlier. At some point the 338 Sqn. markings were removed and replaced with new unit markings on the nose and tip tank. The colour has been described as light blue, but it has not been possible to verify this.

**Decals**

To make a model from the 338 Sqn. attachment, unit markings and serial number can be taken from Vingtor Decals sheet 72/48-105 “F-84E/G - Sola Fighter Wing”. The decals for the wingtip tanks will have to be modified for the Fletcher tanks though, or alternatively painted. Code letters may be taken from Vingtor Decals sheet 72/48-103 “F-86F Sabre” as the size and style were the same. The later unit markings

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F-84G 51-10167 RI-A with full squadron markings for 334 Sqn. Despite the Fletcher fuel tanks and lack of blow-in doors on the fuselage, it is in fact a F-84G and not an (R)F-84E. (via Per-Jarle Sogn)