

The Stinson 108 in Spanish and French AF Service  
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By Larry Westin - November 1, 1999

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Earlier Stinsons, notably the model 10, the model 76 (L5 Sentinel) and several Reliant versions, were used by several military air arms just prior, during World War II, and after. Only two countries, Spain and France, used the Stinson 108 in military service.

Cases exist where Hollywood painted a Stinson 108 to look like a military airplane for a movie, but only the Ejército del Aire, the Spanish Air Force, and the French Air Force actually used the Stinson 108 operationally in military service.

### **Stinson 108 in the Spanish AF**

The Ejército del Aire acquired some 21 Stinson 108-3's for liaison duties. In Spanish Air Force service the Stinson 108-3 was designated L.2. Known serial numbers indicate these were not purchased as a single batch, in fact the Spanish Air Force may have purchased some from private owners.

In service the Stinson 108-3's retained their civilian paint scheme with the addition of military insignia. Spanish roundels were painted top and bottom of each wing, and on each side of the fuselage. On the left side of the fuselage roundel appeared the squadron number. On the right side of the fuselage roundel appears the aircraft number within the squadron. As with all Spanish Air Force aircraft of this time period, the rudder was painted white with a black "X."

On the vertical stabilizer the Spanish Air Force designation was painted, L.2, followed by a dash and ending with the airplane serial number, in Spanish Air Force use, for that type airplane. No doubt that sentence totally confused you. To clarify - the Stinsons carried designations from L.2-1 through L.2-21. Some publications indicate only 18 aircraft were obtained. The Stinson 108-3 in the Museo del Aire, hangar 3, carries the designation L.2-21, so I am assuming 21 were purchased.

All Spanish AF Stinson 108's are model 108-3, all the Station Wagon model. All aircraft were built by Stinson. Except for 108-3982, NC982C, all were unsold when Stinson was sold to Piper. 108-3982 was sold by Stinson on 12/11/47, and came from the factory equipped for skis, with VHF radio, rotatable loop, and marker beacon (well equipped). All the other aircraft first passed on to Piper before going to the Spanish Air Force.

The Ejército del Aire declared the L.2 aircraft surplus in 1965. Subsequently 9 aircraft were then civilianized, and registered to the Subsecretaria de la Aviacion Civil with Spanish civil, "EC," registrations. Known registrations are as follows in the chart on page 2, sorted by Spanish AF serial number.

<b>Stinson S/N</b>	<b>Registration when built</b>	<b>Spanish AF S/N</b>	<b>Spanish AF markings</b>	<b>Civil Registration &amp; Notes</b>
108-5140	NC4140C	L.2-01	95-x<105-x	EC-AZN
108-5062	NC4062C	L.2-02	95-x<105-x	EC-AZT
108-5153	NC4153C	L.2-03	94-2<104-2	EC-AZO
108-4362	NC6362M	L.2-04	94-3<104-3	
108-4298	NC6298M	L.2-05	90-4x<91-4x	Crashed Dec 23, 1950 at Poblet (Tarragona). Rebuilt with the spare fuselage of c/n 4288 and known as L.2-05bis since.
108-4334	NC6334M	L.2-06	90-4x<91-4x	
108-????	NC?????	L.2-07	90-4x<91-4x	
108-5088	NC4088C	L.2-08		EC-AZU
108-5099	NC4099C	L.2-09	91-46<101-46	
108-4343	NC6343M	L.2-10	91-47<101-47	EC-AZP
108-5130	NC4130C	L.2-11	101-2<94-2	
108-????	NC?????	L.2-12	96-8<107-8	EC-AYZ
108-4342	NC6342M	L.2-13	93-5<103-5	
108-4338	NC6338M	L.2-14	93-4<103-4<	EC-ADV then EC-AZD, Now Museo del Aire
108-????	NC?????	L.2-15	102-3	W/O April 10, 1957 in Tablada (Sevilla)
108-5180	NC4180C	L.2-16	92-4<102-4	
108-3982	NC982C	L.2-17		EC-AZQ
108-????	NC?????	L.2-18	106-x	W/O June 24, 1951 in the Spanish Sahara
108-????	NC?????	L.2-19		
108-4321	NC6321M	L.2-20	90-50<	EC-AEZ
108-5162	NC4162C	L.2-21	90-53<	EC-AEY - Now Museo del Aire

## NOTES:

108-4338, L.2-14, last EC-AZD, originally NC6338M, Preserved, Museo del Aire, Madrid-Cuatro Vientos, uncovered suspended from the ceiling in Hangar 2.

108-5162, L.2-21, originally NC4162C, Preserved, Museo del Aire, Madrid-Cuatro Vientos, fully covered and painted, in Hangar 3. Franklin 6A4-165 on a stand next to the airplane.

On a recent trip to Spain I was privileged to visit the Museo del Aire, Madrid-Cuatro Vientos. The museum has two Stinson 108-3's on display. In hangar 2 an uncovered example hangs from the ceiling. This unique display allows visitors to see the structure of the Stinson 108.

In hangar 3 a fully covered example, serial number L.2-21, sits on its own landing gear. Except for a few fairings, this airplane is externally complete. The instrument panel is incomplete.

I attempted to learn the serial numbers of the displayed airplanes, but was unsuccessful. Also I asked if any museum staff had flown the Stinson 108, but none could give me any information. Since it has been 35 years since they were declared surplus, this was not unexpected. Serial number and other information above from Paco Riavas via email on 02/01/09, and another email from José Ramón Valero on 02/03/09.

If you are in Madrid I strongly suggest a visit to the Museo del Aire. Displayed aircraft are exhibited very professionally and aircraft are well maintained. In addition they have displayed engines, radio and other aircraft related items. A recommended museum to visit.

Information sources for this article:

My thanks to John Wegg, author of "General Dynamics Aircraft and their Predecessors," and editor of Airways Magazine, for providing much of the information about the Spanish Air Force use of the Stinson 108. John Wegg also supplied the black and white photo of the Spanish Air Force L.2-17.

My thanks to Pete Hughes <pete@pjhughes.demon.co.uk> of Air Britain, for providing the serial numbers and civilian registrations.

My thanks to Paco Rivas <info@pacorivas.net> of the Muse del Aire, for providing considerable additional information about the Stinson 108 in Spanish Air Force service. Feb 1, 2009.

My thanks to José Ramón Valero <rnac@aire.org> for additional information about the Stinson 108's in Spanish Air Force service. Feb 3, 2009.

### **Stinson 108 in the French AF**

My thanks to Alain Flotard for providing information about the use of the Stinson 108 in French AF service.

The French Air Force used the Stinson 108-3 in French Indo China - now Vietnam. Alain Flotard provides details. "Andre Bellouard was the pilot and Pierre Rouxel the Mechanics. They are still alive 90 years old and 84. They are very happy of this. This 108-3, serial number 108-4419, was the plane of "Le haut Commissaire" of the region near Hue. It was the General Lorillot. He used the Stinson 108 for traveling in all the "Indochine." It flew with original colors Maroon and they put on it the French Cocarde and the insigna of the ELA 52. (Escadrille de liaison aerienne)."

Stinson 108-3, sn 108-4419, now F-BEXD in the same paint scheme as it flew in Vietnam in 1951. This shows the actual airplane flown by the French Air Force in Indochina (Vietnam) in 1951, now beautifully restored, and flying in France today.

If you have corrections or additional information about Stinson 108 used in military service, please contact me.

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