

“Ugly Duckling, Swan or a Hunt Bird in hand?”

An open source assessment of the JF-17 Thunder

by Prof Prodyut Das



The assessment of a rival's warplane suffers from a primary lacunae in that the information is secret. There is perforce reliance on secondary sources but this is inevitably heavily dosed with rivalry, jealousy, envy, disdain, NIH (not invented here!) racialism and similar human failings. The task therefore becomes difficult and the output subjective. To illustrate my

observation I will mention the case of two very well known warplanes.

The existence of the Mitsubishi Reisen (Zero) first came into US knowledge almost a year before Pearl Harbour. The American Volunteer Group (AVG) *Flying Tigers* sent back reports from China of an astonishing Japanese fighter with unimaginable maneuverability and range. The US experts

discounted these frontline reports because such a fighter could not exist. One can sympathise with the experts. Going by their lights such an aircraft could not be designed. They did not know that the Japanese had got rid of everything which the West would consider “essential”: armour, bullet proof windscreen, self sealing tanks, radios, etc to produce the ultimate dogfighter that swept