

Special Ops: The 77 Sqn 'The Veiled Vipers' of the IAF



Aviation and Spec Ops (Special Operations) are two very exciting subjects which are very much related to each other end to end at least in this era of modern warfare and when we correlate the two even more in light of the Indian Military Aviation, we get the 'Veiled Vipers' aka the No.77 Squadron of the Indian Air Force. With so much pride and excitement, we would like to inform you that our most recent visit was to this legendary unit. Before moving towards the role of the unit, Ops conducted/supported by the unit, the interview and photo-session we conducted at the unit, let us give you a walk-through the glorious history and origin of the unit.

The first brick in the foundation of the unit was laid when the US Congress cleared the 'Foreign Military Sales 2008' for the Indian Ministry of Defence (MoD). Among many other equipment like AH-64Es, C-17s, CH-47Hs, P-8Is were 6x C-130J-30 Super Hercules tactical airlift aircraft produced by Lockheed Martin (or LM), for the Indian Air Force. The MoD cleared the procurement of six

C-130J for the IAF at the cost of US 1.06 billion dollars, this historic purchase paved the way for the IAF Spec-Ops Flt (Flight) and further enhanced the tactical airlift capabilities of the IAF. While these were the geopolitical, financial and diplomatic aspect of the C-130J deal, the military aspect is a mythical tale in its own.

It all started when an officer from the elite 9 Para Cdo (Now SF) was sent to the UK for a visit to the Joint Air Transport Establishment or JATE (Now JADTEU) in the early 1990s. Where the officer observed the elite paratroopers of the Parachute Regiment of the British Army doing static-line jumps and the secretive operators of the British Special Air Service Aka the 'SAS' doing CFF (Combat Free-Fall) from the Lockheed C-130 Hercules cargo aircraft at RAF (Royal Air Force) Base Brize Norton. Upon returning to India, the officer presented a debriefing to senior army officials, wherein he strongly recommended the acquisition of the C-130 Hercules as a vital addition for the IAF to support the Indian Special Operations,