

MiG-27s phased out



Flogged to the End

Seldom in history of the Indian Air Force has the phase out of an aircraft type attracted so much nationwide publicity, especially when the type concerned hardly covered itself with glory. The IAF's MiG-27ML (*NATO : Flogger-J*) was export variant of the swing-wing tactical strike fighter from the MiG-design bureau, 165 of which were then built under licence by HAL at Nasik from 1984 and first inducted into service in January 1986. The MiG-27ML supplanted various types including the Su-7, Ajeet and latterly some MiG-23BNs, the type serving with numbers 2, 9, 18, 22 and 222 Squadrons. The MiG-27 had the dubious reputation of having the highest attrition rate in the IAF's fighter inventory.

40 MiG-27MLs were later upgraded by HAL and as the MiG-27UPG, re-equipped Nos.10 and 29 Squadrons, the last of which was phased out at this highly publicised ceremony at Jodhpur on 27 December 2019.

There were many emotional tributes paid to the MiG-27 "of Kargil fame" by some daily newspapers but the fact is that only one squadron (No.9 'Wolf Pack') took part in that conflict, based at



Srinagar, one MiG-27 being lost in action. In fact, the earlier variant, MiG-23BNs of No.221 Squadron 'Valiants' were much more in evidence making their mark with concentrated bombing attacks, while Mirage 2000s of No.7 Squadron 'Battle Axes' carried out precision LGB attacks on enemy targets in the area.

Memories are short : classic aircraft with the IAF such as the Hunter, Canberra and Gnat which types actually "touched the sky with glory" during the 1965 and 1971 air wars, were phased out with hardly a whimper, sans some sentimental mess parties at their last air bases. 🦋

Photos: Simon Watson