

NO QUIT YET FOR MIRAGE F-1

MIRAGE F-1 DOESN'T WANT TO KNOW ABOUT QUITTING

The Mirage F.1 proved to be a good design, as evidenced by the long record of service in the French Air Force, successful export numbers and successful participation in various world conflicts. Though the plane is a beauty as it comes to appearance, aerodynamivms alone is insufficiënt to guarantee success, so what's the secret ? At Base Aérienne-112 Reims, Champagne France, one of the last bastions French Mirage F-1 is a squadron which will be partially lifted this year, a good time to zoom in to this fine plane once more

DESIRED DESIGN

It all started in the seventies, middle of the cold war when there was a need for a successor for the Mirage III. Various customers complained concerning the high landing-speed and wide curves of the Delta-Wing technology, which was at the time a factor. Taking the main-frame of the Mirage III as starting point, the choice was made for a short arrowy wing on shoulder height and these were very thin for those days, but solid enough thanks to increased Construction knowledge. This attitude was ahead of its time and the Mirage F.1 was considered as an air superiority fighter !

Compared to the Mirage III the F-1 had 40% more fuel capacity, twice that range, a much shorter runway for take off and landings and much more agility and better performance at lower altitude and thus it met the needs. The F.1A was an export version with simpler avionics, suitable for export. Eventually, many examples served by the Armée de l'Air, but now most are withdrawn from service and are stored at Chateaudun, the 'warehouse' of the French Air Force. The remaining planes in service – because of eliminating other squadrons - are concentrated at Reims and a small unit at Mont de Marsan.

FRENCH AIRFORCE

In an earlier stage EC 1/30 and EC 2/30 at Colmar were disbanded and now it's ER 1/33 's turn at Reims. EC 2/33 'Savoie' will still be flying up to 2014 but they will be moved from Reims to Mont de Marsan because there is insufficiënt maintainance personell for two bases. By taking over the aircraft of the other squadrons it has become a mix of Mirage F.1CT, the ground attack version, and the F.1CR, the recce version completed with the F.1B trainer version for the necessary training.

The F.1CR was the last type to come to service, and will be the last one to be phased-out. Remarkable fact is that the F.1 still flies while later types of Mirage 2000 have been phased-out already. The avionics of the Mirage F.1 have been improved in between, but it will be clear that for modern warfare the plane does not meet the standards. This way the missions at Kandahar experienced the limited use because of the lack of night vision equipment and laser-guided bombs cannot be adressed without help. In contrast to the Mirage 2000 the F.1 does have a board gun, which proved to be very useful. The F.1 did not just see Afghanistan, but also Chaad, Servia and Bosnia and with it's internal and external camera-systems and ELINT capacity it certainly has provided it's services.

REAL FLYING

As for flying, the trainer is not or one of the most sophisticated airplanes, but you should really learn to fly it, quite different compared to an F-16. The cadets to be very different if an

F-16. Cadets have here with a good school. Cadets really find a good 'teacher' in it. France therefore provides not only training for its crews, but also to the Moroccan Air Force, also flying with this type. The plane is beautiful with its slim form an attractive appearance in the sky, and at Reims AFB two examples were shown in very special colors which gave it al a special cachet. It was a jubilee F.1B with colors of the 67 th anniversary year of the "Groupe Alsace 'from 2008 and a special blue and white F.1C labeled ER 1 / 33 Belfort to celebrate the lifting of this squadron. The airframes, certainly the last in service can still take years and that's surprising, but the avionics make the plane dated and obsolete, and in any event 2014 will be a definit deadline.

The Mirage F.1 in short:

Length	: 15.30 m
Height	: 4.50 m
Wingspan	: 8.40 m
Wingsurface	: 25 square meter
Empty weight	: 7400 kg.
Max. start weight	: 15.200 kg
Engine	: 1 x SNECMA Atar 9K-50 turbojet with 7200 kg thrust incl afterburner
Max. speed	: mach 2.2 (2350 km/hr) at 12.000m, mach 1.2 at sealevel.
Ceiling	: 20.000 m
Climb speed	: 13.400 m/min. – 215 m/sec.
Cargo	: 4000-6000 kg.
Range	: 1400 km
Fuel tank	: 3435 L, droptanks 2 x 1160L of 2300 L
Ejection seat	: Martin Baker 6
Sensors	: Thomson-CSF Cyrano IVM radar, RWR
Internal camera's	: (F.1CR) Panoramic cam. Omera 40, Vertical cam. Omera 33
Armament	: 2 x Matra Magic R550 or 2 x Matra R. 350. exportversion: 2 x AIM-9 Sidewinder air-air rockets, and for air to ground AS.30L laserguided missiles in combination with ATLIS pod, AS-37 anti-radar missile, 250/500 kg. Bombs, SNEB 68 mm rocket gondola's, Beluga cluster ammo, 2 x 30 mm DEFA 553 canon.
Pods	: Photographic pod RP35P, electromagnetic emission detector ASTAC (ELINT/ESM), Super Cyclope IR thermographic captor , FLIR-pod, Raphael TH, airborne electronic imagery radar with radio transmission and Side Looking Airborne Radar (SLAR) capacity.
Export	: Greece, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libia, Morocco, Qatar, South Afrika, Spain, Equador.
Built	: > 700