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CHAPTER IX

THE AIR WAR

The Contending Forces

By 1965, the IAF and the PAF both had come a long way since the Partition days of 1947-48.

The PAF had grown into a well-equipped, highly trained force of about seventeen squadrons, i.e., two squadrons of B-57 bombers, one of F-104 fighters, eight of F-86 Sabres, one of SA-16 Albatross amphibian aircraft and H-43 helicopters for maritime recce and sea-air rescue, two transport squadrons of C-130 Hercules and Bristol planes, one high-altitude recce squadron of RB-57s, including the hush-hush RB-57F, and two squadrons of T-6G, T-33 and T-37 trainers, which were used also for tactical recce and ground attack(1).

It is estimated that actual aircraft strength was: B-57:29; F-104:12; F-86:116; SA-16:4 and H-43:6; C-130:6; Bristol:15; RB-57:3; T-6G(Harvard):25; T-33A:16; RT-33:6; T-37B:21; and a Viscount, making a total of 260 aircraft of various types(2). One of the F-86 squadrons, No.14, was based on Tejgaon airfield near Dhaka.

The F-104 "Starfighter" was indeed the star fighter of the PAF. Among the first planes capable of flying at twice the speed of sound (Mach 2), and armed with a rapid firing 20mm gun and two Sidewinder heat-seeking missiles (AIM.9B), it had radar for interception and fire control. It was expected to be particularly useful for intercepting and shooting down night bombers. The F86 Sabre was a modern fighter already tested in combat and highly regarded all over the world. With a high subsonic speed and carrying six machine guns of .5 inch calibre plus two bombs of thousand pounds each or 56 rockets of 2.75 in., the Sabre had more manoeuvrability than a Hunter in a dog fight. A substantial number of the PAF Sabres had been modified to carry Sidewinder missiles also.

The American B-57 bombers were like an improved version of the Canberra, with a flying ceiling of over 16,000 Metre (50,000 ft) and capable of carrying about 4 tons of bombs. The RB-57F was meant for photo and electronic reconnaissance from a high altitude (above 24,000 Mtr or 70,000 ft) where ~~neither the IAF fighters nor anti-aircraft guns or missiles could harm it.~~ <sup>Took</sup> (L)

The USA had not only gifted the war planes to

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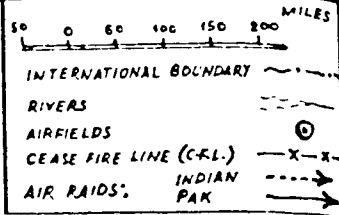
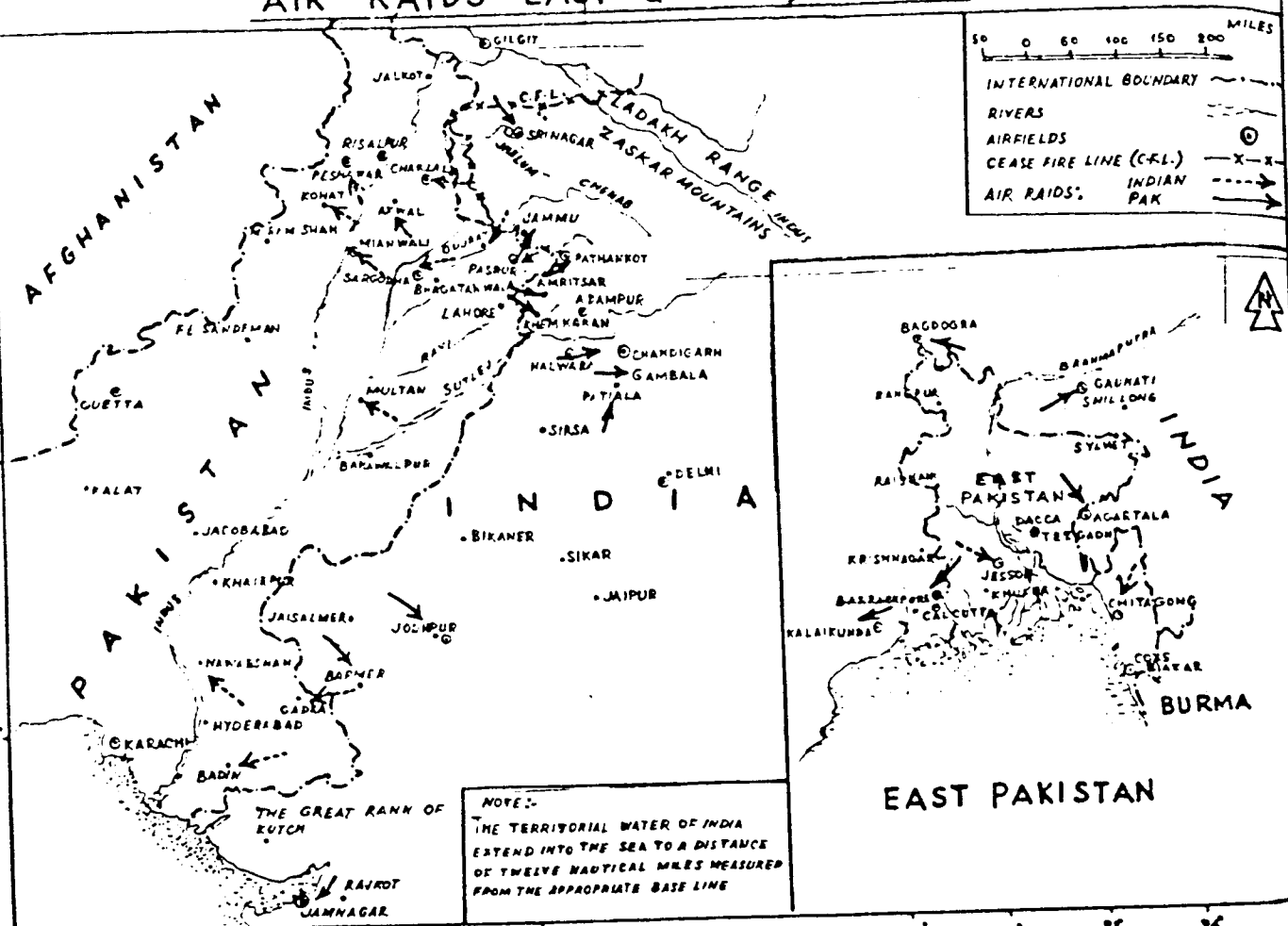
Pakistan to fight Communist USSR and China under the Mutual Aid Programme, but it had also set up sophisticated radar stations in Pakistan to detect hostile aircraft and to guide PAF fighters to intercept them. The radar sites were at Sakesar in the north and at Badin in the south, near Karachi. Sargodha was the biggest base of the PAF, defended by 64 anti-aircraft guns, while Mauripur near Karachi had 48 and Peshawar, Sakesar, Badin and Dhaka had 16 AA Guns each(3).

The IAF had, in 1965, 26 Fighter and 4 Bomber Sqns, with 13 Sqns of Transport planes, and 5 Helicopter Units. The 26 Fighter Sqns comprised of 1 Sqn of MiG-21 still under raising, 6 Sqns of Hunters, 5 of Gnats, 5 of Mysteres, 6 of Vampires and 3 of Toofanis (Ouragons). Canberras represented the only bombers the IAF had. The Transport Sqns were 3 of Dakotas, 3 of Packets, 2 of the Russian AN-12s, 1 of IL-14, 1 of Caribou, 2 of Otters and 1 Sqn of Super Constellations. The Mi-4 and the Alouette represented the Helicopters.

Although this added upto a force about three times the strength of the Pakistan Air Force, it should be noted that the 6 Sqns of Vampires and 3 of Toofanis were definitely outdated, and could not be used against a modern air force like the PAF in 1965. Some of the remaining 17 Sqns of Fighters, and many Bombers, had to remain earmarked, and located far in the east, for guarding against the Chinese threat. The Contending Air Forces in the west were, therefore, well and evenly matched. The IAF MiGs were comparable to the F-104, but were not yet fully operational and integrated. The Hunters and the Gnats were comparable to the Sabres, but, they had no air to air missiles. The Hunter was less agile, while the Gnat had still some control problems and jamming of the guns. The Mystere was a dedicated ground attack aircraft and could not hold its own against the versatile Sabre. The Pakistani radar and electronics was also definitely superior to what was available to the IAF, which was critically dependent on the radar unit at Amritsar. Indian superiority in numbers was, therefore, more than off set by Pakistani advantage in better quality equipment gifted by the USA.

The Americans, it seems, had given to the PAF not only modern aircraft but also modern training and operational doctrine. The PAF had already formulated and issued a clear cut war plan on 29 June 1965(4). The plan was to launch surprise attacks against major IAF bases to destroy many planes on the ground, and thus to reduce the disparity in numbers. A

# AIR RAIDS: EAST & WEST, SEP 1965



**NOTE:**  
THE TERRITORIAL WATER OF INDIA  
EXTEND INTO THE SEA TO A DISTANCE  
OF TWELVE NAUTICAL MILES MEASURED  
FROM THE APPROPRIATE BASE LINE

certain strength of the Sabre force was earmarked for close support of the Pakistani Army. Even the timing of the surprise attacks against IAF bases was carefully considered and decided, and a strike at dusk was preferred to a morning strike. After the sudden strike by the large force of Sabres, the bombers based at Mauripur were to continue and rain bombs over the IAF bases the whole night. Even the training aircraft like Harvard(T-6G), T-33 and T-37 were to operate in the Amritsar, Jalandhar, Ferozepur and Ludhiana areas from the very first night of the war. Compared to this elaborate and determined plan of attack, the IAF, it seems, operated on the basis of ad-hoc decisions, and in the hope that full-scale war would simply not come.

In keeping with its prompt and eager preparations for war, the PAF activated its Commander-in-Chief's Operational Headquarters "Somewhere in Pakistan" on 31 August 1965. The next day, the entire PAF was put on "highest state of alert"(5). On 2 September, the civil defence organisation was activated and on 4 September, Air Priorities Board was set up to control all Pakistani transport aircraft, including those of the Pakistan International Airways. All out war on 6 September might have caught by surprise the Pakistan Army, but certainly not the Pakistan Air Force.

### Air Operations Begin

Being foiled in its attempt to capture Kashmir through Operation Gibraltar, when the desperate Pak army made a major armour-cum-infantry thrust into the Chhamb area and threatened the vital Akhnur bridge and the Jammu-Punch road, at around 1600 hrs on 1 September 1965, General Chaudhuri, the Army Chief, alongwith Air Marshal Arjan Singh, the Air Chief, met Defence Minister Chavan and Defence Secretary P.V.R. Rao for permission to use the IAF. 'Go Ahead' was immediately given, and the IAF aircraft were launched within an hour to stem the enemy onslaught.

Twenty-six fighter-bombers of the Indian Air Force (twelve Vampires of No.45 Sqn and fourteen Mystere aircraft of Nos. 3 and 31 Sqns) took off from Pathankot just before sunset for the Chhamb Sector. This was the start of the air action by the Indian Air Force and the first offensive mission by the IAF fighters to counter the Pakistani attack in Chhamb with two regiments of tanks. In the swift and fierce action, ten tanks, 2 ack ack guns and 30-40 vehicles of the Pak Army were destroyed. However, PAF Sabres were patrolling just inside the Pak border, and the IAF lost four of the obsolescent Vampires. Three of

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the Vampire pilots were killed, and the pilot of the fourth aircraft baled out and reached the base safely. Thus, the IAF paid a heavy price by sending obsolete and purely ground-attack aircraft without providing some superior Fighters to give top cover.

Neither Vampires nor Ouragons were actively used in operations after this, reducing IAF's effective strength by about one third at a single stroke. Although it was an unhappy start and a big shock to the Indian Air Force, the IAF steeled its determination to fight back in the following days.

On 2 September 1965, IAF aircraft were mainly employed for fighter sweeps, and six Mysteres carried out PR/Cover sorties in Chhamb sector. Pak Sabres attacked some ground targets and also a convoy in the Jaurian sector and destroyed some civilian buildings. Next day, the IAF decided to provide good fighter cover for the PR sorties against Pak Sabres, which were certainly much superior to the Vampires and Mysteres. The IAF, therefore, introduced the Gnat fighters into the operation. Eight Gnats of No. 23 Squadron took off for an offensive sweep in the Chhamb sector. The Indian pilots were determined to punish the PAF for their loss of four Vampires earlier. In the very first encounter with three Sabres and one F-104 Star fighter, the Gnats drew blood on 3 September. A very fine technique was employed for this purpose. Two Mysteres were sent on normal operational sorties with a high altitude cover by a formation of Gnats. When the Sabres tried to shoot the Mysteres down, the Gnats pounced on them from above, and Sqn Ldr T. Keelor shot down the first Sabre in a dog fight. Unfortunately, one Gnat, short of fuel, failed to return to the base. The shooting down of a battle-hardened Sabre by the small Gnat had a stimulating effect on the morale of the Gnat pilots. This was the first time that the Gnat was used in combat and it opened its account with a 'Kill' in the very first encounter, without suffering any loss due to enemy action.

The Indian ground situation had become worse with the enemy armour threatening the 41 Brigade position. The Indian Air Force, therefore, carried out extensive fighter sweeps over the battle area, involving fourteen Gnats and four MiG-21s, and gave close support to the Army. Two attacks were carried out by Mysteres on enemy positions at Troti and Kalit in the Chhamb sector. In the air, four Gnats escorting four Mysteres engaged in close support in Chhamb sector spotted four Sabres attacking Indian positions near Akhnur bridge. The Gnats engaged the Sabres, and Flt Lt V.S.Pathania shot down one Sabre

during a low-level dog-fight. Three other Gnats got behind three Sabres for sure kills, but all the three pursuing aircraft suffered gun stoppage after firing a couple of rounds each. But for the jamming of guns, three more Sabres would have been downed, and this would have dealt a severe blow to the morale of the PAF. All the same, the excellent job done by the Gnats was recognised by Vir Chakra awards for SqN Ldr T.Keelor and Flt Lt V.S.Pathania. On this day, the Pak Sabres and F-104s had reportedly fired six side-winder missiles, but none could hit the small, agile Gnats.

For the first time, on 4 September, Mig-21s came on the scene, and two of them made a sweep in support of Gnats and Mysteres, and later in the day two more MiGs went up as top cover to them. One MiG got behind one of the Sabres and fired two K-13 missiles, but both failed to hit the target. Though the MiGs did not get any kill, their presence in the battle area gave confidence to the Gnat and Mystere pilots and also created apprehension in the minds of the adversaries(6).

The same day, F-86s escorted by F-104s carried out three attacks on Indian ground positions in Rajouri sector, two F-86s carried out rocket attacks in Ranbir Singhpura sector, and enemy aircraft also attacked the Akhnur bridge.

On 5 September 1965, while enemy positions were attacked by Mysteres at Jaurian and Garabi in the Chhamb Sector, the Gnats and MiG-21s flew fighter sweeps. In the evening, F-86s attacked Amritsar, the holy city of the sikhs(7).

#### PAF Raids Against IAF Bases: 6 Sep.

In the Joint Chiefs of Staff meeting held at 8.30 a.m. on 6 September, and presided over by President Ayub Khan, Air Vice Marshal Nur Khan, the PAF Chief, was given full authority to conduct air operations as he liked. The latter told the President that his top priority would be to implement the long-standing War Plan No.6 of June 1965 to launch a preemptive attack on certain selected IAF bases with a view to neutralising some vital IAF aircraft and installations, and also to allot part of the PAF fighter force for close-support operations as well as for air defence(8). However, the Pak Air Chief had to argue with himself whether PAF could accept the result in terms of IAF retaliation, especially the possible loss of its radar eyes at Sakesar. He knew that like the PAF, the IAF was also equally prepared to meet raids on air bases, but significantly the IAF was

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better equipped to absorb high casualties in aircraft and pilots. While 50% of PAF pilots were highly trained, the rest were untested youngsters, and moreover, Pakistan had no reserves of either fliers or machines. Nur Khan reasoned that even with a favourable aircraft loss ratio of 1:4, his air force would not be able to recover from heavy initial casualties. Considering the result of inaction potentially more hazardous than the risk of preemptive strike, he went ahead with the airfield strike plan on the strength of the support he received from his staff. He took the crucial decision at 1100 hrs on 6 September, and by 1300 hrs the mission signals were received by the concerned PAF units. The finalised strike plan was(9):

<u>Take-off Base</u>	<u>Commitment</u>	<u>Target</u>
Sargodha	8F-86Fs	Adampur
Sargodha	8F-86Fs	Halwara
Sargodha	4T-33s	Ferozepur Radar
Sargodha	6F-86Fs	
	1RB-57 ELINT	Amritsar Radar
Peshawar	8F-86Fs	Pathankot
		Srinagar
Mauripur	8F-86Fs	Jamnagar
Mauripur	4T-33s	Porbunder Radar
Mauripur	12B-57s	Jamnagar

However, problems were faced in launching the raids from Sargodha. The PAF planners delayed the flight of 12 F-86Fs and 6T-33s from Mauripur to Sargodha to avoid exposing too many machines to likely IAF attacks on the already overcrowded tarmac of Sargodha for too long. What is more, four of the Mauripur Sabres landed with major defects, requiring repairs. Even as late as 1615 hrs, Gp Capt Masud, Sargodha PAF Station Commander, rang the C-in-C requesting postponement of the strike by 24 hours, as only four F-86s were available for strike against each of the three targets - Adampur, Halwara and Amritsar Radar. But this was not accepted. Finally, only 6 Sabres took off from Sargodha to strike at Adampur and Halwara. A vital part of the plan was for the participating PAF strikers to cross the international border simultaneously to achieve maximum surprise. However, while the Peshawar element of 8 Sabres, escorted by 2 Star fighters carrying Sidewinders as top cover at 15,000 ft, arrived precisely on time at 1740 hrs TOT (Time On Target) on 6 September, the first section of three aircraft from Sargodha did not get airborne until 1810 hrs to attack Adampur, and the second section left for Halwara 10 minutes later(10). Thus the surprise was lost.

Pathankot

Eight F-86s carried out a highly successful raid at 1740 hrs. The base was caught napping with no CAP airborne. The F-86s, supported by two F-104s, carried out multiple attacks on selected targets. They destroyed two MiG-21s, 6 Mysteres, one Gnat and one C-119 Packet, and damaged two more Gnats and one Mystere. Three IAF personnel were injured, and one killed. The base was again attacked between 2345 and 0100 hrs by B-57s, but no further damage was caused(11). *Surprise  
Protection  
for ac*

Halwara

At 1840 hrs, four F-86s attacked the Halwara base. At that time four Hunters from Nos. 7 and 27 Squadron were 'capping' the base in pairs. The F-86s saw two of the Hunters of No. 7 Sqn, pulled up behind them and shot them down. However, before his plane was shot down. Fg Offr Gandhi had fired at one F-86 and claimed hitting it. But no wreckage was found. In the meanwhile, Sqn Ldr Rathore and Fg Offr Neb of No. 27 Sqn got behind the Sabres, and shot down two of them. The ack ack claimed one more F-86.

Amritsar Radar Station:

F-86s attacked this radar station thrice between 1050 and 1715 hrs. One B-57 raided the station again at 2330 hrs. However, there was no significant damage and the radar remained operational. One B-57 and one F-86 were claimed shot down by ack ack, and wreckage of the bomber was also found near village Attari(12).

Jamnagar:

This base was raided six times during 6-7 September night by six B-57s at 1945, 2345, 0100, 0200, 0400 and 0530 hrs. Four Vampire aircraft were damaged, and although no Pak aircraft was claimed by the IAF, the wreckage of a B-57 was located. Probably an ack ack gun shot it down.

According to John Fricker, two sections of 3 B-57s each headed south from Mauripur down the coast, flying at a height of about 70 metres and then skimming the shore-line while entering the Indian sky. The flashes from the Mandvi lighthouse across the gulf of Kutch provided an additional fix. About one and a half kms short of the Jamnagar airfield, the Pak raiders pulled up into a steep climb and then dived to deliver 4,000 lb of bombs each on the target. One of the aircraft also launched rocket attacks which caused fire in a hangar. All the aircraft returned to



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Mauripur safely, without encountering any IAF fighter or flak. Thereafter, single B-57s from Mauripur continued harrasing raids on Jamnagar throughout the night, with some crows flying as many as 3 missions in a period of 9 hours(13).

### Adampur:

The F-86 mission for Adampur was intercepted near Tarn Taran by four Hunters. The attack was disrupted, and one Hunter with its pilot was lost when the aircraft hit the ground in a turn during combat. Again, a night raid by B-57s resulted in the loss of one MiG-21.

According to John Fricker, one of the early lessons learnt by Pakistan from the PAF's preemptive attacks on the Indian Air Force bases was that in a small Air Force, casualties were felt as keenly and as personally as in a family, with corresponding effect on morale(14).

### Pak Paratroopers

On the night of 6-7 September, the enemy implemented its audacious plan of dropping paratroopers near the Indian airfields in Punjab. In the early morning of 7 September, a series of reports trickled in, indicating that Pakistan had dropped groups of paratroops near the airfields at Pathankot, Adampur and Halwara. Information pieced together from interrogation of captured Pak personnel revealed that the strength of each batch was approximately three officers, one Junior Commissioned Officer and 60 Other Ranks, selected from Pakistan's crack "Special Service Group". Only C-130 aircraft were used for para-dropping. Approximately, 64 Pak army personnel (one C-130 load) were paradropped at night close to each of the three I A F operational airfields. They jumped from a height of about 350 metres using both the side doors and landed about 3-4 miles away from the perimeter of the airfield. They carried with them small arms, including automatic weapons and 2" mortars, explosives, wireless sets, torches and wirecutters. After landing they buried the parachutes.

They were to assemble with the aid of torch flashes, subdued whistles or barkings akin to the jackal's. Movement towards the airfield was to be effected in three to four batches and wirecutters were provided for entry into the airfield(15).

Their mission was to destroy the aircraft and vital installations on the airfields mentioned above.

On completion of their task, the paratroopers were to be picked up by aircraft on a pre-arranged signal, failing which they were to trickle back unobtrusively into Pak territory on their own.

In Pathankot area, the paratroopers were dropped at about 0230 hrs on 7 September, which meant that they had a margin of about three hours before daylight to complete their task. However, by mistake they landed on a marshy piece of ground, leading to great confusion. By the time the various "Sticks" were collected, it was too late to fulfil their mission. The first warning about this drop was conveyed to Pathankot SubArea HQ by a villager. Hurriedly, approximately 200 men were collected from the transients at the Base and the chase began in the early hours of the morning. By about 1000 hrs, the intruders were completely surrounded and they began to give themselves up in groups. The last group, which included their Commander, surrendered towards the 7th evening.

In Adampur area, the paratroopers landed in the vicinity of a village, where the barking of dogs gave away their presence. The only force available at the airfield at that stage was some elements of PAP. This local force was reinforced by two armoured cars from the NCC Squadron at Ludhiana and a company of infantry from XI Corps to assist in rounding up the paratroopers. By the evening of 8 September, most of the paratroopers dropped near this airfield were effectively dealt with.

At Halwara, apart from the PAP Garrison, the only other troops available to deal with the paratroopers were the muleteers from the animal transport company at Ludhiana. Later, in the afternoon of 7 September, two armoured cars from the NCC Unit at Ludhiana also fetched up to strengthen this force. It was subsequently learnt that the group dropped at this airfield was composed of two Officers and 46 Other Ranks. The paratroopers, after only a token show of resistance, surrendered en masse willingly.

Thus, the paratroopers failed in their mission completely. Their plans were ill-conceived and based on scanty information about the airfields and their defence arrangements. Low in morale, the paratroopers appeared to have very little faith in their mission. Some of the officers frankly admitted on capture that they were doubtful of the success of their operation even before they had started. Finally, the active response of the civil authorities and the spontaneous reaction of the local villagers, who cooperated enthusiastically with the forces to hunt the

paratroopers, knocked the bottom out of this venture. The sturdy peasants, in fact, ranged through the green fields thumping and rattling their sticks, as if they were flushing out juicy partridges instead of Pak Commandos. But, under different circumstances, the Pak move could deliver a telling blow to the IAF.

IAF Counter-attack: 7 Sep

Till 6th morning both the PAF and IAF had been fighting a limited war, employing the air forces only for recce and army support roles in the Chhamb area of J&K. But this day marked the beginning of a new phase in the employment of air power. The Indian Army made successful thrusts into Pakistan in the Wagah-Jassar-Bedian areas, and in the afternoon, the Pakistani President, Ayub Khan, formally declared war on India. Henceforward, the air war escalated and the air forces were now utilised for interdiction and bomber tasks also. 31 Mystere sorties from Pathankot and Adampur, 16 Hunter sorties from Halwara and six Canberra sorties from Agra were flown on 6 September in the Chhamb sector in support of the Army, and on offensive recce in XI Corps area. Fourteen Gnat and 4 Mig-21 air defence missions of escort and 'sweeps' were undertaken in the areas of operation of the groundattack aircraft. The IAF claimed as destroyed 9 tanks, 12 heavy guns, 4 ack ack guns, 26 vehicles and one military train. It also bombed the railway tracks at Rahwali(16). There was virtually no interference with these activities possibly due to the presence of the Indian air defence aircraft, or because the PAF was busy with the last minute preparations at Sargodha for the big pre-emptive strikes against the IAF bases the same afternoon.

However, the official records of the Indian army lament a lack of IAF ground support during its offensive in Punjab areas against vigorous PAF ground attacks on its advancing formations. John Fricker has also corroborated this : "Incredibly, the Indian offensive struggled on without any form of air support, and the IAF did not challenge the repeated ground attack sorties flown without loss by the PAF throughout the day upto 1545 hrs. Eleven sorties were completed from Sargodha in support of the Pak Army on the Lahore front, plus a further four in the vicinity of Jassar Bridge, striking at Indian army vehicles, troops and artillery. The PAF was also very sensitive towards possible IAF strikes against its bases, which accounted for the 22 F-86 and 15 F-104 CAP sorties flown from Sargodha and six each from Peshawar and Mauripur on 6 September"(17).

On 7 September, the IAF retaliated with counter-air strikes over the PAF bases of Sargodha, Chhota Sargodha, Rahwali, Chander, Gujrat, Bhagatanwala, Chaklala and Pasrur. No aircraft were found at any of the bases except Sargodha. At Rahwali, the IAF planes attacked a radar unit and destroyed it. But while flying back, Sqn Ldr Jasbeer Singh crashed into the ground in an accident, and was killed. Seven of the IAF Canberras attacked Chaklala airfield and started a huge fire; probably a big petroleum dump was hit.

Seven counter-air strikes were undertaken against the Sargodha complex just at dawn, entailing considerable risk, as the enemy airbase complex was heavily defended by guns and fighters. Out of these, five reached the targets (Sargodha, Bhagatanwala and Chhota Sargodha), and two did not - one having been intercepted en route and the other being diverted for another task. In the first strike by Mysteres of No.1 Sqn, seven out of the eleven aircraft pulled up over the target undetected, as the rest failed to arrive due to navigational problems. From the attack position at height, nothing could be seen on the ground due to the poor light condition. However, on pulling out of the dive, the leader of the formation spotted a number of aircraft on ORP and warned the rest of the formation, but none of them could spot the targets. All aircraft had to attack blindly, but caused considerable damage to the BPIs(18) and to aircraft parked on the ORP and in the hangars(19). One Mystere was reported missing. It came to light later that Sqn Ldr A.B. Devayya, who was reported missing after the strike, had actually gone down fighting, only after shooting down a superior aircraft in a dog fight. Having accomplished a successful raid over Sargodha airfield, the Mystere piloted by Sqn Ldr Devayya was intercepted by a supersonic F-104 Star-fighter, piloted by (then) Flt Lt Amjad Hussain of PAF, who succeeded in hitting and damaging Sqn Ldr Devayya's Mystere. Undaunted and with utter disregard for his personal safety, Sqn Ldr Devayya, manoeuvring his damaged aircraft, finally shot down the F-104, from which Flt Lt Husain ejected successfully. Sqn Ldr Devayya was posthumously awarded Maha Vir Chakra in 1988 for this exceptional act of gallantry.

During the next strike at Chhota Sargodha by a formation of No.27 Sqn, the airfield was found deserted. The attack was perfect with no air opposition, although heavy ack ack was experienced. On the way back, two Sabres on ORP at Sargodha were attacked, though the result was not clear. But about 50 km from Sargodha, a Hunter developed engine trouble and crashed.

The next striking formation of six Hunters from No.7 Sqn was intercepted by F-86s, and two Indian aircraft were shot down by the Sabres. The most successful raid on Sargodha was carried out next by a Mystere formation of 4 aircraft from No.1 Squadron. Two bombs were dropped on the BPI by Sqn Ldr Handa, who later strafed 3 F-86s parked on the ORP. As a result, one F-86 burst into flames immediately. Another Mystere dropped bombs on the ORP and strafed the aircraft parked at the other end, while the third dropped its bombs on the other ORP. As the fourth aircraft's bombs did not release, those had to be jettisoned over a hangar. All the aircraft returned to base safely.

The fifth strike from No.8 Sqn Mysteres over Bhagatanwala went off perfectly, and all the aircraft delivered their weapon loads on the target. The formation did not encounter any air opposition. However, later in the afternoon, in an unsuccessful strike over Sargodha by a 2-aircraft formation again from No.1 Sqn, one Mystere was shot down by F-86s.

On its part, the enemy raided Srinagar airfield at 1605 hrs, in which four Sabres carried out strafing by front guns, damaging one UN Caribou aircraft, destroying one IAF Dakota and one IAC Dakota.

Overall, On 7 September 1965, in the IAF counter air strikes on the Sargodha complex, the IAF lost 2 Hunters and 2 Mysteres shot down by enemy aircraft and one Hunter lost due to engine flame out, leading to ejection over enemy territory. Against this, PAF possibly lost 4 F-86s and 2 F-104s at Sargodha. The attrition for the IAF strikes on the Sargodha complex was 4 aircraft lost due to enemy action against 25 IAF aircraft involved in these strikes, representing 16% losses. PAF on the other hand has admitted a loss of total of 4 F-86 aircraft in their 14 counter air strike sorties on 6 September 1965 in the West, and 9 sorties on 7 September in the East, giving an attrition rate of 17.4% which was also much above the acceptable 5% daily losses in counter air strikes(20). This led to both the Air Forces avoiding any more major counter air strikes by fighter aircraft in the day-light hours.

### Air Operations in the East

Although the policy of the Indian Government at that time was not to extend the conflict into East Pakistan, the Indian Air Force ordered a Canberra probe sortie to Chittagong to see if any PAF aircraft were there, and, if so, to neutralise them on the

ground(21). Since the decision to strike Chittagong air base was taken by AOC-in-C Central Air Command at 2300 hrs on 6 September, it was too late to make use of the moon, and a first-light attack was the only solution. The route plan was Kalaikunda - Lighthouse south of Calcutta - direct across the Bay to Lighthouse south of Chittagong-Chittagong airbase. It was a low-level flight by 2 Canberras of No.16 Squadron, led by Wg Cdr P.M. Wilson. The time gap between the two aircraft was 10 minutes to allow for safe transit and possible fighter opposition at Chittagong. The No.2 aircraft was to orbit the second lighthouse until called in; if there was fighter opposition, it was to return to base. Unfortunately, the raid was fruitless. No enemy aircraft was seen on the ground, but the bombs were dropped by the first Canberra on the run-way. The second was then called in, but its bombs undershot and exploded on the Flying Control building. No other targets were attacked(22).

This was followed up by the Vampires of No.24 Sqn striking Jessore, and the Toofanis (Ouragons) from Nos.4 and 29 Sqn striking Lalmunirhat. Also four Hunters of No.14 Sqn carried out fighter sweeps over Dhaka. In all this effort nothing was achieved, as no enemy aircraft could be seen on the ground or in the air. But, the lone PAF F-86F Squadron of 12 aircraft located in East Pakistan was able to destroy a sizeable number of Indian aircraft on the ground(23).

When the two Canberras and four Hunters returned to Kalaikunda after their futile missions at about 0600 hrs on 7 September, the PAF struck Kalaikunda at 0640 hrs after flying at low level, partly over the sea. Six F-86s destroyed two Canberras, and four fully armed Vampires. One airman was also injured. They faced no air opposition since the Indian Hunters were patrolling between Dum Dum and Kalaikunda at that time, and the Pak raid was a complete surprise(24).

At 1030, four Sabres pulled up for another attack on Kalaikunda. This time the IAF had got a few minutes' warning, and the two Hunters flown by Flt Lt A.T. Cooke and Flt Lt Mangain were brought overhead. One F-86 was shot down after a thrilling low-level combat by Flt Lt Cooke. Another F-86 was seen spinning onto the ground and was claimed by Mangain. Subsequent reports from the Army stated that one more F-86 had probably crashed across the border, and a wireless intercept indicated that a fourth F-86 crashed near Dhaka after the pilot had ejected. The IAF claimed two F-86s, but the PAF probably lost all the four aircraft involved in the second strike. Two more Canberras were destroyed on Kalaikunda airfield. Cooke and Mangain were awarded Vir Chakra. All

remaining Canberras were sent away to Gorakhpur and the Vampires to Panagarh.

Indian offensive operations in the East were restricted to the early missions mentioned above. After these raids, instructions were received from Delhi, on 7 September itself, that no offensive action was to be undertaken in East Pakistan. After receipt of these instructions, all the aircraft were prepared for air defence duties and they flew CAP sorties only for the remaining period of hostilities(25).

However, this did not deter the PAF, based in East Pakistan, from raiding IAF stations in West Bengal. Pak Sabres attacked Bagdogra airfield near Siliguri on 10 September, destroying a Packet and damaging a Vampire, the pilot of which, Sqn Ldr Marston, died of injuries later in the hospital. Indian ack ack guns engaged the enemy fighters, claiming to have shot down two of them. Actually, the wreckage of one Sabre was found lying in Pak territory just across the border(26).

Again on 14 September, three F-86s attacked Barrackpore, north of Calcutta, causing damage to the Flying Control Tower, and destroying one Packet and one Dakota(27). Enemy aircraft also raided the Agartala airfield damaging the ATC building slightly and killing the Flying Control Officer. However, the IAF was not allowed to retaliate against these attacks. Consequently, air operations in the East were over by mid September.

#### Further Air Operations: 8-22 Sep

On 8 September, the Indian Army opened two more fronts, one in the Jammu-Sialkot sector and the other at Gadra in Rajasthan. Indian aircraft carried out strike sorties in support of the army in the Sialkot and Chawinda areas. Hunters from 9 Wing, Mysteres from 8 Wing, and Mysteres and Gnats from 18 Wing carried out armed recce and attacks on enemy tanks and other targets in Khogal canal-G.T. Road junction, south of Sialkot, east of Lahore, and in Chawinda area. Canberras from 5 and 35 Squadrons and JBCU(Jet Bomber Conversion Unit) dropped bombs over Chak Jhumra, Akwal, Sargodha and Mianwali airfields, damaging blast pens, BPI, etc. Huge fires were observed on the airfield at Sargodha after the Indian attack.

The same day, i.e. 8 September, at 1030 hrs, a formation of four aircraft from No.1 Sqn went to attack enemy concentration near Mandiala ridge in the Chhamb sector. However, no troop concentration was

seen in the area. One enemy bunker was destroyed, and six trucks were destroyed/damaged(28).

In the afternoon, the Indian Army asked for close support in the Sialkot sector. The mission was to attack enemy convoy/transport moving along the Sialkot-Pasrur road. A formation of four aircraft from No.1 Sqn, was sent, but there was hardly any vehicular movement seen along the road. However, one 3 tonner was seen and destroyed(29). CA S

PAF also did not remain idle. Pak Sabres attacked Jammu where one F-86 was claimed as shot down. One B-57 attacked Pathankot at 2330 hrs, but no damage was caused to the Indian installations(30). However, the PAF dropped napalm bombs killing many civilians in Amritsar, and at Ferozepur three civilians were killed and six others wounded. One F-86 was reported to have been shot down by ack ack at 230 SU(31).

Close support sorties were carried out on 9 September to strafe the Pakistan Army all along the Lahore-Ferozepur axis. Canberras from 5 and 35 Sqns and JBCU attacked enemy airfields at Chak Jhumra, Sargodha, Gujrat, Akwal and Dab. At Gujarat and Sargodha airfields a huge explosion and fire were observed, a few minutes after the bombs had been dropped. Heavy damage was caused to the airfield installations, dispersal and pens in all the airfields(32). CA S  
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Hunters from 7 and 27 Sqns, and Mysteres escorted by Gnats from 18 Wing attacked enemy tanks and gun positions in Khemkaran, Kasur, Chawinda, Troti, Dalanwala and Mandiala ridge destroying enemy targets. During these engagements, one Hunter of No.7 Sqn was shot down by ground fire at Kasur and the pilot Fg Offr M.V. Singh taken POW. CA

At the end of another strike when the four Hunter aircraft were rejoining circuit at Halwara, there was a mid-air collision between two Hunters, piloted by Flt Lts Ahuja and S.K. Sharma, in which Flt Lt Ahuja was killed. In the strikes carried out, Indian Fighters destroyed 14 enemy tanks and 20 vehicles. An enemy gun position was also put out of action(33).

The enemy, in its turn, attacked Amritsar, Adampur, Halwara, Pathankot, Jamnagar and Jodhpur; however, no significant damage was caused at any of these places. Two enemy planes (one Sabre and one B-57) were brought down by ack ack fire, - one in the Wagah sector and the other near Halwara(34). At



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Halwara, the ack ack put up a magnificent barrage, hitting the bomber, which crashed at village Sidhwan Khas. Two Pakistani helicopters were also engaged by Indian artillery, and one of them was believed to have been damaged. On the night of 8/9 September, Pakistani aircraft were reported to have flown over Delhi, and when the Indian missile wing opened fire, a bright flash was seen in the sky. However, no wreckage of aircraft was seen anywhere around Delhi. From the aircraft tracks, it appeared that the enemy raids were being staged from Chak Jhumra and Gujrat.

Photo recce was successfully carried out in the Sialkot area. It is interesting to note that during an armed recce over Sialkot, one enemy aircraft was seen with IAF markings.

On 10 September, Indian planes continued their attacks on Pak airfields and armour concentrations. Canberras belonging to 5 and 35 Sqns bombed Sargodha, Wagawal, Risalwala and Chak Jhumra airfields. The dispersal area at Chak Jhumra was heavily damaged. Heavy ack ack fire was encountered at Sargodha(35).

Hunter aircraft belonging to 7 and 27 Sqns attacked positions south-east of Kasur and troop movement west of Ferozepur bridge, besides carrying out interception tasks. A large number of enemy vehicles were reported destroyed. The Canberras also carried out strikes on enemy armour concentrations in the Kasur and Khemkaran Sectors, and almost continuous bombing of the area went on. Consequently, the Pakistanis were forced to withdraw to reform and consolidate. Later, Indian Mysteres also struck further north in the Sialkot-Pasrur sector. While one F-86 was shot down in an air battle over Pasrur, one Mystere was shot down by the enemy ack ack in Lahore sector; but the Pilot, Fg Offr Chinoy walked back to the safety of the Indian territory(36). Shortly afterwards, the army sent a message that the IAF had done a magnificent job by rendering timely assistance and dealing a severe blow to the enemy armour.

Four F-86 aircraft again attacked 230 SU at Amritsar at 1330 hrs on 10th in an attempt to destroy the Radar installations, causing damage to the IFF aerial. Three enemy aircraft were reported to have been hit by ack ack(37). There was a second raid at 1600 hrs. PAF B-57s carried out heavy raids at Halwara airfield. The enemy attacked eight times during the night 10/11 September, dropping a total of 31x1000 lb bombs. Front gun attacks were also carried

out during the first raid. Five Hunters besides buildings and telephone cables were damaged. However all the five damaged Hunters were repairable within one to three days(38).

On 11 September, Indian Canberras carried out bombing sorties in the Punjab Sector over Chak Jhumra, Risalwala, Sargodha and Wagawal airfields, destroying taxi tracks, blast pens, and other installations on the ground. The dispersal area at Chak Jhumra was also heavily damaged. In the same sector Mysteres from No.18 Wing took a heavy toll of tanks, vehicles and bunkers in Phillora, Chawinda, Sialkot and Zafarwal. A total of 18 enemy tanks were reportedly destroyed by this air action, as against the Indian loss of one Mystere. Canberras carried out strikes on enemy armour concentrations in the Kasur and Khemkaran sectors also, and Mysteres and Gnats also carried out patrol over air bases, while Vampires of 220 Sqn carried out Tactical recce over Gadra, Nayachor, Khokropar and Munabao areas.

The same day, five enemy Sabres carried out an attack on Amritsar, and two of these aircraft were reportedly shot down by Indian ack ack guns(39). Halwara airfield was attacked thrice during the night, but no damage was caused. Ferozepur and Pathankot were also raided by the enemy, and an unserviceable Packet aircraft was destroyed on the ground in the latter place. The enemy carried out raids over Indian airfields with B-57s, and two F-86s raided Srinagar at 0823 hrs on 11th, but as the Indian ack acks drove them away, no damage could be done. However, on their way back, they raided an army camp at Pattan. One F-86 was reported to have been hit by ground fire over Pattan.

On 12 September, Indian Canberras carried out raids over Nawabshah and Multan, dropping a total of 44,000 lbs of bombs. The runway, dispersal area, pens and installations were damaged.

While Mysteres of 8 Sqn carried out strikes against enemy concentrations in the Punjab sector at Jahman, Mysteres of No.1 Sqn bombed Pasrur airfield and damaged the runway at three places, and Hunters and Gnats blew up a bridge on the Upper Bari Doab canal along the Lahore-Kasur road. A total of 18 tanks were claimed by Indian aircraft in their strikes during the day, and all of them returned safely to base. Vampires and Harvards from Jodhpur carried out Tac recce over Gadra, Khokropar, Gumapur, and Maunabao areas in the Rajasthan Sector(40). Although some enemy F-104 and F-86 aircraft were found in the air, PAF's opposition had considerably reduced. It

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appeared they were not willing to stay and fight, but were there to act as a deterrent.

On 12th, the enemy attacked Indian airfields a number of times. B-57s carried out four raids on Jamnagar airfield. One Hunter trainer and Dakota and the R&S hangar were damaged. In the four raids on Jodhpur airfield, the enemy B-57s damaged only the taxi track and the electrical section. Amritsar and Halwara were also raided, but no damage was caused. In attacks on Adampur airfield, an AOP hangar and a petrol dump were hit, and in a raid on Pathankot one Mystere and one fuel bowser were destroyed. Three Pak F-86s were reported to have been shot down, one near Suchetgarh and two near Pasrur.

On 13 September, Canberras from 5 and 35 Sqns and JBCU carried out bombing sorties over Chhota Sargodha, Sargodha, Risalwala and Wagowal airfields. As a result, the south-eastern portion of Chhota Sargodha airfield was damaged; at Risalwala the bombs were seen dropping on 22 Runway, and the eastern and western dispersal areas and pens in Sargodha were blasted(41).

Mysteres from 18 Wing and Hunters from No.9 Wing carried out attacks on Daska, Pasrur, Kasur and other areas, while Hunters bombed the railway yard at Raiwind station also. Cover was provided by fighter aircraft for the Indian convoy moving from Amritsar to Khemkaran. A total of 15 enemy tanks were destroyed and another 11 damaged due to IAF action on 13th. Many vehicles were also destroyed. India lost two Mysteres one each in the strikes over Dhaka in the Pasrur and over Lahore area. At 1000 hrs, two Gnats which had taken off from Ambala to provide air cover to a mission from Halwara got engaged with four enemy Sabres. In this action, Flt Lt Kale was hit by a Sabre, and he ejected near Ferozepur.

The same day, i.e., 13 September, some Pak bombers, escorted by F-86s, dropped 18 bombs on Srinagar airfield, damaging a UN Caribou and 3 Mi-4 Helicopters(42).

Adampur was raided by enemy aircraft four times. A hangar and a fuel dump were destroyed, and two Mysteres on the ground belonging to No.32 Sqn were destroyed by a bomb falling between them. In enemy raid on Halwara at 2228 hrs, an army gunner was killed and some buildings were damaged. In the attack on Jammu by four B-57s, escorted by four Sabres, one unserviceable Dakota was burnt and damage was caused to the Ops room and ATC stores. In the three raids over Jodhpur by eight B-57s, the Electrical section,

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ESSO yard and some buildings were damaged. In the raid over Gurdaspur railway yard, one F-86 was shot down by ack ack, and the pilot, Sqn Ldr Alauddin Ahmed (OC No. 18 Sqn), was killed.

On 14 September also, close support missions were flown by the IAF. Morale was very high and the Indian pilots were itching to deal a death blow to the PAF. Enemy armour had taken severe punishment and the Pakistani thrust in Khemkaran sector had all but fizzled out. IAF Canberras in their attack on Kohat airfield dropped a total of 12x1000 lb bombs, as a result of which built-up area east of Runway 05 and the POL dump were destroyed. At Peshawar the bombers dropped 6x4000 lb and 8x1000 lb bombs damaging the POL installations, runway and dispersal area, despite heavy ack ack fire. While returning from this raid, enemy aircraft tried to intercept IAF raiders, 80 km south of Srinagar. However, all the aircraft returned safely to base. Kasur railway station was also attacked, and 16x1000 lb and 4x4000 lb bombs were dropped. The marshalling yard and rolling stock were damaged. Hunters carried out strikes on targets in the Lahore, Kasur and Khemkaran sectors, and an installation looking like a power station was destroyed near Lulian Bridge. While providing top cover for Hunters in the Khemkaran area, IAF lost one Gnat aircraft due to accident near Halwara and one Canberra was shot at by F-86, but returned safely to base. Four Gnats escorting Canberras over the target engaged the F-86, and the Canberras cleared out of the battle area, and all the aircraft returned to the base. It was later confirmed that Wing Cdr Bharat Singh had shot down one F-86.

In its turn, Pakistan raided Indian airfields at Adampur, Halwara, Pathankot, Barrackpore, Agartala, and Jodhpur. Srinagar was also raided by four F-86s in low-level bombing attack and strafing. A total of eight 1000 lb bombs were dropped at Srinagar as a result of which four Mi-4 helicopters were damaged. The raid at Adampur was carried out by two B-57s, of which one B-57 was shot down by LAA. The pilot, Flt Lt Sheikh Altafur Rehman, and the navigator, Flt Lt Bashir Ahmed Choudhry, were captured. During the raids by two B-57s at Halwara, IAF lost two Hunters on the ground and two more Hunters were damaged. Raid over Pathankot was carried out by three B-57s, in which an ATC building and one Dakota was totally destroyed. Jodhpur was raided nine times during the night, and fifty bombs were dropped, damaging an ASC Depot and the taxi track. Most of these bombs fell in Mathania village. B-57s raided Jamnagar three times, destroying four Indian aircraft - 2 Vampires, 1 Dakota and 1 Hunter.

On 15 September, Indian Canberras from No.35 Sqn again attacked Sargodha airfield, causing extensive damage to the pens and hangars. Canberras also attacked Chak Jhumra airfield where damage was caused to the hangars and built-up area near the runway. Fighters were mainly employed on recce and CAP sorties. A few of the IAF aircraft were employed on strikes at Raiwind and Kamoke in order to cut off the communication line and isolate the Lahore sector. Flt Lt Chowdhary of the IAF, whose aircraft had suffered a bird hit while taking off from Halwara airfield and who had ejected, died later in the hospital. The same day, on a special request by the US Government, six US C-130 aircraft were permitted to land at Lahore to evacuate American nationals(43).

// Ten Pak F-86s flew over 230 SU (Amritsar) between 0700 and 1700 hrs apparently for recce, as no bombing or strafing was done. Indian ack ack guns shot down one F-86 near Amritsar, and the pilot, Flg Ofr Mohd Shaukat-ul-Islam, was captured. There were five raids over Halwara airfield also. The signals section was damaged, and two Hunters were destroyed. Enemy aircraft also raided Jodhpur, but no significant damage was caused.

On 16 September 1965, five Canberras of No.35 Sqn raided Peshawar airfield. A total of 8x1000 lb and 2x4000 lb bombs were dropped which hit the technical and dispersal areas. Canberras also carried out two raids on Sargodha airfield, inflicting heavy damage to the installations there, despite heavy ack ack fire. The bombers were also utilised for carrying out strikes against enemy concentrations near Ugoke, as a result of which heavy damage was inflicted on the enemy. More than three tanks were left burning. MiGs, Gnats and Mysteres carried out CAP sorties over base airfields in the western sector, while Hunters were employed for CAP duties over Calcutta and Kalaikunda. Ops recce was carried out by Mysteres around Gujranwala, Daska and Pasrur, and Liberator aircraft from Pune were sent out into the Arabian Sea on search patrols. IAF Helicopters dropped 60 bombs and fired 702 rounds of ammunition in infiltrator positions, 8 km east of Rajouri.

Enemy F-86 aircraft near Halwara/Adampur area on 16 September were intercepted by Indian fighters. In the ensuing dog-fight Flg Ofr Pingale shot down one Sabre, against the loss of Hunter aircraft(44). The enemy was reported to be using Napalm bombs in its attacks on Indian positions. The 750-pounder Napalm bombs that were used bore the US marking Order No. NY-128, lot Nos 28 to 41.

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Next day, on 17 September, Canberras from No.5 and No.16 Sqns attacked Pakistan air bases at Chak Jhumra, Akwal and Sargodha, but damage could not be assessed. Indian Fighters were mostly employed on recce missions. Strike sorties sent out did not sight anything significant to attack. Besides, the Indian aircraft provided ground support to the army. While the enemy fighters carried out Napalm bomb attacks in Gadra and Sialkot areas, enemy bombers attacked Sujwan village, approximately 6 km from Samba, killing 25 civilians and wounding 40 others.

On 18 September 1965, two Canberras were sent out to attack Chak Jhumra airfield, but they dropped their bombs blindly due to poor visibility. IAF Fighters were mainly employed on CAP sorties and sweeps. The same day, an aerial engagement took place over Kasur in which four of the Indian Gnats from 18 Wing engaged six F-86 aircraft. Sqn Ldr Sandhu shot down one F-86, and another Sabre was reportedly brought down by ack ack. All Gnats returned safely to base. In reply, a Pak B-57 bomber attacked Ambala, but its bombs fell on the military hospital, killing 12 patients. Some of the bombs also fell in a residential locality, Model Town, killing many civilians.

The following day also, Canberra bombers again carried out attacks on Sargodha airfield. Damage could not be assessed due to the height of the release of the bombs. Two other Canberras were detailed to strike the Radar base at Sakesar. Only one could reach the target area, but did not drop any bombs, as the actual target could not be sighted. Mysteres carried out strikes against enemy concentrations at Hussainiwala, Gandasinghwala, Jassoran and Chawinda, and tanks and gun positions were destroyed. Vampire aircraft in their attacks on the road/railway line near Suleimanki destroyed 3 to 4 goods wagons and caused damage to the railway line.

On PAF's part, six Sabres "bounced" or intercepted the Indian formation of Mysteres and Gnats. In the ensuing dog-fight two Sabres were shot down, one each by Sqn Ldr D.Keelor and Flt Lt Kapila flying Gnats(45). Low level dog-fight in the jet age was said to be impossible, but Keelor and Kapila fought such an engagement over Chawinda in Pakistan. The battle was joined at about 500 metres above the ground and ended a little above the tree-top. Sqn Ldr Denzil Keelor and Flt Lt Kapila proved the superiority of the IAF officers by their adroit manoeuvre and flying skill, while fighting the air battle against Pakistani Sabres. While shooting down an enemy Sabre, Denzil realized that he himself was skimming the

treetops, and in the heat of battle, he had barely missed coming to grief himself. With Flt Lt Kapila, he had a great experience of a dog-fight between transsonic jets at tree-top height. However, one of the Indian Gnats was shot down by a Sabre and the pilot Flt Lt Mayadeo, taken POW.

The enemy attempted two raids on Jodhpur without causing any damage. In the raid over Jammu, the Indian transmitter building was damaged. On 19 September, 625 SU Garages (near Ferozepur), meant for specialist vehicles, were attacked by four F-86s. Technical areas and POL depot caught fire. The same day, Jamnagar airfield was bombed at 0235 and 0310 hrs, and 12 bombs were dropped. One petrol bowser was destroyed and two persons lost their lives. This day a civilian Beechcraft aircraft, belonging to the Government of Maharashtra and carrying Shri Balvantray Mehta, the Chief Minister of Gujarat, his wife and five others, was shot down by Pakistani Sabres, 25 Km north-west of Mandvi, and all the occupants were killed.

On 20 September, Canberras attacked Sargodha air base and caused damage to the dispersal area and pens. They also raided Chawinda railway station and damaged railway line and road within the target area. Vampires of No. 45 Sqn attacked enemy encampments in Haveli (Rajasthan), and rolling stock, railway line and wagons near Arifwala. Mysteres of No. 31 Sqn attacked tank and gun concentrations around Jassoran, destroying 3 tanks, 3 vehicles and a signals mast.

On the Indian side, Halwara, Patiala, Jammu and Ambala were raided by Pakistani aircraft. At Halwara a Gnat on the ground was destroyed, but there was no significant damage at Jammu and Patiala. A church near the airfield at Ambala was completely destroyed, and a B-57 was reported to have been brought down by ack ack near the Shambu railway station(46) though it was not confirmed.

A formation of 2 Gnats and 4 Hunters was engaged by four F-86s near Lahore in which one F86 was shot down by Flt Lt Majumdar flying a Gnat. Indian ack ack also claimed three F-86s, two of which were in 4 Div sector. The third crashed in Pakistani territory. India lost two Hunter aircraft(47).

Next day, i.e. 21 September, in a daylight raid on Badin airfield, Indian Canberra interdectors caused extensive damage to the radar installation. Wg Cdr Wilson got a direct hit on the radar dome with his rockets. Bombs dropped in the vicinity of the radar installation caused considerable damage. Sargodha airfield was also raided. While returning from the

raid, one of the Canberras was hit, probably by a Sidewinder, and it crashed. Mysteres and Hunters carried out armed recce and close-support sorties for the army in the Chawinda, Kasur and Lahore sectors, destroying two tanks and a few vehicles. This day, the enemy planes carried out four raids over Jodhpur without causing any significant damage. 311 SU at Patiala was also raided, but no damage was reported.

On 22 September, Indian Canberras, escorted by Hunters, attacked troop concentrations in the Chawinda area, damaging railway lines and the railway station. These aircraft encountered small arms and ack ack fire. While a Hunter from 20 Sqn operating from No.9 Wing was shot down by the enemy ground fire in Khemkaran area, a Mystere was shot down in the Lahore area by own troops. Besides, No.1 TAC was attacked by enemy aircraft, but fortunately no damage was done. There were two enemy attacks on Jodhpur. In the second raid, 6x500 lb bombs were dropped on the jail and locomotive shed area, killing 35 people and injuring several others(48).

India and Pakistan agreed to a general cease-fire with effect from 0330 hrs on 23 September 1965. However, even after the cease-fire was announced, two B-57s escorted by 2 F-86s attacked Amritsar town at 1615 hrs. They dropped bombs in the Chheharta residential locality causing many casualties. Both the F-86s were, however, shot down by the ack ack guns. One of them fell at Thima and the other near a gun position. A third plane was seen flying away towards Pakistan, emitting smoke. Thus ended the air war of the 1965 conflict.

### Assessment

The Air Force, like the Navy, not having been alerted about the possibility of another war over Kashmir, no inter-Service contingency plans were drawn up, nor was any course of action agreed upon with the Air Force in the event of its being called out to support the Army. It was only on 1 September 1965 when the Pak Army threatened to cut the Jammu-Srinagar highway, that the Air Force was asked for air support, which it gave at very short notice..

The air operations consisted of close air support, fighter sweeps and interceptions, interdiction and counter-air operations. The IAF carried out these missions throughout the period of hostilities. With its intensive air attacks during the opening phase of the operations in the Chhamb sector, it caused a serious setback to Pak offensive action. The failure of Pakistani armour to break



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through on the Khemkaran sector was, it was claimed, partially a result of effective IAF strikes which blunted the Pakistani armour thrusts and forced the armour to give up the offensive drive. Bearing in mind the wide theatre of operations, the location of airfields and the suddenness with which events took place, it would appear that air support was not too bad. These operational sorties not only inflicted considerable damage on the enemy installations and equipment, besides destroying/damaging a number of tanks and guns, but also demoralised the enemy considerably.

However, there were certain clear deficiencies in the control of IAF operations. Air-defence and offensive support operations were controlled by two separate organisations, i.e. AD(Air Defence) Area and Advance HQ, WAC(Western Air Command) respectively, creating grave problems. As in the initial stages of the war the aim of the IAF was to achieve a favourable air situation, it was essential that all air effort in the tactical area was controlled by a single authority. It was found that since a favourable air situation had not developed, it became necessary to devote a large proportion of IAF effort to defensive measures. CAPs and escorts used up 66% of the entire GA/AD effort, which at times used some of the air effort the advance HQ urgently needed for offensive support. Also, ground attack aircraft on offensive (close support for the army) missions required fighter escort which could not be effectively dovetailed with the requirement of Air Defence, because of its limited availability and dual control by two organisations with different aims. Due to this, offensive effort could not be sub-allotted by Air HQ to TACs (Tactical Air Centres) as planned. ✓

The actual situation was like this: When a Brigade or Division Commander required Close Air Support, he would make a request to the next higher Commander, and all such requests would reach the Corps HQrs. The same evening, the Corps Commander and Tactical Air Centre Commander, and some other concerned officers would consult among themselves and decide the priorities of the different requests for Close Air Support. The TAC Commander would then project the requirements to the Commanders of the two or three Air Stations allotted to him, and with whom he was in direct contact by wireless. Some Air Stations were allotted to more than one TAC. The Air Station Commander would be having requirements for Counter-Air Operations, Interdiction Missions, Air Defence, etc. Also, some of the requirements like Air Defence and Counter-Air were ordered by Western Air Command or by Air HQrs. The Air Station Commander

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would naturally give first priority to orders from Air HQrs and Western Air Command, and the remaining sorties available to him would be allotted to meet the requests for Close Air Support, according to priorities decided by the particular Air Station Commander. He would then launch the Close Air Support sorties the next morning at the earliest(49).

When these sorties arrived over-head, the Air Contact Team(ACT) operating on the ground with the forward troops would visually direct the IAF planes to the enemy targets. For this purpose, the ACT was in Radio or RT contact with the planes. Sometimes, the ACT was unable to contact the planes over-head, because his RT set, the frequency of which had been synchronised with the RT of the planes, had got disturbed by the jolting of the jeep which had carried the RT set to the forward area. Again frequently, there was enemy shelling, requiring the ACT to take shelter under-ground, and so he could not visually direct the IAF planes to the enemy target(50).

During the hostilities the IAF flew some 4000 sorties in the Western Theatre, as detailed below(51):

(a) <u>Fighter Sorties</u>	- 1,017
(b) <u>Fighter Bomber Sorties:</u>	
i. Close support	- 696
ii. Others	- 676
	- 1,372
(c) <u>Bomber Sorties:</u>	
i. Close support	- 33
ii. Bombing	- 163
	- 196
(d) <u>Fighter CAP Sorties over only four of the IAF bases</u>	- 1,352
	-----
TOTAL :	3,937
	-----

A total of 738,000 lbs (335 tonnes approx) of bomb load was expended in bombing raids over Pakistan(52).

Pakistan's losses due to air attacks were estimated as under(53):-

	<u>Destroyed</u>	<u>Damaged</u>
Tanks	123	20
Guns	56	3
Vehicles	281	27
Railway Wagons	64	--
Locomotives	8	--
BPIS	2	--

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Pakistan suffered an estimated loss of 43 aircraft as under(54):-

<u>Type of A/c</u>	<u>By Air Action</u>	<u>By Ground Fire</u>	<u>Total</u>
F-86	15	19	34
B-57	--	4	4
F-104	1	--	1
Unidentified	2	2	4
	-----	-----	-----
	18	25	43
	-----	-----	-----

The enemy Air force carried out a number of bombing raids on some of the Indian airfields and military installations. The airfields of Adampur, Halwara, Pathankot and Ambala, and the Radar Station at Amritsar were the principal targets of repeated attacks by the PAF, in addition to the air fields of Srinagar and Jammu, and the air bases at Jodhpur and Jamnagar.

According to the Pak version and claims, "Halwara received the most attention from the B-57s, which dropped 134 tons of bombs on it, followed by Jodhpur (98 tons), Adampur (85.5 tons), Pathankot (77 tons), Jamnagar (66.5 tons), Sirsa (12 tons), Jammu (10.5 tons), and Srinagar (7 tons). Close support targets received 77.5 tons of bombs from the B-57s, which also delivered 10.5 tons against the Beas bridge, two tons in the Gadra area in the south, and 14 tons on the Amritsar radar,"(55) giving a total of close to 600 tons, or 20 tons per bomber on the PAF strength.

But despite almost nightly attacks on these IAF bases, there was no evidence of any serious damage to them. An analysis of the effect of bombing on various airfields showed that the structural damage caused was small, compared to the effort expended by the enemy. However, the IAF suffered heavy aircraft losses on the ground, especially at Pathankot and Kalaikunda air bases, which were ill-prepared initially and taken by surprise.

Total IAF aircraft losses in action during 1-22 September 1965 amounted to 59, which included 24 shot down in air combat or by ground fire and no less than 35 written off during enemy attacks on airfields.

A detailed break-up is as follows(56):-

Type	Air Battle Casualties	Raid Casualties	Total
MiG-21	--	3	3
Gnat	2	2	4
Hunter	10	3	13
Mystere	6	9	15
Vampire	4	6	10
Canberra	1	4	5
Packet	--	3	3
Dakota	--	5	5
Auster	1	--	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>59</b>

Both countries' losses in aircraft, percentage-wise, were as under:-

	Total No. of combat aircraft	No. of aircraft lost(excluding accidental losses)	Losses as percentage of total number of aircraft
India	460	59	12.8%
Pakistan	186(57)	43	23.1%

India lost 19 air crew killed as against Pakistan's 13, and 7 were POW in Pakistan, and 5 ejected safely in Indian territory. Many IAF officers were honoured with gallantry awards. The IAF won, in all, four Maha Vir Chakra and forty-three Vir Chakra awards for acts of gallantry in operations in September 1965(58).

Both the IAF and PAF performed comparably in spite of Pakistan having high performance F-104s and Sidewinder-equipped F-86s. But both the air forces were reluctant to use their full potential. This over-cautious attitude was possibly due to the impression that the conflict would be long-drawn and hence there was a need to conserve resources. Again, both avoided day-light raids on enemy airfields after 7 September 1965.

The IAF failed to carry out a preemptive strike of PAF airfields just after (or before) the Indian Army advanced across the border in Lahore sector, thus losing a golden opportunity to destroy at least part

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of the Pak air war machine on the ground. Had the IAF attacked in full strength the Pak airfields on 6 September 1965, a different scenario would have emerged. This lapse did not only enable the PAF to assist in stemming the Indian advance in the Lahore sector, but also gave Pakistan an opportunity to carry out surprise attacks against the Indian airfields and radar stations the same evening, inflicting substantial damage.

An unacceptably large number of IAF aircraft were destroyed on the ground. This was primarily due to:-

- (a) Insufficient radar coverage, hence lack of warning.
- (b) Too many aircraft clustered at one base, e.g., Pathankot and Kalaikunda.
- (c) Lack of aircraft shelters.
- (d) Inexperience of local Commanders.

As a result of the successful, initial PAF attacks against the Indian airfields, the IAF spent a huge effort (almost 60%) on combat air patrols over the airfields for the rest of the war, thereby reducing greatly its ability to support the army and strike targets inside Pakistan. CAP sorties were not only flown over the forward IAF bases, but also at Hindon, Agra, Kalaikunda and Dum Dum.

Prior to the 1965 conflict, the Army and IAF had not carried out sufficient joint exercises. This seems to have been due to the almost complete lack of joint planning. Both the Army and the IAF had their sights firmly fixed on their respective objectives, and cooperation between them was incidental, rather than well-planned. In the absence of joint plans, large gaps remained in the air cover over the combat zone. As already explained, there was no reliable and quick system by which the Indian army could call for interceptors, when attacked by the PAF. It is true that 'sweep' sorties were flown over the tactical areas, but this was more of an attempt to draw the PAF fighters into combat, rather than providing a means to intercept the PAF ground-attack aircraft or even provide a deterrent against them. On the other hand, coordination and joint planning between the Pak Army and PAF appears to have been equally rudimentary and casual, though Indian troops advancing on 6 September towards Lahore were effectively bombed and strafed by the Sabres.

There was almost a complete lack of air intelligence at the commencement of hostilities. The IAF could not locate the PAF aircraft in East Pakistan at all(59). In the west, it was not known for quite some time that almost all the PAF's air effort in the Jammu and Punjab sectors was launched from the Sargodha area and Peshawar.

It may be noted that this was the first real air war that the IAF had experienced, and insufficient attention had been paid to the vulnerability of the IAF installations. The Indian facilities for air defence and tactical support were inadequate. However, it is to the credit of the IAF that after the initial reverses, the field units more than recovered their ground, not so much due to the mistakes made by the PAF, but due to the individual initiative and valour of the IAF officers and men. The aircrew performed magnificently, doing all that was expected of them, and even more.

✓ Taking an overall view of the air war, it appears clear that neither side won any decisive victory. The IAF and the PAF mauled each other, but could not kill. They operated according to no clear-cut, well-considered plan or priorities, nor concentrated their resources on close support or counter-air missions to achieve good results. Heavy day-light attacks to knock out enemy air bases and destroy enemy planes in bulk were given up prematurely, even though they alone could have given decisive results, at a heavy but acceptable cost. Night bombing was ineffective, and CAPs on such extensive scale resulted in a major diversion of effort. In a nut-shell, it was the failure - or rather the absence - of a clear-cut operational doctrine to achieve definite victory, which resulted in an inconclusive struggle. /

It may be worthwhile to quote one of IAF's distinguished bomber pilots, Air Cmde P.M. Wilson, who assessed the air operations thus:

"My impression about all air force operation, whether East or West, was that nobody seemed to know what to do. According to me the level of professionalism at all levels was extremely low and I do not exclude my own performance".

✓ "The lessons learned in 1965 were all negative ones - in other words what not to do, should there be another conflict. These lessons were so numerous and so cogent that they were more valuable than any positive lessons"(60). /

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Details were as follows, as gleaned from Fricker, Hussain and Qureshi, etc:-
  - B-57 bombers - No 7 and No 8 Squadrons
  - F-104 Starfighters - No 9 Sqdn
  - F-86F Sabres - Nos 5,11,14,15,16,17,18 and 19 Sqdns
  - SA-16 and H43 helicopters - No 4 Sqdn
  - C-130 Hercules - No 6 Sqdns
  - Bristol 170 - No 12 sqdn
  - RB-57B and RB-57F - No 24 Sqdn
  - T-6G, T-33 and T-37B - No 2 and No 20 Sqdns
2. From Official Records. Many different sources give many different figures for actual strengths of the PAF and the IAF, as also for the losses suffered during the war. Even books sponsored by PAF - such as "Battle for Pakistan" by John Fricker, "The Story of the PAF" published by Shaheen Foundation, Islamabad, and "History of the Pakistan Air Force" by Hussain and Qureshi - give conflicting figures and accounts. For example, Fricker (page 11) gives combat strength of PAF as 141 with 25 B-57, whereas "Story of the PAF" (p.429) says PAF had 130 combat planes with 26 bombers. They include or exclude, as convenient, the Sqdn of PAF stationed in East Pakistan. Same confusion prevails regarding figures concerning the IAF.
3. "Story of the Pakistan Air Force" (published by Shaheen Foundation, Islamabad, 1988), p.416.
4. "The Story of the Pakistan Air Force" (published by Shaheen Foundation, Islamabad, 1988), pp.332-33; and Fricker, John, pp.46-48.
5. "Story of the PAF".
6. From Official Records. However, the Indian Army records and John Fricker present a different picture. Wing Cmdr K.Y. Singh, who as Flt Lt served in the radar unit at Amritsar, has stated in writing that on 4th evening, a MiG-21 hit and damaged a Sabre near Chhamb, and Pak radio announced at 1800 hrs that the Sabre had crashed after the pilot bailed out safely.
7. Gupta, H.R., p.283.
8. Fricker, John, pp.87 and 90.
9. Ibid., p.91.
10. The timings given are based on personal testimony of Indian pilots, and differ slightly from Fricker's account.
11. According to Air Chief Marshal Arjan Singh(Retd), a wrong decision by Wg Cdr Kurian, the then OC Flying, Pathankot, to recall the airborne Gnats

even though he had 10 minutes warning of the impending PAF attack, resulted in the losses. - ACM Arjan Singh's interview of 6 August 1987.

12. From Official Records.
13. Fricker, John, p.10.
14. Ibid. p.100.
15. From Official Records.
16. Ibid.
17. Fricker, John, p.90. These details suggest that PAF attacks on the Indian supply vehicles on the GT road axis on 6 September could not have been very heavy.
18. Bulk Petroleum Installation.
19. From Official Records.
20. Fricker, John, pp.115,118 & 183.
21. ACM Arjan Singh (Retd)'s interview of 6 August 1987. The Air Chief Marshal thinks that possibly as a result of this raid, the PAF struck Kalaikunda. According to Shri PVR Rao, the then Defence Secretary, as far as East Pakistan was concerned, there were no instructions to enter that country on the ground or in the air. He felt that the few IAF strikes in East Pakistan were the result of local initiative, and this possibly caused PAF retaliation on Kalaikunda. "The news of IAF strikes in East Pakistan came as a complete surprise to all including the CAS", said Shri Rao, who personally issued orders to stop air raids into East Pakistan. - Shri Rao's interview of 25 June 1987.
22. Air Cmde P.M. Wilson (Retd)'s letter, dated 15 August 1987.
23. Fricker, John, p.64.
24. According to Air Vice Marshal MB Naik(Retd), who was then Commander IAF Station Kalaikunda, the meticulous way in which the Pak air attack was planned goes to prove that some Pak agent had been planted in the airfield.- AVM Naik's interview 26 June 1987.
25. Interviews with AVM Naik (Retd), 26 June 1987 and ACM DA La Fontaine, 3 July 1987.
26. From Official Records.
27. According to one eye-witness, an unfortunate member of the ground crew, who was carrying out his usual checks on the packet aircraft, was gunned down by an enemy F-86. From Official Records.
28. From Official Records.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid
34. Ibid
35. Ibid.



36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid. Fricker, John, p.151, also.
45. While it is stated in the book, Battle for Pakistan-The Air War of 1965, by John Fricker, pp.127-128, that one Sabre F-86 piloted by Flt Lt S.M. Ahmed was hit by 30 mm cannon of a Gnat and crashed on way back to its base (Sargodha), the version, given in the book History of the Pakistan Air Force by Syed Shabir Hussain and Sqn Ldr M. Tariq Qureshi (p.163), states that one F-86 aircraft was damaged in the combat forcing the pilot (Flt Lt Malik) to eject on his way back to the base.
46. From Official Records.
47. From Official Records. Fricker, John, p.184, also.
48. From Official Records.
49. Ibid.
50. Report of Interview with Air Cmde S. Banerjee (Retd), held on 2 February 1989.
51. From Official Records.  
PAF CAP sorties over major IAF stations were: Pathankot-818, Adampur-238, Halwara-108, and Ambala-188.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid
54. Ibid.  
According to John Fricker, Total PAF losses were 19 aircraft (F-86=13; F-104=2 and B-57=4) out of which 4 (2 F-86s, 1 B-57 and 1 F-104) were lost due to accident and 2 were shot down by the guns of the Pak Army itself. - Battle for Pakistan, p.183.

It is a matter of great surprise and regret that the fog of war still persists and a clear, fully reliable picture of the losses suffered by the IAF and the PAF is still not available. Pakistani accounts appear blatantly propagandist and one version contradicts another. For example, Fricker (p.11) gives combat strength of PAF as 141 with 25 B-57s while "Story of the PAF" (pp.4-9) says PAF had 130 combat planes with 26 bombers. Again, Fricker states (pp.127-128) that one Sabre piloted by Flt Lt S.M. Ahmed was hit by 30mm cannon of a Gnat and crashed on way back to its base, Sargodha, while the version given in "History of the Pakistan Air Force" by Hussain

and Qureshi (p.163) states that a Sabre was damaged in the combat and the pilot, Flt Lt Malik, had to eject on his way back to his base. The records of the IAF have even more discrepancies and conflicting versions. While an Official document states that the total number of enemy B-57 bombers destroyed was four, another lists seven wreckages of B-57 seen in area under Indian control only. It is not at all surprising, therefore, that the Indian and Pakistani versions differ greatly with regard to the number of aircraft destroyed on either side. In the present account or official history, best efforts have been made to meticulously examine all available evidence and arrive at the most probable figures.

55. Hussain and Qureshi, p.411.

56. From Official Records.

In addition to the above, 12 IAF aircraft were lost due to accidents and other causes (Gnat-3, Hunter-4, Mystere-3, Canberra-1 and Auster-1). However, some other Records give slightly different figures. Some aircraft at first considered total loss were repaired, while some reported as only damaged were later written off.

57. As estimated by IAF.

If John Fricker's figure of 141, as the effective strength of Pak combat aircraft, is taken into consideration, then the Pak percentage of aircraft losses comes to over 31% - Fricker, John, p.11.

58. See Appendix X - Indian Air Force.

59. Perhaps they were hidden in camouflaged pens.

60. From Official Records.

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