

MiG-15 - Intrepid Museum

MiG-15bis "Fagot" at the Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum

The MiG-15bis on display at the Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum is a potent symbol of the Cold War and the jet age. It represents a significant leap in aviation technology and played a crucial role in the Korean War, challenging American air superiority.

1. Historical Background and Significance:

* **Post-WWII Jet Development:** The MiG-15 emerged from Soviet efforts to develop advanced jet fighters after World War II, leveraging captured German technology and their own research.

* **Korean War Game-Changer:** The MiG-15's appearance in the Korean War in 1950 shocked the United Nations forces. Its performance, particularly its high speed and climb rate, surpassed early American jets like the F-80 Shooting Star and F-84 Thunderjet.

* **Catalyst for Innovation:** The MiG-15's effectiveness spurred the development of more advanced American aircraft, notably the F-86 Sabre, which became its primary adversary in the "MiG Alley" air battles over Korea. This rivalry pushed jet fighter development forward at an unprecedented pace.

2. Technical Specifications:

* **Crew:** 1

* **Length:** 10.1 m (33 ft 2 in)

* **Wingspan:** 10.08 m (33 ft 1 in)

* **Height:** 3.7 m (12 ft 2 in)

* **Empty Weight:** 3,681 kg (8,115 lb)

* **Max Takeoff Weight:** 6,040 kg (13,316 lb)

* **Powerplant:** 1 × Klimov VK-1 centrifugal-flow turbojet, 26.5 kN (5,950 lbf) thrust

* **Maximum Speed:** 1,076 km/h (669 mph, 581 kn) at sea level

* **Range:** 1,200 km (750 mi, 650 nmi) with drop tanks

* **Service Ceiling:** 15,500 m (50,900 ft)

* **Armament:**

* 1 × 37 mm Nudelman N-37 autocannon

* 2 × 23 mm Nudelman-Rikhter NR-23 autocannons

3. Interesting Facts and Stories:

* **Reverse-Engineered Rolls-Royce:** The MiG-15's engine, the Klimov VK-1, was heavily influenced by the British Rolls-Royce Nene turbojet, either through licensed production or reverse engineering. This fueled political controversy in Britain at the time.

* **MiG Alley:** The area over northwestern North Korea where MiG-15s and F-86 Sabres frequently clashed became known as "MiG Alley." These engagements provided valuable combat experience and shaped future fighter design.

* **North Korean Pilot Defection:** No Kum-sok, a North Korean pilot, defected to South Korea with a MiG-15bis in September 1953. This provided the US with an intact example for evaluation, offering invaluable insights into Soviet technology. It is speculated, though not confirmed, that the MiG-15 on the Intrepid *might* be No Kum-sok's aircraft.

****4. Its Role in History:****

* ****Shifting the Balance of Air Power:**** The MiG-15 challenged American air superiority and forced a reassessment of fighter design and tactics.

* ****Accelerating the Jet Age:**** The MiG-15's performance demonstrated the potential of jet fighters, leading to rapid advancements in jet technology on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

* ****Symbol of the Cold War:**** The MiG-15 became an iconic symbol of Soviet military power during the Cold War and remains a significant artifact of that era.

****5. Current Condition and Display Information:****

The MiG-15bis on display at the Intrepid is located on the flight deck, amongst other historic aircraft. It is presented in a static display, allowing visitors to view it up close. While its exact history and provenance are not definitively tied to No Kum-sok's defection, the possibility adds to its intrigue. The museum provides information about the aircraft's history, specifications, and significance through signage and educational materials. Visitors can appreciate its sleek design, powerful engine, and the crucial role it played in shaping the jet age and the Cold War.