

MiG-21 - Intrepid Museum

The MiG-21F-13 Fishbed (c/n 94A 762013) at the Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum

The Intrepid Museum in New York City houses a MiG-21F-13 "Fishbed," a pivotal aircraft in Cold War aviation history. This specific example offers a fascinating glimpse into Soviet-era military technology and the tense global climate of the mid-20th century.

1. Historical Background and Significance:

* **Design and Development:** The MiG-21, designed by the Mikoyan-Gurevich Design Bureau, was the Soviet Union's answer to the need for a supersonic interceptor and fighter aircraft during the Cold War. It first flew in 1955 and quickly became a backbone of Soviet air power and its allies.

* **Cold War Icon:** The MiG-21 became one of the most widely produced supersonic jets in history, serving in the air forces of over 60 nations. Its presence symbolized the global reach of Soviet influence and played a significant role in various regional conflicts.

* **Fighter Evolution:** The MiG-21's delta wing configuration and powerful engine pushed the boundaries of fighter design, influencing subsequent generations of aircraft. It became a testbed for various weapons systems and tactical doctrines.

2. Technical Specifications:

* **Crew:** 1

* **Length:** 13.46 m (44 ft 2 in)

* **Wingspan:** 7.15 m (23 ft 5 in)

* **Height:** 4.10 m (13 ft 5 in)

* **Empty weight:** 4,980 kg (10,980 lb)

* **Maximum takeoff weight:** 7,965 kg (17,560 lb)

* **Powerplant:** 1 × Tumansky R-11F-300 afterburning turbojet, 38.3 kN (8,630 lbf) thrust dry, 57.4 kN (12,910 lbf) with afterburner

* **Maximum speed:** Mach 2.05 (2,230 km/h, 1,386 mph)

* **Service ceiling:** 17,500 m (57,400 ft)

* **Armament:** Typically included a combination of internal cannons and external hardpoints for missiles and bombs. This particular F-13 model originally carried two K-13 (AA-2 'Atoll') air-to-air missiles.

3. Interesting Facts and Stories:

* **The Intrepid's MiG-21:** This specific MiG-21F-13 was acquired by the museum through an unusual route. It was initially sold to a private collector and then donated to the Intrepid.

* **Polish Air Force Service:** This MiG-21 served with the Polish Air Force before its retirement.

* **Early Variant:** The F-13 model represents an early production version of the MiG-21, showcasing the initial evolution of this iconic fighter.

* **"Fishbed" NATO Codename:** The NATO reporting name "Fishbed" became synonymous with the MiG-21 and reflects the Cold War era of identifying and classifying adversary aircraft.

4. Its Role in History:

* **Vietnam War:** The MiG-21 played a prominent role in the Vietnam War, engaging in aerial combat with American aircraft. It proved a challenging opponent, forcing the US to adapt its tactics and technology.

* **Arab-Israeli Conflicts:** MiG-21s saw extensive use in the numerous conflicts between Israel and its Arab neighbors, contributing significantly to the air battles in the region.

* **Global Proliferation:** The MiG-21's widespread deployment contributed to its involvement in numerous other conflicts around the globe, solidifying its place in aviation history.

5. Current Condition and Display Information:

* **Restoration and Display:** The MiG-21 on the Intrepid is displayed on the flight deck, offering visitors a close-up view of this historic aircraft. It is currently restored and painted in Polish Air Force markings.

* **Accessibility:** Visitors can view the aircraft as part of their general admission to the museum.

* **Educational Value:** The MiG-21's presence on the Intrepid serves as a valuable educational tool, providing context about the Cold War, aviation technology, and the global political landscape of the 20th century.

By presenting this iconic Cold War aircraft, the Intrepid Museum offers a compelling and informative experience for those interested in military history and aviation.