

FLIGHT INTERNATIONAL

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Supersonic futility?

Global militaries seems to be fixated with supersonic aircraft, but are they necessary?

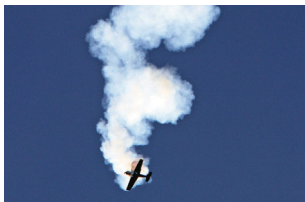
The British Aerospace Harrier was subsonic, but showed itself to be more than capable of air-to-air combat with supersonic adversaries (Dassault Mirages in the Falklands).

As a ground attack aircraft, the Harrier showed itself to be more than capable in Afghanistan. Why then did the UK Ministry of Defence find itself drawn to the Lockheed Martin F-35? How many aircraft remain capable of supersonic flight when loaded with iron bombs? And how many air-to-air combats are carried out at supersonic speeds?

The UK has spent a lot of money enabling the Eurofighter Typhoon to carry ground attack hardware and in doing so have slowed it down (sounds a bit like the Messerschmitt Me262 all over again).

SAFETY

Recovering in a Yak-52



Nasty surprises could await fliers

Training to fly a Yak-52 should include recoveries from all unusual attitudes possible in that aircraft. More importantly, it also needs to include the demonstration of all the conditions that can lead to these unusual attitudes in the first place.

You can easily fly the Yak-52 after a basic check-out, but you will leave yourself exposed to potentially nasty surprises if after a while you attempt more ambitious flying.

Before any sortie with two pilots on board a clear understanding must indeed be agreed on who takes over if things get critical. In such a case, or even better, at the first warning signs of an impending critical situation, the pilot who is checked-out in the Yak-52 will take control, assuming he or she has received training on type from an experienced Yak-52 flight instructor. One final issue to consider is certification. Yak-52s were never certificated according to International Civil Aviation Organisation (Annex 8) criteria. They fall into the European Aviation Safety Agency "Annex II" category, which means that their airworthiness is controlled on a national basis.

The fact that the two Yak-52s involved in the last two accidents were nevertheless issued with certificates of airworthiness should be a concern to the investigators.

Isn't it time national aviation authorities agreed on common standards to maintain and operate Yak-52s in Europe?

Etienne Verhellen

Court-Saint-Etienne, Belgium

If the UK needs to go supersonic, then so be it, but please look at where and what we are fighting and how we are doing it and then consider whether a new build of Harriers might just have been better value for money than the F-35.

Les Neville

via email

The Yakovlev Yak-52 accident in the UK mentioned in Ian Parker's letter (*Flight International*, 10-16 May) happened just a few days after another one in France on 24 April. The French BEA and the UK Air Accidents Investigation Branch have started their investigations.

Squall questions to answer

Having read your article "Squall hit A319 before short landing" (*Flight International*, x-x May), several questions stand out.

Your report does not mention whether this is based on the final or an interim report. However,

even an interim report should record the history of the flight; the facts, all of them. And there are obvious facts missing.

Did the squall reduce visibility such that the flightcrew could not see the runway? If so, did they continue descent below the minimum descent altitude? If so, the report must answer the question why.

If the squall did not reduce visibility to a point where the crew could not see the runway, it really doesn't affect this approach much: the article does not mention the squall affecting the aircraft position or controllability. If the crew did have the runway in sight, why did they land short of a runway they could see?

It is either of these two questions that will allow aviation to learn from this accident. As it stands, the investigation hasn't answered all the facts, let alone found a probable root cause.

Name and address supplied

Retire all the admirals

In your issue of 3-9 May, Reg Austin mourns a Royal Navy blunder that continues to cost us dear. This was far from unique.

Around 30 years ago, I proposed that radar antennas and transmitters be flown inside unmanned airships buoyed and partially fuelled by hydrogen, with, but not from, a frigate that would data-process downloaded data.

On the one hand it is emissions that attract attack; on the other, deployed thus, the vulnerable elements would not clutter warships, and be cheap enough to duplicate or triplicate.

Fuelled thus, a vehicle small enough to be inflated in an ordinary aeroplane hangar promised transoceanic range, could be towed for economy and flown clear of storms.

But, as a captain told me bluntly, the Royal Navy did not muck about with gasbags. And if the RN didn't fancy blimps, it promoted them. He retired as an admiral. Retiring all the admirals looks a good economy.

Noel Falconer

France



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Chinese question, good-looking Tupolev, a fond farewell

CAN COMAC CATCH UP?

Although the C919 design may be good, no one knows for sure of actual performance/problems associated with it.

atmaero

RARE VIDEO

No doubt the Indian navy's new Boeing P-8s will bring a jump in capability, but a modified 737 isn't going to look as good as the service's Tupolev Tu-142.

Sprucemoose

FINAL ENDEAVOUR LAUNCH

I will miss you *Endeavour*. Thanks for everything *Endeavour* and flightcrews!

Samuel Speltdoom