

PAKISTAN AIR FORCE: SQUADRON HISTORIES

v.1.0 September 25, 2002

Babar Mahmud

NO 1 Squadron

No. 1 Squadron was raised on 28 April 1975, presently equipped with FT-5.

NO.2 Squadron

NO 2 Squadron was raised on 1 June 1957, Presently equipped with F-7 Aircraft.

No 2 Composite Squadron was formed on 15 April 56, at PAF Base, Mauripur, with T-33 aircraft. Initially the squadron was given the name of 2 Squadron. Later, in April 75, it was renamed as No 2 Fighter Conversion Unit (2 FCU). The present name, 2 Composite Squadron was assigned to it in December 79. The initial role of the unit was to impart jet conversion training to the freshly graduated pilots from PAF Academy Risalpur and to carry out check rides and instrument ratings for all jet pilots of the air force. In May 72, No 20 Photo Reconnaissance Squadron was number-plated and its 3 RT-33s and all its photographic equipment were transferred to No. 2 Squadron to form a recce flight, thus expanding the role of the unit.

In December 1979, after the passing out of No 66 GD(P) and No 4 Supplementary courses, the role of the unit was changed to that of a composite squadron assigned to perform a variety of tasks including ground controlled interceptions for the training of air defence controllers, and aerial targets towing for all three services; these were in addition to the earlier tasks of instrument ratings, checkouts and of photo recce. In August 82, when No 7 Squadron was temporarily number-plated, all its B-57 light bombers were also transferred to No 2 Squadron, adding yet another role of night interdiction and special missions to the unit's assignments.

No 2 Squadron has the unique honour of receiving the only Nishan-i-Haider awarded to the PAF. Pilot Officer Rashid Minhas laid down his life in a most extraordinary manner to defend the honour of his country, when he foiled the attempt of his much superior East Pakistani instructor to hijack his aircraft to India during the East Pakistan crisis in 1971.

NO.4 SQUADRON

In January 58, a maritime flight consisting of 2 Grumman SA-16 Albatross amphibian aircraft was established as part of No 12 Composite Squadron based at Mauripur. On 15 August 59 the status and strength of this flight was raised to that of a squadron with 4 SA-16s and 4 Bristol Freighters; the unit was designated No 4 Squadron. On 8 July 60 its strength was reduced to 2 SA-16s and 2 H-19D helicopters, and it was assigned the role of search, rescue, casualty evacuation and maritime reconnaissance.

No 4 Squadron carried out all its assigned tasks in a creditable manner. From 9 to 21 November 64 the unit also took part in CENTO maritime exercise Midlink VII. During the 1965 war, the SA-16s were employed to detect and report movement of all kinds of vessels, particularly the Indian aircraft carrier Vikrant. The H-19s, for their part, helped the army to track down suspicious persons in the coastal areas.

On 19 August 68 the SA-16s were placed in storage, bringing to a close their commendable ten year contribution to the task of search and rescue. No 4 Squadron continued operating its helicopters till they too were approaching the end of their useful life. In March 69 the unit was number-plated.

NO.5 SQUADRON

No. 5 RPAF Squadron was formed with 8 Tempest Mk II aircraft on 15 August 47 at Peshawar under the command of Squadron Leader Zaheer Ahmad; most of its personnel came from No 1 RIAF Squadron. Despite a shortage of technical manpower, the unit ably carried out its assigned task of watch and ward duties from Miranshah during the early period of its history. In December 47, the squadron took part in operation 'Curzon' during which it provided cover to the army which was being pulled out of Razmak.

The squadron was visited by the Prime Minister of Pakistan Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan in January 48. He was accompanied by the RPAF C-in-C, Air Vice Marshal Perry-Keene and Air Commodore M K Janjua. On 11 April 48, the squadron presented a smartly turned out guard of honour to the visiting Governor-General, Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah at Peshawar and two days later the squadron pilots participated in a fly past in the honour of the Quaid's visit to Risalpur.

In the early-50s the squadron was reequipped with the Hawker Fury which was the best piston-engine fighter-bomber of its time. In June 51 the squadron lost Pilot Officer I A Rafiqui in an air crash near Lahore. He was the elder brother of Squadron Leader Sarfraz A Rafiqui, H.J., who joined the same squadron as a pilot officer on 4 November 53 and later commanded the unit from March 63 onwards. In November 51 Squadron Leader F S Hussain took over as squadron commander and a few months later the squadron won the inter-squadron armament trophy which he received from the C-in-C, Air Vice Marshal L W Cannon, on 12 February 52.

On 1 September 65, even before full scale war had started, 5 Squadron had the distinction of shooting down 4 IAF Vampires in the very first air engagement of that day. During the 65 war the squadron flew one hundred and ninety hours in various types of operations. Squadron Leader S A Rafiqui shot down 2 Vampires and 1 Hunter aircraft. He was reported missing at 1800 hours on 6 September 65, and later confirmed as killed in an engagement near an enemy air base. Flight Lieutenant Yunus Hussain, his wingman, also gave his life for the nation in the same action, after having shot down 1 Hunter. Flight Lieutenant Cecil Chaudhry of the same squadron accounted for 2 Hunters and 1 Canberra during the war while Flight Lieutenant A H Malik shot down 1 Mystere.

In 1967 the squadron was reequipped with Mirage-III E aircraft and assigned a tactical attack role in which the squadron had become fully operational before the 1971 war with India. During this war it flew over 200 day and night sorties which included counter air, photo recce and interdiction missions as well as air defence. The squadron participated in the first strikes against the IAF bases at Pathankot and Awantipura. It did not sustain a single loss throughout the war. Flight Lieutenant Naeem Atta shot down 1 Canberra aircraft at night and Flight Lieutenant Riaz Sheikh damaged 1 Su-7 aircraft. Wing Commander Hakimullah and Squadron Leader Farooq Omer were awarded the Sitara-e-Juraat

NO.6 SQUADRON

With the birth of Pakistan on 14th August 1947, No. 6 RPAF Squadron came into being although it had already existed for several years before independence as an RIAF unit. The squadron inherited 1 serviceable Dakota with 2 pilots, 3 navigators and 3 signalers stationed at Peshawar. To remedy this paucity of men and material, the RPAF drew up a three-phase program; in the first phase, ending on 31 March 48, No. 6 Squadron received 7 more Dakotas and during the next twelve months the aircraft strength went upto about 20.

During this period a pattern of operations was established by the squadron for supply dropping in Azad Kashmir. These missions were essential for keeping troops and villages cut off by snowbound roads supplied with the essentials of life. Flying fully loaded Dakotas with an effective ceiling of not much above 10,000 ft, in an environment of peaks ranging from 16,000 to 20,000, No. 6 Squadron could accomplish these missions only by following the sinuous curves of the Indus valley. During November 48 the squadron, operating from Risalpur and Peshawar, air dropped some 88,000 lbs. of supplies. On 4 November 48, a Dakota piloted by Flying Officer Mukhtar Dogar was attacked by 2 IAF Tempests. The pilot skillfully evaded the attackers and brought the Dakota back to base. Flying Officer Dogar was

awarded the Sitara-e-Juraat for this act of gallantry. He was the first officer of the squadron to receive a gallantry award. In early 1950, a large number of Bristol Freighters was purchased from the UK and added to the fleet of No. 6 Squadron. Their performance was similar to that of the Dakotas so no new techniques were necessary for the conduct of Northern Area operations. The generous reserve of Bristol Freighters enabled No. 6 Squadron to undertake an extensive range of transport and communication tasks within and outside Pakistan for nearly fifteen years. In 1955, some of the aircraft were adapted to carry a 4,000-lb. 'block buster' bomb beneath each wing and the squadron carried out a limited amount of training for a night bombing role against lightly defended targets. This paved the way for similar operations at a later stage with its C-130s.

The squadron acquitted itself creditably during large scale food dropping missions in the 1952 floods; a Sanad to this effect was presented to the unit by the Governor of the Punjab on 17 August 52. From 15 to 30 November 53, operation 'Snow Drop' was carried out to deliver supplies in the Northern Area. Chaklala was used as a forward base and 800,000 lbs. of supplies were dropped in seven hundred and eighty hours of flying. In 1955 the squadron also demonstrated supply dropping during an air display witnessed by the Defence Minister General Muhammad Ayub Khan at Lahore.

During its formative years, 6 Squadron gained valuable operational experience on Bristol Freighters in a variety of climatic and geographical environments, ranging from the snowbound peaks of Kashmir to the desert of southern Punjab to the tropical forests of East Pakistan. In 1963, when 4 Lockheed C-130Bs were received under the US aid programme, it enabled the squadron to begin phasing out its Bristol Freighters. The Hercules also allowed the squadron to revise its valley flight procedures by overflying the Karakoram before letting down over the destination air strips and drop zones, with a corresponding improvement in safety margins.

During the 1965 war, the PAF offensive against bases included assaults by para commandos, who were dropped at night from 3 C-130Bs near Adampur, Halwara and Pathankot. In another role, the squadron was able to convert its Hercules aircraft into night bombers for raids against battlefield targets with upto 22,000 lbs. of HE bombs, which were rolled out of the rear ramp on pallets. The squadron flew over twenty such missions and dropped bombs on enemy forces moving up for the battles of Chawinda and Pulkanjari. Seven officers were awarded the Sitara-i-Juraat and 2 JCO's the Tamgha-i-Juraat.

After the 65 war, 6 Squadron continued its task of logistic support for army units stationed in the Northern Areas and of routine PAF commitments in both wings of Pakistan. The squadron came under tremendous pressure towards the end of 1970 when the political situation in East Pakistan became unstable. The unit efficiently completed the task of moving a large number of troops from West to East Pakistan. In 1970 the squadron also participated in extensive flood relief operations in East Pakistan. When civil war erupted in East Pakistan in March 71, 2 C-130s were permanently deployed at Dhaka; they remained there till the December war broke out. These aircraft took extensive part in evacuation of troops and civilians from hostile areas. Wing Commander Munim A. Khan and his crew lifted a record figure of 365 people from Sylhet to Dhaka in one C-130 sortie. During 1971, the Indian government had stopped PAF flights over India and the squadron's C-130s proceeding to East Pakistan had to route via Sri Lanka, entailing sorties of exhausting length as well as the risk of interception by Indian fighter aircraft.

When war broke out on 3 December 71, the squadron undertook tactical bombing raids in West Pakistan in much the same way as it had done in the 65 war. A C-130 captained by Group Captain Mir Alam made a very successful attack against Jaisalmer and inflicted heavy damage upon the IAF's technical complex there. The crew were awarded Sitara-i-Juraat for this action. Successful bombing was also carried out in the Srinagar valley and against battlefield targets. The squadron did not suffer any war loss of life or equipment.

The squadron regularly participated in CENTO exercises 'Nejat' and produced good results; the exercises were held at Masroor, Rezayiah (Iran), England and Turkey. Every year the squadron takes PAF Air War College for its educational tours abroad. Since 1971 the college teams have been taken to China, England, Australia, North Korea, Germany, Egypt, Syria, Cyprus, Singapore, Malaysia and Sri Lanka. Owing to its increased commitments, some additional C-130Es have been provided to the squadron during the last decade.

NO.7 SQUADRON

At its inception in June 1960 under the command of Squadron Leader Ayaz A Khan this squadron was equipped with Martin B-57 light bombers. At that time it had 10 B-57B and 1 B-57C two-seat aircraft. The dual model, appropriately named 'Baba' for the respect it commanded as the senior most transition vehicle of the squadron, is still airworthy and flying regularly, inspite of having one nose gear-up and two belly-landings to its credit! No 7 Light Bomber Squadron was located at PAF base Mauripur and was assigned the role of airfield strikes and deep interdiction missions. Since 1960, the squadron has remained fully prepared to undertake its assigned tasks. Loss of some aircraft during the two India-Pakistan Wars as well as in occasional accidents, coupled with the increasing problem of spare support eventually reduced the aircraft strength to an uneconomical level. It was therefore decided by Air Headquarters to combine B-57 and T-33 aircraft in one composite squadron in August 82. Wing Commander S Tanveer Hussain who was then OC No. 7 Squadron took over the new No. 2 Composite Squadron, while No. 7 Squadron was number-plated. On 22nd November 1982 Air Headquarters revived No. 7 Squadron with a new weapon system - the Chinese A-5 supersonic surface attack combat aircraft. The unit was now named No. 7 Tactical Attack Squadron whose first squadron commander was Wing Commander Shams Khan. A colorful ceremony was held on 27th December 1983 to formally reequip No. 7 Squadron with A-5s and to say goodbye to the 'heavies' - the B-57s. A smartly turned out contingent drawn from the aircrew and ground crew of the new squadron participated in the parade at which the squadron colour was handed over to the new custodians. At the end of the ceremony, 2 B-57s in close line astern formation flew past to mark the end of their service in the squadron, and in came three sleek and agile A-5s in close vic formation. The striking contrast between the two types underlined the new operational arena entered by No. 7 Squadron on that day. No. 7 Squadron has had the honour of fighting in defence of the country in both the 65 and 71 Wars. The squadron was tasked to carry out deep penetrations at night to bomb heavily defended enemy air bases. All missions were efficiently executed, demonstrating the highest standards of courage and devotion. In the process, 3 aircraft were lost to enemy ground fire during the two Wars. The squadron will always remain proud of its 6 Shaheeds. In the short duration of the War of 1965 this squadron earned 12 gallantry awards: 7 Sitara-i-Juraats and 5 Imtiaz-i-Sanads. During the war of 1971 8 Sitara-i-Basalats and 2 Tamgha-i-Basalats were awarded to the squadron in recognition of the courage displayed by its pilots and navigators. In recognition of the squadron's acts of gallantry during the two wars, the Chief of the Air Staff presented the unit with one of its most coveted and proud possessions - the Squadron Colour. The Colour presentation parade, in April 1976, was commanded by the squadron commander Wing Commander Yousaf H Alvi, and the colour bearer was Flight Lieutenant Najam S Butt. The squadron now proudly parades this colour on all ceremonial occasions.

The B-57 light bomber wing of the PAF - No 31 - was established in May 1960 with Nos 7 and 8 Squadrons at PAF Station, Mauripur (Masroor). No 8 Squadron was raised in August 60 with Squadron Leader Muhammad Iqbal as its first officer commanding. He saw the squadron through its infancy and was succeeded by Squadron Leader Saeed A Ansari in November 63. On 27 October 64, the squadron became the first in the world to form a regular formation aerobatics team of 4 bombers which coolly performed loops in full view of disbelieving spectators.

Squadron Leader Rais A Rafi succeeded Squadron Leader Ansari in October 64 and remained in command till April 68. It was thus during his tenure that this squadron saw action in the 1965 war with India. During the war the squadron carried out counter air operations against enemy airfields at Jamnagar and Jodhpur in the south and Ambala, Adampur, Halwara and Pathankot in the north. The squadron also carried out daring day and night close support missions in the Shakargarh sector. During most of the night strikes the squadron flew in single aircraft stream raids at low level. In the attack phase, the aircraft were pulled up for bomb delivery from multiple diving attacks. The squadron followed this attack mode despite much greater exposure to ground fire because it ensured the best probability of killing their targets. During one of these missions Squadron Leaders Alam Siddiqui and Aslam Qureshi - pilot and navigator - were killed in action.

After the war, the squadron was awarded two Sitara-i-Juraats and eleven Imtiaz-i-Sanads. for the gallantry and dedication of its crews during operations.

In the post-65 period the squadron trained hard to achieve even higher standards in the light of lessons

learned during the war. The unit was number-plated on 1 May 70, and its assets amalgamated with those of No 7 Squadron. This became necessary because of dwindling spares support following the American arms embargo.

NO.8 SQUADRON

The B-57 light bomber wing of the PAF - No 31 - was established in May 1960 with Nos 7 and 8 Squadrons at PAF Station, Mauripur (Masroor). No 8 Squadron was raised in August 60 with Squadron Leader Muhammad Iqbal as its first officer commanding. He saw the squadron through its infancy and was succeeded by Squadron Leader Saeed A Ansari in November 63. On 27 October 64, the squadron became the first in the world to form a regular formation aerobatics team of 4 bombers which coolly performed loops in full view of disbelieving spectators.

Squadron Leader Rais A Rafi succeeded Squadron Leader Ansari in October 64 and remained in command till April 68. It was thus during his tenure that this squadron saw action in the 1965 war with India. During the war the squadron carried out counter air operations against enemy airfields at Jamnagar and Jodhpur in the south and Ambala, Adampur, Halwara and Pathankot in the north. The squadron also carried out daring day and night close support missions in the Shakargarh sector. During most of the night strikes the squadron flew in single aircraft stream raids at low level. In the attack phase, the aircraft were pulled up for bomb delivery from multiple diving attacks. The squadron followed this attack mode despite much greater exposure to ground fire because it ensured the best probability of killing their targets. During one of these missions Squadron Leaders Alam Siddiqui and Aslam Qureshi - pilot and navigator - were killed in action.

After the war, the squadron was awarded two Sitara-i-Juraats and eleven Imtiaz-i-Sanads. for the gallantry and dedication of its crews during operations.

In the post-65 period the squadron trained hard to achieve even higher standards in the light of lessons learned during the war. The unit was number-plated on 1 May 70, and its assets amalgamated with those of No 7 Squadron. This became necessary because of dwindling spares support following the American arms embargo.

In May 82, the squadron was reactivated at PAF Base, Masroor with Mirage-V aircraft under the command of Wing Commander Khalid A. Sattar. The reequipment ceremony was presided over by the Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Tariq Kamal Khan. In March 86, No 8 Squadron won the award for the best formation in the Pakistan Day fly past.

In May 82, the squadron was reactivated at PAF Base, Masroor with Mirage-V aircraft under the command of Wing Commander Khalid A. Sattar. The reequipment ceremony was presided over by the Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Tariq Kamal Khan. In March 86, No 8 Squadron won the award for the best formation in the Pakistan Day fly past.

NO.9 SQUADRON

The story of No 9 Squadron dates back to May 1944 when it made its operational debut in Burma during WW II. Equipped with Hurricane II C aircraft, it engaged in extensive operations in that theatre and was awarded a souvenir Japanese general's sword in recognition of its meritorious services. In the years that followed, the squadron maintained itself in a high state of combat preparedness on a succession of the latest fighter aircraft of their time: Spitfire VIII, Tempest 11, Fury, Starfighter, Mirage, and most recently, the Fighting Falcon. Five of its squadron commanders - M Asghar Khan, A Rahim Khan, Zafar A Chaudhry, Zulfikar Ali Khan and Jamal A Khan - rose to lead the Pakistan Air Force. Originally raised at Risalpur on 13 November 43, the squadron was allotted to the RPAF upon partition at the instance of Squadron Leader Asghar Khan, who had commanded it in 1945 and was a member of the Air Force Reconstitution Committee in July 47. In its new capacity as the first fighter squadron of the RPAF, it was formed at Peshawar on 15th August 1947 with 8 Tempest aircraft under the command of Squadron Leader M Ibrahim Khan. After flying Tempests for almost three years, the squadron converted onto the Hawker Fury fighters in July 50. In November 56, the unit moved to Kohat which was to become its home for the next five years.

In 1961, the squadron's decade-long association with Furies as well as its piston-engined chapter came to an end. In March 61 came the F-104 Starfighters - the ultimate in aircraft technology at that time. In the PAF, 9 Squadron was the only recipient of this awe inspiring Mach 2 fighter which, through its sheer power and speed, struck terror in enemy ranks in both the India-Pakistan Wars. The Starfighters, after rendering valuable service for more than a decade, faded out of Pakistani skies in the early 70s.

No 9 Squadron reemerged at Rafiqui in January 1973 as a tactical attack unit, equipped with brand new Mirage-V aircraft. On 15 June 77, it became an OCU with the task of converting pilots onto Mirage fighters. On 31st August 1981, it moved to PAF Masroor and remained there till the middle of 1984. As an OCU, the squadron graduated 15 conversion courses on Mirages and in June 84, the squadron changed its location once again and moved to Sargodha, where it was reequipped with F-16 Fighting Falcons and was redesignated as No 9 Multi-Role Squadron. It was on this aircraft that Squadron Leader Hameed Qadri shot down an Afghan Air Force Su-22 and damaged another while flying an air defence mission over Parachinar on 17 July 86.

9 Squadron's record in war has been as striking as its achievements in peacetime. In the 1965 war it flew air defence, fighter escort and recce missions from the city of Shaheens on its fabled Starfighters. On 6th September Flight Lieutenant Aftab shot down an IAF Mystere which was attacking Rahwali. On the 7th Flight Lieutenant Amjad H Khan accounted for another Mystere. Squadron Leader Jamal A Khan intercepted and shot down 1 IAF Canberra at night. For their acts of valour Squadron Leaders Jamal A Khan and M. L. Middlecoat and Flight Lieutenant Amjad H Khan were decorated with Sitara-i-Juraat.

Soon after the start of the 1971 war the Squadron flew its Starfighters to PAF Masroor. There, while performing air defence day/night strikes, recce and escort duties, its pilots shot down an Indian Gnat, a Su-7 and an Alize. Squadron Leader Amjad H Khan ejected in Indian territory while attacking a radar and was taken prisoner of war. Wing Commander M L Middlecoat and Flight Lieutenant Samad Changezi made the supreme sacrifice by laying down their lives in defence of the fatherland; both Shaheeds were posthumously awarded the Sitara-i-Juraat.

For its meritorious services in war and peace, the squadron was awarded the squadron colour on 25th January 1979. The scrolls around the squadron crest in the middle of the banner carry the battle honours: 'Sargodha 65' and 'Karachi 71'. The squadron crest itself is a griffin; a mythical creature with an eagle's head and wings and a lion's body signifying immeasurable strength, aggressiveness and vigilance.

NO.10 SQUADRON

With the induction of B-57 bombers in the PAF, an operational conversion unit was raised at Mauripur on 15 August 59, to train pilots and navigator-bombardiers for NO.8 B-57. The training unit was named NO.10 Squadron and it carried out its assigned task for a little over six months.

In March 1960, a second operational B-57 Squadron No.7, was formed which, together with its sister unit No 8 constituted No 31 Wing. Consequent upon this development, No 10 Squadron was number-plated on 1st March 1960.

NO. 11 Squadron

No 11 Squadron, known as the 'Arrows', has the singular distinction of being the first jet squadron of the PAF. The squadron occupies a glorious place in the annals of PAF history; it is credited with the highest number of 'kills' in the two wars the country has fought and the famous PAF ace Squadron Leader M.M. Alam belonged to this family of air warriors. The squadron was also honored in 1983 by being the first PAF unit to be equipped with the F-16 Fighting Falcon.

No 11 Squadron was first formed as a light bomber unit on 1 January 49 at RPAF Station Mauripur; it was to be equipped with twin-engined Brigand aircraft. However, the first Brigand crashed on its way to Pakistan and procurement of these aircraft was cancelled; the squadron was number-plated in February 1949. Two years later, in June 1951, the unit was revived under its first squadron commander, Squadron

Leader A.Rahim Khan, with the new role of fighter interceptor and this time it had the privilege of being equipped with the first jet fighter in the PAF inventory, the SuperMarine Attacker. It remained the only jet squadron in the PAF until the large scale induction of F-86F Sabers in the mid-50s.

The unit was reequipped with Sabers on 18th January 1956, and its role was changed from Fighter-Interceptor to that of Fighter-Bomber Squadron. In 1965 the squadron was a part of the elite 33 Wing at Sargodha. After proving its mettle in the 1965 India-Pakistan War the squadron was reequipped in 1966 with the Shenyang F-6 (the Chinese-built Mig-19) and its role was changed to air superiority. The squadron shifted to PAF Base Rafiqui in January 71 and remained stationed there till January 83. In between, it operated during the 1971 War once again from Sargodha. In January 1983 the squadron was moved back to Sargodha to be reequipped with F-16s; its role was then changed to that of a multi-role squadron.

No 11 Squadron can boast of many distinguished pilots and squadron commanders. Three of its commanders reached the top leadership of the PAF: A Rahim Khan, Zulfiqar Ali Khan and M Anwar Shamim. Squadron Leader F S Hussain, its squadron commander in the year 1953, became a legendary figure in the PAF for his highly professional and daring aerobatics displays. M M Alam became a household name in Pakistan after his unprecedented achievements in the 1965 war.

Operating from Sargodha in September 65 the squadron flew 227 sorties in the seventeen days of war with India. The unit was employed on air defence duties as well as in support of the army. It was credited with shooting down 10 Hunters and 3 Gnats and damaging 3 Hunters, together forming a significant proportion of total PAF air victories. Squadron Leader Alam claimed 9 aircraft in only three sorties and also had the singular distinction of shooting down 5 Hunters in a single combat sortie. Flight Lieutenants Jilani, Yousuf Ali and Saad Hatmi shot down 1 Gnat each. Only 1 aircraft was lost due to enemy action and the pilot, Flying Officer Shaukat, flying as Alam's wingman on a fighter sweep over India, was taken prisoner of war. The officers who were awarded combat decorations in the 65 war, included Squadron Leader M M Alam (Sitara-i-Juraat with Bar) and Flight Lieutenants S A Hatmi and Yousaf Ali Khan (both Sitara-e-Juraat).

The squadron was again located at Sargodha for the 1971 war during which it flew several air defence and close support missions. During these operations the 'Arrows' were credited with two kills; Flight Lieutenant Atiq Sufi shot down a Su-7 and Flight Lieutenant Aamer Ali Sharieff a Mig-21. Only 1 aircraft was lost in action and its pilot Flight Lieutenant Wajid A Khan was taken prisoner of war.

Formal recognition of 11 Squadron's acts of valour and meritorious services in defence of the fatherland came in the form of a colour presentation on 18th November 1974 at PAF Base, Rafiqui. The colour was presented by the Prime Minister, Mr Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. The battle honour inscribed on one of the scrolls of the banner reads: 'Sargodha 65'. The squadron crest consists of an arrow encircled by eleven stars signifying the pursuit of professional excellence. In 1981, No 11 Squadron won the professionals trophy for its performance in exercise Jetstream.

NO. 12 Squadron

No 12 Squadron was formed in March 50 with Squadron Leader A K S Ahmed as its first commanding officer. It was at first a heavy bomber squadron with 8 Halifax 4-engined WW II bombers and started flying on 5 April with 2 MK VIII and 6 MK VI aircraft. The squadron was number-plated on 18 August 50 and all its aircraft were placed in long term storage at RPAF Station Mauripur. The unit was reactivated in 1951 and resumed operations in the month of August. In October, the squadron took part in exercise 'Wise Owl' and carried out practice bombing on Churna Island; parachute flare dropping was also carried out during night practices.

In September 1953 the unit was converted into No 12 Composite Squadron with Squadron Leader Mukhtar Dogar as its Officer Commanding. It was assigned a variety of tasks including VIP and Air Headquarters communication flights on Viking and Dakota aircraft, target towing for ack on Furies, and heavy bomber operations on Halifax's.

In early 1954 the squadron received 2 new Bristol Freighters followed soon after by 2 Wayfarers and 2 Tempests. In May a Freighter specially equipped for paratrooping was added to the fleet.

In February 57, the squadron flew its newly acquired SA-16 Albatross maritime aircraft in a sea rescue exercise in cooperation with the Navy. In November 58, the SA-16s participated in the CENTO exercise 'Midlink' held at Karachi. The SA-16 that was primarily meant for Sea Search and Rescue, was equipped with special search radars and had an exceptionally long endurance. In August 59, SA-16s participated in exercise 'Jet North' which also involved the Navies of UK and New Zealand. In November, during exercise 'Midlink-11', the squadron flew its longest ever non-stop flight of 15.45 hours in an SA-16.

On 9 July 60, the squadron was moved from Mauripur to Chaklala, where it was equipped with a Fokker F-27 aircraft for the use of VIPs and visiting dignitaries. On 15 February 77, the squadron received a DA-20 Falcon for VIP flights while in October 78, a Piper Seneca-II belonging to the Atomic Energy Commission was also assigned to the squadron for operation.

NO. 14 Squadron

No 14 Fighter-bomber Squadron was formed at Peshawar on 1 November 48 with Squadron Leader Khyber Khan as the first squadron commander. After being number-plated on 15 January 49, it was reactivated on 16 December 49 under the command of Squadron Leader J K Zuromski. The squadron left for Miranshah on 24 March 50 on its first operational deployment. Its task was to police the tribal areas of North Waziristan in order to contain the insurgency fomented by the Faqir of Ipi.

In 1954 the squadron went through various memorable experiences like the activation of Tezgaon airfield at Dhaka in March, an air display for King Saud at Peshawar in April, a fire power demonstration at Fort Sandeman in May and exercise 'November Handicap' in November. In 1955 there was a summer camp at Samungli in May, a fly past over the Pakistan Day parade in Karachi in August and another tour at Miranshah in October and November. In September 56, No 14 Squadron pilots started leaving for F-86 MTD classes which had been set up at Drigh Road. The squadron moved to Mauripur in November and soon became operational on the Sabre. In November 57 it took part in the naval exercise 'Crescent' and an army co-op exercise 'Yellow Lizard'. In March 59 the squadron won the Perry-Keene armament trophy with a comfortable margin. While in Mauripur the squadron also participated in CENTO exercise 'Shahbaz'. In March 64, the squadron again won the coveted Perry-Keene armament trophy. Soon to follow was another Samungli camp from 20 May to 30 June 64 and then, on 7 October 64, the unit was permanently moved to Dhaka, under the command of Squadron Leader Shabbir Hussain Syed who had taken over in March 63.

No 14 Squadron's exploits during both the 65 and 71 wars constitute an unforgettable part of the PAF's history and have been graphically described in this book in the chapters titled 'Triumph in the East' (1965) and 'Intrepid under Siege' and 'Three Days of Fury' (1971). Here it would be sufficient to mention the high point of each episode.

The strike against Kulaikunda on 7 September 65 was led by Squadron Leader Shabbir with Flight Lieutenants Haleem, Baseer and Tariq Habib and Flying Officer Afzal Khan as formation members. They took off at 0631 hours with two 120 and two 200 gallon tanks and gun ammunition only. The formation arrived over the target without being intercepted and caught 14 Canberra's neatly lined up on the tarmac. The formation put in two attacks each on these Canberra's and on three Hunters also parked on the tarmac; they destroyed ten Canberra's and damaged the rest as well as two Hunters. Squadron Leader Shabbir and Flight Lieutenant Tariq Habib were awarded Sitara-i-Juraat.

In 1971, placed in a no win situation against a force of 10 IAF squadrons comprising Mig-21s, Su-7s, Gnats and Hunters, No 14 Squadron kept the flag flying till literally the last gasp. Their peerless valour won them six Sitara-i-Juraats. In July 72, No 14 Squadron was reformed with F-6 aircraft at Sargodha under the command of Wing Commander Muhammad Afzal Chaudhry. When Wing Commander J A Carrapiett took over in April 73, plans were underway to assign the squadron the role of an Operational Conversion Unit (OCU). The plan ultimately crystallized in January 1974 where after the squadron

successfully graduated 10 pilots of the first OCC on 6 November. At this stage the unit was moved to Mianwali which was then an upcoming training base.

On 1 November 76 the squadron was presented with its colour by General Muhammad Sharif, Chairman joint Chiefs of Staff Committee. The parade was commanded by the squadron commander Wing Commander Anwar-ul-Haq Malik while the colour bearer was Flying Officer Abrar Ahmed Tahir. The squadron colour has the battle honours of Kulaikunda 1965' and Dhaka 1971' on two of the six scrolls.

To facilitate the unit's training role, a trainer version of the F-6, the FT-6, was added to the squadron inventory in May 77 when FT-6s were ferried across from China. During the ferry flight however, a valuable member of the team was lost over the Himalayas, after ejecting from his disabled FT-6.

During its tenure as an OCU, No 14 Squadron had graduated over 100 pilots operationally trained on the F-6.

In September 86, the squadron was reequipped with F-16 multi-role aircraft. After reforming in Sargodha under the command of Wing Commander Sheikh Amjad Javed the squadron flew over to Kamra where an impressive reequipment ceremony was held on 2nd October 1986 reviewed by the Chief of the Air Staff. Wing Commander Amjad Javed commanded the parade and Squadron Leader Sohail Gul Khan and Flight Lieutenant Badar Islam were the old and new colour custodians respectively.

NO.15 Squadron

During the expansion of the PAF following the mutual assistance agreement with the USA, No 15 Squadron was formed on 5th June 1956 at PAF Base, Mauripur; it was designated as a tactical attack squadron. A Cobra was chosen as the squadron insignia. Flight Lieutenant S N Hassan was the first officer posted on the strength of 15 Squadron on 25th May 1956. By the middle of June the squadron had received its first aircraft, a T-33, allotted for transition and instrument flying. The first F-86s were received on 20 July.

It was on 4th September that the first of the legendary F-86s lifted into the skies of Pakistan and 15 Squadron is proud that the aircraft belonged to it. On 5 September Squadron Leader S.M. Ahmad, the Squadron Commander, became the first pilot to cross the sound barrier and create a sonic bang in Pakistani airspace. On 22nd December 1956 the F-86s of Nos 11 and 15 Squadrons took part in the first formation aerobatics demonstration on Sabres, which was witnessed by the visiting Chinese Premier Mr. Zhou Enlai.

History was created on 2nd February 1958, when 16 Sabres performed a loop in close formation. This unprecedented event was witnessed by King Zahir Shah of Afghanistan alongwith President Iskander Mirza. A number of 15 Squadron pilots, including its CO, belonged to this historic 'Falcons' team. On 11th February 1958 the squadron bid farewell to Mauripur and moved to Peshawar.

10th April 1959 was a special Eid for No 15 Squadron. On that day of festivity two Cobras were scrambled at 0715 hours to intercept an intruding aircraft which upon being identified as an IAF Canberra was shot down. Flight Lieutenant Yunis of 15 Squadron created history by being the first Pakistani pilot to shoot down a hostile aircraft.

The squadron moved to Samunli in July 62, and then to Sargodha in October 1963. Here the squadron once again showed its mettle when on 1st September 1965 Flight Lieutenant Imtiaz Bhatti shot down two IAF Vampires in the Chamb sector, for which he was awarded Sitara-i-Juraat. 15 Squadron flew a number of strike, close 1965 War. In July 1973, the unit was reequipped with the F-6.

In recognition of its commendable performance over a span of twenty years, the squadron was presented with a colour by the President of Pakistan, Mr. Fazal Elahi Chaudhry at an elegant ceremony held at PAF Base, Peshawar on 9th January 1976. The role of the squadron was also changed at that time to that of an air superiority squadron

No 16 Tactical Attack Squadron was raised in 1957 and was equipped with F-86s with Squadron Leader Imam-ul-Haq as its first Commanding Officer. Little is recorded about the early years of the squadron; due to unknown reasons, it was disbanded in 1963. On 13 April 70, the squadron was reactivated at PAF Base, Masroor, once again with F-86F aircraft. Wing Commander Sharbat Ali Changazi was appointed as the officer commanding. In February 1971, the squadron was designated as the Fighter Leading School, where courses were conducted for senior pilots of the PAF.

The squadron did not take part in the 1971 war as a unit; instead its pilots were attached command of No.26 Squadron, also an F-86F unit, which was based at PAF Base Peshawar. Apart from leading several missions into enemy territory, Wing Commander Changazi shot down 1 IAF Hunter. Squadron Leader Cecil Chaudhry, also a member of 16 Squadron, was attached to No 18; he accounted for an Su-7. Earlier in the war, he himself had been shot down by ground fire but had ejected safely and was recovered by own troops on the same day. After the war, in October 1972, the squadron was once again number-plated.

After a lapse of almost ten years the squadron was again reactivated, this time with F-6 aircraft, and located at PAF Base Rafiqui. At the same time, it was earmarked to receive the first A-5 III aircraft. A group of officers and airmen was therefore sent to China for familiarization with the new aircraft. The first batch of A-5s landed at Rafiqui on 12th February 1983. Wing Commander Hamid Saeed Khan was placed in command of the squadron which was given a tactical attack role. The reequipment ceremony took place on 21st March with General Mohammad Iqbal, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, as the guest of honour. The ceremony was attended by the Ambassador of China and other dignitaries.

On 23rd March 1983, the squadron took part in the Pakistan Day fly past at Rawalpindi. The base commander Amjad H. Khan, led the A-5 formation which was judged the best of the fly past, and a shield was presented to the squadron to mark the occasion. Since No.16 was the first to fly the A-5s it was instrumental in converting pilots of Nos 7 and 26 Squadrons, which received the same aircraft later. For this contribution, Wing Commander Hamid Saeed was commended with a certificate from the CAS on 23rd March 1984. The squadron was first put to test in exercise Jetstream in 1983 and again when it took part in the armament competition in February 84.

In November 1985 the squadron became the first A-5 unit to drop live 750 lb. bombs; it also carried out extensive dissimilar aircraft combat training for the first time against F-16s. In December, the squadron participated in exercise Highmark 85 and a year later, in exercise Highmark 86 during which it carried out offensive operations as well as live armament at Thal range.

NO. 17 Squadron

No 17 Squadron was established at Mauripur on 1st April 1957, under the command of Squadron Leader M Z Butt. The unit was housed in an old building comprising 4 rooms which had to be shared with No.16. No furniture or furnishing had been provided and these had to be obtained from other units on a beg, borrow or steal basis! In about a month's time, the squadron established itself and started regular flying by 20th May 1957. In January and February 58, the squadron provided an aerial escort of 8 aircraft each for the President of Indonesia and King of Afghanistan. It also took part in the historic air display which was held in honour of the latter dignitary. In the beginning of May 1958, the unit moved to Peshawar from where it carried out offensive operations in the Dir / Bajaur area. 17 Squadron also participated in PAF exercise 'Janus' in 1959. On 27th September 1963, the squadron moved from Mauripur to PAF Base Dhaka where, on 4th January 1964, Air Marshal Asghar Khan, C-in-C PAF, visited the unit during his annual inspection of the base. On 12 January a static display of aircraft and equipment was held on the Armed Forces Day. The squadron returned to West Pakistan in February 1964 to participate in the Perry Keene armament competition. Seven F-86s were flown across India in two formations with a night stop at Palam. Flying Officer Zaigham Aizad won the Sher Afghan trophy for best individual marksmanship during the competition. While in West Pakistan, the squadron also took part in the Republic Day fly past at Rawalpindi on 23rd March 1964. The unit returned to Dhaka on 28th March 1964.

Air Marshal Asghar Khan again visited the squadron on his way back from a tour of Indonesia and the Philippines in April 1964. On 8th October 1964, the unit moved from Dhaka to Mauripur on a permanent

basis. Flight Lieutenant Imtiaz Bhatti was left behind for liaison duties with the incoming No.14 Squadron.

No 17 Squadron took an active part in the war between India and Pakistan in September 1965 in which all its pilots flew with great determination and courage. The role assigned to the squadron at Sargodha mostly involved close support to the army in Sialkot, Lahore and Khem Karan sectors. Squadron Leader Azim Daudpota, the squadron commander, and Flight Lieutenant Seraj-ul-Haque also flew some air defence missions at Sargodha.

After successfully executing a strike over the Philora area on 19th September 1965 Squadron Leader Daudpota's formation comprising Flight Lieutenants S M Ahmad, Mujtaba and Azam was bounced by 2 IAF Gnats and in the ensuing fight Azam shot down 1 Gnat. One of the most effective strikes carried out by the squadron was led by Squadron Leader Daudpota with Flying Officer Qadir and 2 other pilots, they destroyed several medium guns that had been positioned near Jallo / Atari for shelling Lahore. The formation was highly commended by the Army field commander. The squadron in all claimed 20 to 30 tanks and 100 to 150 vehicles destroyed or damaged and 150 to 200 enemy troops killed. In April 1966, 4 pilots flying F-86 aircraft escorted King Faisal of Saudi Arabia into Karachi on his state visit to Pakistan. On 1st June the squadron was equipped with F-86E aircraft and by August all the squadron pilots were operational on this new mark of the Sabre. In October 66, the squadron moved to Iran for ten days to take part in the Iranian Air Force Day fly past. In February 67, the squadron took part in the annual armament competition and produced scores which were an improvement upon its previous performances. On 9th March the squadron also participated in a fire power demonstration at Jamrud Range, Peshawar.

On 15th October 1971 No. 17 Squadron moved to PAF Rafiqui from where it carried out war operations under the command of Wing Commander Mujtaba Qureshi. A total of 337 sorties were flown during December 1971 which included 272 operational missions. The war missions included air defence scrambles close support in the Lahore-Kasur-Hussainiwala sector and counter air strikes against the IAF. During operations there were 5 cases of aircraft damage due to enemy attack. On 4th December 1971 Flight Lieutenant Nayyar sustained fatal injuries when his aircraft engine flamed out. The squadron returned to Masroor at the end of December.

On 19th July 1979, Squadron Colour was presented to the unit by Admiral K R Niazi, Chief of the Naval Staff.

NO. 18 Squadron

No 18 Tactical Attack Squadron joined the Pakistan Air Force on 1st February 1958 at PAF Station, Mauripur with Squadron Leader Nazir Latif as its first squadron commander. It was equipped with F-86F aircraft and became operational in June 1958. The first action the squadron saw was during 1960-62, when it flew missions in support of the army in Dir and Bajaur agencies.

The first combat history of this squadron was written during the 1965 war when the unit based mainly at Sargodha conducted extensive operations all the way from Kashmir in the north to the Kasur area. Earlier the squadron had provided air cover in the Rann of Kutch to Pakistan Army. The period is replete with the courageous deeds of its men and officers. The squadron went into action early in the morning of 6th September in the Wagah and Atari sectors. For two weeks thereafter formations of 18 Squadron delivered one telling blow after another to exact a heavy toll from the enemy. On one occasion, two ammunition trains attacked by this unit at Gurdaspur railway yard remained ablaze for thirty six hours. This strike was led by the squadron commander Squadron Leader Alauddin and during it he joined the ranks of the shaheeds thus setting an example which will continue to inspire the men and officers of 18 Squadron and indeed the whole of the PAF, long into the future. Though primarily tasked to carry out ground attack, the achievements of this squadron in aerial engagements also earned recognition. Before he martyrdom, Squadron Leader Ahmed had shot down a Mystere; Flight Lieutenant Saleem destroyed an Indian army aircraft, while young Flying Officer Qais dispatched a light communication aircraft. Squadron Leader Alauddin Ahmed and Flight Lieutenants Hashmi and Amanullah Khan were awarded the Sitara-i-Juraat while all squadron pilots were awarded Imtiaz-i-Sanads. During the 1971 war the squadron was once again called upon to give a courageous account of itself, and it lived up to its traditions. Equipped with F-86 Es it

went into action in the Shakargarh salient and provided extensive close support to the army. It flew several interdiction missions in the Kashmir valley. One such mission was the spectacular attack on an explosives dump at Akhnur. From Samba to Sulemanki the fighters of 18 Squadron attacked with exemplary skill and courage.

And as in the previous war, the unit was not to be left behind in air combat. The squadron pilots shot down three Su-7s and one Mig-21 and damaged two Su-7s all with the faithful old Sabre. Two young pilots of 18 Squadron, Flight Lieutenant Maqsood Amir and Flying Officer Taloot Mirza were awarded Tamgha-i-Juraat for shooting down the best of Indian Air Force fighters. From 1972 to 1980 the squadron took part in all the major operational exercises such as 'Saqib', 'White Horse' and the 'Jetstream' series. In each of these exercises it set out to attain an ever higher standard of professional excellence. The unit's standard of maintenance matched its operational performance. It also set a commendable standard of flight safety resulting in winning the flight safety trophy in 1979. In September 1980 the unit was number-plated upon the phasing out of F-86s.

The squadron was reactivated at Rafiqui in October 1981 with the new and more versatile Mirage-V aircraft and was assigned a tactical attack role.

Since its reactivation the squadron has participated in various exercises and earned a number of distinctions: in 1983 the unit earned the Professionals trophy in exercise Jetstream; in 1984 it won the Sarfraz Rafiqui flight safety trophy and in 1985 the inter-squadron armament competition. For its outstanding performance in war and peace the unit was awarded a colour on 1 April 1982.

In the year 1986, it was decided that 18 Squadron would be affiliated as a "brother squadron" of No 9 Squadron of the Royal Jordanian Air Force, equipped with F-5Es. The ceremony took place in Jordan on 22nd March 1987 at the Prince Hassan Air Base when the officer commanding No 18 Squadron presented the squadron colour to No. 9 Squadron, Royal Jordanian Air Force. A return ceremony took place in Pakistan when on 7th October 1987, the Jordanian squadron brought its own standard and presented it to No.18 Squadron at an impressive ceremony reviewed by General Akthar Abdul Rahman Khan, chairman of the Joint Chiefs Of Staff Committee.

NO. 19 Squadron

No 19 Air Superiority Squadron was raised on 1st February 1958 at Mauripur with twelve F-86F aircraft. It started its operational training for its assigned role of day air defence and close support under its first commander Squadron Leader Amanullah Khan. The Squadron achieved first position among F- 86 squadrons in the Perry- Keene armament competition held in February 1962.

Also in 1962, a flight of 4 Sabres was sent to Dhaka on a trial assignment. By October the Squadron move had been completed with another's flight of 4 aircraft followed by a pair while 2 aircraft were sent by ship. At Dhaka the Squadron became deeply involved in tackling the teething problems in the exciting new environment. The move had generated great enthusiasm among the masses at Dhaka who thronged the air base at Tejgaon to see the shiny fighter planes.

The Squadron was originally planned to be moved back to West Pakistan before the monsoon storms but the squadron commander, Squadron Leader Wiqar Azim represented to the C-in-C, who was passing through Dhaka in a B-57 on his way to a SEATO meeting in Bangkok, that the squadron should stay on through the monsoon weather and establish the precautionary measures and systems which would enable Tejgaon to become a permanent operational air base. The C-in-C agreed and 19 Squadron continued its stay in Dhaka. It was thus also able to stage the first jet aircraft fly past over Dhaka during the Pakistan Day ceremonies on 23rd March 1963.

In October 1963, the squadron moved to Peshawar from where it saw action in the September 1965 war with India. On 6th September it carried out some of the first close air support missions on the Wagha front and helped avert an Indian army offensive across the BRB canal. Late that evening, 19 Squadron struck Pathankot airfield as part of the PAF's counter air offensive. By the end of the war the squadron had flown

706 hours in 554 sorties without losing a single aircraft or pilot. It had destroyed 14 enemy aircraft, 74 tanks, 140 vehicles and 16 guns, and damaged 16 aircraft, 68 tanks, 128 vehicles and 27 guns. For this outstanding performance the officer commanding, Squadron Leader S S Haider was awarded the Sitara-i-Juraat.

In June 1967, the squadron was moved to PAF Base, Masroor where, just before the 1971 war some F-86E aircraft were inducted into the unit. The day air defence of the southern sector with a mixture of Fs and Es was successful as was close air support in the Rajasthan sector in spite of communication difficulties with the forward air controllers. Overall, in its limited operations the squadron destroyed 2 Indian Air Force Hunters, one Mi-4 helicopter and damaged one Hunter. In addition, 8 enemy tanks and several vehicles were destroyed while 2 trains were set ablaze during close support missions. The Squadron suffered only one casualty when Flying Officer Naseem Nisar Ali was shot down by an Indian Air Force Hunter.

On 10th November 1972, the Squadron was converted into Fighter Leaders School. In 1977 it was reequipped with F-6 aircraft and designated as No 19 Air Superiority Squadron; the unit was assigned the role of day interceptor and close support and was moved to PAF Base, Sargodha. A year later, the Squadron demonstrated its proficiency on the new type of aircraft by winning the armament competition trophy for 1978. The squadron also had the honour of representing the PAF in an Iran-Pakistan armament competition held at Vahdati air base in Iran in September 78. In 1979 it displayed outstanding professionalism in exercise Jetstream and won the Professionals Trophy.

NO. 20 Squadron

No 20 Squadron was raised initially as a flight at PAF Base, Masroor in March 1956. The unit was upgraded to squadron status within a year of its formation. Its first CO being Flight Lieutenant Zulfiqar A Khan. The squadron was number-plated in June 1972 and was reactivated in June 1977. Initially the squadron was equipped with RT-33 photo recon aircraft and its role was day photographic survey and reconnaissance.

In June 1977, the squadron was reequipped with French-built Mirage III RP aircraft and was assigned the role of tactical attack and reconnaissance during both day and night. In May 1986, the unit went through another reequipping, this time with Chinese built F-6 aircraft, and was assigned the role of air superiority.

One of the earliest tasks of the Squadron was to conduct a photographic survey of the northern areas with its RT-33s. These missions were undertaken over difficult and uncharted terrain, and often in marginal weather conditions. For his personal contribution as well as for the performance of the unit, the squadron commander, Flight Lieutenant M Anwar Saeed was awarded Tamgha-i-Basalat.

In 1963 the squadron made a major contribution towards an amicable demarcation of the border between Pakistan and China by providing detailed and accurate photographic data. Despite its magnitude the task was completed in one month and in recognition of the unit's excellent performance the officer commanding Squadron Leader A Sattar Chaudhry was awarded Sitara-i-Basalat.

In 1964, No 20 Squadron undertook a task of immense national importance when it photographed the major river basins of the country to facilitate the work of the World Bank's Indus Basin Project. The unit can justly be proud of its contribution towards the siting of Mangla and Tarbela dams, the two largest the country.

The squadron flew 24 tactical reconnaissance missions during the 1965 war. In spite of the great disadvantage of operating a slow and unarmed aircraft, the pilots of 20 Squadron operated well inside enemy territory and photographed vital targets both for the Pakistan Air Force and the Pakistan Army. For this courageous performance the squadron commander, Squadron Leader Mir Mubariz Ahmed was awarded Tamgha-i-Basalat. In 1971 a detachment of the squadron was deployed in East Pakistan also to provide photographic intelligence to the army. No. 20 Tactical Attack and Reconnaissance Squadron was presented with the squadron colour by Air Chief Marshal Zulfiqar Ali Khan on 6th April 1978.

NO. 22. Squadron

No. 22 Squadron was raised in 1984 and presently equipped with MIRAGE V Aircraft

NO .23 Squadron

Raised on 16th March 1961, No 23 Squadron was initially located at Kohat and equipped with Fury aircraft. Its early primary role was close support for the army with the additional responsibility of carrying out anti-locust operations when required.

In May 1961, the squadron participated in operations in the Dir / Bajaur area. From 21st to 24th and on 31st May 1961, it was called upon to provide close support and to destroy specified targets in the Bajaur valley. A total of 23 sorties were flown for this purpose and 60 lb. rockets and 20 mm ammunition were used.

The Squadron participated in exercise 'Hastings' with 5 sorties on 16 and 17th November 1961. A total of 28 missions of anti-locust measures were flown from 21st to 30th November 1961; 4 aircraft and pilots operated from PAF Drigh Road for this purpose. On 23rd March 1963, 2 Furies carried out a fly past over Miranshah fort in connection with the Republic Day parade by Tochi Scouts. Consequent upon the phasing out of Fury aircraft, the squadron was number-plated on 4th March 1964.

The unit was reactivated at Sargodha on 8th February 1966 with the newly inducted Chinese-built F-6 aircraft. It was also assigned the task of converting pilots of other squadrons on the F-6s. Between June and September, No 23 Squadron converted 25 other pilots in addition to its own complement.

A detachment comprising Squadron Leader Asghar A Randhawa, and Flight Lieutenants A. H. Malik and Khalid Iqbal took part in a fire power demonstration at Peshawar on 26th February 1967. The whole squadron moved to Shorkot on 16th September to activate PAF Rafiqui, where it stayed for two weeks.

On 13th October 1971, the squadron moved to Risalewala and remained there for war operations till 27th December. During the war a total of 307 sorties were flown in which the squadron destroyed two Su-7s and damaged 1. On 8th December 1971, Flight Lieutenant Afzal Siddiqui was shot down by own ground fire; he was awarded Sitara-i-Basalat. posthumously.

In June 1975, the squadron was redesignated as No. 23 Air Superiority Squadron. The unit moved to Nawabshah on 1st January for the activation of that forward base. The deployment lasted one week during which air combat training with similar and dissimilar types of aircraft was conducted. In February, the squadron proceeded to Masroor for an air to air firing camp. It was the first unit to evaluate and successfully use the new SM-7 series gunsight in air firing. While at Masroor the squadron also participated in low level air defence exercise 'Gold Coin II' on 27th and 28th February.

In November 1976, a team of 5 pilots comprising Wing Commander Nasir A Butt, Squadron Leader C Q Akhtar, Flight Lieutenants Tahir Ahmed and Azmat Kazi and Flying Officer Shahid, together with 40 airmen, participated in the inter-squadron armament competition. The Squadron team scored the highest marks to win the Perry Keene trophy. Flight Lieutenant Azmat Kazi achieved the highest individual score.

On 25th March 1978 the squadron was awarded a colour carrying its battle honours by the Chief of the Air Staff

NO. 24 Squadron

No. 24 Squadron was formed in December 1962 to carry out special missions from Peshawar. Its crew were all drawn from No. 31 B-57 Wing including the squadron commander, Squadron Leader M Iqbal. The squadron was equipped with special B-57s for electronic surveillance and the first 6 months were spent on ground training and learning about the electronic equipment. A pair of crew was also sent to the USA for training. The Squadron's two RB-57Bs had been specially converted for its tasks. The board mission of 24 Squadron was to maintain electronic surveillance of areas of interest to Pakistan.

During the 1965 war, 24 squadron flew several missions to provide electronic support measures (ESM) for PAF's counter air tasks. A F-86 strike against Amritsar was also provided effective ESM by Squadron leader M Iqbal as path finder with Squadron Leader G A Khan as his navigator. Soon after this mission Squadron Leader Iqbal and another navigator Flight Lieutenant Saifullah Lodhi were shot down by own guns near Rahwali airfield while on a practice sortie. They were both awarded Sitara-i-Juraat posthumously. Squadron Leader G A Khan also won an Sitara-i-Juraat as an intrepid navigator. Squadron Leader Rashid Mir then took over as squadron commander.

No. 24 Squadron's most daring and deep mission into Indian territory was flown in the aftermath of the 65 war. While the newly appointed squadron commander's aircraft penetrated into the Agra area another B-57 monitored its progress from many miles away. Just as Squadron Leader Mir Rashid came over Agra, a SAM-2 was fired by the Indian Air Force, but it exploded on the launching pad and caused many casualties

A little later, when the B-57 was in the Pathankot-Amritsar area, the IAF tried to intercept it with MIG-21s but failed to do so owing to superior tactics by the PAF pilots. When it headed towards Ambala again, the IAF cleared the area of all fighters and prepared for another SAM-2 launch to shoot down the B-57. Over Ambala Rashid announced that he had been buffeted by a shockwave which had also caused one of his engines to flameout, and that some fragment of the missile had shattered his windshield.

The IAF again scrambled MIG-21s hoping to catch the aircraft as it lost height but when it reentered Pakistan the chase was given up by the Indian Air Force due to the presence of a waiting pair of F-104s. The damaged B-57 was landed back safely by its pilot with considerable skill. For his plucky and valuable effort Squadron Leader Rashid was awarded Sitara-i-Juraat.

After remaining on a number-plate status for nearly ten years, the Squadron was reactivated in 1987.

NO. 25 Squadron

No 25 Squadron was formed in January 1966 at PAF Base, Sargodha as a tactical fighter unit under the command of Wing Commander M G Tawab, who was later to become the Chief of Air Staff of the Bangladesh Air Force. Being one of the first two fighter squadrons to be equipped with F-6 aircraft the unit was assigned the additional task of converting pilots of other squadrons on the type as well. This task was accomplished speedily and safely and 25 Squadron can be justifiably proud of having converted a large number of the F-6 fighter pilots who later participated in the war of 1971.

In 1967, No. 25 Squadron pilots took part in the PAF's biggest ever fire power demonstration, staged in honour of the Shah of Iran. In 1968, the squadron presented a formation aerobatics demonstration for Marshal Grechko, defence minister of the USSR. Also in 1968 the unit, under the command of Squadron Leader Imtiaz A Bhatti, won the inter-squadron armament competition. In 1984 the squadron was awarded the best formation trophy in the Pakistan Day fly past. In the 1971 war, the squadron operated from Sargodha as well as Mianwali, and flew 103 sorties in air defence and for close air support in the Shakargarh area. The squadron was credited with 2 enemy aircraft destroyed and 1 damaged. Flight Lieutenant Javed A Qazi was taking off when the airfield was attacked; he chased and shot down one of the attacking Hunters and was awarded Sitara-i-Juraat. During the operations, the squadron lost one aircraft due to enemy action and the pilot, Flight Lieutenant Shahid Raza was martyred.

In April 1976, the squadron was again assigned the role of training pilots on F-6 aircraft upto operational status. So far the unit has converted over 500 such pilots. In 1980 some FT-6 aircraft were also allotted to the squadron to facilitate its training program.

NO. 26 Squadron

No. 26 Squadron was raised on 30th August 1967 under its first Commanding Officer Wing Commander Rehmat Khan, to systematize the operational training of fighter pilots on the F-86. It was originally located at Masroor but later moved to Peshawar with its complement of Sabres. For about ten years it was the only

unit of its kind and can proudly claim to have trained over 300 fighter pilots for the PAF. In fact a majority of the present combat force of the PAF was introduced to fighter operations in this squadron which also has the distinction of graduating over 150 trainees from other friendly countries.

The squadron participated in the 1971 war under the command of Wing Commander S A Changazi. It flew over three hundred sorties in the air defence, counter air and close air support roles. IAF bases at Srinagar and Awantipura were frequently attacked by the daring pilots of 26 Squadron throughout the war. The unit also flew close support missions in the Chamb and Shakargarh sectors.

In addition to hitting the enemy on the ground the Squadron's pilots also challenged him in the air where they destroyed 7 and damaged 2 enemy aircraft. The kills included front line Indian Air Force fighters, some of which were a generation newer than the faithful old Sabres of 26 Squadron. These kills were achieved during classic aerial engagements as well as during pursuit of with drawing enemy fighters. Flight Lieutenant Salim Baig Mirza shot down a Gnat over Srinagar and a Hunter close to Peshawar; both kills were confirmed through target wreckage. Squadron Leader M Aslam Chaudhary flew a total of fifteen missions before he went down fighting valiantly. On 10th December 1971 while leading a section of two F-86Fs on a close support mission in the Chamb sector his flight was attacked by six Indian Air Force Hunters. Totally outnumbered he chose to hold his ground and fight the enemy. In the ensuing combat he was apparently shot down by one of them and was officially declared missing in action. For his courage and devotion to duty he was decorated with Sitara-i-Juraat (posthumous). Flight Lieutenant Fazal Elahi flew intensively during the first two days of the war. He was never daunted and displayed exemplary courage and determination for his young age. On 8th December 1971, while on a close support mission, his aircraft was hit by ground fire which resulted in its disintegration in the air. He was awarded Sitara-i-Juraat posthumously.

By the end of the 70s, the Sabre had become obsolete and it became essential to replace the old faithful. In December 1980, the Squadron was reequipped with Chinese-built F-6s, and designated an air superiority squadron. Four years later, the squadron's F-6s were replaced with A-5s and its role changed to a tactical attack squadron.

At a solemn ceremony held on 27th April 1982, Mir Ali Ahmed Khan TaIpur, the minister of defence, awarded the squadron colour to the unit. The colour has always been a symbol of pride and a reminder to the unit personnel of the high traditions, achievements and sacrifices of their predecessors. The Squadron won three top trophies of the PAF in the year 1985, after converting to A-5 aircraft. These were the Professionals trophy, the flight safety trophy and the command armament trophy.

NO. 41 Squadron

Raised in 1967 and is presently equipped with Cessna, Aero-Commander and Beach Travel