

MiGs on the Run

Pilot Defectors in the Cold War



Short descriptions of the Chapters in English

Introduction

Chapter 1 The Secret of Bornholm 13

The day Stalin died, a freedom-seeking Polish pilot risked his life by flying a MiG-15 fighter to the Danish island Bornholm. The first Soviet MiG-15 fighter in Western hands was quickly analysed by American and British intelligence experts. Denmark did not allow test flights and kept the foreign investigation Top Secret. Two more Polish MiG defectors flew to Bornholm and one to Sweden. The RAF assisted in a Swedish operation to keep a Soviet La-11 defector out of Soviet hands.

Chapter 2 Under the radar to Germany 55

NATO radar stations did not see the defecting Soviet MiG-17 that made a belly landing in Bavaria. Another Russian defector arrived in West Germany by parachute; his nuclear-capable Sukhoi Su-7 fighter-bomber ran out of fuel. An attempt by the CIA and Bundesnachrichtendienst to entice an East German pilot to defect with a MiG-21 was discovered by the Stasi.

Chapter 3 Over the Alps and unseen to Italy 73

Mysterious air incidents with Hungarian and Soviet MiGs over the Austrian border. Did one of the pilots tried to ram his fleeing colleague? Other Hungarian MiGs landed unseen by radar in Northern Italy. Was the Bulgarian pilot that crash-landed his MiG-17 near an American nuclear missile base a spy or a genuine defector?

Chapter 4 Secret Procedures for defectors from behind the Iron Curtain 87

What to do with pilots from behind the Iron Curtain? Never before published details about the secret procedures in Britain, the US and NATO. Most important instruction: do not allow the aircraft to take-off again and keep the plane as long as possible to allow for a thorough investigation by the intelligence services. Also: keep the incident secret for the press.

Chapter 5 Operation Moolah and the 100.000 dollar MiG 97

The US tried to bribe North Korean, Chinese and Soviet fighter pilots by offering 100.000 dollar for the first intact MiG-15 flown to South Korea. No Kum-Sok defected in September 1953 but did not know of the reward, which Washington had forgotten to withdraw after the armistice. The MiG-15 was tested at Okinawa and Wright-Patterson AFB. Earlier the Air Technical Intelligence Center (ATIC) tested in secret a Rumanian Yak-23. A plan to bribe North Vietnamese pilots to steal a MiG-21 (Operation Fast Buck) was cancelled.

Chapter 6 False alarms in South Korea 123

Air raid sirens send millions of South Koreans from time to time to the shelters. Was it a surprise attack by North Korea or was the approaching single enemy plane a defector? Seoul welcomed pilots from the north – and their MiGs – with a generous amount of money, luxurious housing and a new job.

Chapter 7 South Korea as stop-over to Taiwan 133

Sometimes Taiwan was just too far away for defecting Chinese pilots. The Chinese-built MiGs had just enough fuel to reach South Korea. The defectors were after the stop-over nevertheless most welcome in Taipei to collect the huge gold rewards. It was excellent propaganda for the Kwomintang regime.

Chapter 8 Taiwan and China go for Gold 147

Both Taiwan and communist China for many years offered large amounts of gold to defectors. The better and bigger the plane, the higher the reward. Many mainland Chinese freedom seekers flew to the Taiwan, often not for the money but to find a better life. But it was not all one-sided. There were also so-called cross-overs, pilots from the Republic of China defecting with American aircraft to the mainland.

Chapter 9 The MiGs of Israel 198

An ingenious and successful operation by the Mossad to induce an Iraqi pilot to defect with the latest Soviet fighter, the MiG-21, to Israel. The MiG-21, with the new registration 007, was secretly tested by the USAF in the Nevada Desert. The pilot from Syria landed his MiG-23 in Israel without warning..and without a million dollar reward.

Chapter 10 The unmasking of a Foxbat 211

Soviet pilot Viktor Belenko escaped with his super secret Mach 3 MiG-25 Foxbat interceptor to Japan. For the West it was the spy prize of the decade. Within 24 hours the Russian was on a plane to a secret CIA safe house in the US. The MiG-25 was disassembled and inspected by intelligence experts from Japan and the USAF. After many weeks Moscow was allowed to pick up the pieces in 49 crates.

Chapter 11 On the run for Castro 233

The first Cuban MiG defector, undetected by radar, landed his fighter at ..and parked near the Air Force One of president Nixon .His American dream did not materialize and he flew back to Castro in a hijacked airliner. Years later he was followed to Florida by two others. A fourth MiG pilot took a shortcut to Guantanamo.

Chapter 12 Black pilot to a white air force 251

A black pilot of the Mozambique air force flew his old MiG-17 to South Africa. He was welcome in the white South African Air Force, but not as a flier. He returned to his homeland to fight with the resistance.

Chapter 13 Running for the Bear 255

Defections from war-torn Afghanistan to Pakistan started before the Russian invasion. Many pilots did not want to bomb their own people. Not only jet fighters, also helicopters and transport aircraft of the Afghan air forces fled to airbases over the border.

Chapter 14 Stealing a Russian MiG-29 ‘Piece of Cake’ 265

The most spectacular escape of a missile-armed Soviet MiG-29 Fulcrum to Turkey. Ankara allowed Moscow to pick up the most modern Russian fighter within 24 hours, which resulted in a fierce diplomatic incident with Washington. Turkey, a NATO member, refused an investigation of the MiG-29 by American experts. The pilot asked for – and received - political asylum in the US.

Addendum 1 A Dutch Defector? 277

A young aircraft engineer of the Dutch Naval Air Arm MLD stole a two-engined Grumman S-2A Tracker maritime patrol plane at a British airbase on Malta and flew to Libya. He was trying to defect to Egypt, but had not enough fuel to reach his destination in Alexandria. He made a perfect landing on a short airstrip near Benghazi .

Addendum 2 Summary of Defected MiG Fighters 279

The first complete list of all known MiG defections in the Cold War, from the MiG-15 in 1953 to the MiG-29 in 1989.

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Note: The 332 page book also has a 20 (numberless) page insert with colour photos.

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