

MiG 15 Encounter – 9 Aug 1952

The Sea Fury had already proved its worth in Korea – predominantly in the ground attack role, the aircrew of 801, 802, 804, 805, 807 and 808 Squadrons had scored decisive hits on the enemy's infrastructure. However the Fury's dog fighting capability was not properly tested until a single engagement – one which has come to epitomise the spirit of the Fleet Air Arm – the determination to achieve the objective regardless of adversity.



On 9th August 1952 Commander Peter 'Hoagy' Carmichael led his flight of four Sea Fury FB11s from 802 NAS on a routine patrol between Chinnampo and Pyongyang. Though trained to deal with any air to air situation, they were yet to engage with the modern Jet fighter, the MiG 15. Having been in the patrol area for 20 minutes however, SLt Carl Haines spotted the silhouettes of 8 enemy aircraft above the moonlit horizon – he alerted his wingmen and within minutes the small flight was amongst the enemy. Superior airmanship and skill prevailed and the four men were able to condemn one MiG whilst severely damaging a further three.

Controversy surrounds the question as to who was responsible for the critical strike – as the senior officer, Commander P. Carmichael was accredited with the kill and awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, but he always insisted that it was his flight that were deserving of praise, and not just he as an individual. Nevertheless the details are perhaps irrelevant. What matters is that this small flight of naval aviators, notwithstanding their out dated equipment and inferior numbers, managed to maintain an offensive stance and return to HMS Ocean unharmed. Their success was due to factors which still ring true in today's Fleet Air Arm – the four pilots were exceptionally well rehearsed in operating their aircraft; they coordinated efficiently with one another to win the advantage; and above all, they all possessed that enduring Fleet Air Arm determination to win through in spite of unfavourable circumstances. Such spirit would reappear to the Royal Navy's advantage in 1982, it is current in the diverse operational theatres around the world today, and it is sure to continue reappearing in years to come.

