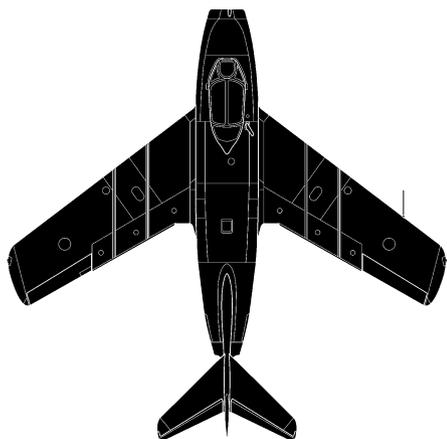


# Airpower Classics

Artwork by Zaur Eylanbekov

## MiG-15 Fagot



The MiG-15, flown by Soviet pilots, shocked UN forces when it entered combat in the Korean War in November 1950. Superior to all Allied fighters then in the theater, it was a menace to B-29 bomber flights and other types of air operations. The airplane, which was relatively unsophisticated and stoutly built, was designed to be a bomber-interceptor. However, it was a standard fighter of the Soviet Union and many other countries for a decade.

The MiG-15 was developed by the Soviet design bureau of Artem Mikoyan and Mikhail Gurevich. Its engines had a Western flavor; indeed, Britain's Labor government sold the Soviet Union examples of the Rolls Royce Nene engine, which Soviet technicians then reverse-engineered into the MiG-15's Klimov RD-45 power plant. The all-

metal fighter had some advanced features, such as 35-degree swept wings, wing fences to control airflow, tricycle landing gear suitable for rough fields, and a pressurized cockpit. Its cannons, however, were relatively slow firing.

At the start of the Korean War, American airmen were taken aback by the MiG-15's combat capabilities. The MiG-15 did some damage against US bombers, but it was far less effective against its opposite number, USAF's F-86 Sabre fighter. The Soviet aircraft had a slight edge in speed and altitude, but suffered unstable performance at high speeds. Better-trained US pilots, equipped with superior onboard systems, had the advantage of experience and eventually overcame the MiG-15.

—Walter J. Boyne

**This aircraft:** Soviet Air Force MiG-15 Bort—#1315325—as it appeared with North Korean markings in 1951 when assigned to 324th Fighter Regiment at Antung Air Base, China. Its pilot was Yevgeny Pepelyayev, the top Russian ace of the Korean War.



North Korean defector Lt. No Kum-Sok's MiG-15, photographed after reassembly in Okinawa.

### In Brief

Designed by Mikoyan-Gurevich ★ built in USSR, China, Poland, Czechoslovakia ★ first flight Dec. 30, 1947 ★ crew of one ★ number built about 18,000 ★ **Specific to MiG-15bis:** one Klimov VK-1 turbojet engine ★ armament, one 37 mm cannon, two 23 mm cannon, two 220 lb bombs ★ max speed 670 mph ★ cruise speed 520 mph ★ max range 750 mi ★ weight (loaded) 13,500 lb ★ span 33 ft 1 in ★ length 35 ft 7 in ★ height 12 ft 2 in.

### Famous Fliers

**Top Aces (more than 10 victories):** Stepan Bahayev, Nikolai Dokashenko, Pavel Milaushkin, Gregory Ohay, Dmitri Oskin, Yevgeny Pepelyayev, Mikhail Ponomaryev, Lev Shchukin, Konstantin Sheberstov, Alexander Smorchkov, Ivan Suchkov, Nikolai Sutyagin. **Notable:** Fyodor Chizh, first US kill with MiG-15; Ivan Kozhedub, top allied ace of World War II; Yuri Gagarin, Soviet cosmonaut and first man in space; Chuck Yeager, test pilot.

### Interesting Facts

Flew in first jet-to-jet air combat, Nov. 8, 1950 ★ built in at least 25 variants ★ heavily influenced by German engineering ★ first seen in 1949 Moscow May Day parade ★ used as unmanned anti-shipping cruise missile ★ flown by air forces in at least 38 nations ★ flew in both an Arab-Israeli war and China-Taiwan war ★ called samolyot-soldaht ("soldier aircraft") by pilots ★ acquired by West on Sept. 21, 1953 when a communist pilot, North Korean Lt. No Kum-Sok, defected ★ his MiG-15 exhibited today in the National Museum of United States Air Force.