

ROYAL INTERNATIONAL AIR TATTOO



KING RIAT

Phil Nasskau reports from the world's largest military air display



Think of a superlative adjective – and the chances are that it applies to the Royal International Air Tattoo (RIAT) which ended yesterday at RAF Fairford, around 2h west of Farnborough.

Billed as the world's largest military air display, RIAT is always a magnet for aviation enthusiasts but this year the organisers excelled themselves by attracting more than 350 aircraft from around the globe, including two flown by the Royal Air Force's youngest and oldest military display pilots.

Fg Off Martin Pert, 24, arrived in a BAE Systems Hawk T1, while 61-year-old Sqn Ldr Terry Cairns – who's just back from flying operations over Afghanistan – flew an English Electric Canberra PR9, which retires from service this week after a career spanning more than half a century.

Formidable

Other superlatives included the first UK flying display by a Spanish air force Eurofighter, flown by Maj Alfonso DiCastro, and the formidable RAC MiG-29M/M2 which uses thrust-vectoring to perform manoeuvres that defy the laws of physics.

Perhaps the most 'lump in the throat' moment came when a US Air Force Boeing F-15C flew in close formation with The Fighter Collection's Second World War Mustang P-51D – proving the old aviation adage that what looks right, flies right.

As a gesture of thanks for the support their country received from the international community during last year's devastating earthquake in Pakistan, the Pakistani air force – the 50th air arm to join the RIAT family – sent a specially decorated C-130 Hercules kitted out to demonstrate its medical evacuation role.



Pictured at RAF Fairford, clockwise from top left:

- Eurofighter Typhoon of the Spanish Air Force
- Northrop P-51D Mustang in close formation with a Boeing F-15C Eagle
- Dassault Mirage 2000D
- Lockheed Martin MC-130H Combat Talon
- The RAF Red Arrows in formation in their BAE Systems Hawk T1As
- Lockheed TriStar tanker
- Socata TBM700
- And finally, the BAE HS125 CC3

