CLOSE-SUPPOR
The renewal of Israel's armoury has slowed as the burden of defence spending has grown and th

threat of war receded. Operational since the mid-1970s, Kfir fighters and Cobra helicopters will remain the backbone of Israel's close-support forces for the foreseeable future, reports Arie Egozi-

I

srael's purchase of additional General
Dynamics F-16s following its abortive attempt to develop the Lavi fighter has eclipsed the continued vital role played
by the Israeli-developed Kfir. Similarly,the decision to buy AH-64 Apache attack heli-copters is overshadowing the continued im-portance of Israel's existing AH-1 Cobras to the country's defence.
The Kfir C-7 is still the backbone of the Israeli Air Force's (IAF's) close air-support capability 15 years after Israel Aircraft Indus-tries delivered the first of the Mirage-based fighters. "The Kfir's capability to deliver its

armament with great accuracy and survive is even better then that of the F-16," says C-7 squadron commander Lt Col S.
The orginal Kfir C-l, first delivered in 1975, was later upgraded with simple intake strakes. The IAF became more demanding as deliveries progressed and the strakes were replaced by full fixed foreplanes. The C-7 is the latest Kfir version and entered the IAF inventory in 1983, the result of lessons learned while operating earlier versions on many air-to-ground missions and in some air-to-air engagements including shooting down a Syrian MiG-21 over Lebanon in 1978

Bell AH-1 Cobras will be joined by AH-64 Apaches later this year

with a Python air-to-air missile.
The Kfir C-7 squadron commander is aware of the increasing danger to the aircraft under his command with Middle East air forces re-equipping with fighters such as the F-15, MiG-29 and Mirage 2000, but he is still confident of his pilots' ability to perform their task. "The small size of the aircraft and its [electronic warfare] systems will bring us safely to the target. The mission computer and other avionic systems can easily be compared to the ones installed in more modern fighters," says Lt Col S.
The Elbit nav/attack system, Astronautics digital air-data computer, Tamam inertial system, El-Op headup display and an Elta EL/ M-2001 ranging radar are the tools, says Lt Col S, that will keep the Kfir C-7 operational for at least five more years.
According to Lt Col S, the Kfir's General Electric J79-J IE turbojet is performing well and is reliable. The Combat Plus option to increase thrust by 5% during heavy take offs is rarely used, because the momentary in-crease in exhaust temperatures damages the engine. "The normal 17,8601b thrust with afterburner is sufficient most of the time. The 0.87 thrust-to-weight ratio in combat condi-tons is good for a fighter that has been around for the last fifteen years," says the squadron commander.

The maximum take-off weight of the Kfir C-7 is 16,500kg. This weight will normally comprise two underwing fuel tanks and armament on seven stations including two wingtip rails used for air-to-air missiles.
The fixed foreplanes, which span 3.7m and cover 1.7m2

have increased the Kfir's stability
and manoeuvrability. The reduced stress on
the aircraft's wing has diminished cumulative
fatigue effects. While the reduced fatigue is
vital, the improved manoeuvrability is impor-
tant to pilots. "The manoeuvrability of the

DC0
52 FLIGHT INTERNATIONAL 23-29 May 1990