

of Rafael NT-D anti-tank missiles and rocket systems.

The air force wants the aircraft by 2002 and will keep them until around 2015. Romania also wants to add 96 IAR AH-1W Draculas to its inventory. A version of the AH-1W Super Cobra attack helicopter, its programme has been stalled by funding difficulties. Bell Helicopter has taken a 70% stake in IAR as part of the deal, while Elbit has been selected to provide the avionics and sensor package. One upgrade which has secured funding is an improvement to 24 IAR-99 Soim trainers, which will receive Israeli avionics in a package similar to the MiG-21 Lancer including multi-function displays, HUD, display and sight helmet, defensive aids suite and improved navigation equipment. The type has been in service as an armed trainer since 1988.

Other "new" equipment includes four ex-USAF C-130B Hercules delivered in late 1996. The air force requires tankers and an AEW platform and has been linked to relevant versions of the C-130 in both instances. The chain of command is split into two air force and air defence corps which split the country along a south west-north east line. Number 1 corps at Ploesti controls the airbases at Boreea-Fetesti, Constanta, Ianaca, Bacau, Tuzla, Tecuci and Titu. The first four bases are equipped with Squadrons of H-5 Beagles, IAR-99 and L-39 armed trainers, MiG-29s and MiG-21s of various types. The remainder operate helicopter squadrons with licence-built

L-39ZA Albatros	31	trng
IAR-823	36	trng
L-29 Delfin	45	trng
Yak-52	20	trng
IAR316 Alouette III	100	utility/SAR
IAR330H/L Puma	74	trans
Mi-8/17 Hip	24/2	trans
SA365N Dauphin	3	VIP
**more required		

NAVAL AIR ARM

The small Romanian naval air is based at Tuzla close to the Black sea coast. It is equipped with six Mi-14PL Haze anti-submarine helicopters and six licence-built Pumas, also equipped for anti-submarine warfare. Five IAR316 Alouette IIIs are used for light transport and embark aboard the navy's destroyer and frigate fleets.

RUSSIA

AIR FORCE

The decline in Russian aviation continues. Effectiveness is sapped by ageing aircraft, lack of maintenance, low flying hours because of lack of fuel and almost no new aircraft being delivered. There has been some reform of the air force, but its impact has been relatively small. The service remains plagued

so far is limited to a handful of aircraft with no major purchase in the offing. The multirole Su-30 is also in service in minute numbers, with India and China taking new airframes. Further purchases for the Russian air force are likely to be greatly reliant on production runs from foreign customers.

The MiG-29SMT/UBT is probably the only new combat aircraft likely to enter service in the following year, with a handful in production. The air force intends to convert around 200-300 of its early model MiG-29s to the new standard to provide a tactical air-to-ground capability supplementing the Sukhoi Su-25.

The defence force (PVO) merged with the air force 1 March 1998, bringing the fleet of MiG-31 and Su-27 interceptors and surface to air missiles under a single command. The merged force has shed 45% of its combined manpower, a loss of 122,000 men.

All force strength figures are approximate. Actual availability of aircraft to units is probably much lower due to unserviceability and lack of fuel.

LONG RANGE AVIATION/DALNAYA AVIATSIYA

The ageing Tu-95MS armed with AS-15 cruise missiles remains the primary long-range strategic bomber asset, with a token force of five Tu-160 Blackjack bombers based at Engels near Saratov operational. Talks on acquiring Ukraine's mothballed Tu-160 fleet reached an impasse last year and have been abandoned.

The air force has a declared requirement for a Tu-95 replacement; designs are reported to be at the concept stage, but funding is unlikely to be forthcoming until well into the next decade, if ever. The Tu-22M3 may be upgraded to enable it to remain a credible interim sub-strategic platform. Total force strength is thought to be around 100 Tu-22Ms and 80 Tu-95s. Tanker support is provided by about 20 Il-78 Midas aircraft.

FRONTAL AVIATION/FRONTOVAYA AVIATSIYA

Frontal Aviation, which is responsible for supporting the ground forces, has been drastically reduced by defence cuts and the retirement of the MiG-23 and MiG-27, Sukhoi Su-17, Su-22, and some MiG-25s. The force is a priority for modernisation, possibly with multirole MiG-29SMTs.

Principal types in service are the Su-24 and Su-25. The Su-24MR is the main reconnaissance asset, with high altitude reconnaissance remaining the preserve of the MiG-25R/RB (around 40-50 aircraft). Similar numbers of MiG-25BMs serve in the defence suppression role with the Kh-58 anti-radar missile.

The Su-27IB and Su-30 are also candidates to replace the Su-24, but production of both continues at very slow rates and neither type is likely to be in service in unit strength until 2005 at least. About 450 Su-24s and 180 Su-25s are thought to be in service.

AIR DEFENCE AVIATION

The new force is a combination of the former PVO (air defence service) and fighter elements of the air force; it includes fighter, interceptor and airborne early warning and command aircraft. The service also has about 2,000 air defence missile systems.

The force is believed to operate around 300 MiG-31s, 200 Su-27s, 16 Beriev A-50 AEW aircraft and small numbers of MiG-25 interceptors, probably now in storage.

Suggestions of a modernisation package for the MiG-31, either in the shape of the MiG-31M interceptor or a multirole Foxhound derivative, are probably destined to remain a manufacturer's pipe dream.



Russia's Su-24 Fencers should be replaced by strike-optimised Su-27 variants, but build rate is slow

Pumas and Alouette IIIs. Number 2 corps at Timisoara controls the Squadrons based at Giarmata, Craiova, Campia Turzii, Caracal-Deveselu, Sibiu, and Caransebes. The first four airbases are equipped with MiG-21s, Oraos and MiG-23s, while the two others operate Pumas and Alouette IIIs. The air force academy is at Brasov and is equipped with various unarmed trainers. An assault/air cavalry unit is based at Alexeni with Mi-8/17s, Pumas and Alouette IIIs, while a VIP and transport unit is based at Bucharest.

Type	No	Role
MiG-29A/UB Fulcrum	15/3	int/trng
MiG-23MF/UM Flogger	34/6	int/trng
MiG-21 Fishbed/Lancer	183	int/attack
Mig-21U Mongol/Lancer	33	trng
IAR93B/PRS1/2/DC Orao	60/14	attack/trng
H-55C/DC (Il-28) Beagle	10/2	recon/attack/EW
An-2 Colt	17	trans
An-24 Coke	6	trans
An-26 Curl	11	trans
An-30 Clank	3	trans/surv
C-130B Hercules	4	trans
IAR-99 Soim	15**	trng

by a loss of experienced manpower and procurement programmes in tatters.

Almost all combat aircraft programmes are at a standstill. Russia is struggling to maintain the expertise and ability to produce modern combat aircraft and weapons when the economy can provide funding for it; at present this prospect is remote.

The MFI (mnogofunktionalny instrebytel) programme for a multirole fighter is still thought to exist, but there appears to have been no meaningful progress. The Sukhoi S37 Berkut forward-swept wing technology demonstrator flew in September 1997, but the project has stalled after a short test programme. Similarly, the MiG 1.42 prototype multirole fighter prototype remains in a hangar at the LII Flight Test centre at Zhukovsky and will probably never fly.

The air force's most realistic hope for a new tactical aircraft is the LFI (Logkiy Frontovoi Istrebitel - light frontal fighter) which Russian designers compare to the Joint Strike Fighter project. So far the project remains at the concept stage with Sukhoi and MiG designs rumoured to exist.

Another critical air force requirement is for tactical and long range strike aircraft. The Sukhoi Su-27IB (also known as Su-34) is on order to replace the Su-24 Fencer, but procure-