

## The Principal World's Air Forces and Air Arms – Comparative Strengths

The table below compares the personnel and combat strengths of the World's principal Air Forces and Air Arms. It also includes small Air Forces which operate the high agility 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> generation fighters that hold the key to winning and maintaining control of the air on which all other types of air and surface operations ultimately depend. In all, 62 countries now operate such aircraft in fleet sizes varying from a handful to many hundreds. Britain was a latecomer to these ranks, joining them only when the Typhoon made its operational debut.

In terms of the total number of combat aircraft it operates, the RAF ranks 20<sup>th</sup> in the World: equal with Greece and Saudi Arabia. It now fields fewer combat aircraft than other medium sized countries such as Iran, Egypt, Turkey, Germany and France. The RAF's combat 'front line' is about two thirds that of the Air Forces of Israel, Pakistan and Libya. It is about half the size of the Air Forces of Syria, Taiwan, North Korea and South Korea, one third the size of the Indian Air Force and one tenth the size of the size of the Chinese Air Force. Such comparisons exclude qualitative differences, but – as in other fields – numbers alone do matter.

It should also be noted that the number of combat aircraft in the RAF is far smaller – in proportional as well as absolute terms – when compared with the various elements of United States military aviation (technically the most advanced in the World). The number of fixed wing combat aircraft in the RAF is about 70% of that in the US Marine Corps alone, about a quarter of that in the US Navy and about one tenth of that in US Air Force. In all, the United States' armed forces 'field' over 14 times more fixed-wing combat aircraft than do all of the British Armed Forces put together. If dedicated attack helicopters are included, the US/UK combat aircraft ratio drops to 11.5:1. By contrast the US Army has 6 times more troops than the British Army and the US Navy has 4 times more principal surface combatant vessels and 5 times more submarines than the Royal Navy. In numerical terms at least, air power is - by some way - Britain's least strong military suit.

Serial Number	Air Force	Total Number of Combat Aircraft	Personnel Numbers	High Agility 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Generation Fighters
1	Algeria	204	10,000	Mig-29 (36)
2	Angola	90	6,000	Su-27
3	Argentina*	149	14,500	Nil
4	Australia	156	13,670	F/A-18 (71)
5	Austria	40	6,700	Typhoon
6	Bahrain	33	1,500	F-16 (21)
7	Bangladesh	62	6,500	Mig-29
8	Belarus	174	18,170	Su-27 (23) Mig-29 (41)
9	Belgium	71	7,470	F-16 (71)
10	Bulgaria	70	13100	Mig-29 (16)

11	Brazil*	302	67,320	Mirage 2000 (12)
12	Canada	120	13,500	CF-18 (99)
13	China (PRC)	2,643	400,000	Su-27 (140)
14	Cuba	31	8000	Mig-29
15	Czech Republic	38	6130	Gripen (16)
16	Denmark	48	3,470	F-16 (48)
17	Eritrea	8	350	Mig-29 Su-27
18	Ethiopia	48	2,500	Su-27
19	Egypt	471	30,000	F-16 (151) Mirage 2000 (15)
20	Finland	61	4,700	F/A-18 (61)
21a	France (AF)	303	63,600	Rafale and Mirage 2000 (184)
21b	France (Naval)	60	6,443	Rafale (16)
22	Germany*	295	52,570	Typhoon
23	Greece	278	23,000	F-16 (74) Mirage 2000 (49)
24	Hungary	19+9 on order	7,500	Mig-29 (12) Gripen (14)
25a	India (AF)	849	161,000	Mig-29 (74) Su-27 (50) Mirage 2000 (48)
25a	India (Naval)	34	7,000	Nil
26	Indonesia	94	24,000	F-16 (10) Su-27
27	Iran	281	52,000	F-14 (25) Mig-29 (25)
28	Israel	402	35,000	F-16 (110+102 delivering) F-15 (78)
29a	Italy (AF)	258	44,000	F-16 (30) Typhoon
29b	Italy (Naval)	15	2,200	Nil
30a	Japan (AF)	280	45,900	F-15 F-2
30b	Japan (naval)	80	9,800	Nil
31	Jordan	100	15,000	F-16 (16)
32	Kazakhstan	164	19,000	Mig-29 (40) Su-27 (25)
33	Korea (DPRK)	590	110,000	Mig-29
34	Korea (ROK)	518	57,000	F-16 (153) F-15 (12)
35	Kuwait	50	2,500	F/A-18 (39)
36	Libya	374	23,000	Nil
37	Malaysia	63	15,000	F/A-18 (8)

				Su-30 (18)
38	Myanmar	125	12,000	Mig-29
39	Netherlands	137	11,050	F-16 (137)
40	Nigeria	84	10,000	Nil
41	Norway	61	5,000	F-16 (57)
42	Oman	64	4,100	F-16 (12)
43	Qatar	18	2,100	Mirage 2000 (12)
44	Pakistan	352	45,000	F-16 (55)
45	Peru*	102	15,800	Mig-29 (18)
46	Poland*	205	32,000	F-16 (48) Mig-29 (45)
47	Portugal	46	7,100	F-16 (46)
48a	Russia (AF)	1,650	160,000	Mig-29 (226) Su-27 (321)
48b	Russia (Naval)	245	35,000	Su-27 (49)
49	Singapore	102	13,000	F-16 (60)
50	Slovakia	71	3,660	Mig-29 (22)
51	Saudi Arabia	278	18,000	F-15 (146) Typhoon on order
52	South Africa	45	9,180	Gripen (28)
53	Spain*	198	23,564	Typhoon F-18 (91)
54	Sudan	36	3,000	Mig-29 (10)
55	Syria	584	40,000 plus 60,000 Air Defence Command	Mig-29 (68)
56	Switzerland	90	32,900 (mobilised)	F/A-18 (33)
57	Sweden	157	5,900	Gripen (151)
58	Taiwan	479	45,000	F-16 (136) AT-3 Mirage 2000 (47)
59	Thailand	165	46,000	F-16 (50)
60	Turkey	445	60,100	F-16 (223)
61	Turkmenistan	94	4,300	Mig-29 (24)
62	Ukraine	373	49,100	Mig-29 (160) Su-27 (55)
63	UAE	184	4,000	F-16 (80) Mirage 2000 (69)
64a	United Kingdom (RAF)	278	45,100	Typhoon
64b	United Kingdom (Naval)	31	6200	Nil

64c	United Kingdom (Army)	67 attack helicopters	Not available	Nil
65a	USAF	2,658	346,150 + 6,800 Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard	F/A-22, F-15 F-16 (1,370 + 668 Air Forces Reserve and ANG)
65b	US Army	1107 attack helicopters	NA	
65c	US Navy	1154 + 114 USN Reserve	NA	F/A-18 Hornet and Super Hornet (922+ 67 USN Reserve)
65d	US Marine Corps	387 +39 USMC Reserve 176 attack helicopters		F/A-18 (254+ 31 USMC Reserve)
66	Venezuela*	56	6000	F-16 (21) Su-30 on order
67	Vietnam	221	30,000	Su-30 Su-27
68	Yemen	75	5,000	Mig-29 (20)

\*Denotes totals of Air Force and Naval Aviation

NB: Totals include only dedicated combat aircraft and dedicated attack helicopters. Helicopters and fixed wing aircraft designed for non-combat tasks but which have been adapted to carry some form of armament are not included.

Source: Source: International Institute of Strategic Studies 'The Military Balance 2007'