

Singapore Black Knights Are Back

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The Black Knights aerobatics team of the Republic of Singapore Air Force is back and will perform at the 2014 Singapore Airshow 11 to 16 February 2014 with a brand new team and a brand new look.

The team's six F-16C Fighting Falcons retain the red and white colors of the Singapore flag but now sport a crescent moon and five stars topside. The Singapore flag consists of two horizontal stripes, one red above white. Red signifies universal brotherhood and equality of man. White symbolizes pervasive and everlasting purity and virtue. The crescent moon represents a young nation ascending—the country achieved independence in 1965. The five stars represent democracy, peace, progress, equality, and justice.

Maj. Gen. Hoo Cher Mou, Chief of the Republic of Singapore Air Force, officially unveiled the new paint scheme at Tengah AB on 26 July 2013.



The Republic of Singapore Air Force's Black Knights aerobatics team is back and will perform at the 2014 Singapore Airshow with a brand new team and a new look.

Black Knight 1, flown by Lt. Col. Joseph Leong, leads the five other pilots into action. Leong has accumulated 4,000 flying hours in three different fighter types during his twenty-six years of service. Black Knight 2, piloted by Capt. Devdutt Sasidharan, flies right wing. Sasidharan is a flying instructor from 145 Squadron who has spent most of his career flying F-16s. Black Knight 3, piloted by Capt. Jeremy Tan, flies left wing. Tan has 1,700 hours under his belt, nearly all of which were acquired in F-16s. Black Knight 4, piloted by Capt. Augustine Wan, flies slot. Wan is the only pilot to come from the 2008 Black Knights team, the last season the Black Knights flew. He has more than 2,300 flight hours in the F-16. Black Knight 5, piloted by Maj. Eugene Lim, flies solo. Lim is from 143 Squadron with 1,300 flight hours. Black Knight 6,

piloted by Capt. Chang Haw Ning, flies second solo. Ning is an experienced aerobatic demonstration pilot who has performed at airshows overseas. Nearly all of his 2,300 flight hours were accumulated in the F-16.

Supporting the team is a flight line crew drawn from different RSAF squadrons. They perform checks and maintenance of the F-16s before and after each flight. For the first time in the history of the Black Knights, two female crew chiefs are part of the crew. Backing up the flight line crew is a team of Air Force engineers who conduct scheduled maintenance on the F-16s. Finally, the team has two commentators referred to as Black Knight 7, Military Expert 3rd Class Neville Ng and Military Expert 3 Naranasamy Samyval.

The history of the Black Knights can be traced to 1973 when Singapore formed an aerobatics team called the Osprey Red. Osprey is also the nickname of 140 Squadron, Singapore's first fighter squadron. When the team was formed, the then-Singapore Air Defense Command was only five years old and its pilots had just mastered flying the British-made Hawker Hunter. The initial team flew a four-ship of Hunters for their first aerial demonstrations through the remainder of the 1970s.

The team was renamed the Black Knights in 1974. The knight was chosen as mascot as it is the most maneuverable piece in the game of chess. The knight is also the mascot of Tengah AB, which is now home of the Black Knights.

Starting from a four-ship Hunter formation, the team has progressed over the years. The Black Knights flew F-5s in 1981 and used two different types of aircraft in 2000, four A-4SUs along with two F-16As. In 1990, 140 Squadron became the first RSAF unit to operate the F-16. Ten years later, the squadron switched to the newer F-16C/D.

Each day of the Singapore Airshow, crowds will be entertained as the team performs twenty-one breathtaking maneuvers. Crowd favorites, such as Heart and Way of the Dragon maneuvers, have been retained. The team has introduced new maneuvers, such as Crisscross and Spear formation, that will surely delight fans. The aerial routines highlight the excellent agility and handling of the F-16C. Each performance will last around twenty-two minutes.

Ow Eng Tiong is a journalist based in Singapore.