

Tuskers

No. 5 Squadron turns 75



While Man Aman Singh Chhina writes on the Tuskers, Angad Singh was in Ambala to cover the event with some great photography!



On 24 November 2023, the Tuskers, as the No. 5 Squadron of the Indian Air Force (IAF) is known, celebrated 75 years of its raising with an airshow at the squadron's home, Ambala, to mark the occasion.

The squadron, raised on 2 November 1948, at Kanpur and equipped with B-24 Liberator aircraft, has a long and distinguished operational history, including overseas service and wars.

Writing a detailed history of the squadron in a well-known defence website, Bharat-Rakshak.com, K Sree Kumar says the unit was initially equipped with five B-24 Liberators, originally operated by the British during the Second World War. This number went up to 16 as more aircraft were put into service. With the role of a heavy bomber squadron having been assigned to it, No 5 Squadron became the first unit in the IAF to undertake such a role.

Tragically, the first Commanding Officer (CO) of the squadron, Wing Commander Jal Rustom Sohrab Dantra was killed in Pune, where the squadron was based, in

April 1949, in a ground accident involving B-24. Dantra had risen from the ranks to an officer's commission and was just 31 at the time of his death.

It was in 1957 that No. 5 Squadron moved on from B-24 Liberators and inducted B (I)58 Canberra aircraft. At this time the squadron was located at Agra and once again undertook the role of a bomber squadron albeit with an interdictor role as well. Wing Commander Waman Raghunath Dani was the Commanding Officer of the squadron at the time of this changeover.

In 1961, the squadron was selected to provide its aircraft for the first overseas deployment of the IAF. A detachment of Canberras was sent on deployment with the United Nations peacekeeping force in strife hit Congo. Wing Commander Anthony Soares was the CO of the unit and he led this deployment which saw the squadron participate in offensive tasks against the Katangan rebels destroying much of their fledgling air force in an air raid in early December 1961.

Wing Commander Soares received a Bar to Vir Chakra