

The Mirage 5 was developed by Dassault Aviation from the proven Mirage III airframe. It had simplified avionics and, as a result, a lower production cost. The Mirage 5 was primarily designed for export.

The maiden flight took place in May 1967. Anxious to replace its Mirage III fleet, Israel quickly placed an order. However, it was cancelled following an embargo on arms sales to Israel imposed by the French government.

At that time, Belgium was making a decision regarding the replacement of its venerable F-84F and RF-84F. Apart from the Mirage 5, the Swedish SAAB Draken and the American Douglas Skyhawk were in line for contesting this order amounting to 106 aircraft in total. The choice eventually favoured the French machine, originally destined for Israel, after a cost reduction was negotiated including the use of American avionics as well as some economic compensations. Thus, apart from the first three pre-series aircraft built by Dassault, the entire order was assembled in Belgium by S.A.B.C.A / SONACA and FN.

Pre-series airframe MA 01 made its first flight on 6th March 1970. Renamed BA 01, it was delivered to the Belgian Air Force on 29th June of the same year. The two-seater version MD 01 and the reconnaissance version MR 01 followed and were respectively renamed BD 01 and BR 01. Initially, these three aircraft were overall natural metal but they were painted prior to joining their operational units. Of the one hundred and six aircraft built, sixty-three were BA, sixteen BD and twenty-seven BR.

The Squadrons began their re-equipment with the new machines from 1970. The 3rd Wing from Bierset was the first to receive its Mirages which went to the 1st Squadron (Mirage BA) as well as the 8th Squadron (Mirage BD). Next came the 2nd Wing based at Florennes with its 2nd Squadron (Mirage BA). Finally, in 1971, the 42nd RECCE Squadron, also based at Florennes, equipped with Mirage 5 BR.

But the end was programmed. In 1987, the 2nd Squadron abandoned its Mirages to take delivery of the F-16 and in 1989, it was the turn of the 1st Squadron. During that period, the 42nd Squadron moved to Bierset with its BR where it remained till the end. All Mirages still in service at that time with the 1st Squadron were transferred to the 8th Squadron where they continued their operational career until 1992 after a last "lap of honour" when they took part in the « Desert Storm » operation at the end of a career lasting more than twenty years.

When they entered service, all the Mirages received a Vietnam-type camouflage, made up of two shades of green and beige on top and very light grey underneath. Although the camouflage scheme was identical for all aircraft (BA, BR or BD), it could vary significantly from one aircraft to another. This scheme remained in service until 1981. At that time, all aircraft received an overall wrap-around camouflage.

It was intended to prolong the operational life of the Mirage 5 beyond the year 2000. The MIRSIP program (Mirage Safety Improvement Program) planned the modernisation of the aircraft electronics and of the cockpit. Unfortunately, for budgetary reasons, the Mirage 5 was modernised ... to be sold to the Chilean Air Force.

1 Squadron(*)	2 Squadron	8 Squadron
03 BA 03	01 and 02 BA 01 and BA 02	201 to 216 BD 01 to BD 16
05 to 10 BA 03 to BA 10	04 BA 04	
12 BA 12	11 BA 11	
15 BA 15	13 and 14 BA 13 and BA 14	
17 BA 17	16 BA 16	
19 BA 19	18 BA 18	
21 to 23 BA 21 to BA 23	20 BA 20	
25 BA 25	24 BA 24	
28 to 42 BA 28 to BA 42	26 and 27 BA 26 and BA 27	
44 to 49 BA 44 to BA 49	43 BA 43	
51 BA 51	50 BA 50	
55 BA 55	52 and 53 BA 52 and BA 53	
56 BA 56	57 and 58 BA 57 and BA 58	
59 to 63 BA 59 to BA 63		
		42 Squadron
		301 to 327 BR 01 to BR 27

(*) Until 1989

Note: The above table is given by way of information and does not take into account aircraft withdrawn from service for various reasons (accident or other).

Sources :

Belgian Military Aviation 1945-1977 – Paul A. Jackson - Midland Counties Publications.

History of the Belgian Air Force (1910 – 1990) – John Pacco – JP Publications.

La Force Aérienne – Lannoo.