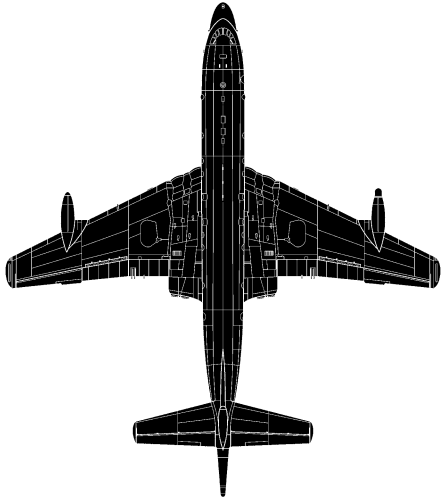


Nimrod



The Royal Air Force's Nimrod might be the most underrated warplane ever. This Hawker Siddeley maritime patrol system served brilliantly in the 1982 Falklands War and subsequent wars in the Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya. Nimrod was in service for some 40 years, taking part in anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface attack, search and rescue, and electronic intelligence gathering.

Nimrod was a direct descendant of the de Havilland Comet, the world's first jet airliner, and was named for the great hunter of Biblical lore. In fact, the first two RAF aircraft were unfinished Comets. It had a bizarre appearance, with huge lobes attached to front and rear and an array of antennae placed on the fuselage. For all that, it was well-noted for its reliability, pleasant flying

characteristics, and adaptability to new challenges. The RAF considered acquiring an airborne early warning variant of the Nimrod—the AEW.3, which was canceled in favor of the Boeing E-3 Sentry, as well as an upgraded maritime patrol variant, the MRA.4, which fell prey to the most recent round of defence cuts.

The Nimrod required close cooperation between crew members. On most missions, the tactical navigator—rather than the aircraft commander—controlled speed, direction, and equipment deployment. The last operational Nimrod—an R1 signals intelligence variant—was kept in service past planned retirement in order to take part in Operation Ellamy, code name for the 2011 British operations in Libya. When Ellamy ended, so did the career of the Nimrod.

—Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: Nimrod R1—#XW665 (cn 8040)—as it looked in July 2009 when assigned to No. 51 Squadron, RAF Waddington, UK.



In Brief

Designed, built by Hawker Siddeley ★ first flight May 23, 1967
★ number built 49 ★ air crew of five (two pilots, two navigators, one flight engineer) ★ mission crew up to 12. **Specific to Nimrod MR2:** four Rolls Royce Spey turbofan engines ★ internal load up to 20,000 lb of bombs, depth charges, mines, torpedoes ★ armament air-to-air, air-to-surface missiles ★ max speed 575 mph ★ cruise speed 490 mph ★ max range 5,100 mi ★ weight (loaded) 192,000 lb ★ span 114 ft 10 in ★ length 126 ft 9 in ★ height 31 ft.

Famous Fliers

Notables: Noel Anthony, Lloyd Barrett, Brian Burridge, David Emmerson, Andy Neil, Billy Speight, Art Stacey. **Test pilots:** John Cunningham, Jimmy Harrison.

Interesting Facts

First jet-powered maritime patrol aircraft ★ flew 111 missions in Falklands War, some lasting 19 hours ★ had unusual ability to climb on single engine ★ received vital air-refueling capability before Falklands operations ★ assisted in destruction of 16 Iraqi patrol boats in 2003 Iraq War ★ used only two engines at low altitudes ★ suffered five crashes in more than 40 years of operation ★ saw extensive action in humanitarian operations ★ boasted longest bomb bay of any NATO aircraft.



A Royal Air Force MR-2 Nimrod reconnaissance aircraft on the tarmac at Incirlik AB, Turkey, in 2002.

USAF photo by TSgt. Anna Haymen