

Jury Report for the 1st FAI Formation Aerobatic Challenge, 2017

Zhengzhou City, China – 29th April to 1st May 2017

Nick Buckenham, Jury President



Discussions between World Air Carnival Ltd, CIVA and FAI in 2016 led to an agreement between the three parties enabling CIVA to provide a team of judges and jury officers for the first FAI Formation Aerobatic Challenge (FAC) planned by WACL as the principal event at the 2017 Zhengzhou Airshow in Henan Province, east-central China. Regulations for the event were written by CIVA and included a set of 12 figures in Aresti-style notation suitable for formations of two to six aircraft, with judging criteria and flight requirements similar in concept to other Section 6 publications.



Twelve teams from nine countries with a total of 41 competitors and 37 aircraft were selected to fly at the event, the transit arrangements, on-site organisation and flight management duties all being handled by WACL. Several days of practice / training flights at the airfield were run after the teams had assembled and tested the aircraft, followed by a planned three days of competition flights comprising a Classic Programme written by each team using up to six

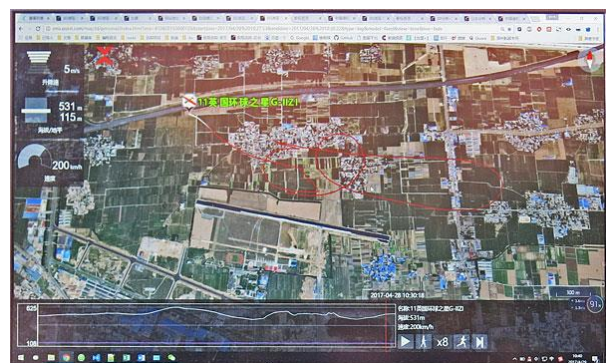
of the 'Known' figures plus optional freestyle links, and an eight-minute Signature Programme derived from the Freestyle sequence already known and practised by each team.

Although the event was originally conceived as a true competition with typical CIVA style judging and results calculations, at a late stage safety concerns expressed by the Air Sports Federation of China led them to recast it as an air show. This extremely disappointing decision effectively removed the requirement for any judging and the subsequent production of results, but through further negotiation with ASFC the judges were employed to apply standard judging techniques to 'inspect' each figure and thus assess its safety.



Each pilot was required by ASFC to carry a small GPS tracking device, supplied by an associated Chinese company, to record the wearers' altitude and geolocation once per

second throughout each flight. On several occasions we were able to see that their



recording showed an aeroplane had descended below the minimum allowed altitude of 100m, though no account was taken as to whether we deemed the incident to be safe, or not.

The flying itself was often spectacular, and a wide range of important lessons were learned regarding the intent of the regulations and a lack of understanding by many non-competition pilots concerning how they should present their performances to obtain a good contest-style assessment. It is strongly hoped that this event can be repeated, but so far there has been little feedback as to whether this may happen. Nonetheless the event marked a valuable step in CIVA's knowledge of formation flying, sequence design and judgement in a competition environment, and a positive view should be taken toward the prospect for a repeat – but next time within a confirmed sporting context.



Nick Buckenham
Jury President, FAC 2017



