

Of the 27 students starting the 1996/7 course, 21 graduated including the third female to gain her wings. Of the other two, one served with Esq 101 as an IP (Instructor Pilot) and is now training on Alpha Jets to eventually serve Esq 301, while the other is with Esq 401 on CASA 212s at Sintra.

Cutbacks in the FAP have meant that the 1997/98 course has resulted in an intake of only 13 students. Foreign students are also taught at the unit, usually from former-Portuguese colonies such as Angola, Cape Verde and Mozambique with which Portugal has ongoing military assistance programmes. Not too long ago, Angola sent a former MiG-21 pilot for refresher training, while at the time of the author's visit, four African students were taking basic training.

The unit's 14 IPs will all have completed a 60-mission basic IP training course. At one time only the cream of the recently graduated fast-jet pilots would have filled these positions, from the co-located Esq 103 (often called First Assignment Instructor Pilots — FAIPs; a term not officially recognised by the FAP).

However, times have changed, as Lt Santinhos explains: "Our CO has 1,000 hours on A-7s, but we can also take pilots from either helicopters or transport aircraft here. Of the 14 IPs, ten are what you could term as FAIPs. An instructor usually stays on the squadron approximately four years before moving on, an F-16 tour is what most IPs would like, so becoming an instructor at Esq 101 does have its rewards."

### Learning to fly jets

Next step for the top 30% is Esq de Instrução Complementar de Pilotagem de Avioes de Caca 103 (Esq 103), where they endeavour to gain their basic jet training qualification on Alpha Jets. In 1993 the FAP received 50 Alphajets from Germany as part-payment for the use of FAP bases and these are now pooled between Esq 103 and 301, although at the time of AFM's visit only 15 aircraft were serviceable.

A student pilot will spend approximately 42 hours on the Programa de Conversao



Operacional (operational conversion programme) with Esq 103, during which he will hone his skills on air-to-air combat, air-to-ground firing and air-to-ground attack — additional hours are also spent on the simulator. Esq 103 does not, of course, deal with just student pilots, on this particular course they are likely to be sharing a class with pilots going through jet operational conversion, i.e. Alpha Jets to F-16s (or vice versa) or A-7s to F-16s. There are also four other classes, covering all aspects of Alphajet training. Pilotagem complementar (PC - complementary jet pilot training) caters for pilots with no jet experience — currently flying helicopters or transports — who are going to fly Alpha Jets. The majority of the syllabus is spent on formation flying, navigation (IFR and VFR) and familiarisation, the remainder includes night flying and instrumentation and involves completing a total of 78 sorties (111 hours), of which ten are solo. Programa de qualificacao no aviao (PQA - Alpha Jet qualification) is for those with some jet experience or former Epsilon instructors. Nearly 60% of the course covers formation flying and VFR navigation. There are 35 sorties, six are solo. Programa de adaptacao ao aviao (PAA - Alpha Jet proficiency) for pilots converting from jets to Alpha Jets. This is the shortest course, covering most modes in small doses — familiarisation, instrumentation, formation, night flying, air-to-ground attack and proficiency, which involves about 15 sorties,

nearly 20 hours. Finally for those jet pilots who are slated to become combat instructor pilots but are currently serving with Esq 301, there is the Curso de Instrutor de Pilotagem de Avioes de Combate (CIC - combat pilot instructor). The student will fly 26 sorties, with five of them involving air-to-air combat — there is no VFR navigation or proficiency flying. If the student does not know how to fly visually at this stage, then he is not cut out to be an instructor.

Various sections within the squadron provide instruction and most of the instructors have secondary roles. In the Standard Evaluation (StanEval) section two pilots ensure that the squadron keeps up to date with NATO standards and plan operational courses. Another two carry out the check rides after the last mission in each category — and in addition, there is a Weapons Officer, Flight Safety Officer and Electronic Warfare section. Although the Alphajets can be equipped with chaff/flare for self protection it is not carried. The EW section is currently fitting radar warning receivers (RWRs) to them.

### Moving to fast jets

The other Alpha Jet squadron, Esq 301, is an operational unit and the FAP's Tiger squadron. It was reactivated in the autumn of 1993, having stood-down at Montijo in mid-1993 following the G-91R's retirement. It once provided Tactical Air Support to Maritime Operations (TASMO) missions but

## Sqn Badges

