

AVM PINTO LAID TO REST

Air Vice-Marshal Eric W. Pinto, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief Western Air Command, who died in an air crash near Poonch on Friday, was laid to rest with full military honours at the New Delhi Cemetery late this afternoon.

Monsignor Ignatius Lobo conducted the service. The Monsignor was Air Vice-Marshal's school-mate in Bombay.

The body of the Air Vice-Marshal was brought from the Military Hospital in Delhi Cantonment to his residence at 7 Akbar Road in the afternoon, where a mass was said.

The Prime Minister who had earlier attended the cremation at Nigambodh Ghat of the three senior Army officers, drove straight to 7 Akbar Road to call on Mrs. E.W. Pinto and other members of the family.

The funeral procession formed up inside the Air Vice-Marshal's residence and then moved on to the cemetery on Prithviraj Road. The coffin was carried from inside the house by IAF officers of Air Vice-Marshal's rank and placed on a gun carriage and draped with the National Flag and the IAF ensign. An escort party formed the head of the procession, followed by the buglers and IAF Band with their instruments muffled and draped with black silk. Behind them was the Bearer Party. The pall bearers, who included Air Vice-Marshals Arjan Singh, P.C. Lal, K.L. Sondhi, Ranjan Dutt, S.N. Goyal, M.S. Chaturvedi, Shivdev Singh, M.M. Engineer, O.P. Mehra and Y.B. Malse, rode on the vehicle drawing the gun-carriage up to the cemetery.

The entire route from 7 Akbar Road to the cemetery was lined on either side by IAF airmen who presented arms as the cortege went past and then reversed arms and rested on arms. Behind the cortege were Mrs. Pinto with her children and relatives, and the Defence Minister, the three Services Chiefs and high-ranking officers and Air and Military Attaches of the foreign diplomatic Missions.

Near the cemetery the procession formed on foot, the coffin being carried by the pall bearers. After the last rites were performed by Monsignor Lobo, wreaths were placed on the bier on behalf of the President and the Prime Minister. The Defence Minister, the three Services Chiefs and members of the Diplomatic Corps and Service officers placed the wreaths personally.

As the coffin was lowered in the grave, three volleys of small arms were fired and the buglers sounded the 'Last Post'. After the 'Reveille' was sounded, Mrs. Pinto threw the first handful of earth into the grave followed by all other present filing past to pay their last respects.

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