



NATO TIGERMEET WELL ORGANIZED UNDER THE SPANISH SUN IN ZARAGOZA

NTM 2016 WELL DONE UNDER SPANISH SUN

Organizing the 2016 Tiger Meet was a Spanish matter and full member Ala 15 at Zaragoza was honoured to play the role of host. Altogether some 90 aircraft from 14 countries were joining. The Nato Tiger Meet (NTM) is something we do all together is the common thought. So everybody who joins the final exercise is taking part in the pre-phase planning conferences. Participants personally are stuck to the running date and can only be replaced before a specific deadline. Pilots, crews, planners, ground personnel and those in leading functions are all eager to find the best possible way such an exercise should be conducted.

PREPARATION IS CRUCIAL

Central or core planning can be added with mission support operating assistants. Belgium, the Netherlands and Norway are using this concept. We are helping the air operations center (AOC) with our own small operating center as a Norwegian planner (Nickname 'Jazz') describes. Pilots do have the plan but planning a Combined air operation (COMAO) as a whole is much bigger than daily operations. NATO standard is the goal and we do everything to achieve the working routines fitting in this concept but COMAO has to be trained, running an AOC has to be trained and planning has to be trained as well. We train every level of the squadron.

So far the mission support operating assistants are doing a good job. There is an intense contact between the participating countries. Some are more experienced than others. The exercise does not stick only with learning how to cooperate with each other in the same operating procedures and some countries really have new input on tactics. However no new fighter type was introduced since the last NTM conducted in 2015 at Konya, Turkey and performances of aircraft are known there is a continuous upgrading of aircraft during the time and so new capabilities can be offered in air warfare.

EXCHANGES CONTRIBUTES TO AWARENESS

One of the most important things is to communicate clearly and to overcome language differences. Everything is set up in planning conferences but in a continuous way new people are joining the 'community' everyone with the aim to fit in as good as possible, learn from others and hand over own experiences and tactics. No lack of dedication can be discovered. The commitment can be seen on the faces, professionalism is there on the job and surely there is also laughter because everyone joyfully accepts his role in this exercise with so many other countries in cooperation. As commander 'Beck' of the Greek air force 335 Mira detachment from Araxsos explains.; 'to us it is a great opportunity, every year again'. Not every country has the possibility to exercise on this level as much as some others do.

We came with four F-16's including one double seat example. We offer a seat to pilots from other countries. Socialising with other NATO pilots is one thing and it tightens relationships but the real treat is the NTM covers the whole spectrum of mission types whether it is offensive counter air (OCA), defensive counter air (DCA), strikers or whatever. For example a Hungarian Gripen pilot can observe from our back seat directly what an F-16 is doing when offensive approaching one of their Gripens. This experience can be of high value. Not only to know what is the strong point of the opponent F-16 but also to know what is the weak point of your own fighter. Exchanges are a returning pattern. We try to participate on every NTM, at least at observer level but of course much better as pilot experience. NTM has flexible coordination. We fly what we really want and this is different from other exercises. All spectrum of experiences are in our pilot Group.

TO REACH HIGH LEVEL AS OBJECTIVE

When talking to 'Yoyo' a young Spanish pilot he mentioned the several types of aircraft gathered in this exercise. The Spanish air force has experience with dissimilar air combat techniques. (DACT). Comparing the two major fighter types of the Spanish air force the Typhoon and EF-18A Hornet some

things can be said. In his opinion, and this is a well known fact among the pilots, the EF-18 always gets a first chance when engaged with a Typhoon, thanks to his higher alpha in combat. Then we are talking about within visual range (WVR) combat and without a helmet mounted sight feature. The latter is standard for Typhoon pilots but the Spanish EF-18A pilots will receive this ability too in late 2016 or begin 2017 when the new Scorpion helmet will be introduced. The benefit of the Typhoon is his ability to reach a higher altitude where his missiles have longer range and higher speed in beyond visual range (BVR) attack. On the question if the exercise brings pilots to their limits or concerning only to a culture of smooth international operation he answers: "we always are going to the edge", but this depends on the way the mission commander leads.

MORE HELICOPTER OPS

Maybe yes, the Tiger Meets association was a social get together in the beginning but this changed rapidly to a high level exercise with all possible combat training. A growing helicopter role grew in the development to today's Tiger Meet. These 'Helo' operations meet current objectives of training with a heavy use of helicopters in today's conflicts. Helicopter actions have their own spectrum of missions with insertions and extractions, working with forward air controllers (FAC) and local Special Forces in support, attack, rescue and Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) missions but can also submit to COMAO operations of the fighters whenever needed in the 'theatre'.

SHADOWS IN COMBAT

In the morning most participants fly local missions among each other called Shadow Waves. They are flying to working areas using transit areas and transit corridors. Common mission types are engagements in 2v1 and 2v2 but this can be enlarged in scale from 4v4 till even 10v4 settings. Both offensive and defensive tactics are trained and air to ground missions as close air support as well. In the afternoon the COMAO waves are going to be conducted and this is started from the very beginning at day one. COMAO usually comprises different air assets from different countries and is the most suitable instrument to learn from the experience of others. The COMAO is under command of the mission commander and this is his biggest challenge.

Responsible for the COMAO including effectiveness but also safety rules the mission commander gives tasks to every pilot in his group. There is always a mission plan and some mission commanders stick to completely while others like to do it by themselves. The success of the whole mission depends on the quality and experience of the mission commander. In a Tiger Meet several hundreds of missions will be executed and this offers a lot of possibilities to act as mission commander. Many pilots are eager to gain this experience, but all positions in packages are trained. From a fly lead of two aircraft to section lead of four aircraft to package lead or mission commander of a strike package. No one will discuss the major importance of exercises like NTM with the tiger aspect just as a nice common feature however on the other hand this symbolizes the mightiness when they all come together.

[Kees Otten & Wim Das](#)
