

## **AJETS: EXERCISE MAKES THE DIFFERENCE**

### **AJeTS: Exercise makes the difference !**

At Ba-120 Commander Marzac (Cazaux) Alpha Jets are in use by the Advanced Jet Training School (AJeTS). Belgian and French pilots train in this remarkable multinational undeniable efficient combination in the French Ecole Transition Operation Elle / 8th Wing (ETO-01/2008), which provides both countries with new aspiring fighter pilots.

### **Cazaux**

Cazaux is one of the largest ideally located French bases with plenty of rehearsal space in the sky and a shooting range at 100 km nearby (Monte de Marsan). Cazaux hosts the AJeTS training schools for the French SAR and CSAR units (EH01-067 Pyrénées) and since 1998 the 150 Air Combat Sqn of the Singapore Air Force for their Advanced Jet Training with A-4 Skyhawks. Other units come from the the times of the Mirage's IV of the 'Force de Frappe', a time when Base 120 was surrounded with great secrecy. Next we find a training unit for dealing with effects of Chemical, Biological and Radio-Nuclear Weapons and the French CEV test center works on testing and development of aircraft and weapons.

### **Elementary-training**

Belgian pilots first have their elementary flying training (Phase I and II) at the SF-260M and French pilots their's at TB-30 Epsilon or Grob 120A with a minimum of 120 hrs. Next the pilots from both air forces soon converge on Tours where they make up the basic jet training done on Alpha Jet E of the French Air Force (Phase III). Through a series of 15 flights 'General Flying' (GF), 12 flights 'Instrument Flying' (IF), 13 flights and 22 flights formation, pilots are prepared to continue with navigation preparedness for a sequel to AJeTS / phase IV. In between 23 simulator flights have to be fulfilled for self-sufficiency, the emergency training.

### **Modernization**

The Belgian Air Force has placed 29 Alpha Jets-B with 2/008 for training of the Belgian and French cadets at 1/008 and 2/008, the French also fly on the Belgian Alpha Jets at 2/008, because of the Belgian more advanced avionics which brings extra perspective. Future fighter pilots have to be prepared for Typhoon, Rafale, Mirage 2000 and F-16. Therefor the Belgian Alpha Jets had a midlife modern cockpit avionics update (2006). The French use the standard version of the Alpha Jet E, but the decision has been made to upgrade similar to the Belgian 20 French Alpha Jets, implicating a INS/GPS, HUD, Up front controls, HOTAS, DVR and computerised firing modes for wapensimulations. CEV works on the test-phase in this. Advantages of a bilateral joint structure consist of minimal ground staff, the use of more sophisticated Belgian Alpha Jets by the French and working together in operational costs.

### **Modular program**

1st Lt pilot Karl Craps explains the course. Experienced instructors go through a modular program teaching the cadets, to deliver well trained pilots under the motto: 'No aircraft is better than its pilot', the fine tricks are taught ! The basic module consists of four pillars. Continuity flying, combat navigation, basic fighter manoeuvres and air to ground missions.

The 1st module is for 'aircraft conversion' on the Belgian Alpha Jet. These are the first 11 flights and simulator missions (sim's) and are designated with CT01-CT11. It concerns 4 single flights, 3 times 2 formation flights and 4 sim's. The following flights and sim's are CT12-CT18, a mix of GF and IF. Next CT19 to CT22 follow with night flights. In the 2nd module (CN01-CN19) the base navigation techniques are expanded with a tactical situation, and from that point we also start navigating in 2-ship and 4-ship formation as Karl explains. Next the principle 'fighterplane' is taught and an introduction to close air support follows.

The sim's now also direct to simulating air-to-ground attacks. The 3rd module, basic fighter manoeuvres (BFM) and advanced combat manoeuvres (ACM) teaches the basics of 1-versus-1 and 2-versus-2 air to air fights (BFM01-BFM11 and ACM12-ACM17). The 4th and last module, air-to-ground is also well known as 'First Shooting Campaign'. Karl: Here we learn handling training-ammunition and real target shooting. Both types Alpha Jets use the same gunpod. Inert BDU.33 non exploding exercise-ammo is used, giving smoke ignition on the ground to be measured by range officers. Scores are not most important, it's just a weapon training. Modules 2 and 3 can be interwoven, started at the same time. Once module 4 is trained, the others are lying still. Shooting namely is not executed throughout the whole year.

### **Completing the training**

Finally 6 combined missions include combinations of all learnt disciplines such as navigation, a passage on the shooting range or navigation interrupted by air-to-air fight. After this basic-module the French cadets get assigned to their final squadron and aircraft. In function of this designation some advanced modules follow. Belgian cadets train for Multi-role, they pass an extra advanced module called advanced combat navigation (ACN01-06) which goes deeper into the tactical situation mainly in terms of briefing (NATO standard) and the concept of close air support (CAS). In AAM01-07 basic fighter manoeuvres are about similar as in the BFM module, though each time a higher level is expected of the cadet. Finally the 'Specific Combined Mission (SCM01-06) is on program where all that has been taught is combined, including specific instrument flying training (SIFT01-06). This way each year mostly two promotions take place of some 4 or 5 cadets who will be visiting the F-16 OCU at Kleine Brogel for six months. Finally pilots are well prepared to become a fighter pilot. The complete training course is open for other NATO members, German and Spanish pilots were also educated at Cazaux. The course is organized very well, and it is expected that the Alpha Jets of the Belgian Airforce will remain up to about 2018.

Special thanks to Karl Craps, 1lt / pilot of ETO 02/008

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