

GATHERING AT CAMBRAI

NATO TIGERMEET 2011

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Nato Tiger Meet (NTM) 2011 was planned to be the biggest Tiger Meet ever. Marking 50 years of existence NTM is a good occasion to express strongly the progress made in the last decade. Unfortunately engagement of several participating countries in today's military conflicts such as the 'Unified Protector' air campaign above Libya, have lead to several cancellations. However the participant list saw some decrease, still there was an impressive number of aircraft with great diversity joining the exercise. This year the 335 Mira was promoted to full membership status.

TIGER SPIRIT

To fully understand the instrument of NATO's Tiger Meet organisation one must look at the historical growth and changes through the years. Not only there is a cultural identity which is recognized in the tiger look and leads to the creation of the most spectacular and artistic tiger look paint schemes at the aircraft but also there is in the tiger spirit a commitment to the principles creating the feeling of righteousness and an eagerness to join the club. The Tiger Meet is so much more. It gives the opportunity for many NATO members to meet each other, to respect each others identity, but also train and learn from each others tactics in a highly professional setting. Technically speaking, the exercise is very much a standard NATO live exercise (LIVEX) with a proved concept in starting with planning conferences in the beginning with and specific building up in complexity of missions towards the end of the exercise. The latest principles of air warfare and lessons learned, operating with newer systems evolving a wider scoop of possibilities challenge the pilots to reach the best level which can be achieved. Elements of contests stimulate pilots to give the best of their qualities. The NATO Tiger Association (NTA) has reached, just because of its very special identity a very autonomous status within NATO.

Founding of NTA

When in the early sixties the French Minister of Defence Pierre Messner made a plea for an improvement in Franco-American military co-operation he could never imagine what would eventually the result of his effort. The Commander-in-Chief of USAFE-Command took it very serious and requested his commanders in Europe to look in every way for a good solution. Sometimes coincidence rules the world, but at this point it sure did. At that time 74 RAF Squadron at Coltishall and 79th TFS of Woodbridge were renewing friendship and were searching for a new theme and discovered that the Escuadron de Chasse 1/12 of the Armee de l'air shared the tiger in their squadron emblem. The French squadron was invited to Woodbridge in 1961 and when the three squadrons were meeting there for a one day exercise in fact the first Tiger Meet was born. It was a great success and next year six NATO countries and eight flying squadrons found each other present on Woodbridge. In 1963 the exercise moved tot the mainland to Kleine Brogel in Belgium. The NATO Tiger

Association has steadily grown since that time. The family of tigers changed in composition during the years since 1961. Some squadrons were disbanded since that time, others, like Canadian squadrons were withdrawn from Europe and are now disbanded members. On the other hand new probationary members became full members and fill up the strength of NTA today. In 1964 when France hosted the tiger meet a new element was added by them in the exercises. They recognized the importance of the ground crews and introduced cross training on different aircraft types and ground competitions. Several prizes for different competitions are today's heritage of the past. The most important is the Silver Tiger Trophy for those who showed the highest degree of professionalism and Tiger spirit during the Tiger Meet. How to become one of the best is good demonstrated by the success story of the Czech 221 Squadron (at that time 331 Sq) helicopter unit entering the tiger family as a honorary member in 1996 and after joining NATO became a full member in 2001 and won the Silver Tiger trophy in 2002. It is all in the game to be a winner.

FULL SCALE

The Tiger Meet is a large scale combined air operations exercise. The span of exercises is within the full spectrum of air combat what can be encountered in air combat nowadays. Everything is based on the principle 'train as you fight and fight as you train'. This implicates you must simulate the circumstances just as they are in real combat. This asks a wide variety of assets including land units making the exercise a joint exercise and indeed is a challenge to organize. In this context it is very important to keep in mind that air warfare changed a lot through the years and new threats are to be recognized and countered successfully. It is good to realize that the opponent can be a high tech Sukhoi Su-35 but also terrorists using human shields who are difficult to fight. Actually several of the participants are active in and above Afghanistan bringing their experience with them. It is highly valuable to have an instrument to share this experience with each other resulting in mutual improvement of knowledge and skills.

OBJECTIVES

Within the main objectives are a better cooperation between de NATO air forces, a better understanding of procedures and developing unit interoperability. Objectives which were first lay down by General Lee in 1962 and the Tigers still live with that. Each squadron always tries its best to bring at least one two-seater to NTM. The squadrons then trade backseat rides, so there is usually plenty of opportunity to 'check out the competition'. This is one of the best customs. Practically the exercise is conducted in daytime because of restrictions, but actually what can be done in daytime can also be done in night time and this is vital while air warfare shifted to nightly hours. The participants are split in blue and red forces and briefing separately. During the morning the aircraft normally flying 2v2 and 4v4 engagements and other small scale operations in so called 'shadow waves' while the full Composite Air Operations (COMAO) are scheduled for the afternoon. The COMAO wave includes Close Air Support (CAS) aircraft, Suppression of Enemy Air Defences (SEAD) aircraft and airborne radar aircraft and usually consists of 50-60 airplanes. The latest years, the NTM's saw gradually involvement of helicopters. They fully introduce joint ops in

the theatre. Red Forces develop their own strategy in the theatre. The focus can be on different types of operations such as Ground-Assisted Air Interdiction with interdiction missions deep in enemy territory in collaboration with Special Forces searching for High Value Targets and training especially to avoid collateral damage. Also Combat Search And Rescue (CSAR) to extract downed pilots, casualties (CASEVAC) or hostages (Hostage Rescue Operations) can be on the program. Other missions are simply reconnaissance flights or practice Quick Reaction Force (QRF). The Scenario's are fully adaptive and changed by mission results of the day. The advantage of more players in the field is to set up a very realistic scenario close to Afghanistan-like actions. The operational theatre was pointed to the north and south of Belgium, Northern France and Northwest Germany.

CONTEST

To host 650-800 involved people with a great diversity of nationalities it is quite a challenge to organize. Thanks to the Tiger culture it is interesting for them. There is a strong identity in the social concept. After hours of activity there are events like a Gala –evening, gift exchanges during the International evening and off course the tiger games creating a sportive issue. The Squadrons are not new for each other, there is no ice-breaking period, there is a long tradition of networking and the feeling is much can be reached within two weeks. The crews are partly experienced and partly new, so others can be attached to the concept. New countries applying for the membership must prove to be worth as a probationary member. Then after two years practicing with the rules of engagement a full membership can be achieved.

The participants are especially stimulated by competition. To win the Silver Tiger Trophy the participants are judged by subjective criteria like the quality of briefings, how the missions were executed and the way how they help new members to a higher operational level. Representatives for judging are from every contributing country. Other prizes are the Tiger Spirit Award, the winner of the Tiger Tail, Tiger Suits, the Tiger Spirit Award, the best Operational Squadron and Tiger Games. Like in previous Tiger Meets spotters day's were organized. Fares are at least partly donated to charity and among them a remarkably organisation promoting the tiger. This organisation is called 'stichting SPOT' and makes efforts to save the wildlife, especially wildcats such as the tiger and jaguar. Interesting where different aspects of society meets because of the same emblem.

CAMBRAI

On Tuesday 10 May 2011 there was the NTM 2011 Kick-off with the flag ceremony. Apart from the planning conferences (February 2011) the active exercise is limited to a two-week period and was scheduled between 9-20 May. In 2011 the airbase of Cambrai- Epinoy in the north of France, housing the EC01-012 with Mirage 2000C played the host and could only do this for the last time because the air base awaits disclosure in the summer of 2012. On Sunday 15 May there was a Tiger Air Show for the public at Cambrai-Niergnies. Some units were limited in time for participating and arrived in the second week, like Slovak Mig-29. Among the countries which cancelled participation were the United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Norway and Hungary

while Belgium decided to sent a very small delegation of two aircraft at the very latest moment. Aircraft types cancelled were Super Etendards and Rafales. New combinations of armament were observed with F-16 Block 52 Polish Air Force 6 Sqn equipped with AIM-120, AIM-9X and Joint Helmet Mounted Cueing System (JHMCS) and sniper pod, Spanish Air Force EF-18's carrying IRIS-T air-to-air missiles at the wingtips and the Swiss Hornets with AIM-9X in combination with (JHMCS). The appearance of 335 mira F-16's from Araxos and quite a big delegation of Portugal with 306 Squadron F-16AM's from Monte Real were not unnoticed. Next NATO Tiger Meets are planned in Monte Real for 2012 and Araxos for 2013.

Participants Tigermeet 2011 Cambrai

Fighters

Austria (tiger), RG-27	1JTS	Saab 105ÖE	3x	Y109, RF26
Belgium	31 Smd	F-16AM	1x	FA-87 (tiger)
		F-16BM	1x	FB-24
Czech Republic	211 Sqn	JAS-39C	3x	9235 (tiger), 9238, 9245 (tiger)
		JAS-39D	1x	3819
Germany	JaBOG	321 Tornado ECR	4x	46+29 (lego), 46+33 (tiger)
				46+44, 46+46
		AG-51 Tornado IDS	6x	43+48, 44+61, 44+69, 45+35, 45+51 (panther), 46+10
Greece	335 Mira	F-16C block 52	2x	003, 010
		F-16D block 52	1x	021
France	EC-01/012	Mirage-2005F	3x	42/102-EY, 44/118-EQ (tiger), 65/118-MG Other French Mirages included Mirage 2000RDY and 2000B/L 54/102-EZ, 80/103-LI (tiger), 88/103-KV (tiger), 102/ 103-KR
Poland	6 ELT	F-16C block 52	5x	4055, 4058, 4060 (tiger) 4061, (later 4051 & 4080 were noted)
		F-16D block 52	1x	4082 (tiger)
Portugal	301 Esc.	F-16AM	5x	15102, 15106 (jaguar), 15109, 15114, 15117, 15123
Spain	Ala-14	Mirage F.1M	3x	C.14-41/14-22 (tiger)

	Ala 15	EF-18A	C.14-56/14-31 3x C.15-27/15-14 C.15-36/15-23 C.15-41/15-28 (tiger)
Switzerland	11 Staffel J5023,	F-18C 4x F-18D	J-5011 (tiger), J-5014, J-5015, 1x J-5236
Turkey	192 filo	F-16C block 50 F-16D block 50	2x 93-0679, 93-0682 (tiger) 1x 93-0696 (tiger)
Slovakia	1 Sqn	Mig-29A Mig-29B	1x 0619 (lego/tiger) 1x 5304

Helicopters

Italy	21 gruppo MM81217	AB-212AM	2x MM81215,
Czech Republic	221 Sq (tiger)	Mi-35	2x 3361 (tiger), 3367
France	5RHC 5RHC EALAAT	Sa.330B Tigre Tigre	1x 1255/DDQ 1x 2012/BHC 1x 2012/BHN (tiger)
UK	814 Sq	Merlin HM.1	1x ZH860/68

ECM/AEW Aircraft: D-CGFE Learjet (GFD), F-GPAD Falcon-20 (AVdef)
Awacs from Naewf was cancelled.

Slovak Mig-29 only in second week, Mirage F-1M from Spain only in the first week.
French and UK helicopters mainly flying around the weekend of the Airshow.
Polish F-16's were not flying every day.

Cancelled before start of the exercise were: 2x JAS-39C from 59/1 Puma Squadron
Hungary, 5x F-16MLU 313SQ RNLAf, 5x F-16MLU 338 SQ RNORAF and 2x Puma
RAF 230SQ.

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