

TIGERMEET 2010 A DIRECT HIT

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Once a year tigers are gathering somewhere in Europe and a two weeks exercise period brings them many experiences. Not only is the Tiger Meet a full scale air exercise and important for upgrading tactics in interoperability, it is also very valuable to meet the crews of the other allies in a typical tiger mood.

TIGER CULTURE

The tiger squadrons are units from several European countries associated in the NATO Tiger Association (NTA). The full members will organize a tiger meet annually. Using a rotation concept, the full members are accompanied by probationary members and even observer countries. All these participants are part of a full scale Dissimilar Air Combat Training (DACT). Off course the exercise has the same professional character like other exercises in NATO and earns if you look at the number of participants and movements the term 'Flag Exercise' but the tiger meet is so much more and part of a tradition which became a culture among the pilots. The special thing were the tiger meet distinguish itself from other exercises is the tiger spirit, which is expressed by the participants in every way.

FOUNDING OF NTA

When in the early sixties the French Minister of Defence Pierre Messner made a plan 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 Some squadrons were disbanded since that time, others, like Canadian squadrons were withdrawn from Europe and are now disbanded members.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 recognised 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 2001and 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. The exercise is prepared in conferences in previous months and a realistic schedule is set up in the pre phase. In 2010 the tiger meet was hosted by RNLAf 313 Squadron at Volkel air base in the Netherlands and it was the first time the Dutch played host. Participating countries were Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom. Totally 60 aircraft were involved and some 250 aircrew and 400 ground crew. The exercise was a great success with 644 missions of the 750 planned flown. An Awacs from 1 Squadron Nato AEWCF flew from its Main Operating Base Geilenkirchen and an Ohoi ANG KC-135 flew exclusively for the TigerMeet from Eindhoven air base.

OBJECTIVES

Within the main objectives is 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 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) were scheduled for the afternoon. The COMAO wave includes Close Air Support (CAS) aircraft, Suppression of Enemy Air Defences (SEAD) aircraft and airborne radar (AWACS) and usually consists of 50-60 aircraft. NTM 10 was not limited by fighters only.

Helicopters of different countries joined in the CSAR. Red Forces develop their own strategy in the theatre. The focus in 2010 was (1) on 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, (2) CSAR missions and CASEVAC missions to extract downed pilots and casualties out of enemy terrain and (3) to practice Quick Reaction Force (QRF). Also reconnaissance missions were on the program. The scenarios 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. Dutch exercise areas were located centrally in the Netherlands and above the North Sea, mainly north of the Dutch coast. In the latter area the use of chaff and flares and supersonic flying add more realism to the training.

CONTEST

The tiger look is something special and does not only express the feeling of the tigers but also inspires the painters to create beautiful peaces of art. Tigers are sometimes in bright colours on tail or fuselage painted but also the last few years it was common to use a tone-down dual grey painting. 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 de 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 last year in Kleine Brogel a spotters day was organised and the organised spotters were very helpful to the RNLAF to take the organisation out of their hands and controlled this event fully. Fares are at least partly donated to charity and this time a remarkably organisation was invited to promote the tiger. This organisation is called 'stichting SPOT' and makes efforts to safe the wildlife, especially wildcats such as the tiger and jaguar. Interesting were different aspects of society meets because of the same emblem. Next year Cambrai in the North of France will take over the role of host. For 2012 and 2013 the meet is projected at Monte Real in Portugal and Araxos in Greece.

Tiger Trophies:



Silver Tiger Trophy:	<u>211th Tactical Squadron</u>	Czech Republic
Best Flying Unit:	<u>338 Skvadron</u>	Norway
Tiger Games winner:	<u>221 squadron</u>	Czech Republic
Best Skit:	<u>Jet Trainer Squadron</u>	Austria
Best looking Uniform:	<u>21 Gruppo</u>	Italy
Most fancy paintscheme:	<u>192 Filo</u>	Turkey



NATO Tiger Meet 2010

<i>Sqn</i>	<i>Aircraft Type</i>
31 Sqn	F-16AM/BM
EC01.012	Mirage 2000C/B
ECE 05.330	Mirage 2000D
221 Sqn	Mi-24V Hind
AG 51	Tornado IDS
211 Sqn	JAS-39C/D Grippen
21 Gruppo	AB-212ICO
313 Sqn	F-16AM/BM
338 Sqn	F-16AM/BM
591 sqn	JAS-39C/D Grippen
jts	Saab OE105
1 sqn	E-3A Sentry *
321 Sqn	Tornado ECR
192 Sqn	F-16C/D
335 Mira	observers only
6 Sqn	observers only
11 Staffel	Weekend Visitors
301 Sqn	Weekens Visitors

* Flying From MOB

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