

# Tiger Olé

Meeting point for this years Tiger Meet was the Spanish Air Force Base Los Llanos just south of the provincial capital Albacete in the region La Mancha.



**A touch of Don Quijote** – The rolling hills with the Mediterranean vegetation and the brownish pastel shades, home of Cervantes famous novel hero, were the scenery in which the 42<sup>nd</sup> Tiger Meet took place since 1961. For the second time after 1992 the 142 Squadron of the Spanish Air Force was hosting a NATO-Tiger Meet (NTM). Still equipped with Mirage F1, 142 Escuadrón is a proud member of the NATO Tiger Association since 1986. Besides the air defence role as a secondary task, the squadron's main role is air to ground attack. In a few years they will also receive the new EF-2000 Eurofighter. After this years Tiger Meet was initially planned to be held at Orland/Norway, 338 Squadron of the Norwegian Air Force had to postpone their plans to 2007. On short notice 142 Squadron at Albacete jumped in and planned and organised the Tiger Meet 2006 - Muchas Gracias!



**Tiger Meet** – The more than forty year old tradition of this extraordinary community of operational squadrons is influenced by some events which give the Tiger Meet a special character. Not only black and yellow striped aviator scarves or tiger striped squadron badges dominate the scene, also the jets and helicopters have great attention. Most participating squadrons bring a special painted aircraft or helicopter along to the meetings. Besides that a Tiger Meet also maintains certain other traditions. For example the opening ceremony, when all national anthems are played and the countries flags are raised.

**Flag parade** – This years Tiger Meet was officially opened by Colonel Orlando F. Jiménez, Wing Commander of 14 ALA (Wing) Spanish Air Force, who gave his opening remarks in front of 13 squadrons from nine nations. The following four days 41 jets and six helicopters flew almost 300 sorties within the tiger meet exercise. Together with jets and helicopters 480 technicians and aircrews were stationed for one week on the airbase just south of the provincial capital Albacete with its almost 160.000 inhabitants. Only a Boeing E-3A of the 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron of NATO's Airborne Early Warning (NAEW) Wing at Geilenkirchen / Germany had to fly the common missions from Torrejon (Madrid), because of its high gross weight that did not allow takeoffs and landings at Albacete.



<b>Participants (Flying)</b>		
<b>UNIT</b>	<b>Home Base</b>	<b>Aircraft</b>
31 SQN BAF	Kleine Brogel	6x F-16 AM/BM
EC 01.012 FAF	Cambrai	5 x M2000
EC 05.330 FAF	Mont de Marsan	2x M2000 D5 - 2 x Rafale B
321 SQN GAF	Lechfeld	5x Tornado ECR
AG 51 "I" GAF	Schleswig	3x Tornado IDS
338 SQN NoAF	Orland	4x F-16 AM
192 Filo TuAF	Balikesir	4x F-16 C/D
301 SQN PoAF	Monte Real	4x F-16 AM/BM
142 SQN SpAF	Albacete	4x Mirage F-1
15 WING SpAF	Zaragoza	4x EF-18A
230 SQN - RAF	Aldergrove	2x Puma
231 SQN CzAF	Prerov	4x Mi-24 Hind
1 SQN NAEW	Geilenkirchen	1x E-3A

**COMAO** - Composite Air Operations again had priority in the flying operations of the exercise. Morning sorties were used for training, and the COMAOs were flown in the afternoons following an intense cycle of coordination, planning and detailed briefings. All this fitted into Air Task Order (ATO) and exercise scenario, which was set up for south eastern Spain. The four-day-flying program included a great variety of different tasks. Fighters flew fighter sweep and escort missions within Mixed Force Fighter Operations (MFFO). Fighterbombers attacked ground and naval targets, while ECR-Tornados of Fighter Bomber Wing (FBW) 32 Lechfeld supported these missions in the SEAD-role (Suppression of Enemy Air Defences) against "hostile" radar sites and Surface to Air Missile (SAM) systems. Reconnaissance results were provided by the Recce-Tornados from Tactical Reconnaissance Wing (TRW) 51 "Immelmann". Helicopters from 230 Squadron (Royal Air Force Aldergrove) and 231 Squadron (Czech Air Force Přerov) put their effort in Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) of shot down aircrews over hostile territory and some other special operations.

**Flight Safety** – In all flying operations this point played a central role. Safety briefings at the beginning of the week gave aircrews and technicians a good overview about special items to take care of. The excellent discipline of the entire personnel helped to finish the week of the tigers without any flight safety problems.



**“Dardo”, “Raglan” and “Viking”** were only a few of the many Callsigns that could be heard in the air around Albacete. Almost 50 jets and helicopters were involved into Tiger Meet 2006, which makes it to one of the biggest of the last years. For the first time 15 ALA (Wing) from Zaragoza was flying on a Tiger Meet with EF-18 Hornet from its 152 Squadron. Colonel Fernando Bobadilla Hastings, Wing Commander of 15 ALA, especially flew in for the weekend. As an old Tiger from 142 squadron Albacete, he was proud to be back at his old base with his Tigers from Zaragoza. For the weekend 335 Squadron / Hellenic Air Force from Araxos and the Jet Trainer Squadron / Austrian Armed Forces from Linz-Hörsching sent 2 pilots each to participate in the non-flying events. The application of 152 Squadron to join the NATO Tiger Association (NTA) was accepted together with the application of 335 Squadron from Araxos, which brings both units to the status as probational members for the next two years. An honorary membership for Jet Trainer Squadron of Linz-Hörsching in Austria was also discussed, since they were already present on NTM 2005 at Balikesir with their Saab J 105 OE and showed great enthusiasm for the NTA-ideals.

**Proud members** - The latest numbers of membership now show 17 full members and three probational members in the NTA. Another ten squadrons hold the status as an honorary member, which means that they either come from friendly countries close to NATO, like PfP-nations (Partnership for Peace) or are stationed overseas like North American Tiger Squadrons. Every one of them is allowed to participate in flying operations if applicable. All together presently 30 squadrons share the honour of being a member of the tiger community, which is quite a success after its start 45 years ago.



**Looking over the fence** is the big argument for 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Lorenz Schaffelhofer (27), Tornado-Pilot from Lechfeld: "The most important things are the operational experiences with foreign nations, as well as social contacts." It was his first big Tiger Meet, but in spring of 2005 he already participated in a so called "Tiger Mini Meet" in Switzerland, which was organized by Fliegerstaffel (Squadron) 11 of the Swiss Air Force. "Flying was not carried out there, but here at Albacete it is different" he states and adds: "It is an excellent experience to see the team spirit of everybody." He was also very much surprised how open minded all participants were. This fact allowed an extensive and effective exchange of ideas, according to Schaffelhofer. Major Jürgen Frank (39), pilot and detachment commander of TRW 51 "Immelmann" from Schleswig looks at it the same way. Since 1996 he is attending Tiger Meets and appreciates besides the personal contacts the multinational cooperation: "An important aspect is the training with other nations, especially facing possible joint task forces under the command of NATO or United Nations in the future.

**Exchange Pilots** - Major Marc Grüne (35) of Escuadron de Chasse 01/012 at Cambrai / France and LTC Guido Brendler (39) from 152 Escuadrón at Zaragoza / Spain were also very enthusiastic about their first Tiger Meet. Both are pilots from the German Air Force attending a two to three year aircrew exchange program in France and Spain respectively. In their squadrons they are fully integrated into flying operations, but the Tiger Meet offered them another big piece of international cooperation that adds up to the invaluable experiences as exchange officer in a foreign air force. Two USAF pilots on exchange with the 301 sq were also present, proudly showing their skill with the Portuguese language.

**International Teamwork** – One good example of international cooperation was explained by 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Jürgen Koller (29), technical officer from Fighter Bomber Wing 32 “ECR” at Lechfeld and technical detachment commander of his wing on the Tiger Meet: “One of our ECR-Tornados had a broken fuel transfer valve. Normally the spare part would have been brought to Albacete with a C-160 Transall, which in turn would have been very complicated” he noted. With the help of the Belgian Air Force that had a planned support trip with a transport aircraft to Albacete, the missing part arrived via Kleine Brogel and Brussels at Albacete without any delays. Therefore the ECR-Tornado could be fixed just in time for the return to Germany. Finally he added: “Besides getting to know different technical concepts and procedures that are used for handling aircraft, it is very remarkable to see how Tiger Spirit works and ties together the Tiger-Squadrons.”



**Silver Tiger** – a special spirit was also necessary to win the trophy that is always awarded to the squadron with best overall results. This year Lieutenant-Colonel Yves Gerard, commanding officer of 01/012 “Cambresis”, had the honour to receive the famous Silver Tiger for his squadron. Two more distinctions were awarded to the Tigers from Cambrai. The squadron from northern France was also voted for the best Tiger flight suits and the best painted aircraft. Best flying operations was once again awarded to 31 Squadron of the Belgian Air Force.

**NTA-Advisors** - For many years the retired US Air Force Colonel Don Verhees, Colonel Denis “Damned” Mercier from the French Armée de l’Air and Colonel M.D. Roland “Doc” Kauschmann from the Luftwaffe share their own part of Tiger Spirit in advising and supporting the matters of the NTA. Always present on Tiger Meets, they are available for any kind of question. Apart from holding up comradeship and solidarity as one of the main aims, it is of great importance to them to support the development of cooperation between the different nations. The integration of new NATO-members and PfP-countries should strengthen the operational capabilities of all squadrons. Once someone has learned about the special Tiger Spirit, he will continue to support it, following the old saying: “Once a Tiger always a Tiger.”

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