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Story and pictures  
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# Tigers over the Atlantic

## Excercise "Ocean Tiger 2008"



*For the first time Super-Etendard-Squadron "Flottille 11" of the French Navy hosted a Tiger Meet. Large exercise areas over land and sea offered excellent training opportunities to participating Tiger-Squadrons from all over Europe.*



*Belgian F-16 and French Rafale on the apron. [ Source: Metternich/Luftwaffe ]*

**Landivisiau** – 14 flying squadrons from 8 nations met at the end of June on the French Navy Base 30 kilometers northeast of Brest. Almost 500 pilots and technicians with 36 aircraft and 8 helicopters visited the French Navy. In addition observers from Italy, Norway and Greece were present, but did not play a part in flying operations. During 5 exercise-days Composite Air Operations (COMAO) were flown on a daily basis with sometimes more than 40 aircraft airborne. Different forces had to work together. Fighter and recce aircraft, bombers, CSAR-helicopters (Combat Search and Rescue) and one E-3A NATO Early Warning Aircraft from 1 Squadron Geilenkirchen / Germany flew complex mis-

sions together. Under surprisingly stable weather conditions and with few technical cancellations a total of 335 missions were flown. Besides the Austrian Saab 105OE from Düsen-trainerstaffel (Jet Trainer Squadron) at Linz / Hörsching, Czech JAS 39C/D Gripen from 211 Squadron at Caslav participated for the first time in flying



*Tiger-Formation at famous Mont Saint Michel. [ Source: Metternich/Luftwaffe ]*

operations on a Tiger Meet. Furthermore it was the first NATO-Exercise ever where Rafale, Gripen, F-16 and F-18 could train together.

Saint Malo, Rennes and Belle-Île are only three names out of many well known locations in the picturesque Bretagne. All these scenic spots, wide bays, high cliffs and numerous small islands fascinated the participants.

„Panther, kick right 20, Bandits 10 o'clock 20"– With this directive command from one of the four JAS-39 Gripen of 211 Squadron, two German Recce-Tornados from Recce-Wing 51 "Immelmann get a warning". The Czech Gripen from Caslav, who participate for the first time in flying operations on a Tiger Meet, have spotted hostile fighters. Spanish F/A-18 from 15 Wing at Zaragoza, who simulate the RED AIR threat, are in the 10 o'clock position at 20 nautical miles. With the order "Kick right 20" the Gripen gives a different course to the formation to avoid the threat. The two Recce-Tornados are tasked in the SEAD-Role (Suppression of Enemy Air Defences) as HARM-Shooters (High Speed Anti Radiation Missile) in order to neutralise Crotale-SAMs (surface-to-air missiles) in the target area by attacking their fire control radar. Together with the Czech Gripen, who are flying Fighter Sweep and the following 10 fighter-bombers, consisting of Mirage F1, Super Etendard and Rafale, they have the task to attack different targets over land and sea with their precision munitions.

With this pre-attack a landing of Special Forces in a second attack-wave is prepared. Puma, Merlin and Mi-24 Hind Helicopters are approaching the Island of Belle-Île. F-16s from 31 Squadron / Kleine Brogel / Belgium are flying fighter escort for the formation.

On the island, just off the south-western coast of the Bretagne, personnel of the United Nations were captured by hostile troops. The Special Forces are tasked to free the hostages and evacuate them. In NATO phraseology



French Mirage 2000 on taxiway in front of Czech JAS-39C Gripen taking off. [ Source: Metternich/Luftwaffe ]



Target-Approach over water - Czech Mi-24 Hind in front of Merlin (left) und Puma Helicopters. [ Source: Metternich/Luftwaffe ]



Mirage 2000 from Escadron de Chasse (EC) 01/12 at Cambrai. [ Source: Metternich/Luftwaffe ]

this kind of operation is called “NEO” (Noncombattant Evacuation Operation). It is part of a big COMAO (Composite Air Operation) within the flying exercise “Ocean Tiger 2008”.

**Realistic Exercise** – “Besides the scenario of hostage rescue, CAS-Missions (Close Air Support) were the main focus in the exercise” says Capitaine de Corvette (LtCdr) Francois-Xavier „Fix“de Bengy. As squadron commander of 11F he is responsible for planning and execution of “Ocean Tiger 2008”. “With respect to the area of operation in Afghanistan, where many of our squadrons are on a mission right now, we put the centre of attention on these missions. Apart from that we concentrated on “MAOs” (Maritime Air Operations) which is our main concern in military naval aviation.” With the results of the exercise de Bengy is fully satisfied and adds: “We from Flottille 11 are proud to host the NATO Tiger Meet. The moment of time to organise the Meet was just right, since our swimming home, the aircraft carrier “Charles de Gaulle” is



*Squadron Commander of Flottille 11, Capitaine de Corvette François-Xavier de Bengy.  
[ Source: Metternich/Luftwaffe ]*

presently on dry dock in Toulon for overhaul. Therefore we are stationed here at Landivisiau for a longer period. Also the new base infrastructure with the new Rafale-buildings was a surplus for organising the exercise.”

**High value training** – For young aircrews the Tiger Meet is something special and new. Besides tigered flight scarves, colourful aircraft, and the famous tiger-traditions (which they already know about within their own sqdns), it is for many their first time to attend a multinational exercise. That was the case also for Cap-



*Aircrews from various nations are planning a COMAO. [ Source: Metternich/Luftwaffe ]*



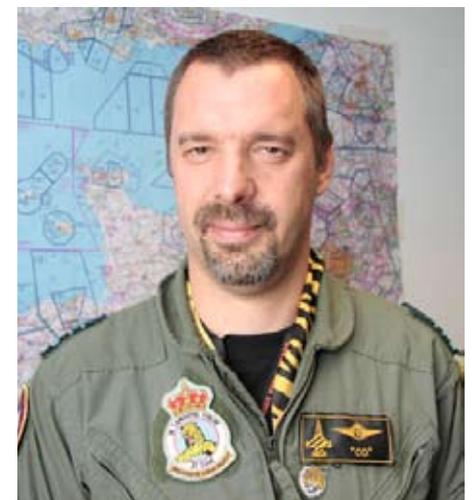
Participants of "Ocean Tiger 2008" during In-Briefing.  
[ Source: Metternich/Luftwaffe ]

tain Thomas Klaster from 1st Squadron of Recce-Wing 51 "Immelmann" at Schleswig / Germany. Stationed there since 2007 as a Weapon System Operator (WSO) on Tornado, and even with his 600 total flying hours, he is one of the rookies of the 51 Wing. Still training to reach combat-ready status, he needs every flying hour he can get. "Nowadays with reduced flying hours and many limitations for the day to day training, it is important to fill every mission with the maximum amount of training objectives. On the Tiger Meet every moment is full of good experiences", states Captain Klaster and adds: "Every flying hour in such complex scenarios counts three times as much as a standard training mission at home."

But it is not only the flying ops that fascinate him; it is also the so called "Tiger Spirit" that impresses him. "The special thing about the Tiger Meet is the mixture of operational flying training and the strong teamwork of the participants. Everybody is working for common goals, regardless from unit or nation. The exchange of ideas and thoughts is not only limited to duty matters like on other exercises. Social events after work offer an excellent chance to get to know other nations. A good example is the traditional "International party", where every nation offers specialties of their local kitchen. This way it is possible to get to know the whole of Europe in very little time. But all this is just a nice side effect, which has nothing to do with the flying exercise itself."

**Flight Safety** – Prior to starting with flying ops extensive briefings were the mandatory part of preparation for the exercise. Training areas, limitations, alternate airfields, and approach procedures were only a small part of thorough instructions into local procedures. Also ground operations were part of a complete safety concept. Sufficient crew rest for pilots and technicians was especially watched during the week. The daily evening events for the participants finished between 22.00 and 23.00 hours. "Personnel on early shift even left before that time", states Lieutenant de Vaisseau Bruno „Fabio“ Manaranche, Super-Etendard-Pilot and OPS-Officer from 11F.

**Tiger Traditions** – For almost 50 year Tiger meets have been organized. In 1961 three squadrons (74 RAF, 79 USAF, and 1/12 FAF) with a tiger in their squadron crest met at RAF Woodbridge in England. "Pilots from 31 Squadron / Belgian Air Force were then present for the first time the next year, also held at Woodbridge" says Lieutenant-Colonel Rudi Verrijt, F-16 Pilot and squadron commander. "The reason why we were always present since 1962 is easy to answer. At home it is nearly impossible to achieve the same training objectives as we do here a Landdivisiau. For us the Tiger Meet is an exercise with an immense training effect. On the question why there are bright Tiger colours all over the place, he answers: "Tiger Accessories are an external sign for a powerful community. It is somewhat like a



Squadron Commander of 31 Squadron from Kleine Brogel / Belgium, Lieutenant-Colonel Rudi Verrijt.  
[ Source: Metternich/Luftwaffe ]



*Belgian F-16 preparing for takeoff [ Source: Metternich/Luftwaffe ]*

corporate identity, what civilian companies use to optimize their productivity. It shows the strong bonds between the Tiger-squadrons and the different nations. The old stupid cliché (from perhaps the 70's) that the Tiger Meet is only Partytime should be refuted in the strongest possible way. Facing smaller budgets and more operational tasking the Tiger Meet could not exist any longer, if it had not constantly shown its operational training value.

Nearly 50 years of NATO Tiger Meets underline this “states Lieutenant-Colonel Verrijt and proudly adds: “The big advantage we have compared to other multinational exercises is that complex missions can be flown right from the beginning. This is possible because we already know each other. But “Tiger Spirit” also achieves other things as LtCol Verrijt explains the charity project of his squadron.

„I fly for Charity“ – With this slogan a small tiger puppet named “Tijgetje” flies around the world for children that are ill from cancer. Aim of the project is to collect as much money as possible for the “Belgian Children’s Can-



*Pilot of 31 Squadron thanks the Swiss Detachment Commander for taking the Mascot „Tijgetje“ with an F/A-18 Hornet up into the French skies. [ Source: Metternich/Luftwaffe ]*

cer Foundation". Therefore "Tijgetje" flies all kinds of aircraft, reaching from propeller aircraft over helicopters to jet aircraft. Over 400 flying hours have been written down in his flight-log since the project started in 2007. Famous names like Red Arrows or Thunderbirds can be found in the log, besides operational missions over Afghanistan. During the next Tiger Meet in September 2009 at Kleine Brogel, Belgium, "Tijgetje" will be sold in an online auction. Another example of real "Tiger Spirit": after the cancellation of the '08 Tiger Meet at Lechfeld, Flottille 11 took over and organized the exercise in less than six months. They really "stepped up to the plate", adds Colonel (ret) Don Verhees (NTA advisor), using American baseball slang.

Lieutenant de Vaisseau (LV) Aymeric de Valence is a squadron pilot of Flottille 11. As one of the two main project officers of "Ocean tiger 2008" he discusses the situation as follows: "We are a small flying squadron with only 10 Officers and about 120 NCOs (Non Commissioned Officers) and troops. It



*Project Officer for the exercise - Lieutenant de Vaisseau (LV) Aymeric de Valence [ Source: Metternich/Luftwaffe ]*



*ROVER 4 (Remotely Operated Video Enhanced Receiver) Receiver Antenna and Laptop. [ Source: Metternich/Luftwaffe ]*

was really impressive to see how the squadron managed to organize the Meet in such a short timeframe. Never before have we had 80 missions flying on a single day at Landivisiau. It was a brand new experience on the flying as well as the logistics part. Of course we had excellent planning support from Kleine Brogel and Cambrai, but at the end we had to cover it all on our own. Nobody in the squadron complained about the long working days during the preparation of NTM 08. Everybody in the squadron had the same goal, to make "NATO Tiger Meet 2008" a success.

**New systems** – Sometimes the Tiger Meet is the place where new systems or procedures are tested. While Escadron de Chasse et d'Expérimentation (EC) 05.330 from Mont de Marsan is testing the Rafale since 2006 with respect to mobility and operational capabilities, 31 Squadron prepared itself for their detachment to Kandahar in Afghanistan by testing their new Video-System ROVER 4 (Remotely Operated Video Enhanced Receiver). It provides Live-Videos that are transmitted from other aircraft or drones to a laptop computer. It enables a FAC (Forward Air Controller) to describe the target area much better to attacking fighter bombers than before. This also helps to minimize own losses.

**Future** - Général de brigade aérienne (Brigadier General) Denis Mercier, presently working at the headquarter of Armée de l'Air in Paris in the branch budgeting, controlling and Transformation, was one of a couple of important visitors at Landivisiau during "Ocean Tiger 2008". As a Mirage-Pilot and former commander of the Tiger-Squadron EC 01/12 at Cambrai, he has always kept in close touch with "the Tiger Business"; plus he is one of three advisors of the NATO Tiger Association (NTA). He sees the particularity of the Tiger Meet in the fact that it is the only multinational exercise that is planned solely by squadrons and not by headquarters like normally. "This is a different approach which has some advantages" he thinks and continues: "The Squadrons incorporate things into the exercise which they need for their training and preparation for operational missions. That



*Général de brigade aérienne (Brigadegeneral) Denis Mercier from Armée de l'Air is convinced by the „Tiger Spirit“. [ Source: Metternich/Luftwaffe ]*

sometimes differs from the point of view of headquarters and is one of the keys to the success and effectiveness of the Tiger Meet. In the future it will be of great importance to continue to optimize operational training for the aircrews” explains General Mercier.

**Planning** – “At the present time specific high value training is more important than ever before. Large exercises are expensive and not easy to organize. Taking into account increasing deployment times of the technicians and aircrews, early planning and coordination is necessary to have a good planning base on the working level” notes General Mercier. “An exercise like the Tiger Meet, based on squadron initiative, can be organized at fairly low costs, but has to rely on the coordination of the headquarters. It is important that they understand the high training value in order to deconflict it with other exercises and incorporate it into their annual schedule.” For 2009 the preparation of the next Tiger Meet at Kleine Brogel Airbase in Belgium is already in full course. A two-week exercise is planned, which will support good COMAO-training. Maybe the Eurofighters from 12 Gruppo (squadron) at Gioia del Colle in southern Italy, and the Fulcrums from the Slovak Republic will participate so as to carry on the old saying: “Once a tiger, always a tiger”.



*Full ramp at Landvisiau.  
[ Source: Metternich/Luftwaffe ]*

## PARTICIPATING SQUADRONS

Squadron	Air Force	Base	Aircraft
31 Squadron	Belgian Air Force	Kleine Brogel	5 F-16 MLU
ESC 1/12	Armée de l'Air	Cambrai	5 Mirage 2000
ESC 5/330	Armée de l'Air	Mont de Marsan	3 Rafale
Flottille 11	Aéronavale	Landivisiau	3 Super Etendard
AG 51 "Immelmann"	German Air Force	Schleswig	3 Tornado Recce
152nd Squadron	Spanish Air Force	Zaragoza	4 EF-18 Hornet
142nd Squadron	Spanish Air Force	Albacete	4 Mirage F-1
Fliegerstaffel 11	Swiss Air Force	Meiringen	3 F/A-18C/D Hornet
211 Squadron	Czech Air Force	Caslav	4 JAS 39C/D
Düsentrainerstaffel	Austrian Armed Forces	Linz / Hörsching	3 Saab 105 OE
814th Squadron	Royal Navy	Culdrose / UK	1 Merlin
230th Squadron	Royal Air Force	Aldergrove / UK	2 Puma
231 Squadron	Czech Air Force	Prerov	4 Mi-24 Hind
ALAT	Armée de Terre		1 Alouette III
1 Squadron	NATO	Geilenkirchen (Germany)	1 E-3A Sentry
Apache Aviation	Civil Target Display	France	1 Hawker Hunter 1 L-39 Albatros
21 Gruppo *	Italian Air Force	Grazzanise	1 AB 212
338th Squadron *	Royal Norwegian Air Force	Ørland	F-16 MLU
335th Squadron *	Hellenic Air Force	Araxos	A-7E Corsair (F-16C BLK 52)
1./JaboG 32**	German Air Force	Lechfeld	Tornado ECR
313 Squadron***	Royal Netherlands Air Force	Volkel	F-16 MLU

\* Non flying participants

\*\* Separate training missions

\*\*\* Only weekend (Open Day)

## TIGER AWARDS

Tiger Games	31 SQN	Belgium
Flying	31 SQN	Belgium
Dress	EC 1/12	France
Aircraft Paint	EC 05/330	France
Skit	11 Flottille	France
Silver Tiger	11 Staffel	Switzerland

