

# NATO Tiger Association

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## Tigers @ 50

NATO Tiger Association (NTA) celebrates its 50th Anniversary during Tiger Meet at Cambrai. 20 Tiger Squadrons plus a number of support units gathered in northern France for the presently largest live air exercise in Europe.



Story and Pictures by  
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**Mirage 2000 Pilot in front of his aircraft.**

**Cambrai** - The majority of NTA member squadrons showed up at the home of Escadron de Chasse 01.12 “Cambresis” despite the ongoing operations over Libya, where quite some Tiger Squadrons are involved. The French authorities had to cancel a series of other exercises, but managed to save the NATO Tiger Meet (NTM). Out of 24 tiger squadrons from 18 nations that had been planned for the exercise, 20 squadrons attended the Meet, some even just for one week or the weekend like the Spanish Tigers. Even so, over 60 aircraft joined the exercise together with more than 900 aircrews and technicians for the conduct of Composite Air Operations (COMAO) over France, Belgium, Netherlands and Germany. It was already the 7th time that EC 01.12 organized the NATO Tiger Meet (NTM) at Cambrai. For the first time a Polish tiger squadron participated on a NATO Tiger Meet with 6 F-16C/D (Block 52+) of the 6th Eskadra Lotnictwa Taktycznego (ELT) from Poznań-Kresiny. The Tiger Assembly voted 6 ELT into the NTA as probationary members. Also, full membership was given to 335 Mira (SQN) Hellenic Air Force from Araxos / Greece after some years as a probationary member. For the first time they brought their new F-16C/Ds after converting from A-7E Corsair II in 2008. Another well received participant was NTA honorary member 1 SQN from Sliac in the Slovak Republic with 2 MiG-29 that flew a few missions at the beginning of the second week.



**Polish F-16 from Poznań-Kresiny**

**External Forces** – In support of the exercise additional squadrons and units participated in the exercise play with aircraft, helicopters and ground equipment. The French Army Aviation (ALAT – Aviation légère de l’ Armée de Terre) employed Cougar, Gazelle and Tiger attack helicopters for Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) missions. US Air National Guard and Armée de l’ Air had Boeing KC-135 tankers scheduled for air refuelling missions. Furthermore E-3A (AWACS), C-160 Transall, GCI and a Link 16 unit from Mont de Marsan took part in the exercise. Besides these a Learjet from the German company GFD (Gesellschaft für Flugziel-darstellung - Air Target Simulation) at Hohn AB and a Dassault Falcon 20 from AVDEF at Nimes-Garon flew as electronic jammer during the exercise.

**COMAOs and Operational Scenarios** – Quite stable weather conditions permitted the execution of most of the planned missions, even though the Portuguese Detachment had to depart two days before end and the Greek and Polish F-16s had to stand down due to some technical restrictions in week two. At the end a total of 600 missions could be logged not including the deployment and redeployment sorties. The mission profiles were oriented as much as possible towards the individual needs of the participating squadrons, as it had been planned during the previous planning conferences. In the mornings the so called “shadow waves” consisted of smaller formations, flying DACM (Dissimilar Air Combat Manoeuvres) and CAS (Close Air Support) missions. COMAOs (Composite Air Operations) in turn were executed in the afternoons, since the complex planning needed a longer preparation time. For more recent operational profiles like Non Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO) or Convoy Escort Operations for protection of



*Tiger Tail in mass Formation*

slow moving aircraft, various types of scenarios were offered in the exercise play. One major point of focus was the integration of helicopter forces into the fast jet scenario. In the interaction of forces the detailed preparation and coordination has become more and more important, especially with changing situations. After all the missions were flown, thorough debriefings led to “lessons learned”.

**Airboss** – This specific job was executed by Captain “Bere” Deelkens and Captain “Garfield” Reenaers, two pilots from 31 Squadron of the Belgian Air Component. They dealt with the daily mission at hand and worked together with the “White Cell” that coordinated between Blue (friendly) and Red Forces (hostile). Captain Cedric “ChoCho” Chauvet” and Lieutenant de Vasseau (LV) Rafael “Teddy” Brun from EC 01/12 were in charge for the “White Cell” operations and also ran a few CO-MAO missions as airboss to support the main airbosses from the Belgian Air Component. Their main task was to coordinate the COMAO planning between



*Swiss Hornet Pilot after mission.*

*Gripen Pilot of 211 SQN CzaF*



the different air, ground and naval forces, adjust scenarios and take care of airspace reservations.

Lieutenant de Vasseau (LV) Rafael “Teddy” Brun, exchange pilot from the French Navy, has a flying experience as carrier pilot with a total of 1500 flying hours on Super Etendard modernise (SEM) and Mirage 2000. His special task was a challenge to deal with that he comments as follows: “As a Navy pilot it was whole new world for me when I arrived at Cambrai almost two years ago. The NATO Tiger Meet itself was not new for me, since I volunteered as a young navy cadet to support the NTM 2003 at Cambrai. Then I only took care of a visiting squadron as liason officer, but now I got a deeper view into the complex operations. It is fascinating to see the clockwork running and being an active part of the operations team. Tiger spirit motivates everybody. You meet people from different nations and after a short time you know what to expect from them. This makes planning and execution of tasks and missions a lot more efficient.”

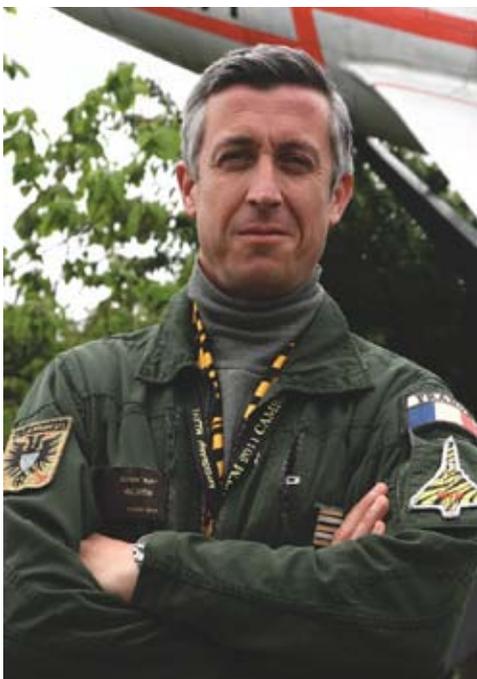
**High Value Training** - Also 1st Lieutenant Lukas Waldeck from Tactical Reconnaissance Wing 51 “Immelmann” at Schleswig was highly impressed by the complex missions conducted. As Weapon



*Aircrews in Flight Briefing*

System Operator (WSO) on Tornado he logged his second NATO Tiger Meet after Volkel/Netherlands in 2010 and relates his experiences: “When I first heard about the NATO Tiger Meet, I was not yet in the military. It was a report on TV that caught my attention. It all looked a bit like carnival, the coloured aircraft, the funny dresses and yellow black Tiger scarves. Not until last year, when an old and experienced Instructor grabbed me and briefed me, I understood more about the Tiger business and the operational training. It is a European “Flag-Exercise” like “Red Flag” in Nevada or “Maple Flag” in Canada. For me it is presently the only possibility to participate in a big exercise. Thorough planning and long working days dominate the weeks here, but after a few days the so called “Big Picture” starts to build up. At home we normally do not fly complex missions like here. The experiences gathered here in two weeks, may equal half a year at home.” Furthermore 1st Lt Waldeck hopes that despite budget cuts and force reductions there will be a future for German Tornados on NATO Tiger Meets. High value training and long traditions should be continued.

**Exercise Director** – The DirEx was Lieutenant Colonel Olivier “Mao” Maurer from the CFA HQ at Metz-Frescaty Air Base. As chief of the exercise branch and former commanding officer of EC 01/12 he was the right person for this job and describes his task as follows: “An exercise of this size is normally not organized by just a single squadron, but from a headquarter and its staff. For the NATO Tiger Meet this is different. The hosting squadron



*Learjet of GFD company from Hohn / Germany flew electronic jamming missions.*

*Exercise Director LtCol Olivier „Mao“ Maurer*



*tail of 211 Sqn / CzAF JAS-39 Gripen in special colour.*

organises the whole logistic and operational details. This is a particular strength of the exercise, because all participating squadrons can come up directly with their special needs for training during the planning phase without going through the whole chain of command between nations and staffs. On the other side a Fighter squadron also depends on support from external units and cannot always communicate from their level of command directly with other branches in the armed forces. That is when I start to enter the play as an exercise director. My task is to be the direct link between the squadron, the headquarters and the supporting units with respect to operational and logistical matters.”



*Général de Corps Aérien H. Hendel at anniversary celebrations.*

**Anniversary** – Fifty years ago nobody would have believed that the NATO Tiger Meet would grow to one of the biggest NATO Air Exercises in Europe. One of the three founding fathers from 1961, Lieutenant General ret. Mike Dugan / USAF calls it a great luck that the Tiger Meet developed out of the initial idea to exchange experiences and develop common procedures. Another founder of the NTA, Air Vice Marshall ret. John Howe / RAF, says that it was destiny that he met an old friend from the Korea War that commanded 79th Fighter Squadron of the US Air Force at RAF Woodbridge, when he was he was leading 74 Fighter Squadron at RAF Coltishall / East Anglia. At the same time across the channel the French Minister of Defence, Pierre Messmer, proposed closer military cooperation between NATO forces in Europe to strengthen interoperability. Whereas General Dugan and Air Vice Marshal Howe's greeting messages were read by the Senior Advisor of the NTA, Colonel ret. Don Verhees / USAF, the French side (and standing in for General ret. Achille Lerche) was represented by retired General Jacques Bourillet, who, as the SPA 162 (Tiger Flight) Commander, attended the first NATO Tiger Meet at RAF Woodbridge in 1961 with EC 01/12. Commanding General of the Force Aérienne (CFA), General de Corps Aérienne Hugues Hendel (as a representative of General J.P. Paloméros, Chief of Staff of the Armée d'Air), presided over official ceremony celebrating the anniversary. In his Order of the Day he honoured the development of the NTA during the last fifty years.



*Pilot of 301 SQN from Monte Real shows tiger claws.*

**Tiger Meet in transformation** – After the ceremony General Hendel mentioned in his informal speech to all the many guests that had gathered for lunch, some particularities of this unique exercise with the following words: “The times when the NATO Tiger Meet was a loose get together of a few fighter squadrons have passed by for a long time already. Over the years not only the fighters have changed but also tactics and scenarios. From a weekend meet without flying operations it evolved to high value 2-week air exercise with the latest scenarios based on real operations. The NATO Tiger Meet has strong traditions that promote team spirit and cohesion. The words from the founding fathers can only be underlined. For successful cooperation we need strong professional and personal bonds. As we can see today, the high objectives of the founders have not only been reached, but surpassed. Presently the NATO Tiger Meet is the largest live air exercise in Europe that is flown out of one single airbase.”

**Traditions** - Besides the priorities for realistic and operational training the added benefits of this exercise are the famous traditions of the NATO Tiger Meets that help to create a special atmosphere which is known as “Tiger Spirit”. It is not only the colourful surrounding with tiger striped flight suits, scarves, boots, flight helmets and aircraft, but the personal relations and the friendship between individuals, squadrons and nations that play a significant role. In respectful competition every squadron is fighting for a number of awards on either professional or more social levels. The evening prior departure day is always dedicated to the closing ceremony and the farewell with the presentation of the awards to the winning squadrons or individuals.

The award categories reach from “Best Flying” via “Best Painted Aircraft”, “Best Tiger Dress”, “Best Skit” (sketch), “Tiger Games” and “Special Tiger Spirit Award” to the big general award, the “Silver Tiger” that honours the squad-

ron with the best overall performance. This year 301 Squadron from Monte Real / Portugal not only won the Silver Tiger but also earned first place as Best Flying Squadron and presented the Best Skit. Even though the major part of the Portuguese detachment was recalled home two days earlier and the remaining Commanding Officer LtCol “Fritz” Luis Morais and his deputy Major Afonso “Jackal” Gaiolas had to improvise the Skit with great Tiger Spirit, it was still the best performance. Staffel 11 from Meiringen /Switzerland won the Tiger Games, TRW 51 from Schleswig / Germany received the trophy for Best Painted Aircraft and ECE 05/330 from Mont de Marsan / France had the Best Tiger Dress. Another surprise of the evening was the awarding of the Special Tiger Spirit Award to the Base of Cambrai. This award is decided only by the three NTA Advisors, the so called “three ‘D’s, Damned Doc and Don”.



*Winner of the Silver Tiger trophy 2011 301 Squadron from Monte Real*

**Outlook** – Some sad moments could also be felt during the NATO Tiger Meet at Cambrai, since it was the last big exercise being conducted from this airbase. In 2012 Base Aérienne 103 “Rene Muchotte” will be closed. With EC 01/12 “Cambresis” the last of the founding NTA squadrons will be decommissioned. But according to the statement of General Hendel during his speech, the famous Escadrille SPA 162 “Tigre” will be transferred to Escadron de Chasse 1/7 “Provence” at Saint Dizier that has been equipped with Rafale B/C since 2006. For next year’s NATO Tiger Meet at Monte Real / Portugal the new Tigers from Saint Dizier most probably will participate in the exercise with their Rafales and continue the long tradition truly to the dictum “Once a Tiger always a Tiger”.



*MiG-29's of 1 SQN from Sliac in Slovak Republic flew also a few Missions*

## Participants NTM 2011

### Tiger Squadrons

EC 01/12	Cambrai / France	3 Mirage 2000	
ECE 05/330	Mont de Marsan / France	3 Mirage 2000	
AG 51 "I"	Schleswig / Germany	6 Tornado Recce	
1./JaboG 32	Lechfeld / Germany	4 Tornado ECR	
211 SQN	Caslav / Czech Republic	4 JAS-39 Gripen	
221 SQN	Namest / Czech Republic	2 Mi-24 Hind	
21 Gruppo	Grazzanise / Italy	2 AB-121 Bell Agusta	
335 SQN	Araxos / Greece	5 F-16	
192 Filo	Balikesir / Turkey	3 F-16	
301 SQN	Monte Real / Portugal	6 F-16	
6 SQN	Poznan / Poland	5 F-16	
11 Staffel	Meiringen / Switzerland	5 F/A-18	
152 SQN	Zaragoza / Spain	3 EF-18	
JTS	Hörsching / Austria	3 Saab 105 OE	
1 SQN	Sliac / Slovak Republic	2 MiG-29	
142 SQN	Albacete / Spain	2 Mirage F-1	Weekend
31 SQN	Kleine Brogel / Belgium	2 F-16	Long Weekend
814 NAS	Culdrose / United Kingdom	1 EH-101 Merlin	Weekend
591 SQN	Keczkemet / Hungary	Observer	
37th BS	Ellsworth AFB / USA	Observers	

### External Support Units

GFD	Hohn / Germany	1 Learjet
AVDEF	Nimes-Garon / France	1 DA-20
142 ARS	Mc Guire AFB / USA	1 KC-135
ETM MTZ	France	1 TBM 700
ALAT	France	1 Cougar
		1 Tiger
		1 Gazelle
Polygone	EW Range GE/FR	

