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WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM - 2018

Swiss F/A-18 taking-off from Meiringen AB for another QRA mission

In 2018, during the World Economic Forum (WEF) meetings the Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) was flown from Meiringen AB from 22-27 January 2018 between 0700 until 2200 hours. Every hour, a pair of fully armed Boeing F/A-18s 'Hornets' flew CAP (Combat

Air Patrol) missions overhead Davos (Switzerland), where the World Economic Forum (WEF) was held with political and business leaders participating. In order to protect the Davos airspace, the Swiss Air Force in cooperation with the Austrian Air Force, flew CAP missions daily.

However, for the Meiringen Airbase in the snowy mountains of the Bern Kanton, this was the last time the QRA missions were flown from here as from 2019 onwards, the WEF-QRAs will be flown from Payerne Airbase; at Payerne Airbase, a 24/7 QRA will be setup to be fully operational in 2020.



Swiss F/A-18 in the early morning at Meiringen AB preparing for the first QRA mission of the day



Swiss F/A-18 with Tiger Tail taxiing after landing at Meiringen AB after a QRA mission

During 2018, WEF-QRAs, only F/A-18s flew CAP missions unlike in previous years where the Northrop F-5s also participated. Owing to the forthcoming retirement of the F-5s, they were removed from active CAP missions.

CAP Operations at Meiringen

During the WEF, the day at Meiringen AB began just like all other days. The runway was swept by the cleaning crew and the runway and taxi tracks were thoroughly inspected. Around half past eight, the first aircraft was launched for the WEF. A yellow mobile control tower was located at head of

the runway and one could see which runway direction was in use. The flight direction changed several times a day at Meiringen because the wind was very variable in the mountains close by. At end of the runway, a barrier was set up for emergency landings. At start of the day, two F/A-18s which operated from the QRA shelters at the head of the runway at Meiringen were scrambled. The start-up and taxiing out of the aircraft took place within a maximum of ten minutes. The F/A-18s which flew CAP missions were armed with live weapons underwing which consisted of two AIM-120 AMRAAM radar-guided medium-range

missiles at the intake suspension points and two AIM-9 Sidewinder short-range missiles on the wing tips. Under fuselage of the Hornets, was a large fuel tank pointed with the text STBY 121.50, being the frequency at which the air traffic controls and the Swiss emergency service had access to warn aircraft being intercepted.

All fighters took off at Meiringen with full afterburners, because the runway at this airfield was only 2250 metres long. Starting at 7am, QRA missions were flown non-stop upto 10pm every day and at any given time, there were four fighters airborne.

Joris van Boven and Alex van Noye



Swiss F/A-18 landing at Meiringen AB after a QRA mission



Former Dutch F-16s at Volkel AB for Chilean AF

‘Project Disposal F-16’ of the Dutch Air Force

F-16s have been serving the Dutch Air Force for decades now. Initially, they were deployed for defensive role but later on, they started using them for combat. The Dutch F-16 fleet was drastically reduced at the start of the year 2000 but after the closure of Twente Air Base in 2004, it was decided for the first time, to sell a part of the F-16 Fighting Falcon fleet. To guide the successful sale of the fighter aircraft, Project Disposal F-16 (*Project Afstoting F-16, PAF*) was created. After evaluation, the Jordanian government decided that they would purchase F-16s to replace their outdated F-5 fleet. In 1996, the first agreement was signed with the US Government for the lease of 16 F-16 Fighting Falcons. These F-16s were of the type F-16A/B ADF (Air Defence Fighter).

Delivery of the F-16s took place under the *Peace Falcon I* programme and these aircraft were flown to Jordan in a batch of six and two batches of five aircraft each in December 1997, January and February 1998. During the *Peace Falcon II* programme, another 17 F-16 ADFs from the United States were flown to Jordan in 2003. These aircraft were brought to the MLU (Mid Life Update) standard in Turkey in 2008 and 2009. Now that the country was accustomed to the F-16s MLU standard, it decided to purchase even more second-hand MLU F-16s. Eventually, a deal was concluded with Belgium for the delivery of sixteen ex-Belgian F-16s which the country wanted to sell. These F-16s were flown to Jordan during Operation *Peace Falcon III* in 2009.

It was in 2006 when for the first time Jordan bought F-16s from the Dutch Government. The second series of F-16s (after the first batch of 18 for Chile) was prepared for sale which took place in 2009. In total, the Jordanian government bought six F-16BMs from the Royal Netherlands Air Force. These aircraft left for Jordan on 28 July 2009 from Leeuwarden Air Base and the same aircraft were flown to Jordan during Operation *Peace Falcon IV*. After this delivery, the Jordanians also received nine ex-Belgian F-16s in July 2011. These aircraft were delivered from Belgium during Operation *Peace Falcon V*. On 8 April 2011, the Minister of Defence announced budget cuts to the Dutch defence and the Council of Ministers agreed with this major austerity



Former Dutch F-16s at Volkel AB for Jordan AF

round. The withdrawal of the F-16s was already realised on 8 May 2011 and it was decided that out of the nineteen F-16s, the air force would sell fifteen. The buyer who responded for the sale was once again Jordan. The contract for the sale of these fifteen F-16s was signed in the summer of 2013 and their delivery was scheduled in 2014, but due to certain delays, aircraft were delivered only in 2017.

The F-16s were prepared for the ferry to Jordan at Volkel Air Base. Aircraft were equipped with Jordanian markings such as the distinctive Jordanian flag on the tail, the roundel on the fuselage and the registration number on the tail which was shown in Arabic. The test flights of the aircraft were flown under the Dutch flag and therefore, the F-16s were temporarily provided with Dutch markings in the form of stickers that

were placed over the Jordanian markings. Once the fighters received approval from the Dutch personnel, the Jordanians made an acceptance flight from Volkel. After this flight, the acceptance was formally signed and the aircraft in question were formally handed over to the Jordanians. During the ferry, the aircraft made tank stops at Aviano in Italy and at Souda-Bay in Greece.

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