

VAYU

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Aerospace & Defence Review



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Riddle of the RFI

Navantia's 'Juan Carlos I'

The S-400 for India

World of Airbus

The Boeing Interview

“When Tigers Gather”



The Rafale

NATO Tiger Meet 2018

The 2018 edition of the NATO *Tiger Meet* took place in Poland at the 31st tactical air base Poznań-Krzesiny during 14-25 May. Every year, the European ‘Tiger units’ send their aircraft to the *Tiger Meet* to intensively train together. This year, various CAMAO war scenarios were flown, simulated contemporary reality of war. Besides intensive training, the NATO *Tiger Meet* also concerns the social aspects of the annual meeting, intention being to bring the audience and the participating units closer to each other.

The Tiger Meet history

The origin of the NATO *Tiger Meet* dates back to the beginning of the 1960s when the 79th Tactical Fighter Squadron of the USAF and No.74 Squadron of the RAF became involved in a joint training operation. More than a year later, a new tradition was born to bring squadrons together in a meeting with the *Tiger* as their

squadron emblem. These meetings were so successful that the American Mike Dugan (in those days a Lieutenant, ending his USAF career as a 4 star General) set up the *NATO Tiger Association (NTA)*.

Hosting the Tiger Meet

Colonel Rafał Zadencki has been commander of the 31st Tactical Air Base in Poznań since June 2017. The 6.elt (6th Squadron) is based at Poznan-Krzesiny and operates



Eurofighter Typhoon



Eurofighter 'Tiger' Typhoons

the F-16 *Jastrząb* Block 52+ Fighting Falcon. This unit is the only Polish member of the NATO Tiger Association and it has been a member since 2014. The 6.elt hosted some 22 squadrons from 13 countries during the *Tiger Meet* that included Italy, Spain, Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Hungary, Switzerland, Austria, France and

Great Britain. In total, there were more than 70 aircraft and helicopters at Poznan during NTM2018 and more than 2000 personnel took part in the exercise.



A 'Tiger' F-16 taxis past



The venerable MiG-21 in its tiger stripes

Participants

This year's *Tiger Meet* was held with the aim to promote European cooperation, and the units which participated came from all parts of Europe. The Polish hosts of the 6.elt, flew with six F-16s during the missions. In addition to the Poles, Belgium (31 Squadron), Greece (335 Mira) and the Netherlands (313 Squadron) also flew their F-16s. Besides the F-16 users, there were also three Eurofighter operators which participated in NTM2018. Countries participating with the EF2000 Eurofighter being Germany (TLG-74), Italy (12° Gruppo) and Spain (142 Escadron). In addition to the Eurofighters, the Germans also brought Tornados from TLG-51. Hungary and the Czech Republic were both present with their Saab JAS-39 Gripens (59/1 Squadron & 211 TL). The French Navy participated at NTM2018 with five Rafale Ms (*11 Flottille*) and the Austrian Air Force flew three Saab 105Öes (1 JTS). The Swiss Air Force was the only participant who is not a member of NATO, but this country flew their F/A-18 Hornet (Staffel 11) from Meiringen. All these fighters were based at Poznań-Krzyszyn and the entire exercise was coordinated by an E-3 Sentry AWACS.

The British flew during the missions with a Merlin HM2 (814 NAS) and a Puma HC2 (from 230 Squadron). The Italians



Tigers all ! French Navy Rafale M (above) and Luftwaffe's Eurofighter Typhoon (below) at the meet





German Air Force Tornado



Saab JAS-39 Gripen



An Antonov An-26 on a mission

also had two helicopters at Poznan in the form of two AB-212 ICO helicopters (21° Gruppo). Finally, the Czechs were present with two Mi-24 helicopters (221 LtBvř). The Czechs only participated in the first week of the *Tiger Meet*. In addition to these airfields, *Tiger Meet* missions were also flown from the airfields of the Polish Air Force Powidz, Mirosławiec, Świdwin and Malbork to support the missions.

Objectives of the COMAO Missions

For participants of the NATO *Tiger Meet* 2018, joint training was the main objective, according to Colonel Rafał Zadencki. The main aim during the NTM2018 essentially to gain more knowledge during combined air operations through active involvement in mission planning. This meant that the participants of the NTM 2018 were assigned their missions and thereafter would implement the mission planning themselves. Force integration was the result of this approach, with participants solving various problems during course of the exercise. As a result, the entire training course was largely focused on the execution of COMAOs (Combined Air Operations) and included the scenario of an international crisis in context of conventional and hybrid warfare.

Aircraft were coordinated in flight by IADS to gain and maintain air superiority and to protect their own forces on the ground. During attack missions, specialised aircraft were deployed in the SEAD role to eliminate enemy defences. Other attack aircraft could therefore attack and disable the important enemy positions.

During the NATO *Tiger Meet* 2018, some 1000 sorties were performed and the participants logged over 1600 hours in the air during the scenario missions. Two missions were carried out daily, the morning missions often included COMAO training thus logging most flight hours. Over 50 training missions took place as part of 'Shadow Wave' flights, with different participating countries practicing separately.

The 2019 *Tiger Meet* is planned to be held in France, at Mont-de-Marsan airbase.

*Photos: Alex van Noye
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Dassault's Mirage 2000N

Now officially retired!

On 21 June 2018, the official retirement ceremony of the Dassault Mirage 2000N was held at Base Aérienne 125 Istres-Le Tubé or BA Istres, when the aircraft type was officially withdrawn from operational status after 30 years of service in the French Air Force (*Armée de l'Air*), accumulating more than 350,000 flying hours.

In the presence of the French Air Force chief, Général Taprest (*Major Général de l'armée de l'air le général de corps aérien Olivier Taprest*) and chief of the French Strategic Air Force, Général Schuler (*Général Commandant les Forces Aériennes Stratégiques, Général de corps aérien Bernard Schuler*) a formal parade was held and the Mirage 2000N was officially withdrawn





from service. Following the ceremony, there was a flying display, featuring AlphaJets, the 'Couteau Delta' demo team with the Mirage 2000D, the Rafale demo by pilot Martinez and the *Patrouille de France* in their Alpha Jets. There was also a formation flight by a C-135F tanker, the Couteau Delta team in their Mirage 2000D, the demo Rafale and 3 Mirage 2000Ns. Later, the Mirage 2000N aircraft joined-up with the *Patrouille de France* and after this show, the specially painted Mirage 2000 'eNd' participated in some more flypasts.

At the ground show near sunset, a jet powered 'flying-board' of *Team Zapata* flew along a Mirage 2000N that taxied over the platform and the flying-board pilot then waved the Mirage 2000N away,





forever! Later in the hangar, a well-attended party was held for all the pilots, navigators, ground-crew and others involved with the Mirage 2000N during the years.

75 Mirage 2000Ns were ordered by the French Air Force, based on a strengthened version of the Mirage 2000B, two-seat training variant of the Mirage 2000. The first aircraft became operational in 1988 replacing the aging Mirage IVs in the nuclear deterrent role. Their primary role was the delivery of nuclear missiles (ASMP, *Air-Sol Moyenne Portée*, air-to-ground medium range) from the centerline point station, while their secondary role was conventional air-ground attack. For this conventional role, several adaptations were made, including recent adaptation to carry laser guided bombs (LGBs).

After official phase-out of the Mirage 2000N, all remaining aircraft will be transported to BA Chateaudun, the storage and disassembly base of the French Air Force before the end of summer 2018, where the reusable parts (especially the wings) will be stored as spares for the current fleet of French Mirage 2000s (M2000D, M2000C, -5) as they fly on.

*Text and photos by
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