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Summer tour in Europe

During three weeks 8-28 August 2018, 12 Lockheed F-22 Raptors made a deployment to the United States Air Force Europe (USAFE) airbase of Spangdahlem in Germany. On this deployment to Europe, came the F-22s of the 95th Fighter Squadron, 325th Fighter Wing, home based at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida, USA.

As part of this 'Flying Training Deployment', the F-22 fighters also made visits to Norway, Greece, Spain, Romania and Poland. Some visits were for just one day, taking-off in the early morning and returning late in the afternoon, while others lasted for several days.

During their visits in Europe, the F-22s were accompanied by Boeing KC-135 tanker aircraft for air-air refueling during flight to the destination, while aircraft maintainers flew onboard for ground maintenance during debriefing of the pilots after morning missions.

Besides these visits, there were many air-air battles ('dogfights') fought overhead western Europe with and against the Spangdahlem-based USAFE F-16s, the European NATO partners Germany (Eurofighters), France (Mirages), Belgium

(F-16s) and the Netherlands (F-16s) in order to maximise training opportunities while "strengthening the NATO alliance and deterring regional aggression."

In Europe, aim of the aircraft and airman was to train with allies and other US Air Force aircraft as well as forward deploy to European NATO bases. As part of the

European Deterrence Initiative, these training deployments are to assure allies and further demonstrate the commitment to regional security and stability. In addition, these training deployments help demonstrate and exercise the capabilities of the aircraft in various environments, enhancing integration between the US and its allies.





It is also an important objective to exercise fourth and fifth, or fifth and sixth generation aircraft capabilities, especially since allies and partners within Europe are operating the F-35 Lightning II such as the Norwegian Air Force, “a perfect opportunity for aircraft to train alongside other types of Air Force aircraft in a realistic training environment.”

Both the F-22 and F-35 bring complementary capabilities to the 21st Century warfighters, “the F-22 being a vital component in our air force that projects air dominance rapidly and at great distances to defeat any possible threats.”

Organisation

A lot of planning is done with each participating country, hosting and participating however, with the USAFE being the lead for F-22s operations. Invitations are sent out early and selection made of the learning objectives. These are planned for the duration of the deployment following which baseline instructions, the rules of engagements and the airspace reservation are sent out to all participants of the mission. This is daily practice for NATO aircraft but the F-22’s presence this time made it very attractive for European participants.



Today's shapes, into the future



Earlier deployments

This 2018 deployment was not the first one in Europe, but certainly it was the longest. In August 2015, the US Air Force deployed F-22 Raptors to Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, to train and exercise with other allied militaries and US forces, the F-22s coming from the 95th FS at Tyndall AFB. In April 2016, the US Air Force deployed F-22s Raptors to RAF Lakenheath for training exercises with other Europe-based aircraft, to conduct critical Global Response Force (GRF) training and to bolster NATO



Raptors and Fighting Falcons, from the same team



allies' capabilities. These F-22s too were deployed from the 95th FS at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida. Most recently, F-22s were deployed to RAF Lakenheath, England, in October 2017. These F-22s were from the 27th Fighter Squadron will pilots and maintainers from the 94th Fighter Squadron of the 1st Fighter Wing, at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia.

The F-22 Raptors have also participated in European airshows, such as the Royal International Air Tattoo and the Farnborough Air Show, as well making a flypast during the 100th Anniversary celebration of the *Lafayette Escadrille* in Paris, France.

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