

THE AVIATION MAGAZINE

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- ✈ Phantom II Pharewell, Larissa AB, Greece
- ✈ Wings Over Solano, Travis AFB, CA, USA
- ✈ SAR 2017 Nordholtz, Germany
- ✈ NATO Tiger Meet 2017, France
- ✈ And so much more...



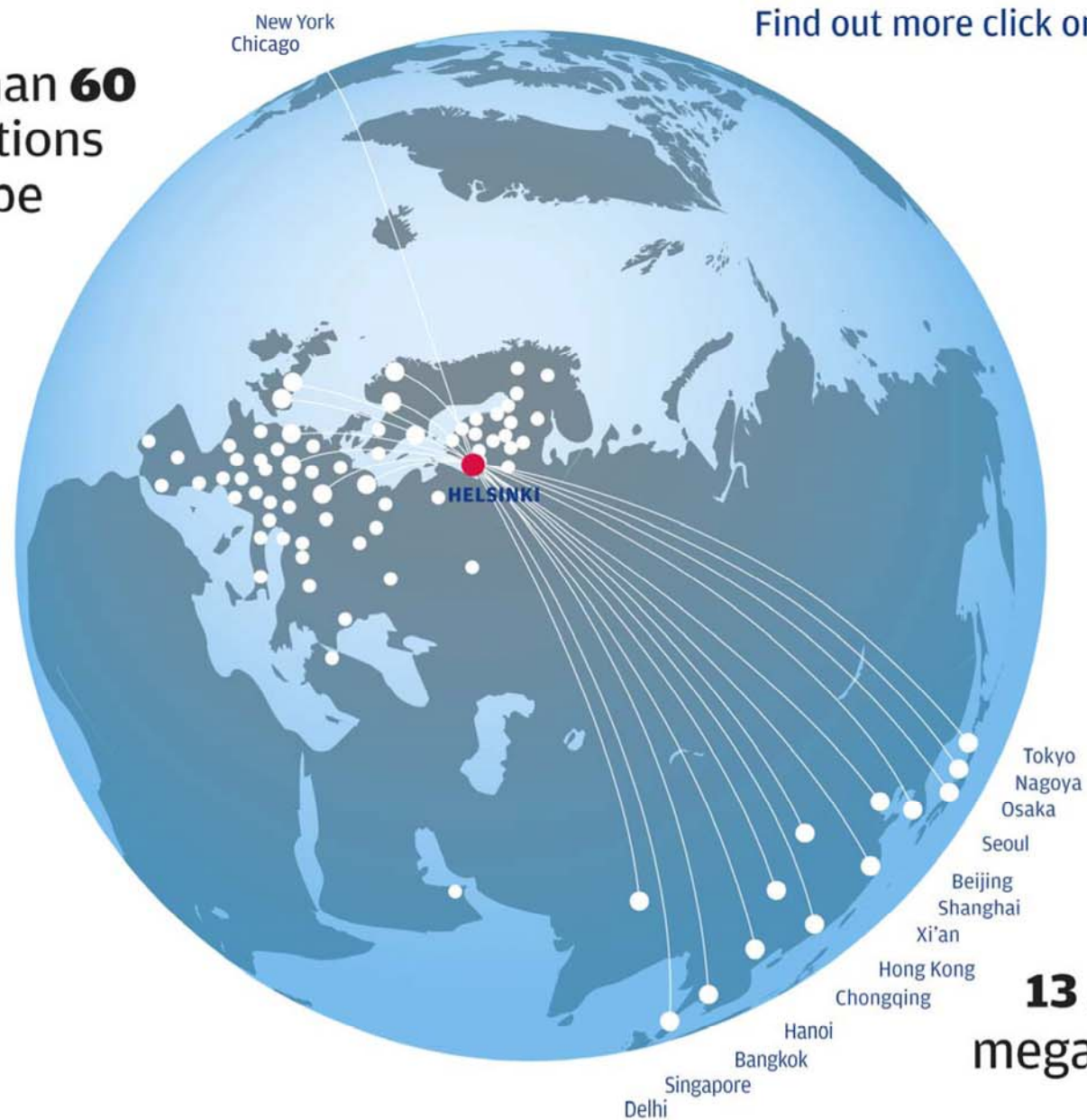
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Content:

- 5 News from the Editor
- 6 RF-4E Phantom II Pharwell, Greece
- 14 Wings over Solano Air Show, CA, USA
- 23 SAR Meet, Nordholtz, Germany
- 29 Helicopter Picnic at Innowroclaw, Poland
- 32 Carabineros de Chile - Law Enforcement in Green
- 36 Warbirds over the Beach 2017, Virginia Beach, USA
- 46 Aircraft of Fleet Week in NYC, USA
- 52 Seinäjoki International Air Show, Finland
- 60 Tactical Weapon Meet Florennes Air Base, Belgium
- 70 Wings of Freedom Tour
- 74 Tag der Bundeswehr, Germany
- 78 NATO Tiger Meet 2017, NAS Landivisiau, France
- 88 Ukraine Air Force Base Tour, Ukraine

Cover: RF-4E of the Hellenic Air Force, by Christopher Mifsud

Index page: German EF2000 at Tiger Meet 2017, by Peter Thivessen



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THE AVIATION MAGAZINE

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e-mail: info@theaviationmagazine.com

THE AVIATION MAGAZINE is published six times a year, by a Team of Volunteers interested in aviation. We are devoted to cover a wide range of aviation events ranging from air shows, air base visits, military exercises, civilian spotting, pilot and veteran interviews all with exceptional photography. **THE AVIATION MAGAZINE** is a leader in the e-magazine format since 2009, bringing exclusive and fascinating reports to our global aviation enthusiasts digitally.

Please note: we do not accept any unsolicited articles or images for publication.

Interested in joining us? We have several Volunteer Team positions available. All require a good command of English communication skills.

- 1) East, South-East of the USA
- 2) West, South-West of the USA
- 3) Marketing Person. If you are interested in becoming a contributor e-mail us with samples of your work:

info@theaviationmagazine.com

Publisher: AirShowsReview LLC.

Contributing Team members:

- Laszlo Nyary
- Peter Thivessen
- Wolfgang Jarisch
- Christopher Mifsud
- Ralf Peter Walter
- Geoffrey Arnwine
- Katherine and Brian R. Veprek
- Joe "Chili" Ciliberti
- Jeroen Oude Wolbers

Occasional contributors:

- Jason Phelan
- István Kelecsényi

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NEWS FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the 52nd edition of **THE AVIATION MAGAZINE**. In this issue we have articles and reports from several continents: Europe, North America and South America thus, living up to our worldwide coverage of aviation events.

Our aviation gallery of available aircraft prints also expanded. Now it includes several notable aircraft with Canadian markings and uniqueness such as the CF-188, the original Harvard and the modern Harvard II. Buy our spectacular prints, all are reasonably priced. The only caveat is the Canadian Postage rates: it is very expensive when compared to European or American rates. Unfortunately, that is out of our control. Check out the ever expanding selection here: <http://www.theaviationmagazine.com/shop.htm>

In our next issue we will have many additional air shows from such famous events as the Royal International Air Tattoo from the United Kingdom and from Duxford the Flying Legends among others.

Stay tuned for our reports and join us by downloading **THE AVIATION MAGAZINE** the BEST and FREE e-based magazine since 2009, imitated by so many, but never surpassed.



McDonnell Douglas CF-188 Hornet
2017 paint scheme of the CF-18 Demonstration Jet celebrating Canada's 150th anniversary of Confederation.



McDonnell Douglas CF-188 Hornet
2009 paint scheme of the CF-18 Demonstration Jet celebrating Canada's Centennial of Flight.



Air-to-air courtesy of Major Lambros Tolas of 348 TRS.

RF-4E PHANTOM II PHAREWELL

Report by Ralf Peter Walter, with photography as noted

On Friday, May 5th, the Hellenic Air Force retired its RF-4E Phantom II from service. In an official ceremony, the 348 Mira Taktikis Anagnoriseos (MTA, Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron), based at Larissa AB, was disbanded.

After 39 years of operation, this day marked the end of the reconnaissance version of the Phantom II in the HAF and in Europe. The Japan Air Self-Defense Force and the Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force remain the last RF-4E operators. On May 4th, the 348 MTA hosted a spottersday to give aviation enthusiasts and photographers a last chance to see this iconic aircraft in action. 514 spotters joined the event.

There were plenty of opportunities to take photos of the squadron's last three aircraft, two of them with a special color scheme and one wearing the Southeast Asia, Vietnam-era, camouflage color scheme. That day, the Phantoms were flying twice in a rarely seen "clean" configuration, which means without any wing mounted pods or rockets. A highlight was several overflights of a three-ship RF-4E formation. This formation was then joined by a Mirage 2000 and an F-16. Some air show feeling came up when a T-6A Texan II and an F-16C performed an impressive display.

Since Larissa AB also is home to the 337 Mira there was some additional F-16C/D Block 52+ flying activity.



Air-to-air courtesy of Major Lambros Tolias of 348 TRS.



History of the 348 MTA

On November 26th, 1953, the 348th Tactical Reconnaissance Flight was established, based at Eleusis AB. They flew the F-84 with a downward looking camera mounted in the front section of the left wingtip tank.

July 5th, 1954, the flight moved to Larissa AB. Almost one year later, the flight was upgraded to Squadron status and became a full member of the NATO Recce Forces. From 1955 until 1957, the squadron flew the RT-33A, a conversion of the T-33A trainer aircraft, by removing the back seat and adding a new nose section to accommodate state of the art photo camera equipment.

In August 1956, the squadron received its first RF-84F Thunderflash, as shown above. For the time being, the RF-84F was a highly sophisticated aircraft. Its three nose-mounted cameras could photograph targets independently or with overlaps from horizon to horizon.



©2017 Wolfgang Jarisch

The squadron received its first RF-4E on November 3rd, 1978. With eight RF-44Es delivered to the HAF a specific RF-4E squadron, the 348 MTA RF-4, was established and operated in parallel to 348 MTA.

In July 1987, the two squadrons merged into 348 MTA, flying both the RF-84F and the RF-4E. After the RF-84F being withdrawn from frontline service and the loss of three RF-4Es, the HAF needed additional RF-4Es.

Luckily, the German Air Force retired some of their RF-4Es and sold 27 aircraft to Greece. 20 of these joined the active fleet while the remaining seven were used as spare parts source. The ex-German aircraft had their Radar Warning Receiver equipment removed and were not able to carry and launch AIM-9 Sidewinder missiles.

In 2003, the squadron was assigned an additional role: Electronic Intelligence by using the ASTAC (Analyseur de Signaux Tactiques). This is a reconnaissance system used to intercept and analyze tactical and technical data on RF emissions radiated by land-based radars and weapon systems.

In its 64 years of existence the 348 MTA has accumulated some 181,000 flight hours. With the retirement of the RF-4E the analog, film based aerial reconnaissance has come to its end, being replaced by the Goodrich DB-110 pod. The DB 110 is a digital, compact, day/night, two-axis stabilized, real-time, tactical reconnaissance pod system carried by F-16 Block 50 aircraft.





©2017 Ralf Peter Walter

Mirage 2000 above



©2017 Ralf Peter Walter

A three-ship RF-4E formation with a Mirage 2000 and an F-16., main image. The same F-16 landing right bottom.



- A three-ship RF-4E formation left to
- RT-4E with special livery left bottom
- T-6II Texan right top

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WINGS OVER SOLANO 2017

Report and photography by Geoffrey Arnwine

For the first time in three years Travis AFB hosted their annual Open House known as “Wings Over Solano.” Returning to the event as the headlining act was the United States Air Force Thunderbirds who have been a common attraction at the show for the past years. Other performers included the United States Navy F/A-18 TAC Demo Team and United States Army Golden Knights Parachute Team.

Gates opened at 9:30 am and prior to aerial activities, people were able to walk around and look up close at the different aircraft on static display and visit the exhibits. Notable statics included the new F-35A and assets

from Travis which included the C-17 Globemaster III, C-5 Galaxy, and KC-10 Extender. Flying activities officially kicked off at 10:00 am with the opening ceremonies featuring flag jumps by the US Air Force Academy Wings of Blue Parachute Team. After the jumpers were finished, Team Travis showcased their own aircraft which included the C-17, C-5, and a 2-Ship KC-10 aerial refuelling demonstration.

The show featured a nice variety of different aerobatic aircraft. Those performers included Barry Hancock in his T-6 Texan WWII trainer, Jacquie Warda in her Extra 300, Dan Buchanan in his Special Effects Hand



- Barry Hancock T-6 Texan Aerobatics, above
- U-2 Dragon Lady - from Beale AFB, CA, below

Glider, Billy Werth in his Pitts S2C, and Anthony Oshinuga in his Pitts S1. Adding to the excitement of these aerobatic acts included multiple races between those aircraft and the Smoke 'n' Thunder Jet Truck driven by Bill Braack. Rich Perkins was able to fly in three different aircraft which included his L-39 Albatross "Firecat," SIAI-Marchetti SF-260 "Mako Shark," and Yak-54 "Russian Thunder." Bob Carlton also flew in his Super Salto Jet Sailplane and SubSonex Microjet.

The US Army Golden Knights were among some of the military performers that participated in the event. During their demonstration they showcased various parachuting formations and capabilities which included bomb bursts and releasing backup chutes in case the primary one fails. The team used their Fokker C-31 as the aircraft to jump from for their act.

Representing the US Navy at the show was the F/A-18 Super Hornet Tactical Demonstration Team flown by VFA-122 "Flying Eagles" based out of NAS Lemoore, CA. During their performance, the team showcased different tactical maneuvers and capabilities of the Super Hornet which included high speed passes and tight turns. On Saturday, the single-seat E model was used in the demonstration and on Sunday the two-seat F model was used.

Concluding the flying portion of the event was the US Air Force Aerial Demonstration Squadron known as the Thunderbirds. It marked the team's first appearance at Travis since the last show hosted back in 2014. Due to weather conditions on Saturday, a low level show was demonstrated which featured maneuvers that were closer to the crowd and even additional sneak passes. On Sunday, the weather was all clear for the team to fly their normal high show. Spectators were able to witness the many formations and precision flying by the Thunderbirds which included the diamond formation, head-on passes by the two solos, and multiple formation loops and rolls. After they were finished flying, the team walked over to the crowd to meet fans and sign autographs.

The show officially came to a close at 5:00 pm and people were able to continue looking at the different static aircraft and exhibits as they were exiting the gates. Special thanks to the performers, volunteers, attendees, and personnel of team Travis for making Wings Over Solano 2017 a success.





- C-5 Galaxy from Travis AFB, above
- SIAI-Marchetti SF-260 “Mako Shark,” below
- United States Army Golden Knights, right





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Report and photography by Wolfgang Jarisch

The German Navy, Naval Air Wing 5, based at Nordholz, was the host of the 9th SAR-Meet since its foundation in 1996. The MFG-5 (Marinefliegergeschwader) had invited for another network meeting for European rescue crews. Teams from five partner nations followed the invitation to measure their flying abilities and to exchange their experiences - "Best Practice Sharing"! Denmark and Portugal sent delegations without helicopter.

For the MFG-5 it was very important to offer both a press and a spotter day. A family day was also organized on Saturday afternoon, so that the relatives could take pictures from their family members at work. In lack of time and few resources not an easy job. Lieutenant Susanne Tewes and her team managed this big challenge brilliantly, so that all events around the SAR-Meet became a great success. A big compliment to this team also because the main job of organizing the event had been done outside the regular working hours!

The event is held biennially and it was the second time the Naval Air Base Nordholz was chosen as the host for this venue. The SAR-meet failed once in 2012 during the closing of Naval Air Base Kiel-Holtenau, the former home base from MFG- 5. The inventory of the MFG-5 includes 22 Westland Sea Lynx Mk. 88 A and 21 Westland Sea King Mk. 41. The Sea Lynx are based on frigates. They support the Navy in their anti submarine role, transport troops and are used for SAR tasks between the ship convoys. The Sea King joined the German Navy in 1972 and is still in service, but a replacement is on the way, the NHI NH-90 "Sea Lion". This was the reason why the host invited to the first ever held "NH-90 Meet". A good idea from the host, but the meeting fell through (fell into the sea). Because of unknown reasons, the French and Italian Navy cancelled their participation. The German Air Force brought one NH-90TH from Bückeberg to Nordholz, which didn't take part in the flying challenge. The Belgian Navy from 40 Sqn. brought one NH-90 "Caiman" to Nordholz; due to technical problems the Caiman remained grounded. This was that meeting that never was.

Nordholz is also the home base from Naval Air Wing 3 "Graf Zeppelin". The inventory includes 2 Dornier Do-228 LM and 8 x P-3C Orion, which are now taking part in an upgrade program that includes installation and check out of the MLU-K15 kits and also a re-winging. The program is set for 8 years and should extend the lifetime for the P-3C up to 15 000 hours per aircraft. The Do-228 LM has taken over the monitoring of environmental pollution in the German coastal area.

On May, 19th a press conference was held in the morning. At the beginning Chief of Staff and Deputy Commander Captain Broder Nielsen honoured Commander Mark Jörg Matthee, Commodore from the MFG-3 and Commander Mark Wiegand, Commodore from the MFG-5, for 10 years accident-free flying, or rather no notable accidents. Captain Broder Nielsen explained about the future and the programs of the German Navy Aviation before both Commanders gave insight views of both Naval Wings.

After the press conference the press people got permission to watch the flying challenge on the base. The flying challenge included orientation flights and a skills and obstacle course. During the orientation flights, the crews had to fulfill special tasks like to “fly to a dike and count the sheep”. The next surprise for the crews was waiting on the approach to the base: they had to sing a song. The live act was transmitted over radio to the crews on the ground, who had to make an assessment. After the assessment the crews flew to the west side, where they had to take a weight of 5 kg and flew at a defined height through an obstacle course. This was a real challenge, because the downwash of the helicopter does not make it easy. At the end of the course, the weight had to be placed on the roof of a very small building, which looked like a hospital. After the weight had been placed on the building, a flashing light was activated. A challenge which included fun and skills.

The Aviation Magazine would like to thank Captain Broder Nielsen, Commander Mark Jörg Matthee, Commander Mark Wiegand and a specially Lieutenant Susanne Tewes and her crew for the organization of the events around the SAR-Meet.

Participants:

Country	Unit	Aircraft
AUSTRIA	Österreichisches Bundesherr	Alouette III
BELGIUM	40 SQN	NH-90 Caiman
LITHUANIA	Lithuanian Air Force	Eurocopter AS365 - Dauphin
POLAND	43rd Naval Air Base	W-3RM Anaconda
USA	3-10 GSAB US Army	HH-60M Blackhawk
GERMANY	TrspHubschrRgt 30	Bell UH1D
GERMANY	IntHubschrAusbZ Bückeburg	EC135
GERMANY	IntHubschrAusbZ Bückeburg	NH-90 TTH
GERMANY	RK Flugdienst / Appen	DO-28
GERMANY	MFG 5	Sea Lynx Mk88A
GERMANY	MFG 5	Sea King Mk41
GERMANY	MFG 5	EC135
GERMANY	Heli Service International GmbH	AW139



Lockheed P-3C Orion from MFG 3 right top, Dornier Do-228-212 from MFG 3 right middle, Westland Sea King Mk. 41 from MFG 5, right bottom



L to R: Commander Mark Jörg Matthee from MFG 3 "Graf Zeppelin", Deputy Commander and Chief of the Staff Captain Broder Nielsen, and Commander Mark Wiegand from MFG (Marinefliegergeschwader) 5.



- HH-60M Blackhawk of the US Army, left top
- Eurocopter AS365 - Dauphin of the Lithuanian Air Force, left bottom
- Aérospatiale AS 332L1 Super Puma from the German Police, right top
- Dornier Do-28D-2 Skyservant (ex 59+11) operated by RK Flugdienst, right middle
- The crew of the W-3RM Anaconda from the Polish Navy, right bottom



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HELICOPTER PICNIC AND MI-2 MEETING AT INNOWROCLAW

Report and photography by István Kelecsényi

On May 22st we have visited the 56th Air Base at Innowroclaw-Latkowo, in order to attend its Open Day, known under the name of 4th Kuyavian Helicopter Picnic. On the same occasion 50th Anniversary of Service of the Mi-2 helicopters with the Polish Aviation was celebrated.

The flying programme included displays performed by the Mi-2 Hoplite, Mi-24D/W Hind and W-3PL Gluszek helicopters, W-4 Puszczczyk helicopter, Mi-24W Hind solo, and duo helicopter display, W-3WR Anaconda SAR Helicopter Demo, Su-22M4 Fitter ground-attack, MiG-29A Fulcrum fighter demo and Orlik Aerobatic Team. The Orlik Teram flew PZL-130 Orlik trainer aircrafts. A civilian Xtreme Air SBach 300 acrobatic aircraft also flew.

The static display had a good selections of helicopters, such as such as Mi-2 Hoplie variants, SW-4 Puszczczyk, PZL W-3PL Gluszek, Mi-24W Czech Republic Caslav AFB, and Mi-24D Hind from the Polish forces. The German Army sent one of their EC-135 helicopters from their Bückeburg AFB. There were armored vehicles on display from the Polish Army that included Leopard A5, and PT-81 Twardy Main Battle Tank, ZSU-23 Biala, Anti-Aircraft unit and several other military vehicles. Access to the Picnic was free.

Access to the Open Days was free. Several thousands spectators were able to see the diversity of the Mi-2 variants and the dynamic demonstration of the Polish Air Force and the Navy.



- A civilian Xtreme Air SBach 300 left top
- Mi-2, left bottom
- Mi-24W Hind right top with an interesting squadron emblem
- Mi-2 Hoplite variant with an interesting 50th year anniversary paint scheme, right bottom.





Carabineros de Chile Law Enforcement in Green

Article and photography by Anthony F. Seychell

The green-uniformed Carabineros de Chile in 2017 celebrated their 90th anniversary of their official founding. There were other watch and local policing organisations in Chile, the earliest possibly being the Dragones de la Reina (Queen's Dragoons) created in 1758. Such local police organisations reported to the local authorities and not the central government. After various instances where the local officials abused this power for their own political ends, it was decided to have one unified, paramilitary and national security institution under the direction of the national government.

The Carabineros de Chile, being a gendarmerie-type police corps, reported until 2011 to the Ministry of National Defence. Six years ago their control was transferred to the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security, which thus became responsible for all the Chilean police forces which also include the Investigations Police of Chile and the Maritime Police. Although fully separated from the other three military branches (Army, Navy and Air Force) and reporting to the civilian authorities, the Carabineros are still considered a part of the armed forces.

The Carabineros connection with aviation started in June 1948 when the Club Aéreo de Carabineros was formed. The Aero Club received in August 1949 its first aircraft, a Cessna145, the 145hp Warner Super Scarab radial piston engined version of the Cessna C-34 Airmaster. Four years later, in 1953, it was decided to see if it would be possible to integrate aircraft into police operations. Thus the Aero Club became involved in police air operations mostly using its Cessna 170s and continued to function as the Carabineros air arm until 17 February 1960 when the Brigada Aeropolicial was established to conduct aerial police work. The unit operated solely fixed-wing aircraft, mostly Cessnas, for almost a decade because the first two helicopters, Fairchild Hiller FH-1100, were acquired in 1969. The Museo Histórico Carabineros de Chile counts amongst its exhibits a Hughes 300, CC-KKO/C-03, which, although shown in the colours of the Brigada Aeropolicial, was acquired by the Aero Club.

On 24 April 1972 the Brigada Aeropolicial was transformed into the Prefectura Aérea de Carabineros de Chile, a separate specialist branch within the Corps. This re-organisation, with separate fixed-wing and helicopter sections, was due to ever-increasing and expanding roles of the unit which was now performing patrol, search and rescue, traffic observation, forest observation, medical transport and disaster relief operations all over the Chilean national territory.

Today the Prefectura Aérea operates a modern mixed fixed-wing and rotary-wing fleet which includes:

Helicopters	Agusta A109E Power
	AgustaWestland AW139
	Bell 206 Jet Ranger
	Bölkow Kawasaki BK-117
	Eurocopter EC135P2+
	Messerschmitt-Bölkow-Blohm Bö105
Fixed Wing	Beechcraft Raytheon 200 Super King Air
	Cessna U206B Super Skywagon
	Cessna C-210N Centurion II
	Cessna T-210 Centurion
	Cessna 550 Citation Bravo
	Piper 31 Navajo
	Piper 31T Cheyenne I

Most of these aircraft types can be seen at Santiago-Tobalaba where the Prefectura Aérea and also the Aero Club are based and where maintenance is performed as well. More aircraft are operated by sections spread over seven police zones throughout Chile.

A helicopter closely associated with the Carabineros is the Messerschmitt-Bölkow-Blohm Bö105, which entered operations with the Prefectura Aérea on October 1, 1976. Up to that time helicopter operations were performed by the Hughes 300 and the FH-1100. However, these small helicopters were quite limited in capability and performance to meet the demanding task of fast Aeromedical Rescue in the high altitudes and often adverse weather conditions met in the Chilean highlands.



The selection, in 1974, fell on the 5-seat, IFR-capable twin-engined Bö105 which had back access as well as sliding doors to each side facilitating the loading of stretchers. Initially six machines were acquired and there were additional acquisitions over time, either to replace helicopters lost in operations or just to expand the size of the fleet. The importance of the Bö105 to the Prefectura Aérea helicopter operations is commemorated by the preservation of at least two machines out of the fifteen that were in the fleet. C-19 (c/n 365) is found in the main hall of the Museo Nacional Aeronáutico y del Espacio in Santiago. Another one, with fictitious serial C-01, stands guard at the gate of the Prefectura Aérea base at Tolaba aerodrome.

The mixed fleet, equipped with the most modern technologies and machines, operated by the Prefectura Aérea ensures that this branch of the green-liveried Carabineros de Chile delivers a professional, motivated and effective quality service.



- Beechcraft Raytheon 200 Super King Air, top
- The Bö105 gate guard, bottom



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WAR BIRDS OVER THE BEACH 2017

Report and photography by Brian R Veprek



Boeing P-26 "Peashooter"



de Havilland DH.98 Mosquito

"Where else can you go to the top of a 75 year-old control tower and watch 75 year-old airplanes take off on a grass runway?" — Mike Potter, Director of the Military Aviation Museum, Virginia Beach, Virginia

To mark the 75th anniversary of America's involvement in World War II, I headed to Virginia Beach, Virginia to attend the 2017 Warbirds Over the Beach air show at the Military Aviation Museum. For those of you who you who've had the opportunity to visit the Military Aviation Museum at their private Virginia Beach Airport, you know that it is a must-see for all aviation enthusiast. Founded and funded in 2005 by Gerald "Jerry" Yagen, the museum displays one of the world's largest private collections of historic military aircraft.

To fulfill the museum's mission to preserve these historic aircraft, a dedicated army of staff and volunteers works tirelessly to restore them to their original flying condition. As most of our WWII veterans have passed on, the annual Warbirds Over the Beach air show honours and celebrates these soldiers through the planes they loved.

This air show is different than most others I attend as the Museum's grounds are also transformed into a WWII park covered with military tents, weapons, vehicles, and memorabilia, and filled with WWII re-enactors, both friendliest and foes, playing very convincing rolls and providing us a glimpse of life in that scary, yet exciting time.

During this year's event, not only did I have the opportunity to enjoy many amazing planes, but was fortunate to spend time with three war bird pilots, who helped me appreciate the skill needed to fly these planes.

Josh Wilson is living every aviator's dream. At 41 years-old he is a full-time commercial pilot flying the Airbus A319, A320 and A321; a part-time aviator with the Air National Guard out of Langley AFB with time in the F16 Fighting Falcon, the RC-26 Metroliner, the F22 Raptor, and the T-38 Aggressor; and in his free time volunteers for the Military Aviation Museum with the opportunity to fly up to dozen different war birds.

Josh's passion for flying started at age 5 while watching his first air show. As soon as he saw an F4 fly he knew he wanted a life as an aviator. Following the advice a pilot gave him on that fateful day, Josh studied hard in school and at age 17 began private flying lessons. But his dreams were almost grounded after he got into a spin early in his training that left him with a deathly fear of spins and stalls. Josh continued with his training and figured if he was going to fly passengers for a living he needed to get over his fear. So he signed up for aviation aerobatics lessons. The first thing they taught him was stalls, spins, rolls and loops. Josh got over his fear and started spending all his free time watching the more experienced acrobatic pilots.

His first job out of college was with the French Connection Airshow, teaching competition aerobatics and tailwheel instruction. After gaining experience in a T-6 Texan, Josh went to work After gaining experience in a T-6 Texan, Josh went to work for North American Top Gun in Florida providing instruction in flying this war bird.



Josh Wilson

Eventually, Josh realized he needed to get a "real job." He was disqualified from becoming a U.S. military pilot due to poor eyesight. So in 2001 he started his career as a commercial pilot. But once LASIK vision-correction surgery was accepted in the military, Josh jumped at the opportunity to fulfill his dream of becoming a military aviator. He was one of the first pilots to have LASIK surgery and joined the Air National Guard.

I was curious what it is like to go from flying a large commercial plane to a powerhouse military plane to a 75 year-old war bird. Josh says an Airbus has computer logic to make it easier to fly and has its limits. "It won't let you roll it over - not that you ever would - but it will stop you." With modern planes, Josh says, you're more of a manager with all the automation. You must be very computer savvy - you are responsible for programming "the box." "Its very regimented," Josh says. I was surprised by Josh's comment that an F-22 is easy to fly. "It's remarkable what that airplane does." While the pilot is still responsible for raising and lowering the gear, the F-22 trims itself and its flaps are automatic. "You just point it where you want it to go and it figures out how it's going to get there," Josh explained.

Flying a war bird, on the other hand, is "totally opposite," Josh says. There is no computer to fly - you need to fly the plane. "If you take your eyes off of it for a second it can get away from you . You've got to be on the ball all the time." Josh has trained to fly a dozen different warbirds with each one a bit different and complicated in their own way. He explained that just because you have experience flying one does not mean you can jump into another and be ready to fly. A few weeks of training, self-study and supervision was required for each warbird. Josh enjoys the freedom that flying gives him and says that he has never had a bad day flying. He enjoys not only flying the war birds but has a real appreciation for talking with those who have flown these planes in war. And when he is up in a war bird he imagines being a pilot in war in those days - remarking that in war the planes would fly so close that you could see your enemy's scarf blowing in the wind. Josh knows he's a lucky guy and told me that he is "very, very humbled to be out here and to have this opportunity."

Mr. Jackie Dankos, from Hanover, Virginia, was at the show flying a North American AT-6D Texan owned by Mr. Justin Knight. Jackie started flying in 1974 after being inspired by his father, an army soldier who fought in the Korean War. He has been flying an SNJ since 1978 and partnered with the late Jeff Ethel, an American aviation author and pilot, who passed on his piloting skills to Jackie. Jackie had the great opportunity to meet Mr. John Leland (Lee) Atwood in the late 1980's. For those of you not familiar with Mr. Atwood, he was a prominent engineer in the aerospace industry working for North American Aviation for over 35 years. He is credited with developing the P-51 Mustang, the F-100 jet fighter, the X-15 rocket plane and oversaw the Apollo program. Jackie enjoys the classic look of the AT-6D and loves the special sounds and rumbles that it makes. It is a difficult plane to fly, Jackie confessed to me, especially the landings and dealing with the crosswinds. At air shows, Jackie especially enjoys formation flying with all his friends on the line.

Keith Woods, an Atlanta-based attorney and part-time judge, was at the air show flying a P-51 Mustang owned by the Commemorative Air Force. Keith always wanted to be pilot in the Air Force or Navy, but poor eyesight prevented him from accomplishing that goal. Instead, he pursued a commercial pilot's license on his own. As a law enforcement officer he was able to get some flying in on the county-owned twin-engine Beechcraft. But life as a law enforcement officer left him without the time or money needed to spend more time in the air. So his passion for flying led Keith to obtain a law degree. After accruing 200 hours in a T-6 Texan, Keith bought a share of a replica of a Kate Torpedo Bomber (also known as the Nakajima B5N), the standard torpedo bomber of the Imperial Japanese Navy for the majority of WWII. Next, Keith learned to fly the Douglas SBD Dauntless. The following year, Keith was, as he told me, "at the right place at the right time" and was provided the opportunity to fly the P-51.

When I asked him what is it like to fly a P-51, Keith describes it as easy to fly but hard to land due to its limitations in view - and because it's "squirly." I'm assuming the pilots reading this will know exactly what "squirly" means. Keith says it is historically "very cool" to fly a P-51. He especially enjoys to mix with old P-51 pilots.



Keith Woods

I had the good fortune to speak with the Museum Director, Mr. Mike Potter, who shared his love of warbirds and his commitment to the museum's vision for the future. Mike Potter, banker by trade and private pilot, was just one of the many passionate volunteers who gave generously of his time, when two and a half years ago the current museum director resigned. After chasing warbirds for 35 years and being one of the early members of The Confederate Air Force (now called The Commemorative Air Force), Mike quit his career in banking for the opportunity of a lifetime as the Museum Director of the Military Aviation Museum.

With a huge grin on his face, Mike explained, "it's an office job most of the time, but five percent of the time I get to look out of the window and see this" as he points to the line of 75 year-old war birds out his window. Mike told me the story of Jerry Yagen's first war bird acquisition - a Curtiss P40 Flying Tiger. This aircraft, given to the Russian's under the lend-lease program, flew with a red star on its side. It was shot down while defending the Port of Murmansk, the northern-most port in Russia that does not freeze in winter and consequently became home to supply convoys. Crashing above the Arctic Circle, the P40 was found 45 years later. "It was a crash site, nothing but a field of rubble. And that field of rubble now flies again," Mike explained with great pride.

He says that Mr. Yagen went to "ridiculous" lengths to restore his P40, which required about three and a half years of hard work. Following its restoration, the FAA would not allow Mr. Yagen to fly his P40 because he lacked the necessary tail wheel certification. Not to be deterred, Mr. Yagen purchased a Stearman N2S-3 and a North American SNJ to train himself to "fly these planes the same way all those kids did 75 years ago," Mike recounts . "So now he's up to three planes and as he says after that it just got out of hand". The Museum currently has 70 aircraft with at least half of the planes airworthy at any given time. For this air show, approximately 24 were scheduled to fly. Prepping for an air show is a six month project - getting the planes ready and inspected.



It is the "magicians," as Mike calls them, at the Museum's Fighter Factory who ensure the aircraft are in tip-top condition. Fifteen full-time FAA-trained airframe, power plant mechanics are currently employed. Mike describes them as not only highly-skilled but very determined and devoted to their craft. He says many of them have owned their own planes and worked at more traditional airports. And although they could make a lot more money elsewhere, these dedicated mechanics choose to work with the Museum's aircraft. "On any one day, they may be swapping out a cylinder on a radial engine on the Skyraider and the next day they are hand-stitching fabric on a WWI plane," Mike shares, explaining the unique opportunity that attracts their mechanics.



I asked Mike about their pilots - where do they come from? Mike explains that the Museum has no need to recruit pilots. "The pilots find us," stating that they get two to three pilot requests per month. Most of their volunteer pilots have owned their own war birds and have thousands of hours in "tail draggers." And many pilots are qualified to fly two to three different planes. The selection process is very rigorous as the pilots will be entrusted with planes worth upwards of \$3 million.

The newest addition to the museum's grounds is a control tower or what the British refer to as a "watch tower." It was acquired from the Royal Air Force Base Goxhill in North Lincolnshire, England, the first base turned over to the Americans following Pearl Harbor. Dismantled nine years ago, the tower was brought over brick by brick and rebuilt. The exterior is 99% complete with plans to renovate the inside within the next few years. Asking about the funding required to run this huge operation, Mike advises that the Museum is funded primarily by Mr. Yagen and his wife, Elaine. Donations, ticket sales and renting the museum for weddings and other events only pays for the lights and salaries of their seven Museum employees. "It doesn't pay for a single square foot of land, a single brick or single airplane. Mr. Yagen writes a check every year," Mike states.

When Mike attended his first board meeting over 2 years ago, the members were discussing what they needed to do to become a "sustainable, truly community-based organization," independent of Mr. Yagen's continual financial support. Mike recalls that he told the Board that he hoped they were able to do that quickly but advised them "the day you do that, you need to replace me." Mike selflessly explained that he is a businessman that knows planes but does not know "beans" about running a museum. The Board has taken Mike's recommendation and has recently hired a new Museum Director with a museum background. Mike will return to his previous role as a proudly-passionate volunteer.

With War Birds Over the Beach attendance expected to reach 5,000 visitors this year, Mike looks forward to showcasing their three newly acquired "can't tell you cause I'd have to kill you" airplanes at this October's WWI air show. Mike, staring out his window, recalls how just eight short years ago, this site consisted of nothing but 135 acres of grass, trees and a 2,500 foot crop-duster airstrip. "Now," Mike gleams "it is a world-class collection in a world-class setting."

I encourage everyone to visit the Military Aviation Museum (Open daily from 9am-5pm, except Thanksgiving and Christmas); attend one of their annual air show events; or at least check out their website (MilitaryAviationMuseum.org) to view great pictures of their war birds. I believe air shows are of great value - to the past, present and future!

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CH-53 Sea Stallion



Fleet Week is a United States Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard tradition in which active military ships recently deployed in overseas operations dock in major cities for one week. Often, Fleet Week includes displays and flights by various aircraft. I had the opportunity for up close views of the V-22 Osprey and a CH-53 Sea Stallion.

MV-22

The V-22 Osprey is the world's first production tilt-rotor aircraft with one three-bladed prop-rotor, turbo-prop engine, and transmission nacelle mounted on each wingtip. It is classified as a powered-lift aircraft capable of both vertical takeoff and landing, as well as short take off and landing. It was designed to be the best combination of a conventional helicopter and a long range, high-speed turbo-prop airplane. The V-22 Osprey was made in cooperation with Bell Helicopter and Boeing Helicopter. The MV-22 is the Marine designation.

The Osprey first flew in 1989. The U.S. Marine Corps begin training with the Osprey in 2000 and used them in the field in 2007. The U.S. Air Force started using their version of the Osprey in 2009. The Osprey has been used in operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Kuwait.

The Osprey has a maximum speed of 305 knots (at 15,000 feet), a maximum altitude limit of 14,000 feet, and an operational range of 1,100 nautical miles. For takeoff and landing, it typically operate as a helicopter with the nacelles vertical and rotors horizontal. Once airborne, the nacelles rotate forward 90° in as little as 12 seconds for horizontal flight, thus converting from a helicopter to the more fuel efficient, higher speed turbo-prop aircraft. The Osprey is powered by two Rolls-Royce AE 1107C engines. To ensure that the Osprey can still fly if one engine fails, the engines are connected by drive shafts to a common central gearbox. However, the Osprey is generally not capable of hovering on only one engine. The Osprey is equipped with a glass cockpit which incorporates four multi-function displays and a shared central display unit. The auto pilot system can take the aircraft from forward flight into a 50 foot hover with no pilot interaction, other than programming the system. Since the fuselage is not pressurized, personnel must wear oxygen masks above 10,000 feet.

The Osprey can be armed with one M240 machine gun (.308 caliber) or a M2 machine gun (.50 caliber) on the loading ramp. A belly dash-mounted, remotely-operated gun turret system was created for the Osprey but seldom used due to its hefty 800 pound weight. Ospreys are routinely escorted by helicopter gunships and close air support aircraft in order to allow the Osprey to focus on their transport role.

The Osprey is manned by a crew of four including a pilot, copilot and two flight engineers. It can transport a maximum of 32 troops and carry a maximum internal cargo load of 20,000 pounds or up to 15,000 pounds on its two external hydraulic lifts. The Osprey is 57' 4" long with a wingspan of 45' 10". It's maximum height, with nacelles vertical, is 22' 1". It's rotors, which can fold in 90 seconds, are 84' 7" wide. The Osprey has a range of 879 nautical miles and a combat radius of 390 nautical miles.

Ospreys are on display at the American Helicopter Museum and Education Center in West Chester, Pennsylvania, at the National Museum of the United States Air Force at Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, and the New River Aviation Memorial at Marine Corps Air Station New River in Jacksonville, North Carolina.





CH-53

The CH-53 Sea Stallion is a heavy-lift transport helicopter manufactured by Sikorsky Aircraft. It was originally contracted by the United States Marines with required capabilities including a load capacity of 8,000 pounds, operational radius of 100 nautical miles, and a speed of 150 knots.

It's desired use was for assault transport of heavy equipment, aircraft recovery, personnel transport, and medical evacuation. The Sea Stallion is managed by a crew of four: pilot, co-pilot, crew chief, and aerial observer. It can carry a load of 55 troops or 24 rescue baskets with medical attendants; an internal cargo load of 8,000 pounds or an external load up 13,000 pounds on its single-point sling hook. The Sea Stallion is 88' 6" in length, 28' 4" wide and stands 24' 11" tall. It features a 6-bladed main rotor with a diameter of 72' 2.8" and a four-bladed tail rotor - both of which are capable of folding to save space on Naval vessels. It's maximum takeoff weight is 42,000 pounds, including a useful load of 8,000 pounds.

This aircraft was initially powered by twin General Electric T64-6 turbo-shaft engines providing 2,850 shaft horsepower. The engines were upgraded multiple times including a T64-413 increasing its performance to 3,925 shaft horse power and a maximum speed of 170 knots. It has a range of 540 nautical miles and a combat radius of 100 miles. It's service ceiling is 16,750 feet. It is usually equipped with two door-mounted .50 caliber BMG GAU-15/A machine guns.

Upgrades to the Sea Stallion included defensive and infrared countermeasures. The Sea Stallion was first used in the Vietnam war, recovering downed aircraft and evacuating personnel. It is also known for its use in the attempted rescue of American hostages in Iran in 1980 and in Grenada to deploy the 8th Marine Regiment during Operation Urgent Fury and then evacuate 233 U.S. students. Sea Stallions were also used by the Air Force, Marine Corps, and Navy in support of Operation Iraq Freedom, as well as Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

While retired by the U.S. military in 2012, the Sea Stallion remains in military service with Germany, Iran, Israel, and Mexico. It also has been converted for civil use as a fire fighting aircraft in the U.S. A display of a Sea Stallion can be seen at Fort Worth Aviation Museum in Fort Worth, Texas.



CH-53 Sea Stallion in action above. The typical Marines helicopter gunships escorts for both the CH-53 and the MV-22: The Bell AH-1 SuperCobra below.



Seinäjoki International Air Show, Finland

Report and photography by Pasi Ahola



The Finnish Aeronautical Association is the national and central organization of sport aviation in Finland. SIL organizes one main air show every year and usually it's in different location each year, last year it was at Rissala airport, Kuopio (home base of Karila Air Command).

This year air show is in Seinäjoki airport (EFSI) which is relatively small airport, 2000m runway with no regular air traffic. It's home base for Etela-Pohjanmaan Ilmailukerho (Southern Ostrobothnia Aviation Club) and they were the main organizers this year.

Main attraction were fighter jets, because Finland is currently reviewing new multi role fighter to replace older F/A-18C Hornets. This gave a good opportunity to see the Eurofighter Typhoon, F/A-18E/F Super Hornet and JAS 39C Gripen in action.

Each day the program started off with DC-3 arrival with passengers, also it made one sightseeing flight every day, and in the later afternoon it returned to Vaasa airport with passengers. Saab had ground stand for more information and as well a JAS Gripen fighter on display with impressive arms selection.

Organizer were expecting 10000 spectators, but already first day it was clear that there will be more than that, weather was excellent at first day and I'd estimate that there were 10000 already at Saturday. One of the more interesting aircraft was the old VL Viima II, a tandem seat biplane, there were only about 20 made and only 2 are airworthy.

Finnish Army had their own stand and they showed the NH90 TTH which is a medium-sized, multi-role military helicopter that replaced recently Mil Mi-8 helicopters, and a Hughes MD500 Defender, a light



- VL Viima II, a tandem seat biplane on the left side
- Midnight Hawks, above.

multi-role military helicopter. Clive Davidson flew with Yakovlev Yak-11("Moose"), which is Russian trainer aircraft used during the fifties.

One of the regular guest at every Finnish air show is the Fouga FM.170 Magister, it was used by Finnish air force for a long time. I have grown up by listening that Fouga sound, they were located at air base near my home.

All fighters were supposed to fly on Saturday, but for some reason Super Hornets didn't take off, I heard that reason was too short rest time for pilots. On Sunday they flew, but I was a bit disappointed cause there were nothing to show, only some basic flying around the airport. On the other hand, the Eurofighter Typhoon and Gripen gave everything and did a really good show. Quite regular guest is the Finnish Air Force F/A-18C solo, I have seen that several times and it's ok with flares etc.

Most impressive were the Midnight Hawks aerobatics group. Finland has its 100 year anniversary in 2017 and Hawks were painted like Finnish flag on their fuselage. They started the show with music (Finlandia/Sibelius), show was as good as always. The team's trademark is a very tight diamond formation, also they have formation called "swan" specially for Finland birthday.

Next year this show will be at Tikkakoski and it is "Finnish Air Force 100 years" -show. Executive Director of The Finnish Aeronautical Association, Timo Latikka states: "This show will be the most spectacular air show ever in Finland".



F/A-18 Solo Demo of the Finnish Air Force



Saab JAS 39 Gripen of the Swedish Air Force



Eurofighter Typhoon FGR4 of the R.A.F.

Seinäjoki International Air Show, Finland



F/A-18F Super Hornet of the US Navy



The chief of the air base at Florennes, Base Commander Colonel Didier Polome, said: "The occasion to host the Tactical Weapon Meet (TWM) in Florennes is the 100th birthday of the 1.sqn."

The 1.sqn of the Belgian Air Force "Stingers" celebrates in 2017 the 100th anniversary of their symbol, the Thistle, adopted in 1917 during WW1. The 1.sqn was formed in 1913. For the birthday, one of the F-16 was presented in a special paint scheme with thistles on the tail. The motto of this squadron: "Nemo me impune lacessit" (No one provokes me with impunity), was painted on the black external wing tanks. The 1.sqn is part of the 2nd Tactical Wing.

The TWM was embedded in the 100 year celebration. Objectives of the TWM: Not a flag/course, for junior leaders, flexibility to fit with participants needs. According to the 1st sqn Commander "BK": "In the first week the participants learn and understand advantages and limitations of coalition assets. The contents of the second week: Joint and combined war type missions with the main content : share lessons acquired and tactics developed during recent coalition operations". There were 216 people involved in the exercise. 232 sorties of mission flights were performed with about 300 flying hours. And the following air forces participated: Hellenic Air Force with 2 F-4E PI2000, from 338 Mira "Ares", Andravida AB; Italian Air Force with 3 EF2000, from 4 Stormo, Grosseto AB; Polish Air Force with 3 MiG-29, 1.ELT, Minsk Mazowiecki AB; Royal Air Force with 3 Hawk T.1A, from 100 sqn, Leeming AB; Spanish Air Force with 3 EF2000, from Ala 11, Moron AB and of course several F-16 AM/BM from 1.sqn and 350. sqn from the 2nd Tactical Wing of the Belgian Air Force.

Guest: Two Mirage 2000-5F based at Luxeuil, France. The 2-EJ with a special colour scheme on the occasion of their 100th anniversary with a huge stork, the symbol of the squadron. A F-16 BM "30 years OCU" based at Kleine Brogel, Belgium (OCU=Operational Conversion Unit) and a F-16 AM from the 349 sqn based at Kleine Brogel, Belgium, Motto: "Strike Hard, Strike Home" with a spiked mace on the tail.

The Aviation Magazine Media would like to express our thanks to Captain „PeC“ for the invitation to the press-day and the Commander of the 1.sqn „Stingers“ for their great hospitality and assistance on base. Thank you!







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MiG-29 Polish Air Force left top and (2) Eurofighter EF2000 Typhoons of the Spanish Air Force the main image.



©2017 Ralf Peter Walter



SF.260 of the Belgian Air Force left top, Hawk T.1 of the RAF right top and a pair of Eurofighter EU2000 Typhoons of the Italian Air Force.





- Alphajet of the Belgian Air Force, left top
- CASA C-235 of the Spanish Air Force, right top
- F-16 BM "30 years OCU" based at Kleine Brogel, Belgium





"Wings of Freedom" Tour

Article and photography by Geoffrey Arnwine

B-24J Liberator





On June 8-11, the Collings Foundation made their visit to Concord, CA for their annual “Wings of Freedom” Tour.

During the tour, they flew in their very own B-17G Flying Fortress, B-24J Liberator, B-25J Mitchell, and P-51 Mustang. People were able to see the aircraft up close on the ground and even go inside the different bombers and view the cockpit, hallway, and bomb bay. Flights were offered to people at various charges based on the aircraft. This was a rare opportunity for passengers to fly on board these vintage WWII bombers and get a glimpse of what it was like for the crew members back in the 1940s. During the flights, people were allowed to walk around the different sections of the aircraft and take pictures.

After their visit to Concord, the Collings Foundation continued their tour up north to Oregon before making their way back home in Stow, MA.

B-71G Flying Fortress



Armed Forces Day in Southern Bavaria, Germany

On the occasion of the "Tag der Bundeswehr" (Armed Forces Day) on Saturday, June 10th and this year's 60th anniversary of the Lufttransportgeschwader 61 (61st Airlift Wing) a spotterday was organized at the German Air Force air base Penzing in Southern Bavaria, Germany.

230 aviation enthusiasts enjoyed a perfect day watching a wide variety of current and historic aircraft. The weather was perfect and a spot south of the runway provided excellent conditions for taking photos. The air traffic controllers did an amazing job requesting every aircraft to perform a low approach or a low pass before landing. As the program for Saturday included flying activity, the spotters could enjoy the rehearsal of some of the displays planned for Saturday.

Since 1971, Penzing Air Base has been home to the LTG 61. The air base will be put in a low state of readiness at the end of this year, following the disbandment of the LTG 61, which is planned for the end of this September. Until then, the LTG 61 remains the oldest active flying unit within the German Air Force. The wing was established on August 24th, 1957. Its 1st squadron had 18 C-47 Dakota, whereas its 2nd squadron started to receive the brand-new



C-160 Transall



Nord 2501 Noratlas





A400M



CH-53GS



Tornado IDS



Nord 2501 Noratlas. In 1970, the LTG 61 began the transition to the C-160 Transall. After the transition was completed, the 2nd squadron was disbanded. In 1979, a squadron with Bell UH1D was integrated into the LTG 61. After 47 years of operating the C-160 Transall, the wing's remaining few aircraft will be transferred to its sister-wing LTG 63 at Hohn Air Base in Northern Germany.

To celebrate its 60th anniversary, one Transall was painted to look like the aircraft as they were delivered in the early 1970s. The logo on the fuselage depicts the aircraft the wing flew during its existence: C-47 Dakota, Nord 2051 Noratlas, C-160 Transall and the Bell UH-1D. The painting on the vertical tail symbolizes a chamois, the wing's heraldic animal.

The Aviation Magazine thanks the Lufttransportgeschwader 61 for a perfectly organized day, tailored to the "needs" of a spotter/aviation enthusiast.



For its 53rd edition, it was the 11F of the Naval Air Station (NAS) Landivisiau, who organized this important gathering from Monday the 5th to Friday the 16th of June 2017. Landivisiau is located in Brittany, the north-western region of France. The NAS is the training base for the French Navy's fighter jets. The NAS host the Sqn 11, 12 and 17 all equipped with the Rafale Marine, for a total of 42 aircraft.

The annual event is a meeting point for all squadrons whose emblems are the tiger or similar large cat such as the puma (cougar). Unfortunately some of the Tiger Squadrons were involved in other exercises or military operations around the world, therefore they could not participate.

The spirit of the Tiger is above all the spirit of camaraderie between the squadrons. The goal of this exercise mainly to exchange and be constructive from an operational point of view to improve working together during operations. For 2017, 13 nations with 53 aircraft, 15 helicopter and 900 persons were involved.

The daily flight operations were planned in two packages, in Combined Air Operations (COMAO) and relatively smaller packages (SHADOW WAVE). Beside the combat aircraft, airborne warning and control aircraft (AWACS), air refuelling aircraft, attack helicopters, including search and rescue helicopters almost all of the type of air operations can be effectively enforced. The organization of the host nation was really brilliant.

The host squadron the 11F have painted a Rafale Marine in white and black. It look stunning! In addition the French Air Force painted two additional Rafales: one two seater Rafale B from EC 03.030 „Lorraine“ and one Rafale C from EC 01.030 „Cote d'argent“ both from AB Mont-de-Marsan in the south of France. They looked definitely brilliant. Another eye catcher was a JAS39 from the CzechAF with a very unusual painting on the tail. The 31.Sq of the Belgian Air Force has painted the tail in black with „Les Pirates Embarqués“. That means: The pirates are going on board“. Not to forget the French helicopter Gazelle and the Tiger and the Italian AB212 with a shark mouth. The design of the Swiss Air Force was not new, but the tail painting is always impressive.

The Aviation Magazine Media would like to express our thanks to the host nation especially the Naval Headquarter. Our special thanks for their great hospitality and assistance on base to Mme. C. (SIRPA Marine) and Mme. M-L. (Naval Station Landivisiau) with her famous team.



The Rafale Marine of the 11F





The French Air Force's Rafales with special paint schemes on this page





The French EC665 Tiger left top and the SA341/342 Gazelle right top
The Belgian F-16AM with "Pirate" skull and bones symbol, bottom image.





- The Czech AF JAS39 Gripen, top image, main image top
- One of the German AF's EF2000 with an interesting tail marking, bottom image.





- The Italian AB 212 ICO , main image top
- Swiss AF's F-A-18, left bottom
- The Austrian AF's Saab S105Ö, right middle
- French Navy's Northrop Grumman E-2 Hawkeye, right bottom





Ukraine Air Force Base Tour

Report and photography by Joe Ciliberti



Su-24 Fencer



Our photoreporter, Joe Ciliberti, has recently been on a tour of two of the most important bases of the Ukrainian Air Force.

Cordially invited by the Ukrainian AF Command in Kiev, the tour consisted of a visit to Air Force Base A1789 in Vasylkiv, 30kms South of the Capital and home of 40th Fighter Aviation Brigade flying MiG29s. This was followed by a splendid tour of UkAF base Starokostiantyniv, 250kms SW of Kiev and home of the Su-24 Fencer of the 7th Fighter Bomber Regiment.

Vasylkiv AB

On the day The Aviation Magazine visited Vasylkiv no flying was taking place as preparations were underway for a massive national aerial exercise due in the following days. However, Joe was offered a tour of the based aircraft, some of them very much at the ready should there be need. One needs to remember that Ukraine suffered territorial loss to the Russians and is therefore on alert 24/7 to defend its borders should there be need. A good number of the MiG-29s were fully armed and ready on QRA (Quick Reaction Alert) basis.

Vasylkiv AB is under the command of Col Kravchenko Volodymyr who has plenty of hours on different aircraft and over 1500hrs on the MiG-29. The base is quite a large airfield with one massive aircraft parking ramp equipped for all kinds of aircraft. The Mig-29s and L-39s however, are spread around the airfield in pens that hold one or two fast jets at a time. Additionally, there are also individual pens for different types of aircraft on the south side of the field. Col Volodymyr's leadership could be seen in the efficiency of officers and other personnel under his command who certainly have a lot of admiration for their commander.

The Ukrainian Air Force is in a continuous upgrading mode and the base showed both operational MiG-29s and some that were being prepared for a return to flight status. Others were undergoing deep maintenance and the base also has its own simulator developed and built by the Ukrainians themselves. During The Aviation Magazine visit, the simulator was being 'flown' by a young pilot, one of several whose willingness and determination to defend his country was very evident.

Tucked in a medium-sized ramp were a number of recently-refurbished L-39s that are used both for training as well as to keep the based pilots' hours high to ensure the best results.



MiG 29s left top and right middle and bottom, with an L-39 on right top





Starokostiantyniv AB

This is the only known base of all Su-24 Fencer, medium-range bomber of the Ukrainian Air Force.

On the day The Aviation Magazine visited the base all flying started at 0900 and continued for 6 whole hours, with Su-24M/MR and L-39s launching and recovering without a break.

This huge base was very active during the 2014 war with Russia and one of its Su-24MR was hit by a MAN-PAD but recovered safely to a forward operating base with one engine fiercely on fire. During that mission on July 1st, 2014, the Fencer was being flown by then Lt Col Bulatsyk Yevhen.

Starokostiantyniv AB houses both the Su-24M bomber as well as the Su-24MR reconnaissance version of this aging but still very formidable jet. The 7th Fighter Bomber Regiment flies two squadrons of Su-24M and a squadron of Su-24MRs while L-39s are used by all three squadrons for pilot proficiency and also as a way of fuel saving for training purposes.

The base is commanded by Col Kovalenko Mykola who was very proud of the achievements of his personnel maintaining and flying the Su-24s. Indeed, the steady flow of movements on the day kept the Col busy as some of his pilots flew up to three missions on that particular day and a number of pilots received their qualifications during the day's missions.

Starokostiantyniv AB is a typical Soviet-era style base with two large ramps that house most of the Su-24MRs and L-39s while the other two squadrons were dispersed in pens dotting the south side of the airfield. The field houses a very good number of active Su-24s as well as others that will be made airworthy again in the near future.

The latter were all nesting to the East of the airfield but one could tell that they could easily be worked back to airworthy status. Additionally, a good number of Su-24s were undergoing maintenance both inside and outside the hanger situated in the SW corner of the field, just short of runway end.

Being a medium-bomber base and housing one of the meanest jets in Ukrainian AF inventory, security is very tight both outside and on the base, however, our reporter found some of the most friendly and highly appreciative personnel as they truly wanted to show some of their best aircraft and what the servicemen and women stand for as they strive to continue with the success story of Ukraine's independence on August 24, 1991.

Joe Ciliberti would like to thank the Command of the Ukrainian AF, Col Kravchenko Volodymyr, Col Oleksander Vereschak, Col B. Yevhen and Maj Alexandr Poriadko.

Su-24M top left and right middle and a L-39 right bottom.





Su-24M

THE AVIATION MAGAZINE

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