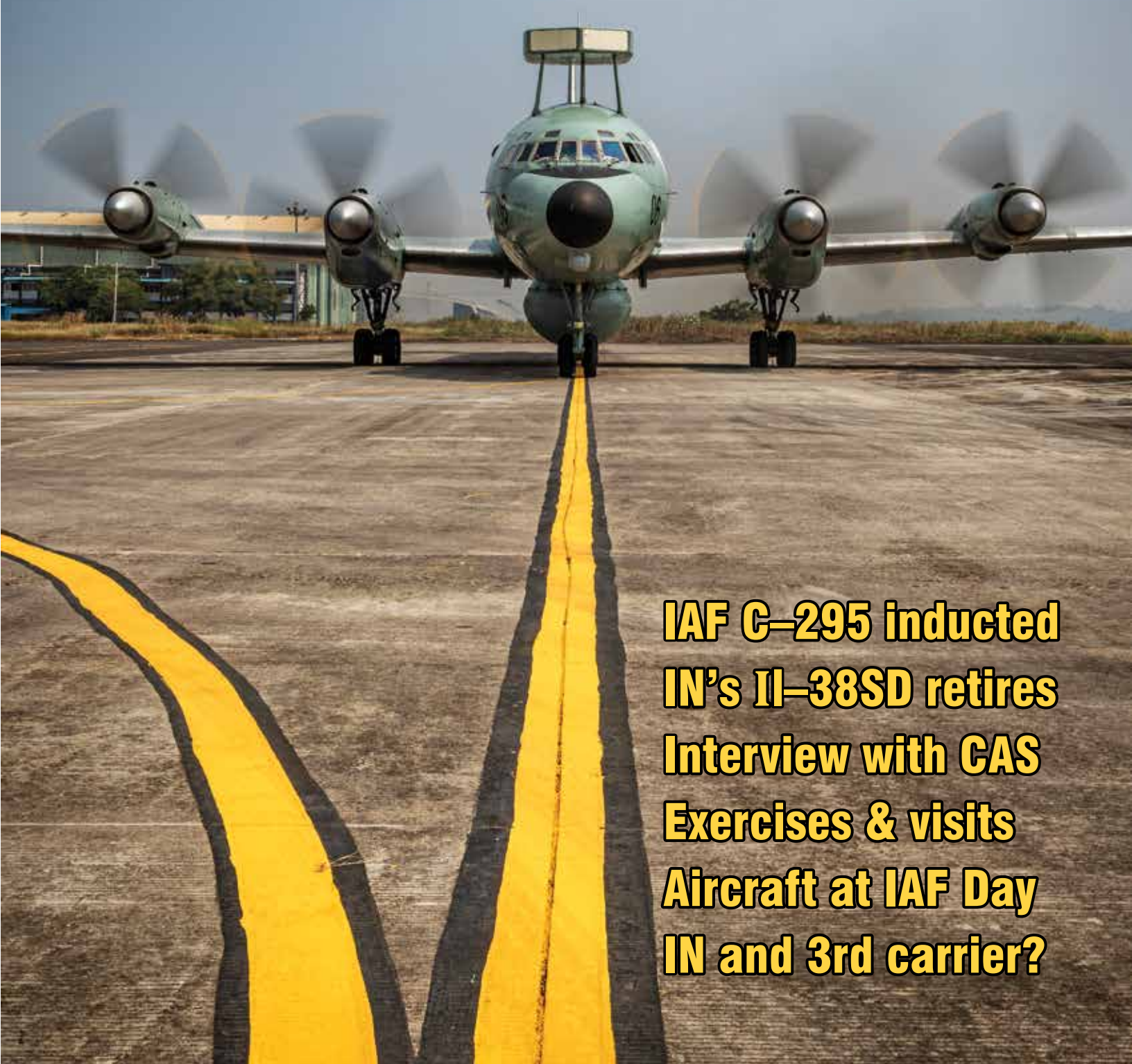


VAYU

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Aerospace & Defence Review



**IAF C-295 inducted
IN's Il-38SD retires
Interview with CAS
Exercises & visits
Aircraft at IAF Day
IN and 3rd carrier?**

Frisian Flag 2023



The international exercise Frisian Flag 2023 took place at Leeuwarden Air Base. From 2 October 2023 until 13 October 2023, two waves were flown every day from Monday to Friday. These waves took place in the morning between 9:30 AM and 12:00 PM and in the afternoon between 1:30 PM and 4:00 PM. On 13 October, only the morning wave was flown and in the afternoon the participants left for home and therefore the exercise. The unrest in the world and an ongoing war on Europe's eastern border makes it once clear again that peace and security cannot be taken for granted. Well trained units are therefore of great importance to keep the Netherlands and NATO territory safe and to defend them if necessary, now and in the future.

Commodore Johan van Deventer is the commander of Air Combat Command (ACC) of the Royal Netherlands Air Force. This command covers all the Dutch Air Force unit that combines all the F-35A Lightning II and F-16AM Fighting Falcon fighter operations and MQ-9 Reaper operations. Also the fighter control, targeting and network management are part of this organisation within the air force. The ACC units are all based at Leeuwarden Air Base, Volkel Air Base and the Air Operations Control Station New Millingen. Van Deventer says, "Today we're here at Leeuwarden Air Base, because Leeuwarden is

the centre of all we do in the next two weeks during the exercise Frisian Flag. This exercise is our annual exercise where we train high-end fights with lots of aircraft of an International coalition. We bring that coalition here to Leeuwarden and we train whatever we need to do. We have here the greatest airspace of Europe to do it and we have the greatest unit of Europe that can organise it. Next to that we are here with all the participants from the different nations".

Recent Air Policing missions over the eastern flank of NATO territory, as well as past missions such as over Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq, have proven that international cooperation is indispensable. All differed greatly in terms of threat level and task for the pilots. The war in the Ukraine shows once again the necessity for airpower. Because only airpower can create the preconditions needed to gain freedom of movement on land, at sea and in the air. To protect both our national and NATO integrity, integration of air capabilities is crucial. NATO-Allies need to be ready to face any kind of threat, at all times. They need to rely on each other, know what to expect from each other and be able to work alongside. Exercises like Frisian Flag provides the alliance the training that is needed.

During Frisian Flag 2023, pilots are prepared for various

situations involving operations in an international context. Complex scenarios provide training in defensive missions, such as monitoring airspace or protecting supporting aircraft, and in offensive missions, such as attacking airspace to gain the upper hand, but also attacking ground targets. This makes Frisian Flag a valuable exercise to participate in for both young pilots and experienced flight commanders. Commodore van Deventer explaining the reason why an exercise of this scale is needed for all involved parties, “Especially in this time frame we’re living in it’s very important to do that coalition operation and to do that high end training, because war might start tonight and tonight we must be ready as the Royal Netherlands Air Force but definitely as the NATO Air Force together. With all our allies we have to be ready to execute as one single team. How are we able to go and do that, well that’s done by exercising and by training and that’s what we do here the next two weeks at Frisian Flag 2023”.



and to participate in future international missions. This is exemplified by the homebased deployment over Poland in 2022, in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Within hours of the invasion, at the request of NATO, the



Importance Frisian Flag

The Royal Netherlands Air Force (RNLAf) was deployed almost continuously over the last decades, not only for international peacekeeping and peace enforcing missions but also to protect NATO territory, support allies and to emphasise the strength of the NATO alliance. Deployments and international missions nearly always take place in cooperation with allies, coalition partners within NATO, the UN or the EU or a group of countries that share the same goals and values. But always in an international context.

Deployments or international missions do not start with actual operational deployment, but with shared values, starting points, doctrine, training and exercises. Training in an international context is necessary to ensure that the RNLAf remains capable to carry out its air defense duties

RNLAf and its allies were flying over Poland safeguarding the airspace on the eastern flank, while under NATO command. Following this mission, the RNLAf also executed enhanced Air Policing missions over Bulgaria, 2022 and Poland, 2023.

Major Marcel Burgers is the Project Officer for this year’s edition of Frisian Flag. Marcel, who is tactical callsign is ‘Fikkie’, is in its daily job an Air Combat Manager in the Royal Netherlands Air Force. After the explanation of Commodore van Deventer, Major Marcel explained the goals of Frisian Flag in depth, “With this training we will make sure that we are on the highest readiness level available. We practice and train during planning briefing and debriefing. All the pilots can look each other in the eyes and we can learn from each other. This is necessary, because we know what’s going on in the

real world and we need to train and be ready. Not only all our governments expect that we are full time ready, but also the civilian people from every nation which participates expect that we as a military organisation can execute missions on the highest level possible”.

Participants at Frisian Flag 2023

Leeuwarden Air Base

The Netherlands: F-35A

Belgium F-16

Germany: Eurofighter

Finland: F/A-18

USA: F-35A



Homebase

Denmark: F-16, Skrydstrup Air Base

The Netherlands: F-16, Volkel Air Base.

United Kingdom: F-35B, Queen Elizabeth II aircraft carrier.

Multinational Tanker Unit (MMU): A330 tankers, Eindhoven Air Base

France: E-3F, Avord Air Base

Article by Alex van Noijs and Joris van Boven

Photos: Alex van Noijs & Sergeant-Major Jan Dijkstra Mediacentrum Defensie





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EATC Aeromedical Evacuation day

On 7 November 2023, the first 'Aeromedical Evacuation' day was organised by EATC at Eindhoven Air Base (ICAO code EHEH). 'Aeromedical Evacuation' is the transport of injured people by air to a safer environment. EATC is a partnership of seven European countries being Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and Spain.

About 80 experts in the field of medical transport by air came together at Eindhoven air base. These were experts from the participating ETAC countries, but also from Denmark and the United States. There, the experts received an explanation about the possibilities and expertise that ETAC can offer in this area. The Aeromedical Evacuation procedures and challenges of the participants were then discussed.

The commander of EATC, Major-General Franck Mollard of the French Air Force, indicated



in a speech that Aeromedical Evacuation is one of the 3 core tasks of EATC, in addition to air transport and refueling of aircraft in the air (air-air) refueling. Aeromedical Evacuation is a major puzzle in which various countries have unique resources and capabilities. And all the pieces of the puzzle are put together by EATC, after which the right choice can be made for the required help.

Various aircraft and helicopters were positioned on the western platform of Eindhoven Air Base. All aircraft were equipped for 'Aeromedical Evacuation'.

EATC

EATC is a partnership of seven European countries: Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and Spain. These countries combine and optimise air transport in Europe. Where EATC acts as a broker between cargo that needs to be transported and

Airplane type	Air Force/Owner	Comments
A330 MRTT	French Air Force	Standard tanker aircraft that can be converted in 24 hours
A330 MRTT	Multinational MRTT Unit (MMU)	Continuously configured in the MEDEVAC version, based in Cologne (DE)
A400M	German Air Force	
C-130J	Italian Air Force	
CH-53	German Air Force	Helicopter used in war zones
Bombardier Challenger 605	Civil contractor from Luxembourg	Provided by the Luxembourg Government



transport aircraft that still have space on board. With the help of ETAC, the participating countries try to use air capacity as efficiently as possible.

For example, the A330 MRTT (MMU unit) carries out an air to air refueling mission for Spanish fighter jets on behalf of the Netherlands; a French C130J performs a parachute drop mission for Germany; while a Belgian helicopter is transported by a Spanish A400M; a Luxembourgish Learjet performs an aeromedical evacuation for an Italian soldier injured in a crisis area; an Italian C27J transporting

French freight; a Belgian A400M transports Dutch soldiers and finally a German A400M performs an aeromedical evacuation mission off Luxembourg.

The participating countries use the ATARES system for settlement. The “Air Transport & Air-to-Air Refueling and other Exchanges of Services” (ATARES) is a cashless exchange system for air transportation. Several European and NATO countries are part of the multinational ATARES agreement. The exchange of services is based on the “Equivalent Flying Hour” (EFH): this reference is the cost of one (1) C-130 flight hour. All other aircraft types offered under the ATARES scheme are calculated based on this C-130 reference.

This arrangement facilitates mutual support through the exchange of services and is the currency used by the EATC Member States. This cashless service allows countries to save on outsourcing costs and optimise aircraft utilisation (less empty space).

It can also provide countries with additional training opportunities. ATARES is not based on purely bilateral reciprocity, but must be seen in the global multinational framework. EATC provides support to participating countries in three areas namely Air transport, Air-Air refueling and Aeromedical Evacuation. The headquarters of EATC is based at Eindhoven air base. ➡

Article by Joris van Boven and Alex van Noije
Photos: Joris van Boven

