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**ARCTIC
Transporters**

**Trident
JUNCTURE**

CH-148 CYCLONE



CH-53 IN GERMAN SERVICE

**Aviation Management: Communication
Aircraft Ownership: The Freedom of GA**

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Cover: LC-130H

This month's cover features a 109th Airlift Wing LC-130H. The photograph was taken by Rogier Westerhuis of Aero-Image.com

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Large Air War Over Northern Europe

TRIDENT JUNCTURE

Patrick Dirksen and Frank Mink of TristarAviation.org

In October and November a large scale air war was fought in the skies above Norway and also parts of Sweden and Finland. Over 250 aircraft from fourteen countries battled against each other. All this as part of Exercise Trident Juncture 2018, the largest NATO exercise since the end of the Cold War.



CC-150 Polaris



Colonel William Radiff

In total over 50,000 military personnel were involved in Trident Juncture at land, sea and in the air. All NATO countries participated, as well as partnership countries Sweden and Finland. Main goals of the exercise were ensuring NATO forces are trained and ready to respond to threats, and demonstrating that NATO stands ready to protect its values, people and territories together. The training part was especially aimed at the units that are assigned to the NATO Response Forces 2019. The air component operated from six airbases in Norway, Sweden and Finland. All participating countries alternated as 'Blue Forces' and 'Red Forces'. Furthermore, multiple missions were flown to support the land and sea war scenarios.

Operating from the Norwegian airbase at Bodø were Canadian CF-188 Hornets, French Mirage 2000s, Swedish JAS.39 Gripens, Italian Tornados and F-2000As, and local Norwegian F-16s. They received support from tanker aircraft from Italy and Canada. For electronic warfare, both a classic Norwegian Falcon 20 and a brand new Italian E.550 Gulfstream participated. Multiple missions were flown daily.

During the exercise, two Russian Tu-160 bombers came by to take a closer look. A Tu-142 maritime reconnaissance aircraft also showed much interest.

We were invited by the Air Task Force Commander of the Canadian detachment, Colonel William Radiff, to have a brief

look behind the scenes. Normally Radiff is base commander of CFB Bagotville, home of the 3rd Fighter Wing. During Trident Juncture, Radiff was based at Bodø Airbase in northern Norway, where he was responsible for eight CF-188 Hornets, two CP-140 Auroras and a CC-150 Polaris, as well as almost 250 men and women.

The CP-140s operated from Andøya airbase with 61 staff members and supported the maritime components of the exercise. Main tasks were anti-submarine and surface warfare. The Polaris served as tanker aircraft from Bodø, not only filling up the Canadian jets but almost all other participating fighter aircraft as well.

401 squadron at CFB Cold Lake served as the high readiness fighter squadron at the time, and to validate its state it deployed eight of its CF-188A Hornets to Bodø airbase via stops in Bagotville and Keflavik in Iceland. Such flights are often accompanied by a CP-140 acting as a so-called 'duck butt' in case one of the pilots has to bail out over the ocean, but in this case the fighters flew together with the Polaris and the Auroras went separately. The Hornets operated in standard configuration, with three external fuel tanks and an LM Sniper pod. Additionally, they all carried an ACM1 pod (Air Combat Maneuvring Instrumentation pod), model P4, on one wingtip, as with all participating fighter aircraft. This enables the crews to debrief the missions as all the aircraft's in-flight data is recorded.



Radiff explained, “the main roles of the CF-188 during the exercise were, as we requested, offensive and defensive counter air and air interdiction (strike) missions. But we also flew other types of missions when needed, such as close air support”. For the different mission types no changes had to be made in the configuration, as the onboard computer of the Hornet was able to simulate all different kinds of weapons needed, like guns, rockets and bombs, by using so-called rolling codes. No live firing was included in the exercise. Missions were flown in the morning, afternoon and night, even in weekends. Radiff: “for the night missions, NVS 9 night vision goggles are available. Using them is the aircrews’ choice, but everybody does use them. As in Canada, there is little artificial lighting here, so using NVG is rather standard.”

As so many complex missions were flown, and it took a day of planning to prepare for single mission, a complete squadron of eighteen pilots was present. Before the actual mission, an international mass briefing was given, followed by an individual flight or group briefing in the temporary Canadian squadron HQ.

Radiff also gave special credit to the maintenance crews who worked in two and when needed even three shifts a day to keep all aircraft in pristine condition. The crews used special pack up kits, filled with tools and spares, that can be flown in on board a CC-177 or CC-130. In addition, the maintenance

crews cooperated with the Spanish contingent, housed in the neighbouring shelters with their EF-18M Hornets.

When asked whether he preferred the Blue or Red Forces role, Radiff is clear, “fighter pilots like to win! So Blue.” But in the end most is learned by performing both roles, in different circumstances. “It is all about passage of knowledge!”

Radiff states the F-18 is the best defence procurement to date. “We continue updating the aircraft and it is a great platform today.” This was reflected by the fact that no missions were cancelled due to technical reasons. The only reason to cancel a few missions was wind exceeding the peacetime safety limit of 35 knots.

A useful feature of the CF-188 is its folding wings. By operating a handle in the cockpit, the pilot can fold up the outer part of the wings. This way it was possible to put no less than three Hornets in a single shelter, which was very useful with every bit of space on the airbase needed during the exercise.

One of the reasons to hold the exercise in Norway in this time of year, was to train under harsh weather conditions. But as with everything, all is relative. “It is quite warm here actually,” said Radiff with a grin, implying that Canadians are used to ‘real’ winter weather. However, for most participating soldiers, the weather has certainly been an extra challenging factor. ☹