

# VAYU

## Aerospace & Defence Review



**The IAF at 88**  
**Rafales of the IAF**  
**The Golden Arrows**

**IAF Force Multipliers**  
**Looping over Dacca**  
**Dalip Singh Majithia**

# In remembrance of the past - and looking to the future

## Germany and Israel record aviation history



Formation flight (photo Luftwaffe)

In July 2020, for the first time in history, Israeli fighter aircraft landed on German soil. Six F-16 'Barak' jets took part in the exercise *Blue Wings 2020*, together with two KC-707 tankers and two Gulfstream aircraft. Hosting them was fighter wing TLG31 'Boelcke' of the German Luftwaffe, which operates the Eurofighter EF2000 from Nörvenich air base.

"On behalf of the German air force, it is an honour for me to welcome the Israeli air force entering German airspace for the first time in history. My Israeli friends, General Norkin, Amikan, now our Blue Wings fly side by side," Lieutenant General Ingo Gerhartz, commander of the German Luftwaffe, said, welcoming the Israeli delegation to Germany.

As part of preparations before the real exercise, multiple transport flights were made with C-130H and C-130J Hercules aircraft. The F-16s themselves

were accompanied by two KC-707 tankers during the journey to Nörvenich. The Israeli delegation consisted of some 200 personnel while TLG31 with 1,100 personnel and EF2000s formed the German part. Security measures were taken, not only because of the Israeli presence but also because of Covid-19, including testing all participants before they can roll in.

This exercise followed multiple visits to Israel by Gerhartz and it was no coincidence that World War II ended exactly 75 years ago. To commemorate this, the day after arrival a formation flight was made over Dachau concentration camp. This formation was led by an Israeli Gulfstream 550 with both Gerhartz and commander of the Israeli air force, Major General Amikan Norkin on board. They were accompanied by two F-16s and two Typhoons. Above Dachau, Norkin broadcasted: "Flying together above the valley of darkness, making room for

only light ahead. As we vow: never again." This commemoration flight with the Israeli and German fighters flying side by side, did not only honour the numerous victims of the Nazi regime, but also showed the world that an inseparable friendship has emerged from an apparently insurmountable enmity. Norkin: "By remembering the past, we ensure the future."

The formation also made a pass over Fürstenfeldbruck airfield. Here in 1972, eight Palestinian militants took 11 Israeli athletes who were participating in the Olympic Games as hostages. After flying over the area, the formation landed at nearby Lechfeld and both air force commanders visited the monument at Dachau concentration camp. Here a remembrance ceremony was held, including amongst others the German Minister of Defence and the Israeli Ambassador.



Next day, tactical part of the exercise began and some 170 sorties completed throughout the entire exercise *Blue Wings 2020*. During the second week, both forces also participated in the NATO exercise MAGDAY, which takes place several times a year. A spokesperson of the German air force explained, "MAGDAYs are a central element in strengthening the cooperation, interoperability and capability development of allied air forces. As a NATO partner nation, the Israeli AF took part in this MAGDAY as part of the *Mediterranean Dialogue*."

During this second week, two KC-707 'Re'em' tanker aircraft of the Israeli air force were based at Nörvenich. Although already some 45 years old, these aircraft of Nevatim air base of 120 'Giants' Squadron are still going strong. Apart from this, 122 Squadron with their special missions Gulfstream 550 aircraft is based at Nörvenich as well. One



*KC-130H 427 performing a support flight*



*Brand new C-130J-30 667 of 103 squadron*



*F-16C of 101 'First Fighter' squadron returning after a mission*

of the G550s was the 'Nachshon-Eitam' equipped with a Conformal Airborne Early Warning (CAEW) system, easily recognisable by the conformal phased-array radars on both sides of the fuselage, while the other one was a 'Nachshon-Shavit' specifically outfitted for signals intelligence (SIGINT). These aircraft performed dual role as VIP transport aircraft and to carry out electronic warfare. The three F-16Cs were from 101 'First Fighter' Squadron

while the three dual F-16Ds were from 105 'Scorpion' squadron, both based at Hatzor.

*Special Temporary Reserved Airspace (TRA)* was used, mainly above the North Sea and over Rheinlandpfalz/Saarland. "The exercise is being held to continue enhancing the Israeli AF's capabilities, maintain its readiness to face various scenarios, and to continue strengthening its bonds and cooperation with allied air forces," as explained in a press statement. Air



Israeli pilot in his "office"



German EF2000 returning back to Nörvenich

Full afterburner take-off



Gulfstream 550 'Nachshon-Eitam' with conformal AEW system clearly visible



Returning home after the last mission of Blue Wings 2020



Take-off (photo Luftwaffe)



Flying side by side

combat, surface-to-air action, defeating surface-to-air missile threats, and "other combat scenarios in enemy territory" were practised. After end of the exercise, a spokesperson of the Luftwaffe added, "The main focus of *Blue Wings* exercise was on the exchange of flying experience with the Israeli participants on 'Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs)' when carrying out multinational air operations. These experiences help in the further development of the national TTPs. The long-term and intensive cooperation with the Israeli air force could be continued very successfully."

Lieutenant Colonel Mbassa, Deputy Commodore of TLG31, as the responsible leader for the *Blue Wings* exercise, concluded, "The result has been an excellent exercise and a very intensive exchange, which has particularly helped our young comrades. This gives us a positive outlook on our future cooperation with our Israeli partners." 🦋

*Text and photos by Patrick Dirksen & Frank mink*