

POLISH BATTLEFORCE JOINS EUROPEAN UNION

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Part 1 : MIROSLAWIEC and TOMASZOW MAZOWIECKI, SOKOL and FITTER

**Part 2 : INOWROCLAW, GDYNIA, PRUSZCZ GDANSKI, DOL EXERCISES,
NAVY and FULCRUM.**

Poland said ' yes ' and decided they will join the European Union. For that reason Poland is in the middle of interest on for example social and economic terrain. Interesting is also to have a look how Poland stands on the territory of military aviation. This opportunity was given to Dutch Top-Gun correspondents Wim Das and Kees Otten. By means of some base-visits where the Polish operationality was demonstrated. Highlighted in this article are some parts of the Polish airforce which gives the reader a good impression of the possibilities within this force. Poland is a country which can be counted on in important way, as well as from NATO as European Union point of view. Amongst others Poland in the old days was (as Eastern Germany was) a buffer between Western-, and Eastern Europe in times of the cold-war and the Berlin wall. Therefor the country has at it's command a massive number of airfields and a large number of types of planes and helicopters.

Polish Fulcrum Mig-29 fighters are rarely to be found in Western-europe during joined excercises, or perhaps sometimes at a flying-show. From various Polish helicopters we only find the W-3 Sokol/Anaconda variants in the West (and the MI-14 marineversion) but the other types we lack. And it is just these Polish helicopters who look so fresh with their cheerful red-white tea-linen roundels on their fuselages ! Enough reason for Top-Gun to visit a few bases in Poland to get acquainted with their squadrons with offensive tasks. Therefor were visited two helicopter-attack squadrons, the 1st and 2nd Eskadra Smiglowcow in Tomaszow Mazowiecki with the W3 Sokol helicopters, also in Inowroclaw the 1st and 2nd Eskadra Smiglowcow Szturmowy, the 4th Eskadra Smiglowcow with various types MI-2 Hoplite's and the 3rd Eskadra Smiglowcow Szturmowy with the MI-24V Hind's. Except for the choppers the Sukhoi-22 Fitter still is an imposing appearance that is hardly seen in our neighbourhoods but it did get a major role within the Polish NATO participation for as long as this machine remains operational. The Polish air-force therefore also demonstrated the SU-22's of the 8th Eskadra Lotnictwa Tactycznego (8-ELT) on Fitter base Miroslawiec (12 Basa Lotnicza). The 'threat' of the former Eastern-block countries fortunately lies behind us and we already live like good neighbours next to eachother for many years already. Since two years Poland is member of NATO, (Northern Atlantic Treaty Organisation) and it will soon join the European Union. It is not quite clear yet what the 'policy' will be within the Polish air-force in the coming years.

Prime minister Leszek Miller (former member of the communistic party) was the great winner of the recent elections, which stands about contradictory on the traditional American sympathies and with him Poland makes a 180 degrees turn to the left. The new government has to deal with a major budgetary deficit, this recognisable situation in The Netherlands already lead to the knock-off of the complete squadron inventory Bolkow B-105 helicopters, the complete fleet of 12 P-3 Orion's will be sold and three airfields will be closed down, being 'Valkenburg', 'Twenthe' and 'Soesterberg'! Inquiries eventhough learn that the development of Polish Air and Army forces concern long-term agreements, so the results will not be as dramatic as in The Netherlands.

MIROSLAWIEC

The 8th ELT, flying with the Sukhoi SU-22M4 Fitters is a squadron operating specific in the 'attack-role' in targets on land, as well as targets over the Baltic sea which is integrated in the national defence system. In contradiction to sister-units on the base Swidwin and Powidz the 8th ELT is not assigned to Nato Rapid Reaction Force (RRF). Therefor there is some uncertainty about the future of the 8th ELT if economisations and reductions are to be carried out on the SU-22 fleet. The base itself however is no point of discussion because of the situation near to the sea and the army exercise range (Drasko Pomorski) and the shooting range (Nadarzice) are very favourable. These facilities are also being used by other NATO countries. For instance the British Desert Rats with their Lynx anti-tank helicopters practised here as well as units of the US-Army with their apache helicopters. The presence of a SU-22 maintainance hangar and the presence of many 'Hardened Aircraft Shelters' (HAS), radarfacilities and Calvert Light System make this base extra valuable. In fact there should be specific American interest to participate in the use of this base and also a possible transfer of the 8th ELT to Swidwin could become actual but no further concrete details were revealed about this subject. The SU-22 Fitter is a reliable and strong design which is very suitable for the offensive role and comparable with the Tornado concerning low-level attack missions. As a fighter-bomber the plane is very capable to attack targets on land, at sea and air-to-air. This machine is 'favourable' to the pilots in contradistinction to the Mig-21 Fishbed easier to fly and 'more forgiving to the pilot' which gave the Fitter the nick-name 'Stupid-proof'.

About the reliability one can state that this is so good, that former accidents are only imputed to 'pilot-errors' and not to technical failures. Never the less the Fitter is equipped with a ejection-seat which can save the pilot even when the plane is at very low level. The ceiling of the plane is at a height of 15000 meters with a reach of maximum 2450 kilometers. The maintainance of the SU-22 is complicated with service-sessions after 100, 200 and respectively 400 hours duty. The 100 hours servicing contains just a list with checkpoints, the 200 hours servicing concerns inspections of vital parts on the workbench. The 400 hours maintainance is a very severe process, the machine is about to be dismantled. For this process the machine is not clever built, and many parts are to be removed from wings and fuselage. The SU-22 in general is flown with a ground pre-programmed computer who measures in advance located points very accurate with a special height-depth measure system ('radio altitude system') which operates with a 'Doppler-beam'. This system exists as alternative because of the lack of radar on board. One of the

small adjustments who will possibly be mounted in near future is an external radar-system on the wing-hardpoint. Several modernisations have already been executed and fitted such as GPS (Global Positioning System) anti collision-lights, and ASO-3 Flare launchers. There are plans to provide a part of the Fitter-fleet of Miroslawiec with Head-Up Displays (HUD). This feature gives the pilot the possibility to see from various angles projected on a display in front of him, advanced and improved multi-functional displays, and possibly Tactical Aid To navigation (TACAN). If all these features and plans will be executed in the desired numbers is eventhough a question, because the Fitters are to be phased-out in 2010 according to the latest plans. Salient detail is that the twin-seater because of a adjustable nose-cone in the air-intake improves the airblast considerable, in such way that the performance of the of the Lyulka jet-engine improves from 1,8 mach of the single-seater to 2,1 mach for the twin-seater !

The armament can exist of both unguided as well as guided rockets and pods with fast-firing guns, also air-to-air rockets for self-defense. Possibilities are present for laser-guided rockets and bombs, a system in which the computer services the laser-pointer but a clear sight is required here, a situation that is less frequent above the Baltic sea. Next to this the SU-22 is standard equipped with two 30mm guns in the wings and further more there are the TV-guided Kh-29T rockets (just the Miroslawiec Fitters) where the pilot monitors on his TV screen the same images as the missile-camera does, and he is able to guide the missile to his target. Some details: Presently in use missiles are the Kh-25ML laserguided (AS-10 Karen) and the Kh-29T (AS-14 Kedge) in two variants, the laserguided Kh-29L and the above mentioned TV-guided Kh-29T. The unguided rocket launchers concern the types UB-32 and B8, and the 'Gun-containers' with double-barrel Gsh-23 canon concern the SPPU-22-01. The Klon-laser is positioned in the nose-cone. Fitter pilots first have their basic jet-training on the TS-11 Iskra on the ' Air Force Academy' in Deblin. After that the next step is training on the SU-22UM-3 twinseater followed up with conversion and combat training. Three times a week trainingsmissions are held, sometimes up to four missions a day so they get about 200 flying-hours a year above land as well as above sea. Within the Polish Airforce the SU-22 Fitter is a functional and reliable type, which will be seen flying for a number of years till the end of it's days approach and the present avionics in spite of some adjustments will be outdated. Possibly the F-16 will show itself as a worthy successor.

TOMASZOW MAZOWIECKI

Tomaszow Mazowiecki is the headquarter of the 25 Brygada Kawalerii Powietrznej (25 Air Cavalry Brigade) where the 56 PSB in Inowroclaw also resorts. On the base only the Polish built PZL W3 Sokol (Falcon) is to be found in 2 Air squadrons which form together the 7th PULK. One squadron is assigned to Nato. (on this base we find the 'Huzar' armed version, on Gdynia the marine/SAR version) The W-3 is a complete Polish designed and built helicopter. It first saw the light in 1979 and is mass-produced since 1985. The machine can be seen as successor on the MI-2 and operates mainly in the W-3W (Multi-role) standard attack-version, a armoured version of the W-3A. Next to that there are some special variants such as the W-3 "Protion" version for ELINT-tasks (Electronic Intelligence) and the W-3PPD for Airborne Command & Control. These versions were not to be photographed, though external differences are hardly to be noticed compared to the W-3W's.

The W-3 has 2 pilots and a WSO, it can transport 8-9 soldiers. Pilots reach up to about 200 flying hours a year, and those assigned to Nato even more. The W-3's are quite more modern as the Mi-2's, they have a more modern radar system, standard IFF system (Identification Friend or Foe) and GPS (Global Positioning System) also there are plans to upgrade avionics the coming years with NVG (Night Vision Goggles) cockpits for 'all weather capabilities'. The W-3W SOKOL provides fire-support and aircover in close air support (CAS) actions in service of own troops, it can also execute attacks against ground-, and sea targets and slow-flying enemy planes and helicopters. For this purpose it is equipped with a true arsenal of weapons such as a Gsh-23L double-barrel canon, 4 hardpoints aside the fuselage for rocketlaunchers (Mars-2M with 16x S-5 57mm and B8-10 with 10x S-8 80mm unguided missiles) by the WSO (Weapons System Officer) aimed with an optical visor. Next to that there is in principle the possibility for ant-tank rockets when a choice will be made about the purchase of a new Western type for this purpose. For selfdefense it is equipped with a GAD-Launcher with 2x infrared 9M32ML Air-to-Air missiles. The W-3W is also very capable for CSAR (Combar Search and Rescue) missions and can be used as a ambulancehelicopter. The latest novelty is that mines can be placed (Platan Aerial Minelaying System) and backwards clusterammunition can be dropped (ZR-8MB-1 dispenser). The W-3 therefor is a potential helicopter, the Polish are very proud of it and the chopper can remain in service for many years to come.

The W-3 unit cooperates with the nearby Leznica-Wielca where Mi-8 and Mi-17's are stationed, amongst this unit are also armed versions. Of both types one was flown over to demonstrate. Both the HIP's and the SOKOL's displayed their fabulous possibilities with an impressive demonstration ! The attack-squadrons of Polish Airforce and Army have demonstrated to be very competent and they proved to be very powerful.

End of part 1, part 2 see next page / link.

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