

Another “phantastic” aviation day belongs to the past. On 20th of September, 348 TRS (Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron) celebrated its 60th anniversary. We were there and give you the details...

Article by Tasos Keltemlidis

348 TRS’ main role is tactical reconnaissance for all armed forces of Greece for intelligence purposes, flying day and night with any weather conditions. 348 TRS, also supports operations of electronic warfare.

348 TRS’ secondary role is supporting with its recce flights public and social services of the Stare with photographing forest fires, built-up areas, island for discovering sources of water etc.

The history of 348 TRS begins in Elefsina Air Base(112 C.W), in 1953. The 335 Squadron of 112 Combat Wing, equipped with F-84 G Thunderjet type aircraft, placed a photo camera on one of the tip tanks. The results were satisfactory and this led to the delivery of the RT-33A type aircraft, that is to say, a T-33A aircraft with cameras on its modified nose.

The new aircraft urged the 335 Squadron to form the 348 Tactical Reconnaissance Flight, which, on the 7th of July 1954, was relocated at 110CW in Larissa, and after being supplied

with new RT-33A, upgraded to Squadron.

These aircraft were replaced with the new RF-84F Thunderflash, which, the Hellenic Air Force, first among the NATO countries acquired, in August 1956 and the RT-33A were given to the Armeé de l' Air.

Until autumn of 1978, the RF-84F aircraft were the only type of the Squadron's aircraft. Then the RF-4E Phantom II were acquired, which led HAF in the new era of air reconnaissance.

On March 29th 1991, the RF-84F aircraft were withdrawn after 34 years of active service, leaving in the Squadron's inventory very few RF-4Es, just enough to form a flight. However in August 1993, their number was increased with the addition of RF-4E granted by Luftwaffe.



A few words for the legendary RF-4E Phantom II

The RF-4E is a variation of the F-4E. The main difference is the photo cameras at the nose, with lateral and rear observation capabilities.

The RF-4E has the can carry 4 different types of cameras, with the LOROP KS-127A as most impressive, which can take photos from a height of 35,000 ft. Another option is the AAD-5

infrared system which can be used day and night.

The Greek RF-4Es are fitted with weapons and self-defense systems and are capable to operate from up to an altitude of 40,000 ft, depending on the mission. Their main role is reconnaissance before and after an air attack.

They are based in Larissa, at 110 Combat Wing, and they operate from the 348 Squadron with call sign "Eyes".

Crew: 2

Engine: 2 General Electric J-79-GE-15 turbojet engines with afterburners, thrust 17,900 lbs.

Wing Span: 11.8 m

Length: 19.1 m

Maximum Speed: 1500 mph

Service Ceiling: 60,000 ft



A few words for the ceremony

Friday morning 20th of September 2013 was a very special day for the 348 TRS and the Hellenic Air Force. In an open ceremony a lot of aviation enthusiasts gathered at Larisa Air Base to celebrate with the 348 personnel, squadron's 60th birthday.

A great surprise for all visitors was, that allies from NATO Air Forces honoured 348 TRS, with their presence. More specifically,

- Armee de l' Air sent two mirage F1CR (ER 02.033 "Savoie" / BR11 "Cocotte"),

- Ejército del Aire sent two EF-18A+ Hornet (ALA 12/ 121 & 122 Escuadrons),

- Aeronautica Militare sent one Tornado (6° Stormo/ 154° Gruppo)

and one AMX (51° Stormo/ 132° Gruppo).

The ceremony started at 09.00 o'clock sharp, with an orthodox Holy Unction, blessing the Squadron staff, to be strong and protected while they are on duty.

About 10.00 o'clock , all people headed to the main area of the ceremony, where there was a static display of the foreign aircrafts. There was plenty of time for take photos and exploring the area.

At 11.00 o' clock, four RF-4Es of 348 TRS took off for the main flight demonstration. All three aircrafts passed before us. The forth special one took off "secretly" as it was the squadron's surprise for us…a new special painted aircraft…!!!

For almost one hour flybys thrilled the crowd offering special memories to them.

After landing, the special RF-4E parked to the center of the static display area.

Few minutes after that, Lt. General Christos Vaitsis, (HTAF Chief & CAOC7 Commander) and Lt. Colonel Manolis Mpoudouridis, (Squadron Leader of 348 TRS) who both were on the flight crews of the demo flights, took the stand and saluted all the present people, giving sort speeches. After taking the traditional family pictures of the flight crews in front of the anniversary aircraft the main part of the ceremony was about to end.

At 13.00 o'clock, a barbeque party was planed to take place at Squadron's area. Mainly, the squadron staff, many old colleagues, the flight crews of the NATO allies and few lucky civilian guests were there enjoying the rest of the afternoon.



Anniversary souvenirs

During the ceremony, many stuff were available for buying. The highlight of the souvenirs was the limited edition, anniversary patch (only 300 patches have been produced). The “battle” for obtaining one was relentless!

Other than this, there were a squadron photobook, a 348TRS DVD (anniversary edition), two anniversary coins and some regular squadron patches such as the RF-4E type patch and the classic shield squadron patch.

It is worth mentioning that the flight crews from France (mirage f1CR) and Spain (EF-18A) had also brought patches to sale!



Photography by Kostas Alkousis and Tasos Keltemlidis

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