

FIRST USAF THEATRE SECURITY PACKAGE BRING EUROPE



TEXT AND PICTURES: HENK De RIDDER

On 13 February 2015, twelve A-10 Thunderbolt II's from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, deployed to Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany in support of

operation Atlantic Resolve. This deployment is the first U.S. Air Force Theatre Security Package. TSP's in Europe have to reassure allies and partner nations

WINGS A-10'S BACK TO



AN A-10C FROM THE 'BULLDOGS' WAITING FOR ITS DRIVER TO CLIMB IN.

that European security is a priority to the United States. Depending on mission and U.S. European Command requirements, The tsp rotations will normally last six months.

ENCOUNTER UPCOMING THREATS

COL ROBERT P. WINKLER, COMMANDER OF THE 52ND OPERATIONS GROUP (OG) STATES THAT THE A-10'S OF THE 354 EXPEDITIONARY FIGHTER SQUADRON WILL OPERATE UNDER THE 52ND OG DURING THE TSP AND HE EXPLAINS THE GOAL OF THE EXERCISE: "THE TSP IS A CONCEPT TO INCREASE REGIONAL SECURITY. THEATER COMMANDERS WILL GET GREATER FLEXIBILITY TO ENCOUNTER UPCOMING THREATS. TSP FOR EUROPE WILL BRING MORE ROTATIONS, AND NOT ONLY A-10 SQUADRONS WILL BE INVOLVED." THE TSP CONCEPT IS NOT NEW. IT IS ALREADY SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENTED IN THE PACIFIC REGION SINCE 2004. WINKLER: "HERE IN EUROPE IT IS A LITTLE BIT EASIER TO DEPLOY THAN IN ASIA, BECAUSE OUR ALLIES ARE USED TO NATO PROCEDURES."

HUB

LT. COLONEL STEVE BEHMER, COMMANDER OF THE 354TH EFS, GOES INTO DETAIL ABOUT THE DEPLOYMENT OF HIS WARTHOGS TO EUROPE: "THE A-10'S ARE HERE FOR SIX MONTHS AND WILL USE SPANGDAHLEM AS A "HUB." FROM TIME TO TIME, A-10'S WILL DEPLOY TO OTHER BASES IN EUROPE. MOSTLY TO ROMANIA, POLAND AND BULGARIA. NOW FOUR A-10'S ARE TEMPORARILY AT RAF LAKENHEATH, UNITED KINGDOM." THE A-10'S WILL CONDUCT TRAINING ALONGSIDE NATO ALLIES FOR STRENGTHENING INTEROPERABILITY.

"AS LONG AS NEEDED"

THE DEPLOYMENT INCLUDES TWELVE A-10'S, 26 PILOTS, AND A TOTAL OF 300 AIRMEN. BEHMER: "WE ESPECIALLY BROUGHT YOUNG PILOTS, SO THEY CAN GET EXPERIENCE IN THE EUROPEAN THEATRE. THE MISSION IS THE SAME AS IN THE USA: CLOSE AIR SUPPORT AND COMBAT SEARCH AND RESCUE. THE FIRST WEEK IS BEING USED TO GET FAMILIAR WITH THE EUROPEAN CIRCUMSTANCES. WE WILL FLY TO SEVERAL RANGES TO PRACTICE. AMONG THE 26 PILOTS ARE TWO FORMER A-10 PILOTS OF THE 81ST FIGHTER SQUADRON, WHICH WAS BASED AT SPANGDAHLEM UNTIL 2013. AFTER RETREATING FORCES OUT OF EUROPE, TSP WILL FILL THE NEED TO HAVE FORCES ON THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME, AND TSP WILL GO ON AS LONG AS NEEDED. IN THE US, THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ANNOUNCED THAT 18 A-10'S ARE BEING BROUGHT BACK TO BACK UP STATUS, LATER THIS YEAR ANOTHER BATCH OF 18 WILL FOLLOW. SO, A TOTAL 36 A-10'S WILL PUT TO BACK UP INVENTORY. A-10'S WILL TAKE PART OF DEPLOYMENTS, WHICH ARE PLANNED TILL THE END OF 2018."



82956 DM returning with its wingman at Spangdahlem AB after their mission.



A 354th EFS Warthog on final with 12th Air Force markings on its tail.



A 'sporty' takeoff into the blue German skies.



The A-10A is designed to provide close air support (CAS) to ground troops.



The C-model clearly allows more precision than the A-model: hung with a targeting pod, Maverick and Side-winder missiles.



Taxiing through the former 81st FS shelters.



An A-10 on the taxiway. It used to be a common sight at Spangdahlem Air Base.



Taxiing towards takeoff in typically 'Eifel-weather.'



The nose of the A-10 houses its built-in 30mm cannon, designed to kill heavy armoured tanks.



Davis-Monthan based A-10 in front of a shelter which is only used during deployments nowadays.



The Thunderbolt II has two engines on the fuselage, but can fly on only one in case the other is hit by the enemy.



The Hog driver of the 81945 DM has time to give a look while pulling up.



The 354th EFS will use Spangdahlem as a hub during their six months stay in Europe.



Arizona pilots certainly can learn from grey and rainy missions over Europe.



Colonel Robert P. Winkler, CC of 52nd OG, and Lt. Colonel Steve Behmer, CC of the 354th EFS posing in front of Bulldogs squadron flag.



Two 354th EFS pilots are getting dressed for another mission.



'Moustache March': growing a moustache to honor Air Force legend Robin Olds.



Final check before heading out: you can see why the A-10 is nicknamed Warthog.