

**WIN**

**A SPITFIRE  
FLIGHT**

Closing date  
30 September  
2024



July 2024  
Issue No 615,  
Vol 52, No 7

# AEROPLANE

HISTORY IN THE AIR SINCE 1911

**SPECIAL  
ISSUE**



**COLD WAR**

# BLACKBIRD



*Creating the SR-71's British connection*

**BREITLING FIGHTERS**

Remembering the great warbird aerobatic team

**DUTCH STARFIGHTER**

Another F-104 to fly in Europe?





Spitfire IXT EN570/LN-AOA being flown by Rolf Meum on 11 May near its new base at Notodden. RUNAR VASSBOTTEN

## Norwegian Flying Aces Spitfire airborne

**T**he Norwegian Flying Aces Supermarine Spitfire IXT, EN570/LN-AOA, arrived at its new home at Notodden in southern Norway on the evening of 10 May in the hands of chief pilot Rolf Meum, two weeks after it had made its maiden post-restoration flight with Pete Kynsey at the helm following a rebuild performed by the Spitfire Company at Biggin Hill.

Coded FY-J, EN570 was operated by the Biggin Hill-based No 611 Squadron from April-June 1943. Norwegian pilot Lt Rolf Torbjørn Tradin shot down a Focke-Wulf Fw 190 in it during a 'Ramrod' sweep over Normandy on 30 May, but fell to the guns of another Fw 190 that had got onto his tail during the dogfight, crashing into the sea near Pont l'Évêque. Just short of two weeks later, on 11 June, EN570 was

in turn shot down by an Fw 190, Fg Off Gordon Rowland Lindsay losing his life. The remains of the fighter were recovered from the crash site in the Robermont woods, close to Saint-Pol-sur-Mer, in July 2013.

Tradin had scored one previous victory, shooting down a Junkers Ju 52/3m while flying a Norwegian Gloster Gladiator north of the Oslofjord on 9 April 1940.

## Last operational Belgian Starfighter restored

At Bilzen, Belgium, 20-odd miles north of Liège, Luc Degens has completed restoration of the last Lockheed F-104G Starfighter to fly with the Belgian Air Force, serial FX99 (c/n 9172). It is now on display behind Degens' aviation-themed bed and breakfast business in the town.

FX99 was built under licence by SABCA and delivered to the Belgian Air Force on 2 April 1965, but remained in storage for almost two years before finally entering service with 10 Wing at Kleine Brogel on 12 April 1967. Sixteen years later, on 26

September 1983, the aircraft made the last official F-104G flight with the Belgian Air Force, being ferried by Kapt vl Aerts of 31 'Tiger' Squadron from Kleine Brogel to Koksijde for storage.

During 1987 the aircraft was part of a batch of TF-104Gs and F-104Gs sold to Radcomm Enterprises, which stripped them of all usable parts and abandoned the remains at Koksijde, but FX99 was one of a handful that were shipped to the USA in November 1990 for preservation. It was first noted at Bangor, Maine in 1991, but by 1995 had been acquired by International Vintage Aircraft at Markham airport, Ontario, Canada. The Starfighter later became part of the Canadian Air Sea Land Museum at Ontario, where it began to slowly rot away.

During 2021 two Belgian enthusiasts managed to acquire the aircraft and dismantle and pack it into two containers for shipment back to Belgium. FX99 arrived on their premises at Houthalen-Helchteren in October of that year and they started to reassemble the airframe, but for various reasons they had to abandon the project and it was offered for sale.



A fantastic effort by bed and breakfast proprietor Luc Degens has seen former Belgian Air Force F-104G FX99 transformed into this superb exhibit at Bilzen. LAURENT HEYLIGEN

In August 2022, it was acquired and transported by Luc Degens for restoration and display next to his Antonov An-2TP, SP-FIX. Over an 18-month period, Degens painstakingly repaired all the damage FX99 had suffered during its travels and re-created the scheme it wore during its last flight in 1983. The end result is probably the best-restored F-104G currently on show in Belgium.

