

UNVEILING BELGIAN F-104G FX99

It was a very rainy day that 22 september 2023 in the Belgian village of Eigenbilzen, but in our hearts there was one big sunshine! We all loved the F-104, we all had a connection with the F-104. Between the guest were also the Tiger Air Forces Museum of Kleine Brogel with the famous Jos'Snor'Palmer with his crewmembers. Also our Dutch F-104 D-8114 friends paid a visit as 'partners in crime'! Also the Belgian Mirage-group from Brustem airbase were present! In all, pilots with their wives, enthusiasts and colleague restorators were there! A little more than about 140 people made it to Eigenbilzen.

FX99 made it's last official flight at 26 september 1983 as she was ferried from Kleine Brogel airbase to Koksijde for storage accumulating some 2617 flighthours.

From mid 1994 till october 2021 this a/c could be found at Canadian Markham as part of a museum. Two enthusiasts brought her back to Belgium and arrived end october 2021 in Helchteren, very close to it's homebase Kleine Brogel.

Due to circumstances the plane was sold to the current owner and IFS member Luc Degens who restored it from the day it arrived in Eigenbilzen at 26 august 2022 at his premises. Dedication and much interest resulted in a magnificent restored Belgian F-104 in a fairly short amount of time, and till today it's one of the finest examples of a Belgian F-104 that can be found in Belgium.

Back to today, 22 september 2023. The first plans to make the unveiling would be at 16.00h but the weatherconditions didn't let this to happen. So it was sceduled an hour later, at 17.00h. At this time the weather cleared up and surprise surprise, a three-ship of 349 Sqn F-16s of Kleine Brogel came by to salut the F-104!

Shortly after all former F-104 pilots that were present, gathered around FX99 and just after 17.00h the big black cloth was carefully taken away and the beautiful F-104 s/n FX99 came to view! After a loud applause the plane was welcomed in the Belgian society again!

The three Belgian pilots that made that last official flight happening, Cdt. Francois Aerts who flew this FX99 was together with Patrick Steens and John Lemmens, who piloted that time the accompanying TF-104G the FC11 to Koksijde for storage were after 40 years still around and were happy to see each other again at this, more or less, reunion, with fellow flyboys AND with FX99

The plane is now still in the open, but will be put inside in the near future as more like a shelter/hangar will be built at Luc's premises.

40 Years after her last flight FX99 was again full of life, as the nav-lights were blinking again, and the landinglights shining like never before!

After the unveiling the rain sets in again, as God wanted to say, you've had your unveiling, now I can let it rain again...

Belgium as from today a real nice and correct restored F-104 again!

I would like to thank Luc Degens for the invitation he gave and wish him all the best of luck with his plans!