



# Thunders at 'Exercise



Five PAF JF-17 Thunders participated at the Exercise

The latest edition of Turkey's *Anatolian Eagle* Air exercise was held during 17-28 June 2019 at Konya Air Base in the Central Anatolia Region of Turkey. Konya is one of three main Tactical Training Centres in the Western alliance, along with Nellis which hosts *Red Flag* in the USA and the *Maple Flag* held at the Canadian Forces Base Cold Lake, Alberta. There are several exercises under the nomenclature *Anatolian Eagle* which take place at Konya during the year, and it is here that the Pakistan Air Force has regularly participated, earlier with F-16s but this time with the JF-17 Thunder which came from the recently raised No.28 Squadron, home-based at Samungli near Quetta.

Origins of *Anatolian Eagle* go back to the 1980s when the Turkish Air Force embarked on a modernisation programme, and well recognised that the training of its

personnel was as vital as having the right equipment. The 3rd Main Jet Base at Konya, which is located on edge of the vast and sparsely populated Konya Plains in Central Anatolia, was chosen as this is considered an ideal location for such exercises, the necessary infrastructure completed in June 2001, only a few days before the start of the first *Anatolian Eagle* exercise, participants being from the Turkish, United States and Israeli Air Forces.

Further expansion was made in 2003 with the introduction of Electronic Warfare (EW) systems, and a dedicated aircraft parking area, the Eagle ramp, was inaugurated in 2008.

The *Anatolian Eagle* exercises are carried out several times a year and Konya has hosted delegations from up to 14 nations, including USA, Europe and the Middle East, as well as NATO. Pakistan has been a regular participant.

The exercises have many similarities with *Red Flag* and "one of its objectives is to provide a realistic operational environment to give inexperienced pilots exposure to being part of a large force in wartime conditions, with the aim of increasing their survivability, especially in the early days of a war. It also provides an opportunity for an exchange of experiences amongst participating aircrew and the facility to improve interoperability between different air forces operating different types of aircraft".

The Exercise takes place over airspace spread over 50,000 square miles, and altitude of up to 50,000ft, Some 70 miles east of Konya. There is also a designated area over the Mediterranean, north of Cyprus, for maritime operations, which allows room for 70 to 80 fighters to operate in safely.

As with *Red Flag* the visiting units form *Blue Force*, and are augmented by

# Anatolian Eagle'



the addition of Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) aircraft, either from Boeing E-7T Peace Eagles of 131 Filo or NATO Boeing E-3A Sentries from NATO's AEW&C Force. Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) is provided by the 135 Filo, using their Airbus AS532AL Cougars and Bell UH-1H Iroquois.

*Red Force* is provided by Konya-based 132 Weapons and Tactics Squadron, with their Lockheed Martin F-16 Fighting Falcons, which operate in the Aggressor role. Controlling the exercise is the *White Force*, which develops the scenarios, releases the Air Tasking Orders (ATOs), monitors all missions and analyses the results. Under their auspices Command and Control (C2) of the exercise is provided using the Air Combat Manoeuvring Instrumentation (ACMI) system, which allows the *White Force* to track in real time every aircraft taking part, and to be able to monitor such parameters as their altitude and airspeed.

Fundamentally the *Blue Force* are given targets to attack in the Redlands using Combined Air Operations (COMAO), which are defended by the *Red Force* with aircraft and ground-based systems.

The Anatolian Eagle facilities are located in one area on the Western side of the base, with each Force having its own buildings within the complex; *Blue Force* has three buildings whilst *Red* and *White* have one each. Only members of the respective Force are allowed in their buildings, all situated

## Fighting Falcons at Konya

The Turkish Air Force (*Türk Hava Kuvvetleri*) are one of the largest operators of the F-16 Fighting Falcon, after the US Air Force. Over the years, some 240 of this aircraft type (Block 30/40/50) were received, including considerable numbers built by the Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI) which also supplied 46 Turkish built F-16s to the Egyptian Air Force in 1993-1995.

The F-16s are operated by twelve Turkish squadrons including 132nd (*Dagger*) which has been designated as a weapons and tactics training squadron, at the 3rd Main Jet Base, Konya. (*Vayu Editorial Team*)

