

Exercise Vigilant Sphinx – Cyprus 2014

As part of Op Bolthole, 208 Sqn wanted to explore the options of where to operate from when the main runway goes through its resurfacing in FY 15/16: Leuchars . closed; Linton, only one runway; Lossie ð urn no thanks; Marham ð is that better or worse than Lossie?! Akrotiri ð hmmm that could work. With the idea of Cyprus growing in the mind of OC 208, Mostyn Payne was given the thankless task of organising 8 jets, 20 aircrew, 20 BDS engineers and 5 Ops staff (inc. ATC) for the 2 week detachment.

Day 1 involved the trail flying through FAF Orange, in southern France and onto IAF Gioia del Colle, in Southern Italy, where Paddy ~~food~~ *connoisseur*+Kershaw, took the hungry and tired aircrew to the worst pizza house in the world.

Day 2 was the quick hop across to USN Souda Bay before the final leg into Akrotiri.

Friday was full of briefs on where you shouldn't go, places you'd get *honey trapped* and why you shouldn't harass the local wildlife, before being released for the weekend. One team decided to go for a cultural weekend, taking their own local guide Wam (the ex 1* now Junta), and disappeared off to Pafos, whilst the hard-core-massive stayed in the OM. The only story that emerged from the cultural crew was that you really shouldn't go to Pafos ð

The next week consisted of 5 am alarms to make sure the first take off was 7am. This allowed the Det to achieve 3 waves (of 5-7 jets), before the temperature got too hot, but still achieving 18 sorties a day . the same flying rate we have in the UK. The afternoons were then filled with sport (if you enjoyed a dose of heatstroke), BBQs, windsurfing or the beach. The Sqn did lose one day ð flying due to a Life Saving Jacket issue back in the UK, so in the afternoon the guys went off to a local ~~safe~~ *safe*+water park to get their adrenalin fix.

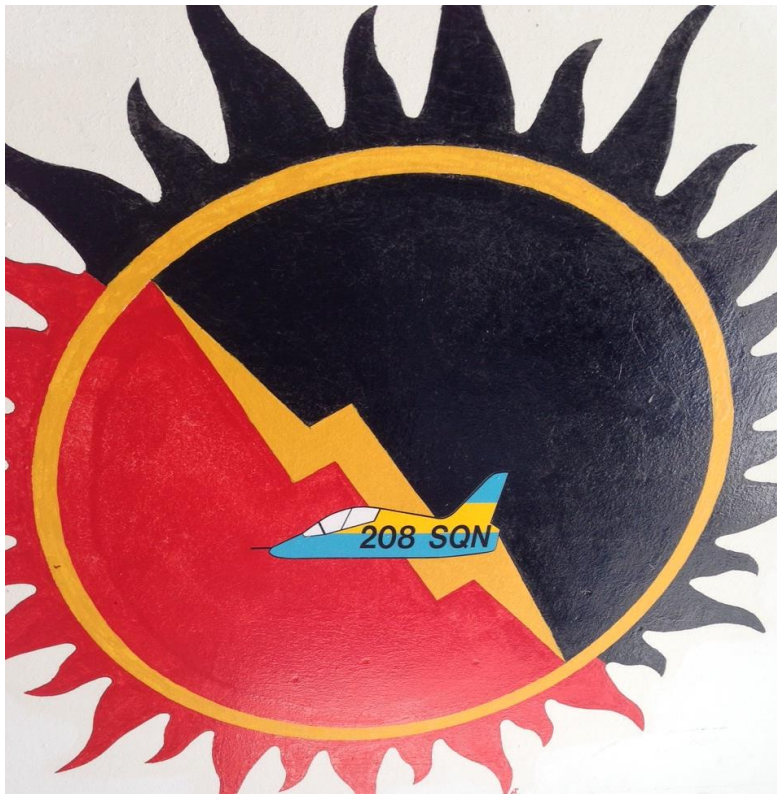
The final week involved: the end of the 1vs1 phase for Stu and Steve; the completion of several different staff work ups; and a few Pax flights to thank RAF Akrotiri for their support.

The Det was very successful with 97 sorties achieved, in 89 hours of flying (with an additional 15 sorties being cancelled due to the LSJ issue). Sophie Polwin completed her QFI AFT Convex, Paddy and James completed their 1v1 phase of the TW QFI Cse and Mostyn achieved his Close Form Leader qualification. This showed that an Op Bolthole detachment to Cyprus could still deliver the training output 208 Sqn achieves consistently, day-in day-out, with the addition training benefits of overseas flying, landaways and operating from a different airfield.

See below for some souvenir photographs:



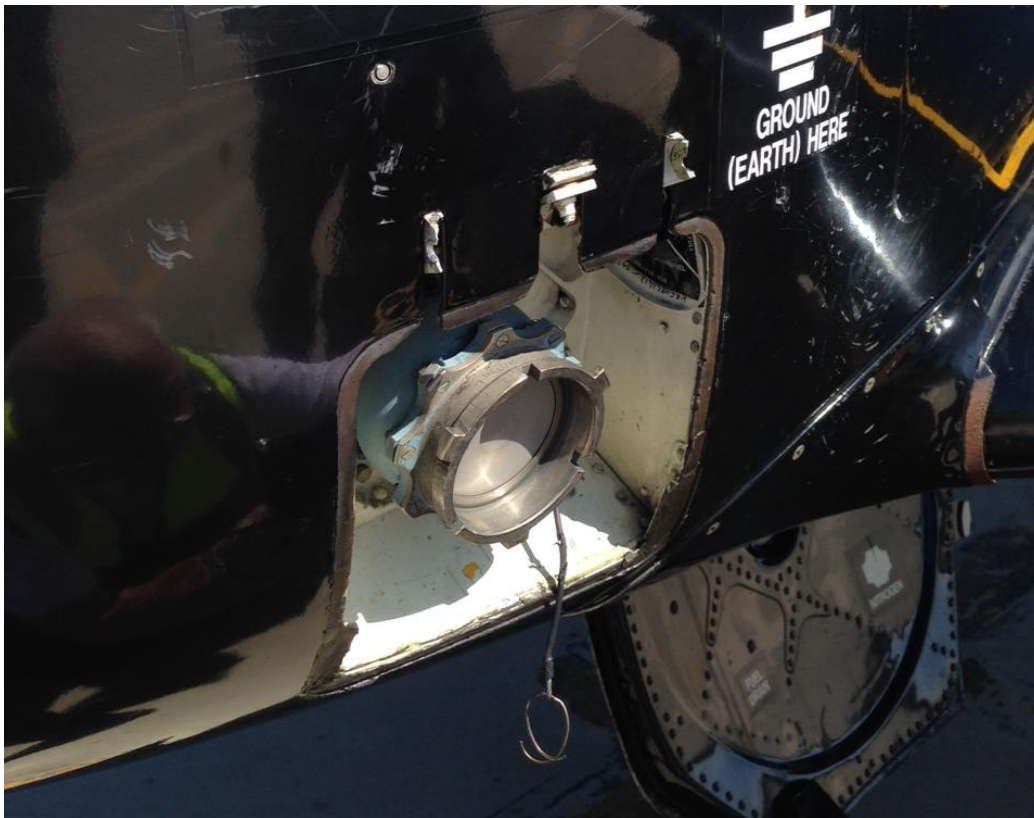
Our ISO container was a little more secure than expected!



Wish you were here...



Mostyn keeps up his 2 Group Diet



One job Paddy, one job!



The official Junta Leader hand-over tattoosõ



There was the odd BBQ it would have been rude not too!