

# Cento Anni dell' Aeronautica Militare

## 100 years of the Italian Air Force

**O**n 28 March 1923, the Regia Aeronautica (Royal Air Force) was founded and Minister President Benito Mussolini wanted that Italy to become a world power. The first military operations where the Regia Aeronautica was involved were conducted in Ethiopia in 1935 and Spain between 1936 and 1939. On 10 June 1940, Italy entered World War II alongside Germany and after the armistice of 8 September 1943, Italy and also the Regia Aeronautica divided itself into two. The hostilities ended on 8 May 1945 and a referendum resulted in the proclamation of Italy as a Republic on 18 June 1946. Also the Regia Aeronautica was called Aeronautica Militare (Air Force) since that day!

The Paris Peace Treaty of 1947 placed severe restrictions on the Italian

armed forces, but becoming a NATO member in 1949, opened the way for modernisation of the Aeronautica Militare. Through the mutual defence assistance programme, the Aeronautica Militare received American military aid in the form of P-51 Mustang, P-47 Thunderbolt and later the F-84, F-86 and C-119s. The Aeronautica Militare was not content with foreign-designed aircraft and the Italian aviation industry was reborn and began to develop and produce its own aircraft like the Fiat G-91, Aermacchi MB-326, Piaggio P166 and multiple Agusta-Bell helicopters. The Lockheed F-104G Starfighter was manufactured under license by Fiat and during the seventies, the Lockheed-Aeritalia F-104S, a fighter-variant of the Star fighter, was developed to meet the requirements of

the Italian defence system. To improve and expand the aircraft industry, Italy joined the programme of the Panavia Tornado and developed and introduced the AMX together with Embraer. Nowadays, the Aeronautica Militare is flying the Eurofighter and the Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II.

To celebrate the 100 years anniversary of the Regia Aeronautica/Aeronautica Militare, a lot of symposiums and events were organised throughout whole Italy. It started with the historical symposium on 15 February at the Palazzo Vecchio, Firenze. At the Piazza del Popolo in Rome was an exhibition with aircraft and a helicopter. On 28 March, almost all the airbases of the Aeronautica Militare were open to the public. The highlight of all the events was a flyby of

A total of 81 helicopters and aircraft participated in the flyby in the following formations:

- ❖ Formation 1 : 6x F-35, 8x EF-2000 and 8x T-346
- ❖ Formation 2 : 2x HH-139B, 1x VH-139A, 1x UH-139A and 2x AB-212AM
- ❖ Formation 3 : 3x HH-101A and 3x HH-101A
- ❖ Formation 4 : 4x P-180AM
- ❖ Formation 5 : 2x C-130J, 4x C-27J and 1x P-72A
- ❖ Formation 6 : 1x Beech 350 and 1x E-550A
- ❖ Formation 7 : 1x A-319, 1x Falcon 50 and 1x Falcon 900
- ❖ Formation 8 : 2x Tornado ECR and 6x Tornado IDS
- ❖ Formation 9 : 4x EF-200 and 4x T-346
- ❖ Formation 10 : 1x KC-767A, 1x F-35B, 2x EF-2000 and 2x T-346
- ❖ Formation 11 : 9x MB-339 Freccie Tricolori

helicopters and aircraft over the city centre of Rome!

The flyby began with not less than 22 aircraft that formed the numbers 100 to mark the 100 years anniversary of the Aeronautica Militare and it ended with the national Freccie Tricolore which made a few passes.

## Guidonia Air Base

Guidonia air base is located 22 kilometers north-east of Rome and was founded in 1915 and intended to accommodate as a flying school where pilots were trained. After the newly formed Regia Aeronautica (Royal Air Force), the air base underwent a construction and the facilities of the Higher Directorate of Studies and Experiences, as well as the Experimental Flight Centre and the Aircraft Construction Plant for the development and construction of new aircraft were built at the air base.

Nowadays, these facilities are at Pratica di Mare air base and Guidonia is used again for training pilots. Guidonia is the home of 60° Stormo which consist of two Squadriglia; 422 Squadriglia and 423 Squadriglia. 422 Squadriglia is flying with Gliders like Grob G103, Lak17 and Nimbus 4D. The 423 Squadriglia is flying with S-208M.

In 1920, two SVA 9 biplanes flew from Rome to Tokyo, covering 18,000 kilometers in 106 days! This record flight was conducted with aircraft made in wood, with open cockpits and were not equipped with radios and navigation was done on watch and compass! To celebrate the 100th anniversary of this flight, two S-208s received special coloured tails. To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Regia Aeronautica/ Aeronautica Militare, four S-208s received special colours.

## Frosinone Air Base

Frosinone air base is located 74 kilometers south-east of Rome and was founded between 1936 and 1939 to train pilots. In the beginning, both fixed-wing

and rotary-wing pilots were trained at Frosinone but in 1955, the training of fixed-wing pilots was transferred to nearby Latina air base. Latina air base is located 34 kilometers west of Frosinone and 52 kilometers south-east of Rome. Frosinone is the home of 72° Stormo-208° Gruppo and is flying the NH500E helicopter. The 72° Stormo is also responsible for the training of helicopter pilots for the Aviazione dell'Esercito, Carbineiri, Polizia di Stato, Vigili del Fuoco and Guardia di Finanza. For this, the Aviazione dell'Esercito and Vigili del Fuoco have their AB206s on temporary deployment at Frosinone. ✈️

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All photos by Rene Slegers