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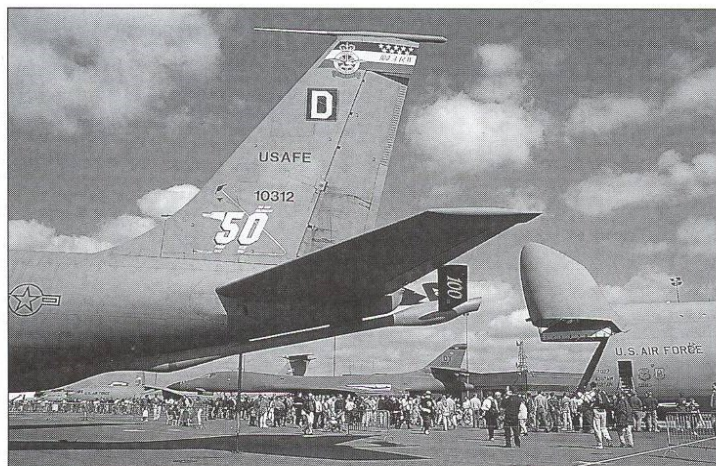


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AIR Show

Reports

AI's roving team of reporters give their verdict on the Air Fete at Mildenhall and the Fighter Meet at North Weald



AIR FETE 97

Four weeks following Nellis' Golden Air Tattoo, it was the turn of RAF Mildenhall, Suffolk, to stage the official European commemoration of the USAF's 50th anniversary.

The sharp and frosty weekend of 24-25 May in East Anglia was as much a contrast with the heat and dust of Nevada as could be achieved, but the sky stayed clear for 20 military air arms representing 16 countries to pay tribute to the USAF's 'Golden Legacy and Boundless



Above: A big show stealer at Mildenhall this year, the mighty Saab JA-37 Viggen was making the Swedish Air Force's debut at an Air Fete. USAF fighter pilots were amazed by the Viggen's capability to reverse inside its own length, perform a one-eighty on a Kona and then blast off in the direction it had just landed — all inside 30sec. MA

Left: Air Fete 97 static park, headed up by the USAF 50th Anniversary logo-toting KC-135R of 100th ARW Boss, Col Christopher Kelly. MA

Future'. Six international aerobatic teams, headed by the Thunderbirds making their first single-show overseas deployment in their history, along with the first public appearance in the UK by the Northrop Grumman B-2A Spirit, guaranteed that Team Mildenhall received a record 200,000-plus Saturday crowd figure.

Sweden, Hungary and Slovenia became the latest countries

to send military aircraft to the Air Fete, the latter nation being one of the best kept secret surprises promised this year by co-ordinator Roger Hoeftling. Highlights of a very full and imaginative static display was a line of Boeing C-135 variants, including an impressive three-ship from Offutt AFB, Nebraska. The USAF's Golden Jubilee may have over-shadowed the military Boeing 707's 40th anniversary but was not forgotten by Team Mildenhall. Featured are some of the photographic highlights of a superb Air Fete 97 which has been well worth waiting for. MARK ASHLEY

Left: The Thunderbirds on the Mildenhall ramp, firing up for their finale to the Saturday show. The USAF Aerial Demonstration Team had flown direct from Andrews AFB three days before Air Fete 97, then departed on Sunday for a 13-hour flight to Colorado Springs. MA

Below left: The star static exhibit was Boeing EC-135C Command Post 63-8054 of the 7th ACCS, part of the prolific 55th Wing at Offutt AFB, Nebraska. The 55th was well represented at Mildenhall, with OC-135B 'Open Skies' Treaty aircraft 61-2670 of the 45th RS and RC-135V Rivet Joint 64-14845 of the 343rd RS alongside it in a line-up dedicated to the military Boeing 707's 40th anniversary. The line was completed by KC-135R 61-0312 of the Mildenhall-based 100th ARW and C-135 derivative, E-3B 76-1605 of the 552nd ACW from Tinker AFB, Oklahoma. MA