



Enter the Dragon

Austrian AF Drakens at the ACMI

Making a welcome return to RAF Waddington on September 4th were nine Austrian Air Force J.35 Drakens. Deployed to operate on the BAE Systems ACMI facility, the Drakens last graced Waddington's dispersals in the late nineties and with the type shortly due to be replaced, this years visit may be the last. Photos Chris Chambers and Robin Powney.

Following the cancellation of last years ACMI deployment of the Austrian AF, their appearance in the 2002 time table was greeted with a mixture of scepticism and enthusiasm. The Draken has managed to stir mixed emotions and heated debate between the fly by wire fans and those a little more appreciative of the classic fifties design, yet their appearance at Waddington ensured a steady flow of visitors through the gates of the A15 enclosure as enthusiasts traveled from far and wide to catch a glimpse of the dying breed.



Although present for almost three weeks, the Drakens have only flown on the range for two. With up to eight sorties per day, the Austrian pilots have been able to practice similar and dissimilar air combat thanks to a steady stream of RAF Harrier GR7's passing through the Waddington facility. (Although the outcome of such battles is a closely guarded secret).



The Draken is employed primarily as an interceptor, designed in the early fifties from a requirement for a high speed aircraft capable of intercepting high altitude bombers flying in excess of Mach 0.9. The aircraft later showed itself to be good dogfighter too. Its instantaneous turn rate is very good, but as is typical for delta winged aircraft, induced drag bleeds off a lot of energy during turns, so requiring a high use of afterburner. This in turn limited range and endurance. This was especially evident to observers at Waddington as even with two centre line tanks fitted the Drakens sorties usually lasted no longer than forty minutes as opposed to the usual one hour we have come to expect from other types. Observers also noted that for reasons unknown, the sorties each day would use just the same four aircraft.



The Austrian Connection

The Austrian Air Force were the final export customer of the type when they ordered 24 J35D aircraft, designated 35OE, in May 1985. The 35OEs were refurbished before delivery with 1.000 flying hours and updated avionics added to these mid-1960s airframes, both cannon and the original radar were retained.

The first aircraft was handed over on June 25, 1987.

Deliveries started in late 1987, but initially all Drakens were retained in Sweden for pilot training at Ängelholm.

The 1st and 2nd Staffel



With plans already in place to retire the Drakens as soon as next year, RAF Waddington has probably played host to its last Dragon deployment. Shame...

Austrian Air Force Detachment			
05	AJ.35OE Draken	Arr 4/09	Dep 23/09
07	AJ.35OE Draken	Arr 4/09	Dep 23/09
09	AJ.35OE Draken	Arr 4/09	Dep 23/09
10	AJ.35OE Draken	Arr 4/09	Dep 23/09
11	AJ.35OE Draken	Arr 4/09	Dep 23/09
13	AJ.35OE Draken	Arr 4/09	Dep 23/09
14	AJ.35OE Draken	Arr 4/09	Dep 23/09
20	AJ.35OE Draken	Arr 4/09	Dep 23/09
22	AJ.35OE Draken	Arr 4/09	Dep 23/09
Serial Details courtesy of Rick Sleight			

received the full order in 1988/1989 .

Like Finland, Austrian military forces are restricted by a peace treaty originating at the conclusion of the Second World War. According to this, a maximum of 5000 personnel and 70 'defensive' combat aircraft are allowed in service. Until recently there had also been a complete ban on guided missile systems of any kind, this was obviously ended though when Austria was allowed to purchase AIM-9 Sidewinder missiles for its Drakens

(Courtesy of [Scramble website](#))