Germany bans military stunt flying

By JOSEPH OWEN
and DEEDEE AHRINGDOKE
Staff writers

West German Defense Minister Rupert Scholz Monday announced a ban on stunt flying for German military aircraft and called on allied nations to find safer ways to conduct flying demonstrations.

Scholz, speaking on a special program on the German television network ZDF, said, "I have made the decision that aerobatic flying can no longer be considered, but it is obvious that I can make this decision only for the West German armed forces," the Associated Press reported.

On the same program, U.S. Ambassador Richard Burt indicated that the United States is ready to adopt its own ban on stunt-flying exhibitions at air shows at its bases in West Germany, according to the AP.

However, at a press conference earlier Monday in Landstuhl, West Germany, U.S. officials would not rule out future performances of precision flight teams, citing their value as a demonstration of equipment and training and as a recruiting tool.

Scholz initially appeared to be calling for an end to stunt flying by all allied nations in an announcement coming one day after the crash of three Italian jets that killed dozens and injured more than 300 during a performance at Ramstein AB.

He called on allied military leaders to See BAN on back page

Stunned spectators watch as a fireball from the crash of the solo jet erupts near the concession stands and a refrigeration trailer.
Survivors share their grief, shock
'I think God put my feeling aside'

By DARYL E. GREEN
Kaiserslautern bureau

RAMSTEN AB, West Germany — Survivors of Sunday’s fiery air disaster at the base open house gathered to share tears and feelings of guilt and depression Monday, the first of a series of grief clinics offered by Air Force mental health officials.

“A lot of us were selling snow cones, and we had a (refrigerator) unit stocked with a lot of ice,” a sergeant said as he choked. “I felt like I was looking at everything. I’m here for me, but I’m here for him too.”

“A young airman with just a little more than a year in the Air Force credited his faith for giving him the strength to help the wounded. "I was actually putting my hands inside their backs and sides to keep their veins shut," the 21-year-old said. “I think God put my feeling aside so that I could get in there and help.”

One common experience expected to be shared by virtually all the survivors is retelling all aspects of the event, said clinical social worker Mary Lee Kelly. “Down the road, years (later), if something like that isn’t talked about, somebody could have a more drastic reaction,” she said.

“I felt guilty because I froze,” an NCO said as he looked down, shaking his head. “I felt like I was looking at everything through a tunnel. I’m not sure it happened.”

The mental health experts at Ramstein encouraged talking about the experience as a means of dealing with it. “The family guidance center at Kapaun Air Station is in the process of working with the schools to get some program set up,” Mulligan said. Mulligan said widows should follow their normal daily routines. “Continue to work,” he said. “Stay involved with family, stay involved with activities. Try to maintain a normal day-to-day routine. If you continue to do it over time, you’ll kind of be back on auto-pilot.”

More than 105 killed since ’82

By The Stars and Stripes

The accident at Ramstein AB Sunday brings to more than 105 the number of pilots and spectators killed in Europe since 1982 as a result of 12 aircraft accidents at air shows:

- Aug. 28, 1988 — About 30 minutes before the Ramstein accident, a light Finnish civilian aircraft crashed during an open house air demonstration at Kleine Brogel, Belgium, killing its 44-year-old pilot.
- Aug. 7, 1988 — The pilot of a Mirage 5 fighter-bomber died when his jet crashed at an air show near Hechtel, Belgium.
- Aug. 11, 1988 — Three people were killed when an Airbus A330 jet crashed during a low pass at an air show near Mulhouse, in eastern France.
- May 30, 1988 — A vintage jet fighter crashed during a holiday air show in Coventry, England, killing its Royal Air Force pilot. The twin-engine Meteor T-7 plunged into a field three miles from Coventry Airport while attempting a descending turn in preparation for a flyby.
- May 6, 1988 — Two died at Hannover, West Germany when a British Chinook helicopter hit a loading ramp with its back rotor and burst into flames during a German air show.
- Feb. 3, 1988 — Six people died at Poiloux, France, when a vintage Dassault-Flamand bomber crashed during a low pass at an exhibition.
- July 24, 1986 — A vintage biplane crashed during a costume air show at Aberystwyth, Wales.
- Sept. 11, 1982 — An Army CH-47 Chinook carrying 46 people — eight of them Americans — crashed onto a highway during a German air show killing all aboard. Victims included the five-member U.S. crew, two AFN staff members, one U.S. skydiver, and 38 other skydivers from England, France and West Germany.

Italian air force officials puzzled by crash

By ALBA BRAGOLI

Italian air force officials Monday continued to puzzle over the cause of the crash that claimed the lives of at least 40 spectators and injured hundreds more at the Ramstein air show Sunday.

"The Frecce Tricolori is the pride of our air force, and their pilots are absolute tops," said team spokesman Maj. Giorgio Di Martino. "Their exhibitions are daring and everything is tried and tested again and again. But we are dealing with human beings and machines. When you fly, the slightest mistake or breakdown can spell disaster."

The pilots fly in Frecce Tricolori after one year of specialized aerobatic training and normally stay on the team for five years, Di Martino said.

"The pilots who apply for the team must have well over 1,000 hours of flight time before they are taken into consideration," he said. "Most are between 30 and 40 years of age and are at the height of their overall condition and performance. The ones who get in are men of quality and experience."

Frecce Tricolori, or the Tri-Color Arrows, is known as one of the most spectacular and daring aerobatic teams.

"In 1986 the team toured the United States and Canada and was seen by millions of people," Di Martino said. "They were the main attraction at all the air shows they participated in. The newspapers called our pilots 'unparalleled acrobats of the sky,' 'incredible flying daredevils.'"

The team consists of 14 pilots — all volunteers from fighter pilot squadrons — with three technical officers and 55 mechanics in support roles. They fly modified Aermacchi MB-339A two-seat training jets, which can be used as ground attack aircraft. The planes can fly up to 558 miles per hour.

"Every single maneuver is rehearsed hundreds of times. The aircraft are checked inside and out and so are the pilots," Di Martino said. "The pilots especially must always be in top physical and mental shape, since they must rely on their reflexes and sight alone."

He identified those killed in the Ramstein crash as Lt. Col. Mario Naldini, 41, the team leader, and Capt. Giorgio Alessio, 31, third left wing, with more than 3,500 flying hours, born in Palermo; Capt. Giuseppe Nutarelli, 38, first left wing, with more than 3,800 flying hours, born in Alessandria. However, the team's brochure listed Nutarelli as the soloist.

"At the time of the accident, the two large groups of the team were creating a heart shape out of brightly colored smoke trailing from the aircraft. The soloist, attempting to pass near the lowest point of the heart, clipped two other planes as he headed toward the crowd."

Roger Hoefling, a Briton who has narrated at least 300 air shows and witnessed a 1979 fatal accident involving the Italian team at RAF Mildenhall, England, said he rarely has seen an aerobatic maneuver like the one executed Sunday. He saw the accident replayed on British television.

"I don't know of another team that has a maneuver that has a man headed for the audience in quite that way," Hoefling said.

Aerobatics at air shows normally are done in front of crowds, not over, to try to avoid such disasters should the planes collide, Hoefling said.

Frecce Tricolori had three fatal accidents before the Ramstein crash. The first was July 12, 1978, when two planes collided while in training over the team's home airport of Rivolto, Italy, killing Capt. Graziano Carraro, 32.

The second accident occurred May 27, 1979, during the RAF Mildenhall exhibition, when Capt. Pier Gianni Petri managed to veer away from the crowd before crashing.

The third accident occurred during training in Rivolto on Sept. 2, 1981, and ended with the death of Capt. Antonio Gallus.

(Contributing to this report: staff writer Dave Deth in England.)
More victims may die, doctors say
Burn patients face greatest threats

By JANET D'AGOSTINO
Medical writer

LANDESTUHL, West Germany — Doctors said Monday they expect more deaths to follow in the wake of Sunday's fatal air show accident at Ramstein AB, in which at least 40 already are confirmed dead.

"There may be some more deaths, particularly among the burn patients," said Dr. (Col.) William Milnor, chief of orthopedics, at Landstuhl Army Regional Medical Center.

Officials at German hospitals said Monday that 10 of the estimated 200 people still hospitalized could die before the night was over. (See story below.)

Eleven patients remained at Landstuhl Monday morning, six of them after the crash of an Italian jet crashed in flames near a crowd of spectators at Ramstein's annual open house.

But the patients were coming in so fast, "the 120 is really a very accurate guess," said Maj. Joe Flannery, chief of clinical staff services, who was chief administrator on the scene Sunday.

The scene at the hospital was like something out of a movie, according to Spec. Donna Cohn, a Landstuhl environmental health specialist who helped carry litters when the first injured arrived.

"People were in pain and screaming, and there was a "pungent" smell of burnt flesh and hair, she said.

The 11 patients remaining at Landstuhl were in very serious or guarded condition, said Flannery, who, along with Milnor, answered media questions Monday morning. The injured still at Landstuhl were all Americans and included five servicemembers, Flannery said. The rest were family members, including two children.

The number of patients at Landstuhl is expected to change. American patients in German hospitals stabilize and are able to be transferred to the Army hospital, said Marie Shaw, a spokeswoman for the hospital.

The majority of people brought to the medical center Sunday had severe burns, with many going into shock from the severity of injuries and loss of blood, Milnor said. Intravenous lines quickly were placed into the injured because "the first thing that burn patients need is a lot of fluids," he said.

Although the number was not certain, Flannery knew of at least 15 to 20 children who were treated originally at the hospital.

Milnor said many of the injured were concerned about the well-being of family members who also were at the air show.

The majority of the 120 patients were Germans, Italians and other nationalities, Milnor said. The hospital activated its mass casualty plan soon after the accident, using the main entrance and hallways as a triage center for stabilizing patients.

Calling Sunday's accident the largest disaster Landstuhl has responded to, Flannery said the hospital's mass casualty plan worked well. There were no staff or blood shortages, and the coordination of emergency vehicle transportation also went smoothly, he said.

Blood supplies were well stocked because of the Reforger and Autumn Forge exercises, which are starting this month, said John Davis, a spokesman for Seventh Medical Command.

A five-member team of burn specialists was expected to arrive at the hospital Monday evening from the Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas.

The team was called in to help because "that is their specialty," and it is the "best-equipped burn unit in the world that he knew of," Flannery said.

Victims are given emergency treatment Sunday after a jet crashed in the midst of the crowd during the Ramstein AB air show.

Hospitals list conditions of disaster survivors

By REGINA KIRKENDALL
Staff writer

The following list details the conditions of more than 330 people injured Sunday at the Ramstein open house. About 200 remained hospitalized Monday; 10 patients were not expected to survive the night.

While the list covers most of the major hospitals and clinics that received the injured, other patients may have been treated at smaller medical facilities in the Ramstein area.

Ludwigshafen City Hospital — Of the 33 victims initially treated, 29 remained hospitalized Monday. Two died early Monday. Five people were treated and released. One man checked himself out, although his injuries required hospital treatment.

Of those who remained hospitalized, 15 had severe or life-threatening burns and six had severe burns. The original 27 hospitalized Monday morning included five servicemembers, Flannery said. Four were to be transferred to Aachen's Special Clinic for burns. Two were to be transferred to Ludwigshafen.

Kaiserslautern City Hospital — Treated about 105 victims. Forty-six remained hospitalized Monday. Eight with life-threatening burns were to be transferred to Ludwigshafen. Five of them were not expected to survive the night. No information was available concerning the nationality or sex of the patients.

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By DEEDEE ARRINGTON DOKE

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, West Germany — Air Force officials turned to unclaimed cars and dental records Monday in an attempt to identify victims of the air show disaster.

Death figures fluctuated and no names of victims were released Monday, but it was believed at least 42 people were killed when three Italian air force planes collided at the annual Flugtag air show.

"It takes time to identify people and nationalities," said 1st Lt. Alan Satterly, a base spokesman. "It's a big problem." 

"They're trying every possible method to come up with identification, including dental records and dental records, calling units to see if anyone is missing." 

Throughout Sunday night and into Monday, 65 volunteers staffed a bank of phones that served as an emergency clearinghouse for information on missing people. In the aftermath of the crash, thousands of people were separated from their friends and families.

A 2 1/2-hour traffic jam to get off base added to the confusion.

When news of the disaster reached the United States, frantic friends and relatives began calling Ramstein to find out if their loved ones were safe.

"One woman called every 15 minutes," a volunteer said.

While few figures were available on how many lost people were matched through the clearinghouse, about 1,000 names of potential missing persons were turned in.

And there were success stories, such as a toddler hospitalized at Homburg who couldn't remember her name. She eventually was matched up with her parents, who had been taken to Landstuhl Army Regional Medical Center for treatment.

The centerpiece of what remained at the accident site Monday was the charred ruins of a single airplane lodged at the end of a refrigeration trailer. Scattered across the area were parts of the plane.

Bicycles thrown on the ground as their riders ran from the airplane's flames and cars abandoned in the parking lot were piled most of the larger debris left on the grass.

On one four-door car, two doors had been flung open and an empty pop bottle stood on the roof. 

Standing guard at the scene of this strangely quiet jungle were U.S. Air Force security police.

The scene at a base theater was more active as people who wanted to let their friends and relatives in the United States know that they were safe took advantage of free telephone lines arranged by the 1964th Comm Group.

"My other relatives called last night to see if we were all right," Wanda Yol of Sulzbach said. "My mother hasn't called. It's better for me to give her a call to let her know."

In other developments:

- Some witnesses said they thought the planes may have been flying too low and too close to spectators. Witnesses said the jets were flying at about 100 feet when the collision occurred, the Associated Press reported.

- Klaus Klop, head of the Federal Aeronautics Office in Braunschweig, said regulations require that aircraft other than helicopters stay above 500 feet. But other West German officials pointed out that the rules for air shows at the families of those killed and injured.

- The Italian air force stunt team involved in the air show disaster will eliminate maneuvers that fly over people and reduce the number of planes at other performances this year, air force chief Gen. Franco Pisano said.

**BAN**

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seek safer ways for pilots to demonstrate their flying skills to the public.

"Until recommendations are presented on which decisions can be made, there will be, with the agreement of the allied air forces, no air shows involving military aircraft in the Federal Republic of Germany," Scholz, a member of the Christian Democratic Union, said in a statement released by his Bonn office.

Also earlier Monday, Burt said the Air Force will work to ensure safety at Air Force bases in the future.

"Their faces showing fright and horror, spectators run from the deadly inferno following the crash of an Italian air force aerial team."