

# Dutch F-16's relocation from USA to Europe



*Netherlands Detachment Tucson Arizona had five F-16AM's assigned. One of them being J-004/AZ which arrived at Sabca in December 2022*

## Draken International purchases European F-16's

Draken International is one of civilian companies in the USA contracted to provide adversary aircraft to US Department of Defence. Operating in the red air role, its aircraft provide realistic training to combat squadrons. Draken operates a fleet of A-4 Skyhawk, Cheetah, L-159, Mirage F.1 and MB-339 aircraft. In 2021, it was announced that the company bought F-16's from NATO members The Netherlands

and Norway; following the move made by competitor Top Aces who had bought former Israeli Defence Force F-16's.

On 30 June 2021, the Netherlands MoD announced it sold 12 of its F-16's to Draken as part of its End Of Life Type (ELOT) programme. The contract with Draken contained an option for the delivery of another 28 F-16's. Except the Dutch fighters, Draken also purchased up to 12 F-16's from the Royal Norwegian Air Force, a contract announced by the Norwegians

on 2 December 2021. Ten of the 12 Dutch F-16's were assigned to the Netherlands Detachment Tucson Arizona (NDTA). The other two withdrawn from use by 312 squadron based at Volkel.

## RNLAF F-16's End Of Life Type (ELOT)

On 1 January 2019, the RNLAF had 68 F-16AM/BM fighters assigned to its squadrons. The number contained 61 operational and seven logistical reserve aircraft. These were operated by 322 squadron at Leeuwarden, 312 and 313 squadrons at Volkel and the NDTA. These F-16's are part of the End Of Life Type (ELOT) programme. From 2019 until the end of 2022, a total of 44 F-16's, including all dual seat F-16BM, were withdrawn from service. These contained the 10 Tucson based fighters. Within The Netherlands both 322 and 313 ceased F-16's operations and passed on their aircraft to 312 squadron based at Volkel. 312 squadron will continue to fly the aircraft until the end of 2024 when the last F-16's will cease operations. From 1 January 2023, the squadron had 24 F-16AM's assigned. Aircraft withdrawn from service are stored at the base and await their future. The Netherlands Defence Material Organisation (DMO) is responsible for the purchase of material for the armed forces



*The second flight arrived in Belgium on 23 January 2023*