

# Baltic Air Policing – Solidarity Among Partners

Information provided by DEU 71st Fighter Squadron “Richthofen”



Since the spring of 2004, NATO has been in direct support of the three Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Under the NATO Integrated Air Defence Systems (NATI-NADS), individual NATO members have rotated their fighter aircraft for three months each to provide necessary Quick Reaction Alert (Intercept) (QRA(I)) assets. At present, the air forces of the Baltic NATO members do not have any aircraft that could perform the Air Policing mission. Until the end of Sep-

tember, the German 71st Fighter Squadron “Richthofen” provided the operational QRA(I) contingent for the area over the north-eastern Baltic Sea.

Another element in ensuring integrity of the airspace over the Baltic Sea is the Control and Reporting Centre at Kaunas, Lithuania. All the data provided by the air surveillance radars are collected here to provide a real-time Recognized Air Picture. Should anything irregular occur in the airspace, this will be reported and if all prerequisites are met, the QRA(I) at Šiauliai will be alerted. However, the large majority of QRA(I) take-offs are conducted for training purposes.

Four F-4F Phantom jets and some 100 soldiers, normally stationed at Wittmund in Germany's north

west, were deployed to the Lithuanian Air Base at Šiauliai. The soldiers brought 250 tons of materiel to the country to ensure 24/7 operational



*Overhead Šiauliai Airbase*

*Photo: German Detachment to Šiauliai*

readiness posture of QRA(I). Norwegian F-16 and Polish MiG-21 aircraft were predecessors of the German Phantoms in this NATINADS role, and in October the United States took over the mission for the rest of the year.



*A two-ship F-4F taxiing at Šiauliai Airbase*

*Photo: German Detachment to Šiauliai*

