

20 years Pilatus "Turbo-Porter" with the Austrian Army Aviation



To celebrate the milestones of 20 years reliable service and 50.000 flying hours, one of the twelve Pilatus PC-6B "Turbo Porters" in service (3G-EK) received an eyecatching colour-scheme, representing all squadron links to the country and the home-base area of Tulln-Langenlebarb in Lower Austria, just 20 miles north-west of Vienna.

When the type was introduced into service, the pilots of the 4th squadron looked for a new

and fitting squadron emblem, and due to the long nose of the aircraft they adopted the blue ant-eater from the comic-series "Pink Panther", which is called "Blue Elise" in German. Therefore the aircraft received now a blue scheme with a large red-white shark-mouth with eyes on each side of the nose, a red-white-red flash stripe wrapped around the fuselage to represent Austria, a large yellow "4" on each side of the fin, a spinner in blue and yellow, the colours of Lower Austria, and in large letters on the underside of the wings "20 years PC-6". This innovative scheme was developed and applied by Lt. Erwin H. A. Schmidt and a team of squadron pilots. At the official celebration ceremony in May '96 the aircraft was rolled out in style, embedded in a cloud of white smoke. During this ceremony a demonstration of the versatility of the type took place, showing water-bombing, target-tow, para-drop and the extreme STOL-capabilities. Initially not all these missions were envisaged for the type, as it had been purchased mainly as a target-tug, but the pilots tested and implemented more and more applications, to which also aerial photography with vertical and oblique cameras was added. The aircraft is even capable of snow operations, as it can be equipped with skis on the landing gear.



The aircraft is powered by one of the world's most common engines, the Pratt&Whitney PT-6 turbo-shaft with 517hp flat-rated, permitting a cruising speed of 120 kts and a ceiling of 22000ft. Minimum approach speed is 50kts, and 100m landing run and 300m for take-off over a 50ft obstacle are sufficient. Wing span is 46ft, length 33ft and height 10ft. MTOW is 4500lb.

The reliability of the aircraft and the skill of its pilots earned praise not only at the celebration, but in the 20 years before and will certainly continue to do so for many years to come.