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# Warrior colours

The Luftwaffe loves painting its aircraft to highlight important anniversaries. **Stefan Peterson** follows the design of the 'Carbon Warrior' Eurofighter to celebrate the type's 15 years of service



Above: Three patches and a special coin were made for this year's German Armed Forces Day on June 13. The event was cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions  
 Right: The Eurofighter's special livery celebrates the 15th anniversary of the aircraft in service with the Luftwaffe All images by Stefan Petersen

On April 30, 2004, a new era for the Luftwaffe began with the arrival of the Eurofighter Typhoons at Laage Air Base, part of Rostock-Laage Airport in the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Northern Germany. These multi-role fighters were first part of the German Air Force's 73 Tactical Air Force Wing 'Steinhoff', formerly Fighter Wing 73.

"At the end of 2018, as we approached the 15-year-mark of the Eurofighter, we thought this anniversary has to be celebrated with a special livery," said Master Sergeant Thomas Koeplin, from the air wing's repair and electronics unit.

His idea caught on, and in the spring of 2019 the plans for celebratory livery became concrete. "There was an open competition which resulted in three designs," said Koeplin, who came up with one of the selected designs. He developed the concept with his technical team.

At the same time, Master Sergeant Stefan Thrun of Fighter Wing 71, based at Wittmund Air Base, was also helping with Koeplin's original idea. Thrun had previously designed a 'Baron Spirit' livery for the aircraft, named after the legendary Manfred, Baron von Richthofen – better known as the 'Red Baron' – the officer

commanding the original Jagdgeschwader 1 wing. His 'Baron Spirit' creation went on to win the trophy for best livery at 2019's Royal International Air Tattoo at RAF Fairford in Gloucestershire.

Koeplin told *AFM* that Thrun's computer programming skills and graphics experience were essential in bringing his original idea to fruition.

"It was a fluid process; perceptions from him and me were merged," he said. The colours and shapes were taken from the wing's badge – a crane placed on a stylised Iron Cross in blue and yellow. The combined design was called 'Carbon Warrior' and won the competition.

After financial resources were secured, they looked for a fitting Eurofighter and settled on 31+18. "This jet came directly from overhaul, clean and sheer, ready for foliation," said Koeplin. "Special liveries for Eurofighters aren't painted on but applied with foil. The foliation process isn't that complex; it's fast on and faster off." The technical clearance for ▶

**The foil for a single Eurofighter weighs between 60-80kg and covers a total surface area of about 200 square metres**



Above: After 15 years of service, the 73 Tactical Air Force Wing is justly proud of the aircraft's 'Carbon Warrior' livery Below: The special Eurofighter undergoes refuelling with a Luftwaffe A310 MRTT (Multi-Role Tanker Transport)



The canopy rails sport the name of 73 Tactical Air Force Wing's new commanding officer, Col Joachim 'Joe' Kaschke



The technical clearance for the Eurofighter's foliage is valid for one year, but it can be extended



the foliage is valid for one year, but it can be extended: "Principally we are safe for 200 flight hours, until the next overhaul."

The foil for a single Eurofighter weighs between 60-80kg and covers a total surface area of about 200 square metres. The type of foil used is prescribed by one of the Eurofighter's manufacturers, Airbus. Also, the System Support Centre – a joint venture between Airbus and the Luftwaffe – shares information so it can check if the weight of the foils has any influence on the handling of the aircraft. "Usually that's not the case, as the foils are spread over the aircraft quite evenly," said Koeplin.

According to Bernd Schwedes from Swiss design company Nordlicht, which in co-operation with digital printers Printzentrum Rostock was responsible for the foliating work, the entire procedure lasted 200 working hours. "I had always wanted to foliate an aircraft," said Schwedes, laughing, "but basically it is nothing different from foliating a truck."

The fighter's first official appearance with the 'Carbon Warrior' livery – on the ground, at least – came during a change of the wing's command on September 23, 2019. □

The 'Carbon Warrior' Eurofighter flies over the Northern German town of Neustrelitz





Above: Bernd Schwedes (centre) is assisted by two colleagues while he applies a large piece of foil on the Eurofighter's aft fuselage Below: 73 Tactical Air Force Wing's Master Sergeant Thomas Koeplin and Bernd Schwedes from Swiss design company Nordlicht work on the fin of the Eurofighter 31+18



The fighter was due to appear in this year's German Armed Forces Day, but the event was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic



The freshly finished 'Carbon Warrior' Eurofighter is rolled out of the hangar

Planned as a surprise, the out-going commanding officer of 73 Tactical Air Force Wing, Col Gero von Fritschen, saw the newly painted fighter decorated with his name on the canopy rail. He had returned from duty in Jordan only the week before and was unaware of the livery project.

The wing is justly proud of the Eurofighter's 'Carbon Warrior' design. For all crew members, it symbolised a work-intensive period, from the introduction of a new weapons system with all its problems (which they alone had to solve) to the consolidation of flight operations and further flying and technical developments.

They had hoped to reveal the jet as a highlight of Germany's Armed Forces Day on June 13 this year, but it never happened. Due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the entire event was cancelled.

However, on June 12, the day before the planned parade, the 'Carbon Warrior' took off for a training mission with photographers to record some air-to-air pictures as memories. By that time, the fighter had undergone a subtle but important change: the canopy rails now sported the name of the wing's new commanding officer, Col Joachim 'Joe' Kaschke, who piloted the 'Carbon Warrior' aircraft on its inaugural flight. **AFM**



Jacked up, the 31+18 stands in the hangar for its foliage