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SCORES ARE KILLED IN AIR SHOW CRASH IN WEST GERMANY

By SERGE SCHMEMANN, SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES

LEAD: Three jets from a precision flying team of the Italian Air Force collided and crashed today during a low swoop past a crowd of 300,000 at a United States air base in West Germany, killing at least 46 people and injuring as many as 500 others. Many of the injured suffered serious burns.

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There was no immediate breakdown of the nationalities of those killed in the crash, which took place during an air show at the Ramstein Air Base, 60 miles southwest of Frankfurt. Hospitals reported that both Americans and Germans were among the injured, and the West German radio said 500 people were hurt and half of those remained hospitalized.

The disaster provoked immediate reaction from West German politicians and from environmentalists who have long opposed air shows as dangerous and noisy. Officials canceled a West German show planned for next month. Flames Engulf Field

The collision at the Ramstein base sent one jet hurtling in a ball of flame into a field crowded with parked cars, concession tents and spectators lolling under a sunny sky. Within moments, the field was an inferno of smoke and blazing fuel. The injured lay crying as flames rose into the air.

West German officials said that many of those badly burned by jet fuel were listed in critical condition, and that the toll was expected to rise. All three pilots were among those killed. The popular air show is a regular feature of the annual open house at the sprawling Ramstein base, the largest military airfield in Western Europe.

The show had been opposed by the local authorities and by peace groups and environmentalists who have been campaigning against low overflights by NATO military jets. Citing several past accidents at similar air shows, the opposition Social Democratic and Green Parties had demanded that such displays be banned. 'We Are Afraid'

Local Protestant churches asked that the show be canceled and urged parishioners to boycott what they called a spectacle that glamorized weapons. Before the crash, protesters stood outside the gates of Ramstein with placards. One sign read: "We are afraid of air shows. End them now."

In the aftermath of the accident, the West German Defense Minister, Rupert Scholz, announced that he was cancelling a West German air show scheduled for next month, and he urged the NATO allies to do likewise.

The American commander of the Ramstein base, Gen. Lawrence Boese, issued a statement regretting "this most tragic accident" and announcing a commission of inquiry.

Despite opposition to the low flights and military parades, the annual open house at Ramstein, with its dramatic military air shows, remained a popular among West Germans, and today's warm, sunny weather brought out an estimated 300,000 onlookers, an Air Force spokesman said.

French and Portuguese teams had already performed when the Italian squad, known as the Frecce Tricolori, or tricolor arrows, took to the skies in 10 MB-339A jet planes. The aircraft are two-seat light-attack jet fighters used primarily for training but also for emergency air support. The precision flying by the team of 10 Italian pilots, the last event of the day, was to have been the highlight of the show. Close to the Ground

Shortly before 4 P.M., on their final fly-by, the Italian jets swept down to within 100 feet of the ground in two five-jet formations, racing toward one another and trailing colored smoke in the red, green and white of the Italian flag. As they passed in clear view of the crowd, two of the planes in one formation appeared to collide with one of the oncoming fighters in the second five-jet formation.

The single plane was instantly sent spinning tail-first into the crowded field. The other two crashed into the runway and into a nearby wooded area. The flaming spectacle and its aftermath, including the cries of the injured, were seen live on German television.

Several cars were set ablaze, and heavy black smoke billowed from the field as American and West German ambulances converged on the

site. Many people staggered about or lay on the ground, blackened by kerosene burns, some with their hair and clothing burned off. Many were reported to be in shock. Officials said the injured were taken to military and civilian hospitals in the area, some by helicopter.

Experienced Pilots

An Italian Air Force spokesman confirmed that the three pilots were killed, including the formation leader, Mario Naldini, 41 years old. The spokesman said the three had 9,000 hours of flying experience. The Italian flying team, based near Udine, is Italy's most experienced precision squadron. It was founded in 1930. The pilots have used the MB-339A aircraft, which have had their wingtip fuel tanks removed to allow for close formations, since 1982.

The crash is certain to further dismay West Germans already up in arms about the low-level military training flights conducted over large areas of rural West Germany. Those flights have become the object of growing anger from environmentalists and from local residents unhappy about the brutal noise and frequent crashes.

In June, three United States Air Force F-16 jet fighters crashed in one day, bringing to 20 the number of F-16 crashes in the seven years that the planes have been in service in Europe. Two of this year's crashes, one of a French plane and the other of an American jet, took place near nuclear plants. Ongoing Outcry

The outcry has prompted Defense Minister Scholz to reduce the number of low-altitude West German training flights. But the elimination of only 2,000 of 68,000 total hours of low-level flying by NATO planes was rejected by critics of the flights as too little.

In addition, air shows have their own history of disasters here. In May 1983, a Canadian jet fighter went out of control during an air show at Rhein-Main Airport in Frankfurt, crashing into a highway and striking a car carrying a Protestant pastor and his two children. All three were killed. The worst death toll was in September 1982, when an American Chinook helicopter exploded during an air show in Mannheim, killing 46 people, including Britons, Frenchmen and West Germans. After today's accident, the Greens Party urged Mr. Scholz to ban all military air shows and low-level flights. "It is terrible when one's fears turn into bitter truth," the party said.

Responding to the accident, the head of the opposition Social Democratic Party in Rheinland-Pfalz, the state where Ramstein is located, urged the Government to "finally put an end to the life-threatening nonsense of military air shows."

Doug Moore, a spokesman at the air base, which is also the headquarters of the United States Air Force in Europe, declined to comment on the protests. The annual open house at the base is part of an effort by the American military in West Germany to build better relations with the German public. CRASH AT BELGIAN AIR SHOW

BRUSSELS, Aug. 28 (AP) - A Finnish military training aircraft crashed at an air show today, killing the pilot, the police said. It was the second fatal crash at a Belgian show in three weeks.

The plane, a Redigo, belonged to the state-owned Finnish aircraft maker Valmet, which recently sold 10 such planes to the Finnish Air Force. Two Redigo planes had taken part at the air show, at Kleine-Brogel Air Base, 68 miles northeast of Brussels. Witnesses said the plane failed to come out of a spin above the air base.