

Spanish Bonanza's

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On an early octobermorning it's a busy business on a corner of Airbase Getafe, in one of the sub-urban cities of Madrid. A row of Beechcraft Bonanza's are lined up and shine with their silk-grey metallic look and orange-red noses in an upcoming orange sun.

Not only desk-functions

Here and there at the platform the two-bladed Hartzel propellers start turning, and several of these planes remain in the quit buzzing sound of their 6 cylinder boxer-engine for a number of minutes to start rolling later on to the runway, after the pilots have finished working through their checklists. All in all you find the sphere overhere as if it should concerns a popular aero club. It is more obvious as one will think. For anyone in the Spanish Airforce who has a desk-function, these planes mean having the possibility of real flying and making the obligatorily flight-hours to keep up your flight license but also for really feeling the pleasure of flying ! The F-33A standard version which is called in Spain the EF-33A (E for Espagne) is characterised by the straight stabilo , it's a plane with a friendly character, fast and firm and behaves by landing less side-wind sensitive. This is just the reason why these types are so very popular and a numerous number of these small planes (about 25) are kept in service at the 42 Grupo, Escuadron 421 at Getafe AFB. So actually more or less a flying club after all... !

A small plane with a history.

The design of the Beech Bonanza descends from the time 1945 when a lot of planes were still constructed out of wood as main material. In fact the Bonanza was the first 'all-metal' one-engined low-winged plane with retractable undercarriage for private use. The design has known many variants with both a single-, and a V-form tail applied and some variants were known under the name of 'Debonair'. The successor 'T-34 Mentor', well known as trainer in many airforces, also descends from this plane, Where the 4-persons cockpit was replaced by a two-persons cockpit in tandem-seat. A twin-engined version of the Bonanza is named the Beechcraft Baron which was also in service with the Spanish Airforce, but in fact ths is a different design.

Birdtracks

To combine nevertheless the useful with the pleasure, and also to guarantee the legitimacy, the Bonanza's sometimes are tasked with secondary tasks. There is a variety of tasks in the air that can be taken up and with some motivation in the implementation, it contributes to the security of the airspace as well as checking air to ground tasks. One of the tasks is checking the annual birdtracks, if we only imagine that many bird-groups fly over the Iberian peninsula to overwinter in the Moroccan Atlas-mountains, the South-west Sahara, Ghana or South Africa. These bird-trachs can form a true danger for the intensive air-traffic over Spain. A bird can look sideways, and in fact at 360 degrees with every eye sideward but all together in front, above, under, behind and sideways (to 180 degrees) is not possible for these birds, and birds flying in

such large formations are even more limited in their sight. Moreover birds have not been aimed at observing objects (also the reason why many birds clash with the large wind-mills) but they are aimed for observing living creatures. The present many times used low-sound turbofan-engines frighten less compared to the noisy piston/propeller-engines. So planes have to take care themselves that they stay out of trouble. Observing and getting in coordinates of the bird-tracks (bird populations change continuously) by means of observation-flights is an important task and completely fitting on the capabilities of the Bonanza. It flies under the 10.000 feet which is relatively a safer zone in the world of the bird-tracks. The 'Ejercito del aire' really likes to contribute in this matter with its Bonanza-fleet.

Observation flights are necessary

Another need is ground observations from out of the air. Certainly in times of the terrorist train-bombings in Madrid there was a raised alert situation in observation flights to be able to discover these terrorist actions or preparations of that kind in a very early stage. By that time the Bonanza's were then pre-eminently 'looking glasses' of the government in air! This vigilance has now however reduced a bit but other perceptions like for example early discovering woods in fire during summertime remains very important. In the summer season Central Spain is tortured by the long-term high temperatures. If a Bonanza might discover a (wood) fire, this is reported directly to the special Canadair fire extinguishing planes on Torrejon, stationed there for fire-fighting with enormous quantities of water. The Bonanza's remain in the air in general for two to three hours, where is only flown under visual visibility conditions and for example not in obscurity.

Finally there is the fun-factor

Those who regularly can leave themselves in these fun-flight tasks, must consider themselves fortunately, because there are many pilots of different types of planes who dream of being allowed to choose the airspace correctly in the Bonanza! The disgrace of 'pilot behind the desk' is made up a little by having the opportunity every now and then to fly this fun-factor plane.

Beechcraft Bonanza F-33A in short:

Length	7,67 m
Span	10,01m
Height	4,42m
Weight empty	760 kg
Max. weight start	1236 kg
Crew	1 pilot
Passengers	3
Engine	Teledyne Continental IO-470, 225 Pk
Cross speed	172 knots
Top speed	182 knots
Range	717 Nautical Miles
Fuel tank	74 gallons

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