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JAPCC NEWS

EUFOR ALTHEA
DACIAN PUMAS BOOST MEDEVAC READINESS

PER ASPERA AD ASTRA

EDITOR: ROMANIAN AIR FORCE STAFF

Cover I: ***ROU AF F-16 Fighting Falcon***

Cover III: ***ROU AF F-16 from 48th Fighter Squadron "SkyLords"***

Cover IV: ***IAR-330 helicopter preparing MEDEVAC mission during EUFOR ALTHEA in BiH | Photo by Vlad Ciobanu***

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CARPATHIAN VIPERS EXEMPLIFIED ROMANIA'S STEADFAST ROLE IN NATO DEFENSE

The Romanian Air Force officially concluded its four-month rotational deployment leading NATO's enhanced Air Policing mission in the Baltic region. In a formal handover ceremony held at Šiauliai Air Base, the Romanian contingent, known as the "Carpathian Vipers," transferred the critical Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) responsibility to a combined force of Hungarian and Spanish aviators.

During their deployment, the Romanian detachment operated alongside Polish Air Force elements from Lithuania, providing unwavering 24/7 alert status. The personnel were ready to scramble at a moment's notice to identify and intercept aircraft approaching NATO airspace. The Carpathian Vipers consistently demonstrated high-end operational readiness and an ironclad commitment to the collective defense principle of the Alliance.

"Individually, we are just people. But together, we are the Carpathian Vipers – a team that embodies the professionalism, dedication, and sacrifice of the Romanian Air Force," said Colonel Vasile Petrea, the Carpathian Vipers Detachment Commander. "Through our daily actions, we reaffirm Romania's steadfast commitment to NATO and to the collective defense of the Euro-Atlantic space."
Since commencing the mission in April, the Romanian pilots and support personnel logged more than 400 flying hours executing a wide spectrum of operational and training sorties. Their deployment was highlighted by active participation in major multinational exercises, including Ramstein Alloy, Hedgehog, and Baltops. These drills were critical in significantly enhancing interoperability with NATO Allied air forces and regional partners.

A Romanian F-16 pilot with the callsign "Tatoo" underscored the effort behind the mission's success, stating, "Behind each combat mission was intense work, supported by rigorous training, discipline and relentless effort, day and night, to achieve the proposed objectives without compromise."

This deployment marked another chapter in Romania's long-standing contribution to the Baltic Air Policing mission, an operation it has supported since 2007 and led on multiple occasions. The mission served as a clear demonstration of Romania's dedication to NATO's core task of deterrence and defense.
The outgoing Romanian team passed the alert duty to detachments from the Hungarian Air Force, flying JAS-39 Gripens, and the Spanish Air Force, operating EF-2000 Eurofighter Typhoons. This combined team assumed the QRA duty under NATO command, ensuring the continued and seamless protection of Baltic airspace.

Over the Baltic skies, every Romanian Air Force F-16 was more than an aircraft – it was an ambassador of shared NATO values and operational solidarity

NATO AIR POLICING: GUARDING THE SKIES WHEN IT MATTERS MOST

When Russian drones crossed into Polish airspace last week, NATO's air defence systems reacted immediately and decisively. Fighter jets scrambled, airspace was secured, and citizens across the eastern flank were reassured that NATO skies remain defended. This is NATO Air Policing in action – the Alliance's daily promise to safeguard every inch and centimetre of NATO territory.

"The violation of Poland's airspace earlier in the week was not an isolated incident and impacts more than just Poland," NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), General Alexus G. Grynkewich, said on September 12 at a joint press conference with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte. "While a full assessment of the incident is ongoing, NATO is not waiting, we are acting."

For more than six decades, Air Policing has provided security in the skies during peacetime. It is a continuous mission to preserve the integrity of NATO airspace. Allied aircraft on Air Policing duties ensure unidentified aircraft and potential air threats are detected, tracked, and if necessary, intercepted. Today, with Russia's war against Ukraine spilling instability across borders and drones intruding into NATO skies, the mission has never been more vital.

NATO Air Policing and enhanced Air Policing detachments are stationed across the eastern flank: in Šiauliai, Lithuania, Hungary supports Baltic Air Policing with Gripens alongside Spanish Eurofighters; in Ämari, Estonia, Italian F-35s conduct the mission; and in Romania, German Eurofighters are deployed under enhanced Air Policing at Mihail Kogălniceanu Air Base. NATO also augments national capabilities to ensure every inch of NATO airspace is protected.

NATO's basing agility enables flexibility in force posturing. In Poland, Dutch F-35s contribute under NATO's Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU), which coordinates support to Ukraine while reinforcing Allied security. These forces are now bolstered by additional deployments under NATO's Eastern Sentry, launched in direct response to Russia's violation of NATO airspace. The newly positioned French Rafale conducting its first A-Scramble in support of Eastern Sentry over the weekend.

"Eastern Sentry and this new approach will deliver even more focused and flexible deterrence and defence where and when needed to protect our people and deter against further reckless and dangerous acts like what occurred earlier in the week," General Grynkewich added on Sept. 12.

The need for vigilance was further reinforced last week, in addition to scrambles executed by NATO's Air Policing detachments, Swedish and Danish fighters took off under National authority to identified Russian aircraft, including two SU-30s and an IL-20 reconnaissance plane, flying over the southern Baltic Sea. National entities coordinate seamlessly, demonstrating robust readiness and cooperation in protecting NATO airspace.

NATO Air Policing is about more than quick responses. It is about assurance – knowing that Allied radar stations, surveillance aircraft, and command centres are monitoring the skies 24/7/365. When threats emerge, whether drones, fighters, or reconnaissance aircraft, NATO aircrews from across the 32-member Alliance stand ready to act together: The Alliance will defend its people, its airspace, and its territory against any threat.

As NATO adapts to evolving challenges, the message remains clear – from the Baltics to the Black Sea, the Alliance is present, prepared, and united. NATO Air Policing embodies this commitment, protecting NATO skies every hour of every day. Activities and events, not just from this recent week, but spanning over 60 years, demonstrate NATO Allied Air Command's robust ability to respond anytime, anywhere.

Coupled with Allied Air Policing, Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) is also a continuous mission committed to defending NATO territory. Together, they comprise NATO's robust Integrated Air and Missile Defence (IAMD) construct, conducted across NATO territory and is prepared to address the full spectrum of threats.

IAMD is conducted using a multi-domain 360-degree approach across NATO territory and is prepared to address the full spectrum of threats. It is a collaborative effort and a key pillar of NATO's collective defence demonstrating Allied unity and cohesion.

"I think what we have seen last night was a very successful reaction by NATO and Allies, including of course, Poland itself, but also the Dutch and the Italians and the Germans, everybody involved," NATO Secretary Rutte said on Sept. 10, praising the Allied Airpower response, during his statement to the press following the violation of Polish airspace by Russian drones. "And I'm really impressed. So of course, we always have to make sure that we are one step ahead. But I think last night showed that we are able to defend every inch of NATO territory including, of course, its airspace."

In Poland, Dutch F-35s contribute under NATO's Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU), which coordinates support to Ukraine while reinforcing Allied security. These forces are now bolstered by additional deployments under NATO's Eastern Sentry. Photo courtesy of the Royal Netherlands Air Force

NATO LAUNCHED "EASTERN SENTRY" TO BOLSTER POSTURE ALONG EASTERN FLANK

On 12 September 2025, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte and Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) General Alexus G. Grynkewich held a joint press conference to outline NATO's response to the violation of Polish airspace by Russian drones two days earlier. Mr Rutte announced the launch of "Eastern Sentry," a military activity aimed to bolster NATO's posture along the eastern flank.

Allied Command Operations (ACO), which is responsible for the planning and execution of all NATO operations, will execute Eastern Sentry along NATO's Eastern flank. It will even further strengthen our posture to shield and protect all Allies.

The multi-domain activity, which will commence in the coming days and continue for an undisclosed amount of time, is in response to ongoing airspace violations, including the numerous Russian drones that violated Poland's airspace on September 10. The Alliance already responded quickly and decisively to that situation, demonstrating NATO capability and resolve to defend the Alliance, but will now act further to strengthen its posture.

"The violation of Poland's airspace earlier this week is not an isolated incident and impacts more than just Poland," said General Alexus G. Grynkewich, Supreme Allied Commander Europe. "While a full assessment of the incident is ongoing, NATO is not waiting, we are acting."

The Alliance will also strengthen its air defence.

"Eastern Sentry and this new approach will deliver even more focused and flexible deterrence and defence where and when needed to protect our people and deter against further reckless and dangerous acts like what occurred earlier this week," said Grynkewich.

It follows a meeting by the North Atlantic Council, September 10, where Allies discussed the situation in light of Poland's request for consultations under Article 4 of the Washington Treaty, expressed solidarity with Poland, and denounced Russia's reckless behaviour.

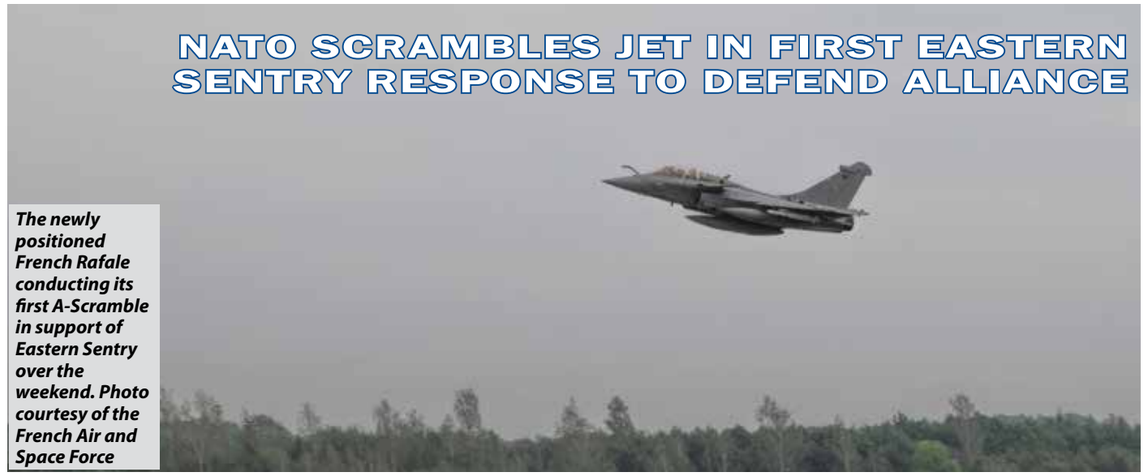
Allies have already begun to announce the deployment of forces and capabilities for Eastern Sentry. Denmark will contribute two F-16s and an anti-air warfare frigate, France will contribute three Rafales, and Germany will contribute four Eurofighters. The United Kingdom has also expressed its willingness to support. These forces and more will reinforce existing Allied forces and enhance NATO's deterrence and defensive posture where and when needed.

ACO will also work closely with Allied Command Transformation, as it continues to do with Baltic Sentry, to rapidly experiment and field new technologies at Alliance-wide scale, such as counter-drone sensors and weapons to detect, track and kill drones.

The Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) is the military headquarters of ACO.

Story by SHAPE Public Affairs Office

NATO SCRAMBLES JET IN FIRST EASTERN SENTRY RESPONSE TO DEFEND ALLIANCE



The newly positioned French Rafale conducting its first A-Scramble in support of Eastern Sentry over the weekend. Photo courtesy of the French Air and Space Force

In response to another potential threat from Russian drones, NATO scrambled its first jet to defend its airspace under Eastern Sentry, a new activity to further strengthen its air defences to shield and protect all Allies, less than a day after it was announced.

The French Rafale fighter jet, one of three to recently arrive in Poland, and a Polish helicopter responded, September 13.

"The response was fast, and the alert was over quickly," said U.S. Air Force Gen. Alexus G. Grynkewich, Supreme Allied Commander Europe. "The limited use of assets was correct and calibrated to the potential threat perceived, which speaks to the utility of Eastern Sentry."

Poland's operational command announced, September 14, no airspace violations had occurred. However, numerous Russian drones did violate Poland's airspace, September 10, which NATO responded quickly and decisively towards. That incident along with multiple other airspace violations elsewhere in the Alliance prompted Eastern Sentry.

In a separate incident, also September 13, Romania intercepted a Russian drone that entered its airspace, the Romanian Ministry of National Defence announced. Meanwhile, the Alliance continues to strengthen its air defences under Eastern Sentry.

Four German Eurofighters stand ready to respond at an airbase in the northeast of that country and three helicopters from Czechia arrived in Poland, September 14. Denmark will contribute fighter jets and an anti-air warfare frigate, and Spain and the United Kingdom will announce their support soon. Italy and Sweden have also signaled they will aid.

"I commend Allies for providing these additional capabilities," said Grynkewich.

Story by SHAPE Public Affairs Office

Adapting Air and Missile Defence Training and Doctrine for Hypersonics and Drones

Many Changes Are Needed to Defend NATO Against Emerging Threats

By Lieutenant Colonel Kim Vogt, DEU AF
Joint Air Power Competence Centre
Subject Matter Expert Air & Missile Defence

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INTRODUCTION

The rapidly evolving landscape of contemporary warfare has introduced new challenges to Integrated Air and Missile Defence (IAMD) and fundamentally altered the dynamics of defence and deterrence within NATO. Emerging threats, such as Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), commercial drones, and hypersonic weapons exploit existing technical and doctrinal gaps in our aerial defences, posing significant risk to current air defence strategies.

Unmanned platforms, ranging from advanced military-grade UAS to simple commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) drones repurposed as airborne improvised explosive devices (IEDs), have been used effectively in recent conflicts, including the 2008 Russo-Georgian War and the ongoing war in Ukraine. Adversaries are challenging traditional air defence strategies by exploiting vulnerabilities in sensor coverage, target tracking, command and control (C2), and magazine depth. For instance, Russia's Shahed-136 UAS has demonstrated the ability to conduct long-range precision strikes while evading detection, especially in the early phases of flight.[1] Ukraine's air defence forces have struggled to detect and track these small UAS (sUAS).

Similarly, Russia has employed Kinzhal hypersonic weapons to target critical infrastructure and civilian assets, forcing Ukrainian forces to reallocate limited defence resources to counter this dangerous threat. This article examines the impact of these emerging threats on IAMD, and explains how adaptation in training and education (T&E) and doctrine can mitigate the risks posed by these new weapons.

GAPS IN CURRENT TRAINING AND EDUCATION FOR AIR DEFENDERS

The rapid integration of UAS and hypersonic weapons into adversaries' arsenals has exposed training deficiencies among Western air defenders. Traditional training programmes have not sufficiently prepared personnel to identify and classify low, slow, and small (LSS) drones, limiting defenders' ability to respond effectively.

Additionally, hypersonic weapons, travelling at speeds exceeding Mach 5, present a qualitatively different challenge compared to UAS, LSS, and more traditional supersonic threats. Their high velocity, manoeuvrability, and variable flight paths render existing detection and interception systems less effective. For instance, Hypersonic Glide Vehicles (HGVs) and Hypersonic Cruise Missiles (HCMs) can avoid radar detection by selecting circuitous or off-axis routing which bypasses known tracking sites. Additionally, their variable altitudes and thermal signatures can reduce detection windows and hinder ground and space-based tracking capabilities, thereby reducing response times for defenders.[2] The Russian employment of the Kinzhal missile in Ukraine marks a pivotal moment in the operational use of hypersonic technology, demonstrating the ability to strike targets with minimal warning. This capability presents a significant challenge to NATO's IAMD posture, and further highlights gaps in T&E.

ENHANCING NATO'S IAMD TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Air defenders require specialised training to address emerging threats, focusing on both technical proficiency and cognitive skills.

First, technical proficiency is essential, as personnel must deepen their knowledge in areas such as electronic warfare (EW), cyber defence, and advanced sensor technology. This includes understanding electronic attack and protection measures, mastering the use of cyber defence mechanisms to safeguard critical C2 systems, and becoming proficient with advanced sensors capable of detecting and tracking elusive threats like hypersonic missiles, sophisticated military-grade UAS, and COTS drones. Expanding weapon system-specific knowledge at the tactical level provides defenders with a crucial information advantage.

Secondly, cognitive skills are crucial for air defenders operating under the intense pressures of modern warfare. Hypersonic weapons' extreme speed and unpredictability significantly compress decision-making timelines, leaving little room for hesitation or error. The same time constraint is true for LSS UAS, which are often detected late. Training programmes must, therefore, enhance decision-making under stress, improve situational awareness, and develop rapid information-processing skills. Techniques such as high-intensity simulations, real-time strategy exercises, and cognitive resilience training can help personnel make swift, accurate decisions in rapidly evolving threat scenarios. Strengthening these cognitive skills ensures air defenders are better prepared for contemporary warfare.

After maximizing the individual capabilities, organizational training enhancements can further strengthen NATO's air defence posture. Several recommendations should be addressed to improve training against hypersonic and UAS threats:

1. **Incorporating Realistic Threat Simulations**: Advanced simulators for hypersonic weapons and UAS would allow defenders to experience and respond to these threats effectively. Joint exercises with allies can foster best practices, information sharing, and collaborative readiness.
2. **Enhancing Intelligence Sharing**: Strengthening intelligence sharing among western nations is crucial to staying ahead of emerging threats. Platforms such as the Battlefield Information Collection and Exploitation System (BICES) enable seamless information exchange among NATO members, while multinational intelligence cells dedicated to emerging threats ensure that training programmes remain informed by updated intelligence.
3. **Training to Interoperability**: Cross-service and cross-domain integration is essential for a cohesive defence strategy; training air defenders in cyber and space operations enhances their understanding of modern warfare's interconnected domains. Joint training with international partners strengthens collective readiness, with multinational exercises like NATO's Joint Warrior and the Technical Interoperability Exercise (TIE) events improve coordination and interoperability, as well as operational cohesion among allies and partners.

CONTINUOUS CURRICULUM IMPROVEMENTS

Training programmes must continually evolve based on operational feedback to ensure air defenders are prepared for emerging threats. The NATO Counter-UAS Working Group plays an important role in these efforts, overseeing the development of courses such as the C-UAS Fundamentals Training (led by the Joint Air Power Competence Centre), C-UAS Operators Training, C-UAS Planners Course, and C-UAS Senior Leadership Seminars. These courses, set to begin in 2025, will serve a valuable role in educating personnel at all levels with an iterative, skills-based training approach. However, at present there are no similar courses dedicated to hypersonic threats. By incorporating both hypersonics and C-UAS into T&E initiatives, NATO will enhance readiness and resilience against these threats.

DOCTRINAL CHANGES

Hypersonic and drone threats require improvements to current air defence doctrine due to their unprecedented speed, manoeuvrability, and detection difficulties. Addressing these challenges demands doctrinal improvements to four main areas: threat detection, C2, interoperability, and innovation:

1. **Improving Threat Detection**: Detecting hypersonic threats requires investments in over-the-horizon radar, space-based sensors, and infrared tracking technologies, among other improvements. Refining doctrine in this area can support the national procurement processes of NATO nations and inform changes to the NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP).
2. **Integrated, AI-Assisted C2**: Compressed timelines associated with hypersonic and drone threats necessitate streamlined decision-making processes. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning can rapidly process vast amount of data and may enable commanders to make informed decisions in real-time. Pre-defined response protocols may also lead to swift, autonomous countermeasures against threats. However, overcoming ethical and legal obstacles will be a key challenge, and NATO doctrine can lay the foundation for the responsible use of AI in C2 systems.
3. **Interoperability Across Domains**: A cohesive network must integrate air, space, and cyber capabilities. Space-based sensors can detect a hypersonic launch, air-based platforms can track its trajectory, and cyber capabilities can disrupt its guidance systems. Strengthening collaboration in these domains will therefore ensure that different nations' personnel and systems can work together seamlessly. This collective approach strengthens individual national defences and presents a unified front that can deter potential adversaries, but it must first be codified in NATO doctrine.
4. **Innovation and Adaptability**: Military doctrines must evolve rapidly to anticipate future advancement in tactics and technology, including emerging countermeasures like directed energy weapons and advanced interception platforms. This fast-paced adaptation requires continuous research, development, and adaptive training to keep air defenders ahead of emerging threats.

In essence, countering hypersonic and drone threats demands a forward-thinking approach which uses doctrinal evolution to drive technological advancements in the air defence realm. By enhancing detection capabilities, streamlining command and control, fostering interoperability, and promoting innovation within NATO and partners around the globe, air defence forces can adapt to the complexities of these weapons and strengthen their overall defence posture.

CASE STUDIES: ADAPTATION BY NATO ALLIES

NATO Allies are implementing new training programmes, integrating advanced technologies, and developing innovative tactics to counter hypersonic and UAS threats:

The German Air Force has recently incorporated hypersonic threat trajectories into its training simulations, enabling personnel to practice detection and interception in realistic scenarios. Regular intelligence briefings update threat assessments, while collaborative workshops with defence agencies drive innovation in counter-hypersonic strategies. Limited access to detailed threat data remains a challenge, highlighting the need for improved intelligence-sharing mechanisms within NATO frameworks, such as the BICES network.[3]

The Netherlands' Defence Ground-based Air Defence Command (DGLC) addresses emerging IAMD threats through advanced courses such as the Patriot Advanced Capability (PAC) course and Weapon Instructor Courses (WIC). They partner with scientists and knowledge institutes to stay ahead of technological developments, ensuring that lessons learned from recent conflicts, including Ukraine, are integrated into their national training programmes. The Dutch Army also employs passive defence measures such as mobility and decoys to complicate adversary targeting and ensure survivability.[4]

The Russia-Ukraine war has demonstrated numerous practical and innovative tactics, including EW to jam enemy UAS, 'SAMbush' tactics against glide bombs and low-flying munitions, and rapid tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) adaptation to counter new threats. Ukraine's ability to adjust TTP in real time underscores the importance of agility and a robust feedback loop across frontline operators and command structures.[5]

Australia has also emphasized emerging technologies in training and operations. Their forces highlight the importance of decentralized command structures, allowing lower echelons to make rapid decisions in dynamic threat environments. Additionally, interagency cooperation strengthens readiness across military branches and civilian agencies.[6]

These adaptations highlight the importance of innovation, flexibility, and continuous learning in countering hypersonic and UAS threats. By incorporating real-world insights and unconventional tactics into training and operations, NATO Allies can refine their IAMD capabilities to address the complexities of modern warfare.

CONCLUSION

Adapting training, education, and doctrine is imperative for defending against hypersonic and UAS threats. Adversaries identify and exploit vulnerabilities in technology, training, and doctrine making proactive adaptation essential. To stay ahead, air defenders must evolve their TTP in an iterative manner, making their systems and tactics more resilient, unpredictable, and effective against emerging threats. This requires a holistic approach that combines doctrinal changes, rigorous training, realistic exercises, and information sharing across NATO members.

Incorporating advanced technologies such as AI for real-time threat assessment, machine learning for predictive analytics, and automated response systems enables defenders to address threats faster and more accurately. This aids human operators where they are not available or lack the necessary reaction time future conflicts demand. Adaptability in tactics is equally important, allowing air defenders to adjust to enemy methods in real-time – whether this means employing electronic warfare against drones, using dispersed radar to counteract hypersonics, or coordinating cyber assets to disrupt adversary command networks. By fostering a culture of innovation and adaptability within the IAMD community, NATO can close technological and doctrinal gaps and ensure the security of NATO airspace.

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ITALIAN EUROFIGHTERS COMPLETED ENHANCED AIR POLICING MISSION IN ROMANIA

The Italian Air Force Eurofighter detachment in Mihail Kogălniceanu, Romania, wrap up their enhanced Air policing mission. After the official hand-over, Italy will operate F-35A fighter jets from Ämari, Estonia, taking over NATO's Baltic Air Policing mission from the Portuguese Air Force.
Throughout their four-month deployment at Mihail Kogălniceanu Air Base, the Italian detachment have been on Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) 24/7/365, accumulated approximately 500 flying hours, preserving the Integrity of NATO airspace alongside the Romanian Air Force.

The Italian detachment supported a range of multinational training activities, including NATO's Dacian Spring, Agile Combat Employment (ACE) drills at Câmpia Turzii, and the Flexible Deterrence Option (FDO) exercises, which featured Italian Eurofighters flying joint missions with Greek, Turkish, and Romanian assets, supported by NATO AWACS and French multinational tanker aircraft.
"Throughout the deployment we ensured maximum readiness during our QRA shifts, always ready to scramble on CAOC order. From a training perspective, the Flexible Deterrence Option activities, has been by far the most engaging event of our rotation" said Captain Andrea M. Italian Eurofighter pilot.
"The Italian contingent lead the mission planning as Mission Commander. We trained side by side with French SAMP/T ground units, simulating an area defence scenario in a complex Blue vs Red setup—Italian Eurofighters flying alongside Greek and Turkish F-16s against Romanian F-16s. We also conducted air-to-air refueling with both Italian KC-767s and U.S. KC-135s, fully integrated with NATO's AWACS. Following the FDO, we executed a forward deployment to Câmpia Turzii under ACE doctrine, refueled, and launched again. A true test of interoperability and readiness", he added.
The Italian Air Force prepare to handover the enhanced Air Policing baton to the Germany Air Force who will assume responsibilities in Romania for the next months. Simultaneously Italian Air Force deployed four F-35A fighter jets to Ämari Air Base, Estonia, where they will assume responsibility for NATO's Baltic Air Policing mission. The transition ensures uninterrupted Allied air coverage across two strategic regions—the Black Sea and the Baltic.
NATO's Air Policing missions are a cornerstone of the Alliance's collective security, providing 24/7 vigilance over NATO airspace. The seamless handover from Italian to German forces, as well as the Portuguese to Italian forces, exemplifies the strength of NATO's interoperability and rapid response capabilities.
The presence of NATO aircraft in Romania served as a clear signal of the Alliance's unwavering commitment and enduring unity to the security of its members and safeguarding its airspace.

A mission completion ceremony was held at 57th Air Base Mihail Kogălniceanu for the Italian Air Force outpost that arrived in Romania in March.
Photo courtesy Italian Air Force

GERMAN EUROFIGHTERS ASSUMED NATO ENHANCED AIR POLICING MISSION IN ROMANIA

The Luftwaffe detachment achieved full NATO operational certification during a formal ceremony held at Mihail Kogălniceanu Air Base.
Photo courtesy 57th Air Base

From 29 July 2025, the German Air Force (Luftwaffe) has commenced its execution of NATO's enhanced Air Policing (eAP) mission in southeastern Europe, deploying to Mihail Kogălniceanu Air Base, Romania. This rotational deployment underscores the Alliance's unwavering commitment to collective defense and regional security.

The Luftwaffe contingent, operating five Eurofighter Typhoon combat aircraft supported by approximately 170 personnel, formally assumed the eAP responsibility from the Italian Air Force (Aeronautica Militare). The German detachment will sustain this critical air sovereignty mission for the next eight months, maintaining vigilant protection of NATO airspace.
Lieutenant General Holger "Hawk" Neumann, German Air Chief, emphasized Alliance solidarity: "As an Alliance we stand together in our collective readiness to reinforce the eastern flank and ensure the security of NATO airspace." Germany's deployment directly relieves the Italian Eurofighter detachment, which provided continuous air policing coverage since April 2025. The Italian Task Force Air has concluded its Romanian mission and will now transition to assume the Baltic Air Policing mission from Amari Air Base, Estonia as Romanian Air Force did in the last four months for reinforcing NATO's collective defense across multiple theaters.

NATO CERTIFICATION CONFIRMS READINESS

The Luftwaffe detachment achieved full NATO operational certification during a formal ceremony held at Mihail Kogălniceanu Air Base on 12 August 2025. The event was attended by representatives from the German Embassy in Bucharest, NATO officials, senior German Air Force leadership, and the Commander of the Romanian Air Force Air Component Command. This certification validates the detachment's readiness to execute the enhanced Air Policing mission under NATO command.

ENHANCING INTEROPERABILITY AND DETERRENCE

This marks the fourth German deployment to Romania for the eAP mission. Throughout their tour, Luftwaffe Eurofighter aircrews and support personnel will conduct integrated operations alongside Romanian counterparts. This includes coordinated live flying exercises with Romanian Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcons and joint training events integrating other NATO air and ground assets. These activities are designed to significantly enhance tactical proficiency, operational interoperability, and the Alliance's overall deterrence posture in the region.
NATO's enhanced Air Policing mission, established in 2014, provides continuous assurance and airspace security over Romania through rotational Allied fighter deployments. These persistent forward deployments reinforce deterrence and collective defense along NATO's southeastern flank.

BLACK SEA AIR SHOW

MIHAIL KOGĂLNICEANU AIR BASE, Romania – Under vast Romanian skies, a multinational spectacle took flight as United States, Romanian, and German aircraft participated in the 4th edition of the Black Sea Air Show at Mihail Kogălniceanu International Airport in Romania on August 2, 2025. With a record attendance of over 20,000 spectators, leaders and Soldiers from the 1st Armored Division and 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) had the unique opportunity to showcase the capabilities of vehicles, equipment, and aircraft to the local community alongside our NATO Allies and partners.

Throughout the day, military personnel, families, and aviation enthusiasts enjoyed the array of static displays and activities. U.S. Army Soldiers witnessed firsthand how the event created a lasting impact within the community as they taught attendees how to operate the AN/TWQ-1 Avenger remote control unit and showed them how to wear the HGU-56/P Army aviator helmet. Each interaction allowed the Soldiers to share stories, culture, and experiences with local Romanians.

"Events like this air show are a great opportunity for us to talk with the Romanians both about what our capabilities are and how we interface with them while we are out here, while also learning about their culture and customs," said Capt. Abby Wingfield, the Charlie Company Commander for the 3-501st Assault Helicopter Battalion, Combat Aviation Brigade, 1st Armored Division.

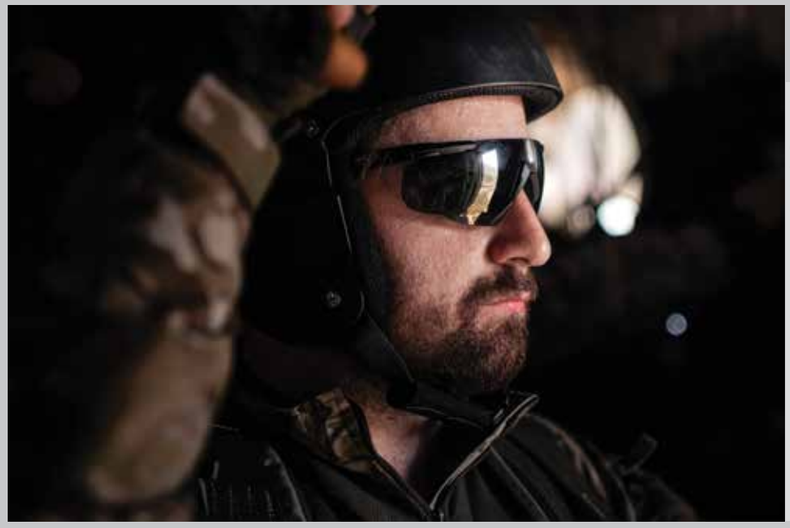
After enjoying the static displays, crowds gathered near the flight line to experience over four hours of spectacular aerial demonstrations. The air show highlighted more than 10 types of military and civilian aircraft and the expertise of each operator. U.S. Army CH-47 Chinook and HH-60M Black Hawk helicopter crews displayed their tactical skillset and operational knowledge as they flew side by side with Romanian IAR 330 Puma SOCAT helicopter crews. The HH-60M Black Hawk crew conducted a hoist demonstration to showcase their training and medical evacuation capabilities. Hoist operations are essential to warfighting readiness as they enable quick extraction of wounded personnel in confined or hostile locations.

"Our training out here has been impactful, both for us and partner nations, because we get to see how different countries operate…and we get to see how in a combined arms operation we would be able to work with different nations despite language barriers and overcoming that so we can create TTPs (tactics, techniques, and procedures) to be more successful in the future," said Wingfield.

As the 1st Armored Division and 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) continue their rotation in Romania, events like the Black Sea Air Show reinforce the U.S. Army's commitment to providing combat-credible forces along NATO's Eastern Flank. The U.S. remains dedicated to strengthening partnerships with our Allies while building enduring relationships with our local civilian counterparts. With each static display and aerial demonstration, the United States, Romanian, and German militaries displayed their ability to increase interoperability and maintain a continued presence in the Black Sea region.

Story by Capt. Regina Koesters, 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment
Photos courtesy of 57th Air Base Mihail Kogalniceanu

AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS WING CONDUCTED BILATERAL EXERCISE IN ROMANIA



A Romanian special operations forces soldier prepares to exit an MC-130J Commando II, operated by the Air Force's 352nd Special Operations Wing, as part of a bilateral exercise in Bucharest, Romania, July 13, 2025. The 352nd SOW worked alongside Romanian allies, enhancing joint capabilities through free-fall jumps, low-level flights, infiltration and exfiltration drills, and establishing a mobile aviation refueling site. Photo: Army Staff Sgt. Reece Heck

Romanian special operations forces prepare to board an MC-130J Commando II, operated by the Air Force's 352nd Special Operations Wing, as part of a bilateral exercise in Bucharest, Romania, July 15, 2025. The 352nd SOW worked alongside Romanian allies, enhancing joint capabilities through free-fall jumps, low-level flights, infiltration and exfiltration drills, and establishing a mobile aviation refueling site. Photo: Army Staff Sgt. Reece Heck

U.S. special operations forces collaborated with Romanian allies during a bilateral exercise to boost NATO readiness in Europe through aerial drills at Boboc Air Base, Romania, July 11-25.

Romanian special operations forces, along with the 53rd Commando Battalion and the U.S. Air Force's 352nd Special Operations Wing at Royal Air Force Mildenhall, U.K., worked to enhance joint operational capabilities through free-fall jumps, low-level flying, infiltration and exfiltration drills, and the establishment of ground refueling points.

"We're working with their ground forces, rotary forces and fixed-wing forces," said the mission commander for the 352nd SOW. "The big goal in this instance is helping the Romanians improve [air capabilities] and interoperability."

Over the course of two weeks, the allied nations executed joint airdrops and infiltration scenarios across multiple landscapes. Over 500 Romanian jumpers conducted free-fall operations, supported by U.S. MC-130J Commando II and Romanian C-27J Spartan aircraft. Concurrently, the Air Force's 100th Air Refueling Wing established and operated ground refueling points in support of Romanian IAR-330 Puma helicopters.

A combined team of 10 Romanian and 15 U.S. aircrews demonstrated formation flying, low-level approaches, and short-field landing drills during day and nighttime operations, sharpening their ability to operate side by side in complex environments.

"As we look at what [U.S. Special Operations Command Europe], NATO and our allies are doing, I think we're learning it's good to have friends in a lot of places," the mission commander said.

Exercises like this continue to strengthen joint capabilities through unity, readiness and trust, enabling allies to respond quickly and effectively in times of crisis.

"We've been training, we've standardized our tactics. It makes it easier if a conflict ever comes up," he said. "It makes us more effective, because then you have the might of multiple countries going at one enemy or one problem set."

Source: https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/4285977/air-force-special-operations-wing-conducts-bilateral-exercise-in-romania/

Romanian special operations forces exit an MC-130J Commando II, operated by the Air Force's 352nd Special Operations Wing, as part of a bilateral exercise in Bucharest, Romania, July 13, 2025. The 352nd SOW worked alongside Romanian allies, enhancing joint capabilities through free-fall jumps, low-level flights, infiltration and exfiltration drills, and establishing a mobile aviation refueling site. Photo: Army Staff Sgt. Reece Heck

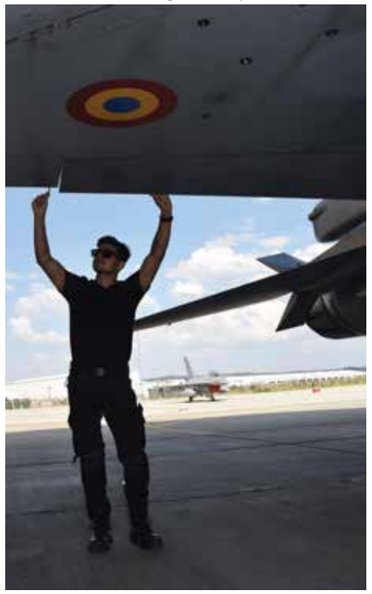
An Air Force refueling point specialist assigned to the 100th Air Refueling Wing prepares to refuel an IAR-330 Puma operated by Romanian special operations forces as part of a bilateral exercise in Bucharest, Romania, July 16, 2025. The 352nd Special Operations Wing worked alongside Romanian allies, enhancing joint capabilities through free-fall jumps, low-level flights, infiltration and exfiltration drills, and establishing a mobile aviation refueling site.. Photo: Army Staff Sgt. Reece Heck

SKY LORDS TRAIN FOR ROMANIA'S CLEAR SKIES

The 48th Fighter Squadron at 71st Air Base in Câmpia Turzii is making significant strides towards operationalization. Daily training is underway, flying is intense, day and night, and the airfield infrastructure has visibly developed. The Sky Lords, as the unit is designated, prepare in both national and international environments through participation in various exercises, even alongside other force elements.
General Emanoil Ionescu 71st Air Base at Câmpia Turzii is in full development, both in terms of structures and airfield infrastructure. These are major steps, in accordance with all politico-military decisions taken by Romania. The military personnel of the 48th Fighter Squadron, through everything they do every day, are worthy successors of their forebears, having taken the name from the squadron that was part of the 9th Fighter Group in the Second World War.

We spent several days alongside the Sky Lords, the Transylvanian aviators flying F-16 Fighting Falcons. Every step toward operationalizing the unit is carried out with careful attention, commitment, and responsibility, in line with both national and NATO standards.

The average age of the military personnel in the 48th Fighter Squadron is between 30-35 years. A large part of the flying personnel graduated from the F-16 conversion course at the 86th Air Base, within the European F-16 Training Center (EFTC) or within the 53rd Fighter Squadron. Most



technical personnel trained in Norway, where they benefited from the immense experience of partners. This was followed by a period of advanced training at 86th Air Base Borcea, and once the F-16s arrived at Câmpia Turzii, the technical-engineering staff applied their accumulated knowledge. Furthermore, young graduates of the Air Force Military Warrant Officers and NCOs School, assigned to the squadron, completed their conversion course on aircraft operation at Câmpia Turzii. Thus, the Sky Lords are forming into a cohesive unit where trust and cooperation are defining elements. Clear communication and close collaboration between pilots and technicians enable rapid and precise aircraft preparation, efficient resolution of technical issues, and safe execution of flight missions. During the documentation visit, even though temperatures frequently approached red alerts, and heat wave conditions at flight line level became commonplace, the engineers and military technicians prepared the aircraft for flight every day, performed necessary checks, assisted pilots during engine start-up, and restored the F-16 aircraft's capability after each mission. In the control tower, everything was monitored with attention and responsibility, then, after briefings, flights followed.

From simple to complex, the Sky Lords train assiduously, aiming to achieve the highest ratings in national and NATO evaluations. Indeed, they work hard and put heart and soul into everything that happens at the Transylvanian airfield.

"The squadron's training and instruction program runs daily, Monday through Friday, according to a pre-established plan that includes air-to-air and air-to-ground preparation stages, both day and night. Within the first training stage, we execute air combat missions, tactical intercepts, and Air Combat Training; within the second, we conduct live and simulated firing and bombing in various national ranges and close air support missions in collaboration with ground forces. In addition to these training phases, the squadron participates in various national and international exercises. Thus, this year, the 48th Fighter Squadron Sky Lords participated for the first time in the multinational exercise RAMSTEIN FLAG 2025, being deployed at RAF Fairford, United Kingdom, where it was confirmed to us that we are on the right path, now, during the operationalization process of our structure", stated Major (AF) Romina Mîrza, F-16 Fighting Falcon pilot.

Story by Lucian Irimia
Photo courtesy of 71st Air Base and Alexandru Aioanei, Bogdan Pantilimon

BIAS 2025

Bucharest International Air Show

FIFTEEN YEARS OF AVIATION EXCELLENCE

There's nothing like a late-summer day with a festival atmosphere spent at the country's largest air show. Held over three days at Aurel Vlaicu International Airport, Băneasa, and supported by national and international military and civilian partners, the Bucharest International Air Show 2025 marked its 15th edition.

Bucharest hosted an outstanding program that won the hearts of aviation enthusiasts – the defining word of the event was "MAGIC."
The Romanian Air Force delivered a compelling demonstration with F-16 Fighting Falcons, IAR-99 Șoim, C-27J Spartan, and C-130 Hercules aircraft. The F-16 pilots' precise maneuvers drew sustained applause and exclamations, reinforcing that these platforms are not only technical assets but tangible guarantees of the security of Romanian and NATO airspace. The C-27J Spartan and C-130 Hercules showcased the Air Force's logistics capability, while the IAR-99 combined agility and precision, honoring Romania's aviation tradition.
Complementing the Romanian component, BIAS 2025 offered an exceptional international program. For the first time in Bucharest, Patrouille de France deployed nine Dassault/Dornier Alpha Jet aircraft, delivering a high-caliber aerobatic display.
The schedule also featured demonstrations by Romanian and international aerobatic pilots, providing a varied and professional lineup.
Attendees repeatedly said the event provided a direct connection to the Romanian Air Force, giving civilians insight into the complexity and professionalism of military aircrew. Beyond the aerial demonstrations, the static display attracted significant interest. Visitors inspected aircraft such as the YAK-52 and Bayraktar drones up close, and observed surveillance and air-defense systems including the TPS-79R radar and the PATRIOT missile system. Flight simulators were in constant demand, with hundreds queuing to experience the sensations of pilot control.

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BIAS 2025 was more than an air show – it was a clear demonstration of the Romanian Air Force's relevance and modernization, a testament to international cooperation, and a celebration of flight, courage, and technical proficiency.

Story by Maria Ioniță
Photo: Adrian Sultănoiu, Alexandru Nițu, Maria Ioniță

WHOEVER SAVES A LIFE SAVES THE WORLD

DACIAN PUMAS BOOST MEDEVAC READINESS

The Romanian Detachment "Dacian PUMAS," deployed on EUFOR ALTHEA, sustained a high-tempo series of MEDEVAC and interoperability trainings at Camp Butmir this summer and into autumn, sharpening rotary-wing medical evacuation capabilities, night-time hoist operations and joint procedures with ROL1 medical teams. The detachment's aircrews, maintenance personnel, logisticians and medical teams conducted realistic, scenario-based drills tailored to the operational environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina – including landing-zone operations at high elevation, litter hoist extractions when a secure LZ (Landing Zone) cannot be created, casualty stabilization and rapid movement to higher-level care. The training emphasized mission-essential tasks: maintaining reaction time, ensuring safe and timely transport of casualties to definitive care and rehearsing the tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) that underpin successful MEDEVAC missions.

"*Whoever saves a life saves the world*," **the detachment said, underscoring the life-saving priority at the heart of MEDEVAC operations. Personnel executed hoist extractions using a stokes-style litter and practiced casualty handling and force protection measures under conditions that replicate the constraints of the theater.**

NIGHT MEDEVAC AND JOINT MEDICAL DRILLS

Night-time MEDEVAC missions formed a core element of the program. Operating under degraded visual conditions, aircrews and ground teams rehearsed navigation, communications and coordination routines designed to sustain a high tempo of operations after dark. Exercises were conducted in close coordination with ROL1 medical personnel at Camp Butmir to validate casualty triage, in-flight care and transfer procedures.

MAINTENANCE AND SUSTAINMENT – "PROTECTORS OF THE ROTARY WINGS"

Maintenance and avionics crews conducted continuous aircraft turnarounds and servicing to keep the detachment's rotary-wing assets mission-ready. These airframe and engine technicians – the unit's "protectors of the rotary wings" – ensured safe flight operations for the IAR-330 fleet, enabling sortie generation and rapid MEDEVAC response.

CEREMONIAL EVENTS AND FORCE RECOGNITION

On July 20, the detachment observed Romanian Aviation and Air Force Day at Camp Butmir, commemorating aviators under the patronage of Saint Elijah. In the presence of EUFOR Commander Maj. Gen. Florin-Marian Barbu, personnel unveiled a monument honoring the courage and sacrifice of Romanian Air Force members who have served with EUFOR ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the ceremony, awards including the Romanian Air Force Badge of Honor and the Merit in the Service of the Armed Forces, third class, were presented in recognition of professional achievement. The event also included tactical demonstrations and a static aircraft display.

DIPLOMATIC AND COMMEMORATIVE MISSIONS

Senior leaders – including EUFOR Commander Major General Florin-Marian Barbu and NATO Sarajevo Commander Brigadier General Matthew A. Valas – hosted a visit by Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Edinburgh, with Dacian PUMAS personnel and aircraft providing transport support for the commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide.

ROTATION HANDOVER AND DEPLOYMENT TIMELINE

A ceremonial change of operational command for the third rotation of the Dacian PUMAS Detachment was held on 10 September 2025 at the 95th Air Base. Senior leaders in attendance included the Joint Forces Command commander, Major General (AF) Valerică Vrăjescu, the Romanian Air Force deputy chief of staff, Major General (AF) Cezar-Aurel Stănciulescu, and the 95th Air Base commander, Brigadier General (AF) Ciprian Marin.

On 23 September 2025, the 3rd rotation of the Dacian PUMAS Detachment, assigned to the Romanian Air Force, assumed the duties and responsibilities of the EUFOR Aviation Detachment from the 2nd rotation during a ceremony held at Camp Butmir, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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Dacian PUMAS and partnered multinational battalion elements continue to train together to refine embarkation and debarkation procedures for rotary-wing operations and boost resilience to variable flight conditions. Commanders stressed that continuous, realistic training–day and night, in the air and on the ground–remains the decisive factor in preserving MEDEVAC readiness and protecting lives in the area of operations.

Story based on information provided by Dacian PUMAS' public affair officers
Photos: Mădălina Burlacu, Vlad Ciobanu

MEDEVAC RESPONSE UPGRADED AFTER DACIAN PUMAS AND KOSEVO HOSPITAL COORDINATION

SARAJEVO – The Dacian Pumas Detachment, in cooperation with medical teams from Kosevo Hospital in Sarajevo, conducted complex joint training and practical coordination designed to optimize rapid-response MEDEVAC capabilities.

The exercise elevated operational medical standards, accelerated ongoing modernization of Sarajevo's healthcare system, and established procedures for ultra-rapid transport of organs and critically ill patients. These improvements significantly reduce the interval between emergency and definitive treatment and materially strengthen the institution's operational readiness.

Photo by Arnaund Chamberlin

MAJOR GENERAL FRANK GRÄFE ASSUMED THE ROLE OF CHIEF OF STAFF, ALLIED AIR COMMAND

RAMSTEIN, Germany – On July 1, 2025, German Air Force Major General Frank Gräfe officially assumed duties as Chief of Staff (COS) at Allied Air Command, Ramstein, taking over from Italian Air Force Major General Gianluca Ercolani.

Major General Ercolani arrived in June 2022, during this time he has led a multinational team comprised of personnel from 28 of the 32 Allied Nations, delivering mission-ready capabilities in support of the Alliance's collective defence.

Major General Gräfe brings over three decades of operational and strategic expertise to the role. Prior to his appointment, he served as Deputy Commander Operations at AIRCOM. A graduate of the German Air Force Academy (1988), he began his flying career on the F-4F Phantom before transitioning to the Eurofighter. His distinguished service includes key leadership roles such as Wing Commander, Branch Chief of the Executive Group Information Centre/Defence Policy at the German Federal Ministry of Defence and Germany's Defence and Air Attaché in Washington D.C.

The role of Chief of Staff is pivotal in aligning the headquarters' efforts with the Commander's priorities, enabling our operational mission and supporting more than 600 military and civilian personnel who serve at Ramstein. The role is instrumental in steering the headquarters responsibility for delivering NATO's Air and Space power.

Following his tenure at AIRCOM, Major General Ercolani will return to Italy, where he will serve as Chief of Staff and Deputy Commander of the Italian Air Force's Operational Headquarters, as well as Deputy Commander of the 1st Regione Aerea in Milan.

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Brigadier General (s) Kevin "Jinx" Jamieson officially assumed duties as Deputy Commander Operations at AIRCOM, succeeding Major General Gräfe.

ALLIED AIR COMMAND HOSTED ANNUAL NATO PARTNER AIR CHIEFS' CONFERENCE AT RAMSTEIN

From September 18 to 19, 2025, Partner Air Chiefs and representatives from 14 Partner nations assembled at Allied Air Command (AIRCOM) Headquarters, Ramstein, Germany, for the annual Partner Air Chiefs' Conference (PACC) 2025.

Colonel Kevin Anderson of the Joint Air Power Conference Centre (JAPCC) provided an update to the attending Air Chiefs, in addition, General Takehiro Morita of the Japan Air Self-Defense Force delivered an address on NATO cooperation from the Indo-Pacific perspective.

NATO cooperates with a range of Partner nations and they contribute to several of its core activities, from shaping policy to developing interoperability and managing crises. Partnership programmes also assist in the development of national defence and security institutions and forces.

PACC provides an excellent opportunity for partner countries to exchange views on air power-related matters. NATO's cooperation with partner nations contribute to shaping policy, improving interoperability and managing crises. Partnership programmes also assist in the development of national defence and security institutions and forces.

Chaired by Acting Commander Allied Air Command, Air Marshall Johnny Stringer, Partner Air Chiefs engaged in fruitful dialog, sharing knowledge critical to future operational planning.

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The agender for the 2025 PACC, included updates from Subject Matter experts on the topics of Agile Combat Employment (ACE), Counter Unmanned Ariel Vehicles (C-UAVs) and Military Partnerships.

ALLIED AIR COMMAND DELIVERD ISR TRAINING MISSION TO BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Allied Air Command's Mobile Training Team (MTT) visited Bosnia and Herzegovina from 20 to 25 June, 2025 to support partner nation defence development. The six-day visit, hosted under NATO's Partnership for Peace programme, which Bosnia and Herzegovina joined in 2006, focused on Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) from an air perspective. The team, drawn from AIRCOM's Military Partnerships branch, instructed 16 mid- to senior-level officers and non-commissioned personnel.

Training covered NATO doctrine, organisational structure and ISR capabilities, aimed at enhancing Bosnia's ability to monitor airspace and contribute to regional security. The initiative aligns with NATO's Defence Capacity Building Package supporting partner stabilisation.

"This training deepens Bosnia and Herzegovina's ISR competence," said Italian Major Gabriele Rame, AIRCOM's Military Partnership branch lead for this MTT.

The visit reflects NATO's enduring commitment to collective defence and stability, emphasising multinational cooperation and realistic training to deter aggression. It demonstrates how targeted support boosts a partner nation's readiness and defence resilience.

By embedding NATO doctrine into Bosnia's ISR framework, the mission strengthens the Alliance's air posture in South-Eastern Europe and reaffirms that NATO support is non-provocative, proportionate and firmly centred on defensive aims.

ENJJPT – 80TH FLYING TRAINING WING MARKS RECORD YEARLY OUTPUT IN PILOT TRAINING

SHEPPARD AIR FORCE BASE, Texas – With the graduation of Class 25-08 on Thursday, September 11th, 2025, the 80th Flying Training Wing reached a 10-year high in pilot production, marking a milestone for the Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training (ENJJPT) program.

The graduation brought the total number of pilots produced in fiscal year 2025 to 175, the most in a single year since before 2015.

"ENJJPT continues to set the standard for fighter pilot production for the NATO alliance," said Col. Jeffrey Shulman, 80th FTW commander. "Despite multiple challenges, our instructors, maintainers and support personnel ensured we continue to produce the finest combat pilots for the alliance at a time when NATO's eastern flank is under threat."

The wing sustained its tempo through a series of obstacles, including a runway closure at Sheppard Air Force Base. Runway 15C/33C closed in April for repairs, forcing the wing to operate from one less runway.

Class 25-08 also made ENJJPT history with the most nations represented in a single class. Eight NATO allies, including the United States, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal, the United Kingdom and Norway trained together.

Maj. Gen. Geert De Decker, Belgian Air Force chief, delivered keynote remarks at the ceremony, highlighting the importance of allied partnerships in developing the next generation of NATO aviators.

Since its founding in 1981, ENJJPT has trained more than 8,300 pilots from 14 NATO nations.

By 1st Lt. Elizabeth Notice, 80th Flying Training Wing.
www.sheppard.af.mil

A NEW GENERATION OF PILOTS TOOK FLIGHT AT ITALY'S INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT TRAINING SCHOOL, BOLSTERING NATO'S COLLECTIVE CAPABILITIES

The IFTS embodies a strong message of cooperation among several countries, crucial for bolstering NATO's comprehensive approach to security. Photo courtesy of the Italian Air Force

On July 2, 2025 a new generation of 67 pilots, including representatives from NATO Allied and Partner nations, successfully completed their advanced flying training at the International Flight Training School (IFTS) in Decimomannu, a leading Italian Air Force facility.

The IFTS is a cornerstone in future-proofing Allied air power, with its primary focus on Phase IV of flight training, known as "Lead In to Fighter Training (LIFT)." This crucial phase is designed to seamlessly transition pilots into operational deployment on sophisticated combat aircraft such as the Eurofighter and F-35, providing them with advanced skills in flight maneuvers, tactical execution, and the masterful management of complex mission systems. The school employs an advanced training system that combines real-flight experience on M-346 aircraft with the intensive use of high-tech simulators – a LVC ("Live, Virtual, Constructive") system able to create complex and dynamic operational scenarios, a cutting-edge approach that enhances interoperability across Allied forces.

Among the newly qualified aviators were personnel from the Italian Air Force and the air forces of Austria, Germany, Greece, and Singapore. This robust international participation underscores Italy's pivotal role in advanced flight training and its unwavering commitment to fostering international defence cooperation. The graduation event was attended by Italian President Sergio Mattarella, Minister of Defence Guido Crosetto, and numerous other civil, military, and religious dignitaries.

The IFTS become fully operational in 2022, in the current flight training classes there are more than 10 nations including NATO member states such as Canada, Germany, Hungary, Sweden, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK represented, alongside key NATO partners and contact countries such as Austria, Japan, Qatar, Republic of Singapore, and Saudi Arabia.

Lieutenant General Antonio Conserva, the Italian Air Force Chief of Staff, stated, "Defence and the Air Force are tasked with maintaining the highest level of operational readiness for their assets, partly by training pilots to the highest quality standards, to ensure the defence of Italian and Allied skies, and an adequate level of deterrence capable of safeguarding peace in every context."

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The presence of pilots from across the Alliance and its network of global partners illustrates the collaborative spirit and shared commitment to collective defence. It reinforces the understanding that highly specialized and interoperable training serves as a cornerstone for maintaining NATO's collective security and effectively addressing the evolving challenges of the modern geopolitical landscape.

NATO ALLIES INTEGRATED FOR BOMBER TASK FORCE, SPANISH HORNETS ON ICELAND AIR POLICING ESCORT U.S. B-1BS TO NORWAY

U.S. Air Force B-1B Lancer bombers from Dyess Air Force Base, Texas, U.S., arrived at Ørland Air Base, Norway, on 9 August for the latest Bomber Task Force Europe deployment, integrating with NATO Allies for advanced training in warfighting capabilities and readiness.

On arrival in the North Atlantic region, the B-1Bs were escorted by Spanish Air and Space Force EF/A-18M Hornets operating from Keflavik Air Base, Iceland. The Spanish fighters are deployed on their first NATO Air Policing mission in Iceland, providing airborne surveillance, interception and quick reaction alert under the Alliance's integrated air defence framework.

During their stay, the long-range bombers will fly a series of Ally-led missions alongside Norwegian F-35 fighters and other NATO aircraft, practising high-threat air operations and refining skills in the find, fix, track and target process. Crews will also train to counter air and ground-based threats designed to deny their freedom of manoeuvre, enhancing the Alliance's readiness to secure air superiority.

"This deployment allows us to train the way we fight — integrated with our NATO Allies, ready and adaptive," said U.S. Lieutenant Colonel Eric Alvarez, 345th Bomb Squadron deployed commander.

"It's about building experience and trust together, enhancing readiness, and staying sharp in dynamic environments." Norweigian Lieutenant Colonel Tom Christiansen, acting chief of the 132 Air Wing at Ørland, added: "This type of training makes us better equipped to handle any challenges."

This is the fifth Bomber Task Force Europe deployment in 2025, demonstrating the United States' enduring commitment to maintaining a ready and capable forward presence. NATO's bomber integration missions underscore the Alliance's ability to operate across a range of domains, strengthen interoperability, and deter potential aggression. By combining strategic bomber capabilities with Allied fighter escorts and operating in complex scenarios, NATO continues to reinforce its defensive posture, ensuring it can respond decisively to any threat to the Alliance.

HUNGARIAN AND SWEDISH GRIPENS INTEGRATED WITH UNITED STATES B-1B LANCER BOMBERS OVER LATVIA

In a demonstration of Allied air power and interoperability, Hungarian and Swedish Air Force JAS-39 Gripens joined the U.S. Air Force's B-1B Lancer bombers for a fly past over Riga. On 19 August, 2025, two Hungarian JAS-39 Gripens, currently deployed on NATO's Air Policing mission at Šiauliai Air Base in Lithuania, flew in formation with Swedish Gripens and two U.S. Air Force's B-1B Lancer bombers over Riga, Latvia.

The formation flight flew low level over Latvia's Monument of Freedom highlighting the seamless integration of the diverse and highly sophisticated platforms.

"The security of the Baltic States and NATO's Eastern flank is the cornerstone of the security of the entire Euro-Atlantic region," said Latvian Minister of Defence, Andris Sprūds. "Such U.S. and Allied flyover manoeuvres clearly demonstrate NATO's presence in the region, transatlantic unity, and commitment to collectively strengthen the security of the Baltic State region," he added.

The U.S. Air Force B-1B Lancer aircraft deployed from Dyess Air Force Base, Texas, and arrived at Ørland Air Base, Norway, on 9 August, 2025, as part of the latest Bomber Task Force Europe. The deployment enables Allied aircrews to refine tactics, increase flexibility and strengthen coordination by exercising and operating together, further increasing warfighting capabilities and readiness.

While in theatre, the bomber aircrews trained on key elements of the find, fix, track and target process – honing the speed and accuracy with which bombers and fighters are able to act against threats in real time.

Bomber Task Force Europe is part of a regular series of deployments that strengthen Allied readiness, deepen integration, and demonstrate credible, combat-ready airpower in support of the collective defence of the homeland and the Euro-Atlantic region.

NORWAY CONCLUDED INTENSIVE AIRPOWER INTEGRATION AS BOMBER TASK FORCE EUROPE RETURNS TO U.S.

Two U.S. Air Force B-1B Lancers, assigned to the 345th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron, taxi on the runway during a Bomber Task Force Europe deployment at Ørland Air Base, Norway, Aug. 14, 2025. BTF Europe enables real-world operations to reinforce peace through presence, precision and resolve. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Tambri Cason)

Bomber Task Force Europe is a recurring deployment aimed at reinforcing NATO's collective defence, projecting Airpower globally, and demonstrating the Alliance's unity and interoperability. U.S. B-1B Lancer bombers completed two weeks of Allied-led training in Norway, strengthening integration between Norwegian and U.S. aircraft in high-threat scenarios.

The deployment saw U.S. aircrews from the 345th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron operate alongside Royal Norwegian Air Force F-35s, training to penetrate contested airspace and conduct coordinated strikes under simulated anti-access and area denial (A2AD) conditions. The mission, part of Bomber Task Force (BTF) Europe, enhanced NATO's joint warfighting capability and reinforced the Alliance's ability to operate cohesively across domains.

"The more we train, the more capability we build, and strengthen the bonds between our Airmen and our Allies," said Maj. Gen. Joseph L. Campo, Director of Operations, Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration at U.S. Air Forces in Europe. "By working side by side in demanding environments, we gain the trust, understanding, and readiness needed to meet future challenges together."

Throughout the deployment, Allied aircrews rehearsed the full Find, Fix, Track and Target (F2T2) process in real time. Norwegian F-35s and U.S. B-1Bs jointly practised defensive escort and air-to-surface targeting, enhancing both survivability and mission effectiveness in dynamic threat environments.

"We have the F-35, which is a multi-role fighter jet, which you might say is a jack-of-all-trades, master of none," said Royal Norwegian Air Force Maj. Morgan, acting commander of the unit that integrated with the BTF. "We are able to defend other aircraft; we are also able to drop weapons onto the ground. Whereas the B-1 is more specific and has long range and high-speed capabilities.

"Hopefully we are able to be there with the F-35 to assist in fulfilling the role of the B-1 and help by protecting them but also have their support in the air-to-surface portion of warfare training," Morgan added.

As the B-1Bs redeployed to Dyess Air Force Base, Texas, U.S., they conducted a rapid hot pit refueling at Lajes Field, Portugal – allowing aircraft to land, refuel with engines running, and resume flight operations swiftly.

BTF Europe is a recurring deployment aimed at reinforcing NATO's collective defence, projecting Airpower globally, and demonstrating the Alliance's unity and interoperability. Training events like this reaffirm NATO's resolve to deter aggression and defend every Ally.

Three U.S. Air Force Airmen, assigned to the 345th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron stand near the front of a B-1B Lancer aircraft during a Bomber Task Force Europe mission at Ørland Air Base, Norway, Aug. 21, 2025. BTF Europe highlights our ability to operate in contested environments while refining tactics that ensure precision and survivability. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Tambri Cason)

A DECADE OF NATO IN SIGONELLA - NISRF CELEBRATED 10TH ANNIVERSARY

The NATO Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Force (NISRF) celebrated its 10th anniversary during a ceremony held at Italian Air Force Base Sigonella. The event marked a decade of growth and transformation – from the establishment of the NATO Alliance Ground Surveillance Force in September 2015 to today's permanent multinational ISR Force.

In his speech, Brigadier General John B. Creel, Commander of NISRF, highlighted the significance of the occasion. "What started as an ambitious program ten years ago has become a permanent NATO Force," he said. "NISRF delivers intelligence for the Alliance every single day, thanks to the dedication of our multinational team and the steadfast support of our Host Nation, Italy."

The Force was originally activated in October 2015 as the NATO Alliance Ground Surveillance Force (NAGSF). In November 2019, the first NATO RQ-4D Phoenix aircraft arrived in Sigonella, followed by the Initial Operational Capability (IOC) in 2021. In September 2023, the unit transitioned into the NATO ISR Force, expanding its mission and becoming a permanent element of NATO's force structure.

In recent years, NISRF has demonstrated its growing flexibility. Earlier in 2025, the Force successfully conducted sustained operations from a forward operating location in Finland – the first time a NATO Phoenix was deployed for weeks outside of Sigonella.

The ceremony also included reflections from NISRF members who have served since the very beginning. Their personal accounts highlighted the challenges and achievements of the early years in Sigonella.

Floriana B., Deputy Legal Advisor and NATO International Civilian (NIC), one of the first members of the Force, recalled those days: "When I first joined the Force in 2016, we were probably less than 100 people – a small team with big dreams! We started with literally nothing. Everything you see today was nothing more than a vision."

Today, NISRF brings together men and women from across the Alliance: analyst, operators, maintainers, and flight crews working side by side. From Sicily, they provide timely intelligence to NATO commanders, enhancing situational awareness and supporting decision-making across the Alliance.

The anniversary ceremony was both a moment of reflection and of looking ahead. "Ten years in Sigonella are only the beginning," Brigadier General Creel emphasized. "NISRF will continue to adapt, innovate, and deliver for NATO – today and tomorrow."

LESS TRANSIT, MORE SURVEILLANCE: NISRF EXTENDS GIUK MISSION FROM THE HIGH NORTH

Strategic reach, operational flexibility, and real-time intelligence: all came together as the NATO Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Force (NISRF) conducted its first RQ-4D Phoenix mission into the Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom (GIUK) gap - launched from Finland, rather than its home base in southern Italy.

NISRF analysts at the NISRF Intelligence Operation Center (NIOC) in Sigonella process the data collected by the RQ-4D Phoenix. In this way, the multinational NISRF analyst team ensures that NATO decision-makers receive timely, relevant insight

The GIUK gap has long been an important transit corridor, an early warning zone in the North Atlantic and also of vital importance to NATO. By operating directly from the Nordic region, NISRF enhances the Alliance's ability to maintain situational awareness and freedom of operation across its entire area of responsibility.

"This first GIUK mission out of Finland reflects how far we've come in developing and applying NATO's ISR capability," said Brigadier General John B. Creel, Commander NISRF. "It's a result of close cooperation, adaptability, and constant operational learning.", he stated.

The milestone mission builds on the operational momentum gained during NISRF's recent deployment to Finland. From its home base in Sigonella, Sicily, the RQ-4D Phoenix already covers a wide swath of NATO territory thanks to its extended range and endurance. Sigonella's central position in the Mediterranean provides strategic access to multiple regions - from the Balkans to North Africa and the Black Sea. Now, with the ability to temporarily operate from forward locations like Pirkkala, NISRF can extend its reach even further north, positioning ISR assets closer to emerging areas of interest and operate longer in the area of interest.

While the Phoenix provides unmatched endurance and coverage for data collection, it is only one part of NISRF's capability. Turning raw data into actionable intelligence depends on the expertise of highly trained analysts, who process, interpret, and contextualize the information collected. It is this human element that transforms surveillance into true understanding - and enables informed decisions at the operational and strategic level.

This mission underscores the growing maturity of NATO's collective ISR capability. The Alliance benefits from a ready, flexible, and reliably operating reconnaissance system that directly contributes to situational awareness and informed decision-making - now with increased presence in a region of rising strategic importance.

Hands-on training in a virtual environment: a key element of NISRF's innovative approach to readiness

STRENGTHENING NATO ISR RESILIENCE: NISRF DIVERSION RECOVERY TRAINING IN HUNGARY

In July 2025, the NATO Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Force (NISRF) conducted its first-ever diversion recovery training at Pápa Air Base, Hungary. Organized by the NISRF Training Center, the event focused on ground handling procedures in the event of a diverted landing of a NISRF aircraft - a critical scenario that requires seamless coordination and situational awareness across multiple national support elements.

Located at Sigonella Air Base in Sicily, Italy, the NISRF Training Center is one of the key elements of the NISRF and plays a central role in the preparation of personnel from all NATO countries. It provides standardized and advanced training to ensure operational readiness in support of NATO's Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capability delivered by NISRF.

Instead of sending an actual NATO RQ-4D Phoenix remotely piloted aircraft, the NISRF Training Center brought Virtual Reality (VR) equipment to simulate operations on site. The goal was to equip multinational personnel with the necessary knowledge and skills to manage recovery operations confidently and efficiently at alternate airfields.

"This kind of training is essential to ensuring our teams across the Alliance are ready to respond to unforeseen circumstances," said Colonel Matteo Molari, NISRF Deputy Commander and Training Center Commander. "We want everyone involved - whether in logistics, security, maintenance, or flight operations - to have a clear understanding of the procedures to be applied during divert scenarios."

By leveraging VR headsets and interactive scenarios, the training provided a highly realistic and repeatable learning experience. Participants could walk through critical procedures, interact with virtual components, and practice decision-making in a safe and controlled environment.

Following the success of this training event, the diversion recovery procedure will be made available to all NATO nations through NISRF Training Center.

By adopting innovative training methods, NISRF also contributes to NATO's aim of increasing operational flexibility across the Alliance.

The training brought together specialists from across the Alliance to enhance interoperability and coordination.

Virtual Reality technology allowed ground crews to simulate complex recovery procedures without a physical aircraft

SPAIN HANDED OVER COMMAND AND CONTROL OF NATO'S ALLIED REACTION FORCE TO TÜRKIYE

The Allied Response Force (ARF) served as the Alliance's primary tool for force generation and rapid response in support of NATO's three core tasks. The Allied Reaction Force (ARF) is a high-readiness, multinational and multi-domain force that can be deployed at very short notice to carry out a wide range of missions. Many current challenges, such as hybrid warfare, terrorism and cyber attacks, require a coordinated response across operational domains.

- The Allied Reaction Force is capable of carrying out the Alliance's full spectrum of missions in support of NATO's three core tasks (deterrence and defence, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security).
- It is a robust, multi-domain force that can be rapidly reinforced with additional units as needed.
- It operates under the overall command of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR). NATO Rapid Deployable Corps Italy (NRDC-ITA) currently serves as the ARF Headquarters.
- The ARF is a component of the NATO Force Model, the framework through which the Alliance organises, manages, activates and commands Allied national forces in support of NATO's three core tasks.

Photo Curtesy of the Spanish Air and Space Force

The Spanish Air and Space Force have concluded their commitment providing high-readiness Air Command and Control capabilities for NATO's Allied Reaction Force, handing over to the Turkish Air Force. The official handover of the Allied Reaction Force (ARF) Air Component Command took place on July 1, 2025, when operational responsibilities seamlessly transferred from the Spanish to the Turkish Joint Force Air Component (JFAC).

NATO's default JFAC is located at AIRCOM in Ramstein, Seven nations (Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Türkiye, the United Kingdom and the United States of America) have established NATO Force Structure JFACs that are trained and stood up to serve as a Command and Control unit for the Allied Reaction Force or to take over from the AIRCOM if required. The use of those national air command structures gives NATO's Air and Space Power a comprehensive resilience and can both flexibly handle critical training requirements and provide sustained command and control for ongoing air operations.

From January 1, 2024, the Spanish JFAC served as the Air Command and Control element for the ARF, marking a significant milestone in Spain's contribution to NATO's enhanced deterrence and defence posture across the Euro-Atlantic area.

During their commitment the Spanish JFAC played a pivotal role in Steadfast Dart 25, conducted in February 2025, by planning and scheduling air assets assigned to the ARF. Additionally, they were actively engaged in planning and conducting many air defence and deterrence operations on NATO's Eastern flank within the framework of NATO's enhanced Air Policing and Air Policing activities. These actions aimed to counter any possible threat from all directions safeguarding NATO Airspace.

The Turkish JFAC was certified during exercise Steadfast Dagger, and will take the lead for combined and joint operations that support NATO deterrence and defence missions. The JFAC will be staffed with Turkish air experts who will plan, coordinate and control Allied air operations involving thousands of sorties of Allied fighters, tankers, transport, intelligence and surveillance and airborne control aircraft providing NATO Air Power for collective deterrence and defence of the Alliance for the next 12 months.

The ARF is a high-readiness, multinational and multi-domain force that can be deployed at very short notice to carry out a wide range of missions. The ARF includes land, maritime, air, Special Operations Forces, cyber, space, logistics and strategic communications elements, provided by NATO member countries through a rotational system. Flexible, scalable and multinational by design, the ARF is a clear demonstration of Allied capability, solidarity and resolve.

* * *

From 2002 until 2024, the NATO Response Force (NRF) served as the Alliance's primary tool for force generation and rapid response in support of NATO's three core tasks. The establishment of the Allied Reaction Force (ARF) and the NATO Force Model in 2024 was part of a broader restructuring of NATO's high-readiness forces.

NATO AWACS AND TURKISH AIR FORCE ENHANCED INTEROPERABILITY DURING NEXUS ACE TRAINING

Türkiye successfully execute NEXUS ACE training exercise from Konya Air Base in Türkiye, reinforcing Allied cohesion and operational readiness in the region. Between August 26 to 28 and September 2 to 5, 2025, NATO's Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft, currently deployed to Konya Air Base, Türkiye, executed a tactical training event alongside the Turkish Air Force's E-7T aircraft and F-16 fighter jets. The event known as NEXUS ACE is part of the Tailored Assurance Measures for Türkiye (TAM-T) mission.

NEXUS ACE served as a vital training opportunity, bringing together NATO's AWACS with Turkish Air Force units in a demanding and realistic operational environment. The coordinated exercise focused on strengthening interoperability, command and control, and operational coordination within NATO airspace.

TAM-T missions are crucial in elevating the readiness level of NATO forces. These activities not only reinforce regional security but also ensure NATO forces maintain a high state of readiness to respond to evolving security challenges.

TURKISH MULTINATIONAL EXERCISE ANATOLIAN EAGLE 25 ENHANCED INTEROPERABILITY

From June 23 to July 4, 2025, Allied and Partner air forces met in Türkiye as Exercise Anatolian Eagle 25 executed from the 3rd Main Jet Base in Konya. Hosted by the Turkish Air Force, this live-fly multinational exercise delivered advanced, high-tempo combat training designed to sharpen interoperability and reinforce NATO's collective defence posture.

A key enabler was NATO's E-3A Sentry, deployed from Geilenkirchen, Germany, providing airborne Command and Control, enabling integrated battle management in contested airspace, a role it has fulfilled in Anatolian Eagle in previous iterations.

"We highly value NATO partnerships with your nations, especially now, working together through collective security and shared training," said Air Marshal Johnny Stringer, Acting Commander, Allied Air Command. "We thank Türkiye for hosting Anatolian Eagle, working together with NATO Partner Nations: Azerbaijan, Jordan, and Qatar and NATO Nation: Hungary and the United States. Anatolian Eagle is an excellent example of this shared training," he added.

Türkiye fields a significant array of capabilities for the exercise, this iteration included F-16 Fighting Falcons, E-7T 'Peace Eagle' Aerial Early Warning and Command aircraft, KC135R tankers, also Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) including the Bayraktar Akıncı and ANKA-S. The United States F-16 fighters, from the 510th Fighter Squadron from Aviano, along with Hungarian JAS-39 Gripen also participated in Anatolian Eagle 25. The exercise challenged participants with complex, high-end tactical scenarios designed to refine combat tactics, counter integrated air defences, and build credible joint force capabilities.

Allied Air Forces also trained alongside Partner Nations including; Azerbaijan, Jordan, and Qatar - enhancing cooperation across a full spectrum of air power in a multi-domain battlespace. Anatolian Eagle 25 reinforces NATO's ability to operate in contested, modern threat environments - critical to sustaining deterrence and promoting regional security. Since its launch in 2001, Anatolian Eagle has evolved into one of the NATO's premier training events. With its advanced infrastructure, intricate scenario design, and integrated mission planning, the 2025 edition underlines NATO's readiness to meet current and emerging challenges across the Euro-Atlantic area.

Two U.S. Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcons assigned to the 510th Fighter Generation Squadron taxi to the runway before takeoff during Exercise Anatolian Eagle 25 at the 3rd Main Jet Base, Konya, Türkiye, June 30, 2025. AE 25 sharpens U.S. warfighter lethality and survivability by refining tactical execution, joint operational procedures and combat adaptability against advanced threat systems. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Zachary Jakel)
Photo source: www.aviano.af.mil

ALLIED FORCES CONDUCTED COMPLEX TRAINING IN POLAND AND LITHUANIA AS PART OF NEPTUNE STRIKE 25 2

On July 24, forces from NATO nations conducted a NATO-led Find, Fix, Track, and Target (F2T2) exercise over Poland and Lithuania, strengthening Allied integration, interoperability, and combat effectiveness. F2T2 missions demand precise coordination across all warfighting domains (air, land, maritime, cyber, and space) employing intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets to locate and communicate potential target locations to other aircraft with capabilities to strike the targets in an established time limit. Fighter jets (from Germany, Poland, Romania, and the US) and surface-stationed missile defense systems (from Poland and the US) operated jointly in a complex scenario, showcasing NATO's ability to execute coordinated, multi-domain operations.

F2T2 missions demand precise coordination across all warfighting domains (air, land, maritime, cyber, and space). Photo courtesy Multinational Multi-Role Tanker Transport

During the mission, NATO's Airborne Warning & Control System (AWACS) provided airborne command and control, facilitating cross-domain coordination to locate targets and swiftly relay their positions to air and ground assets with strike capabilities. The large number of air assets involved offered a valuable training opportunity for the weapon controllers operating on board the NATO E3-A, increasing the ability of different NATO nations to operate together to the same high standard.

"F2T2 provides a unique one-day-training opportunity involving numerous air assets. The major advantage is that we can train with a wide range of aircraft under control, seamlessly integrating this into our regular operation schedule" said Lieutenant Colonel Francisco Patino Patino, NATO AWACS Squadron 2 Commander.

The event was executed as part of the ongoing second iteration of NATO's prime enhanced Vigilance Activity (eVA) Neptune Strike 2025, serving to collective operational skills while fostering trust and confidence among NATO allies. It combined participating air assets, including fighter jets from Finland, Greece, Italy, Romania, UK, US and US KC-135 tankers, with the Gerald. R. Ford Carrier Strike Group (GRF CSG) to maximize Air-Maritime synchronization.

"Our Neptune Strike enhanced vigilance activities represent important opportunities to coordinate and employ a wide range of combat forces throughout the European theater and demonstrate our combined capability to respond to crises and provide collective defence to the Alliance" said Vice Adm. J.T. Anderson, commander of STRIKFORNATO.

The Neptune Strike series are vigilance activities, which are deliberately planned and dynamically executed in support of NATO's deterrence objectives, guided and directed by NATO's Supreme Allied Headquarters Europe (SHAPE). Neptune Strike activities are conducted in compliance with international law and standards and are defensive in nature.

NATO's ability to deliver precise, integrated, multi-domain effects underscores its readiness and capability to protect NATO territory and populations, safeguard NATO airspace, and deter potential aggression – ensuring the continued security and stability of the Alliance.Air-to-Air refueling capabilities were also granted thanks to the support provided by Multinational Multi-Role Tanker Transport (MRTT) Unit and French A330s, a highly versatile aircraft capable of refueling, medical evacuation operations and transporting cargo and personnel.

Neptune Strike combined participating air assets – including fighter jets coming from Finland, Greece, Italy, Romania, UK, US and US KC-135 tankers – with the Gerald. R. Ford Carrier Strike Group (GRF CSG) in a perfect Air-Maritime integration. Photo courtesy Finnish Air Force

15 YEARS OF MULTINATIONAL AIR MOBILITY FOR THE EUROPEAN AIR TRANSPORT COMMAND

On 1 September, 2025, the European Air Transport Command (EATC) marked its 15th anniversary, celebrating a decade and a half of unity, excellence, and multinational cooperation in military air mobility.

The European Air Transport Command is a single multinational command with headquarters located at Eindhoven air base, the Netherlands. The EATC Fleet is composed of over 180 assets located at the national air bases of the seven member nations - Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Spain.

During a ceremony at Eindhoven Air Base, senior military authorities from all seven member countries, alongside NATO representatives, European institutions, and key defence industry stakeholders gathered to pay tribute to EATC's achievements since its creation in 2010, from life-saving aeromedical evacuations to strategic transport, air-to-air refuelling, and rapid crisis response missions worldwide.

"EATC's strength lies in its people and in the unique trust that binds our seven Member Nations together", said EATC Commander Major General Franck Mollard during his address. "Through innovation, harmonised procedures, and shared responsibility, we deliver concrete operational effects for Europe and NATO."

The ceremony unveiled EATC's leitmotiv, "Together we go beyond," reflecting the organisation's commitment to strengthening interoperability and preparing collectively for future challenges. Highlights included a flyby of a Belgian A400M, piloted by a Luxembourg pilot and a British co-pilot, alongside a Dutch F-35, symbolizing the multinational integration.

EATC continues to advance NATO's Agile Combat Employment (ACE) Concept, harmonizing maintenance procedures, enabling multinational

teams to operate each other's aircraft and exchange parts efficiently. The organisation is also exploring its role in potential Article 5 scenarios, ensuring it remains a decisive and ready force for joint European and NATO operations.

The EATC is a unique organisation for military air mobility, including transport, air-to-air refuelling and aeromedical evacuation within Europe. The overall objective is to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the member nations' military air transport efforts. The 15-year milestone underscores EATC's enduring value. Smart collaboration makes Europe stronger, deters adversaries, and prepares nations for the challenges of tomorrow.

NATO ALLIES PRACTISED BEACH LANDINGS TO ENHANCE AGILE COMBAT EMPLOYMENT

On 14 August 2025, a Norwegian C-130J Super Hercules landed on Denmark's Lakolk Beach for the first time, highlighting the Royal Norwegian Air Force's Agile Combat Employment (ACE) efforts.

The event brought together aircraft and aircrews from Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Norway and Sweden, and in support of NATO's commitment to flexible, dispersed air operations under ACE.

ACE enhances operational resilience by enabling Allied aircraft to operate from alternative landing zones –including beaches, highways and remote airstrips –ensuring mission continuity even if traditional air bases become compromised.

"This is the first time a Norwegian Hercules aircraft has performed such a landing – an important milestone in the Air Force's work with Agile Combat Employment (ACE)," the Royal Norwegian Air Force stated in an official release.

The short runway landings provided critical training for crews from multiple Allied nations, sharpening their skills in deploying aircraft and equipment in austere environments. The Danish-led initiative aims to refine operational procedures for tactical transport on unconventional surfaces.

"What we train on is simply doing short-run landings on 'unprepared surface'," said Major Geir Magnussen, a pilot with the Royal Norwegian Air Force. "That is, anything other than asphalt. The runway is right down to the minimum length of what we can tolerate and use with transport aircraft. We then fly at lower speeds than normal, and the goal is to land within a marked box that is only 500 feet long," Magnussen added.

These joint efforts demonstrate the Alliance's commitment to readiness and interoperability and reflect NATO's capacity to adapt swiftly, operate flexibly and reinforce deterrence –wherever and whenever required.

The Aermacchi MB-339 of the 313° Gruppo Addestramento Acrobatico (313th Acrobatic Training Group), also known as the Frecce Tricolori. This iconic jet, based at Rivolto Air Base, is the backbone of Italy's national aerobatic team. Photo courtesy Italian Air Force

ITALIAN AEROBATIC TEAM 'FRECCE TRICOLORI' CELEBRATED 65TH ANNIVERSARY

The Italian Air Force national aerobatic team, well known as "Frecce Tricolori", celebrated their 65th anniversary with a spectacular air show on September 6th and 7th, 2025, at the Rivolto Air Base in Udine, Italy.

This international event marked a significant milestone for a team that had become a global symbol of professionalism and excellence reaching more than 15 thousand flying hours, the Frecce Tricolori has completed over 1500 air shows all over the world.

The celebration not only featured the Frecce Tricolori's breathtaking displays but also highlighted the close connection between precision aerobatics and the tactical skills of modern fighter jets and pilots, daily used by Allied Air Command and Allies to keep safe and secure the NATO boundaries.

Several national aerobatic and demo teams, coming from Allied and partners nations, took part to the anniversary including military assets from Croatian, Finland, French, Turkish, Spanish and Swiss Air Force.

Aerobatic teams like the Frecce Tricolori serve as more than just a spectacular show; they are a vital link to the skills required for modern air combat, with the precision, discipline, and teamwork demonstrated in their intricate routines being directly transferable to the high-stakes environment of a fighter pilot. This synergy between showmanship and military readiness underscored the value of acrobatic teams within a nation's air force and was a tangible expression of solidarity within the NATO alliance.

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The 65th anniversary air show of the Italian Air Force aerobatic team was a tribute to tradition, a showcase of modern capabilities, the seamless integration of Allied and Partner jets who also took part is a powerful statement of commitment in the global defence landscape.

Patrouille de France (France)
Photo courtesy Italian Air Force

Turkish Stars (Türkiye)
Photo courtesy Italian Air Force

Patrouille Suisse (Switzerland)
Photo courtesy Italian Air Force

ALLIED CAPABILITIES ON DISPLAY DURING THE ROYAL INTERNATIONAL AIR TATTOO 2025

From July 18 to 20, 2025, over 20 Allied Nations came together at the Royal International Air Tattoo (RIAT) at Fairford, United Kingdom, showcasing the full spectrum of NATO air capabilities under this year's theme, 'Eyes in the Skies'.

RIAT 2025 highlighted the vital role aviation plays across all air specializations, with fighters from Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States, alongside rotary-wing assets, tankers, transport aircraft, intelligence, surveillance, and airborne control platforms.

This multinational participation demonstrated NATO's maritime patrol, search and rescue, advanced aerial surveillance, reconnaissance and intelligence, and airborne early warning capabilities.

Regarding the latter domains, NATO operates around the clock with their own "eyes in the skies" thanks to the E-3A AWACS and RQ-4D Phoenix assets.

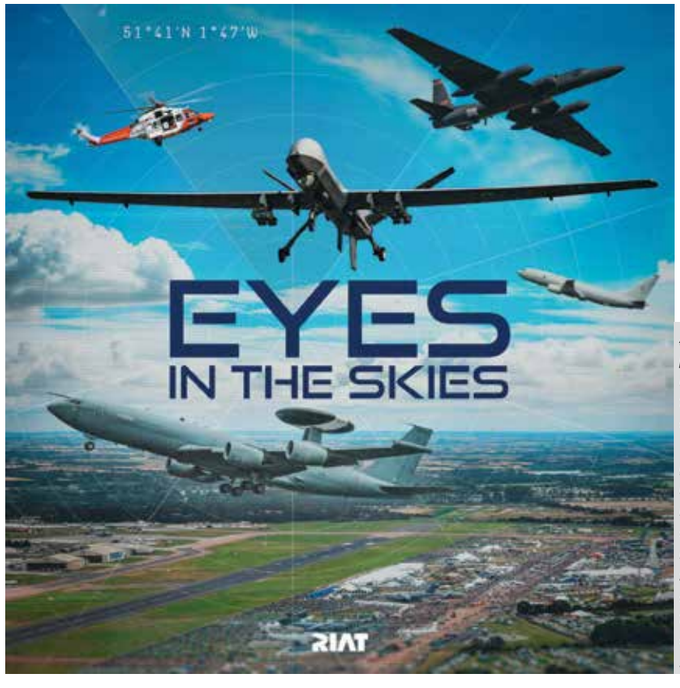
NATO's own Airborne Early Warning and Control Force (NAEW&C Force) ensures situational awareness to support NATO's Integrated Air and Missile Defence. In addition, it ensures airborne Command and Control, which enables battlespace management in contested environments. The NAEW&C Force conducts a wide range of NATO missions, including air policing, counter-terrorism support, crisis response, and non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO).

NATO's E-3A AWACS aircraft has the capability to detect, track, and identify potentially hostile aircraft at low altitudes while providing fighter control of Allied aircraft. It can track maritime contacts and coordinate with surface forces, underscoring its essential role in NATO's integrated defence.

NATO's RQ-4D Phoenix high-altitude long-endurance remotely piloted aircraft is another example of NATO's ability to project ISR capability flexibly across the entire Alliance territory. Operated by the NATO Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Force (NISRF), the RQ-4D ensures informed decision-making and effective response wherever and whenever the Alliance requires.

Reinforcing NATO's transatlantic ties, the United States Air Force contributed a B-1B Lancer to the flypast, under the umbrella of the Bomber Task Force (Europe) mission. This flypast highlighted the strategic reach and deterrence capability the U.S. brings to the Alliance and demonstrated NATO's ability to conduct long-range strike operations.

RIAT 2025 provided more than 175,000 spectators over three days with a dynamic flying display combining stealth fighters, rotary-wing platforms, tankers, and ISR assets in complex, choreographed scenarios demonstrating Allied interoperability and readiness to operate seamlessly across complex operations.



***ABOVE**: RIAT 2025 highlighted the vital role aviation plays across all air specializations, with fighters from Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Photo courtesy RIAT2025, Royal Air Force and Pawel Momont*

***LEFT**: This year's 'Eyes in the Skies' theme saw the Royal International Air Tattoo celebrate and highlight the vital role aviation plays across domains of aerial surveying, airborne early warning, maritime patrol, search and rescue, reconnaissance, signals intelligence and surveillance. At RAF Fairford we welcomed aircraft from around the world which have been modified and adapted for use on these specialised missions, in military and civilian operation for visitors to view.*
Source: www.airtatoo.com

The Human Factor in Aviation

By Chief Psychologist
Florentina Ecaterina Radu, PhD

INTRODUCTION

The human factors domain is multidisciplinary and interfaces with psychology, engineering, industrial and graphic design, statistics, operations research, and anthropometry.
The human factor denotes a physical or cognitive attribute of an individual–or a social behavior–that specifically characterizes human influence on the operation of technical systems and on the man–environment interface.
Personnel are the most flexible, adaptable, and valuable element of an organization's system, but also the most vulnerable to influences that degrade performance. Human behavior and performance are implicated in the majority of accidents.

THE HUMAN FACTOR IN AVIATION

The term *human factor*, now standard in aviation, was first defined by Frank Hopkins, a noted KLM pilot and human performance specialist. ICAO Circular 227 adopted his definition: *"The human factor refers to people: people in their living and working environments, their relationships with equipment, procedures, and the work setting… The two objectives concerning human factors are safety and efficiency."*
Historically, the role of the human factor was secondary. Flight safety long equated to technical reliability, and the pilot was viewed as a fixed component. Human behavior is neither linear nor predictable; humans are simultaneously the system's most vulnerable and its single most adaptable component–capable of situational awareness beyond that of any technical subsystem.
Traditionally, accident investigation prioritized identification of *technical errors*; when technical causes were not evident, investigations defaulted to *human error.* Often, that conclusion led to punitive measures rather than professional analysis. This legacy motivated the evolution of the human factors discipline within flight safety and accident investigation.
Efforts to improve workplace conditions reframed the human factor as *ergonomics*–the functional integration of person and machine in the work environment. As the share of technically caused accidents declined and human factors emerged as a safety threat, corrective action followed: investigation boards were strengthened by including personnel with psychological expertise.
Consequently, human performance issues ceased to be considered solely in cockpit terms and began to be assessed relative to the broader organizational environment. Human performance is now evaluated systemically–operational, technical, organizational, and cultural dimensions are examined. James Reason is a key author in establishing this systems approach.

THE HUMAN FACTOR AND PERSONAL ACCIDENT RISK

Statistics indicate human error accounts for 80% of flight accidents. Errors that precipitate accidents, however, are produced or enabled by numerous contributing factors.
A practical tool for increasing individual awareness is the *Pilot Accident Risk Assessment Method* (USASC, 1998). U.S. military aviation specialists hold that a risk-aware aircrew member is likelier to survive than one who avoids thinking about risk.

The method analyzes five major accident-contributing factors–each broken into major subcategories (domains)–specifically:
- Self-discipline;
- Accident due to direct personal fault (recklessness);
- Medical factors affecting flight duties;
- Actions by the chain of command or flight safety board;
- Leadership;
- Training and practice;
- Standards;
- Logistics support.

Each domain receives a score; the composite provides an overall measure of risk assumed for a given mission or flight activity. Accident risk assessment is a warning tool–not a deterministic predictor of accident occurrence–and is intended to prompt individual protective measures (Operational Risk Management).

Applying this method, we assessed military pilots' attitudes toward personal accident risk across aircraft types: C-130 Hercules, AN-26, and SOCAT (Radu, F.; Roco, M., 2010). Findings showed elevated personal risk levels among C-130 pilots. A plausible explanation includes personality characteristics–high self-confidence and risk tolerance–and the mission profile in operational theaters at the time (Iraq, Afghanistan). Repeating this study in the future would likely yield different insights given current socio-economic dynamics.
The human factors field is complex and offers extensive research avenues with direct implications for flight safety. Human error is often framed as an individual lapse, but it frequently reflects systemic failures to recognize pilots' psychological limits. Inadequate managerial decisions, poor communication, and insufficient training commonly contribute to aviation accidents. Ignoring the human factor produces collective risks, not merely individual ones.

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EUFOR ALTHEA

DACIAN PUMAS BOOST MEDEVAC READINESS