

# CER SENIN

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**BALTICA 2025**

**EMERALD  
WARRIOR 25**

**ROU AF REJOINS  
EUFOR  
OPERATIONS**

**ALMA MATER**



**48<sup>TH</sup> SQUADRON  
REACHES FULL STRENGTH**





EDITOR: ROMANIAN AIR FORCE STAFF

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COVER III: IAR-330 PUMA HELICOPTER FROM  
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*The articles presented in the magazine are drawn from various sources.*

*If a particular source is not explicitly stated, the information is sourced from the Allied Air Command Public Affairs Office.*



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# ROMANIAN AIR FORCE 2024 SELF-ASSESSMENT: MODERNIZATION, MISSION READINESS, AND NATO INTEGRATION

On Monday, February 3, Romanian Air Force Staff conducted a comprehensive self-assessment of its 2024 activities in the presence of Chief of the Defense Staff, General Gheorghe Vlad, and representatives from the Ministry of National Defense. During the session, Lieutenant General Leonard-Gabriel Baraboi, Chief of the Romanian Air Force Staff, presented how the service successfully achieved its strategic objectives, with an emphasis on enhancing combat readiness, airspace surveillance, early warning, threat deterrence, and the overall security of national airspace.

2024 presented an important milestone for the Romanian Air Force amid a challenging geopolitical environment intensified by the 2022 Ukrainian invasion. In this respect, notable progress has been made, with the transition process from the MiG-21 LanceR to the F-16, a process bolstered by key acquisitions from Portugal and Norway. The introduction of F-16s into Fighter Squadron 48 at 71<sup>st</sup> Air Base, completed the formation of a second F-16 squadron, substantially boosting the operational capability of the force.

In a historic move, 2024 also marked the official signing ceremony of a Letter of Offer and Acceptance for the acquisition of 32 fifth-generation F-35 Lightning II jets – a decision that represents a major leap forward in modernizing national defense. Moreover, modernization of the air defense systems continued with the upgrade of FPS-117 radars and the procurement of AN/TPS-77 units, alongside the final operational capability declared for three PATRIOT systems within the 74<sup>th</sup> Regiment have significantly strengthened the nation's air defense architecture. Simultaneously, infrastructure development at the air bases in Câmpia Turzii, Fetești, and Mihail Kogălniceanu has ensured

optimal conditions for aircraft operations. The F-16 Training Centre at 86<sup>th</sup> Air Base, which became fully operational in 2024 following its inauguration in November 2023, successfully graduated its first group of pilots. This achievement, realized in close collaboration with Dutch authorities and Lockheed Martin, underscores the service's commitment to excellence in pilot training. Modernization efforts also extended to the C-130 Hercules fleet, further enhancing the force's power projection capabilities. Adopting the Agile Combat Employment (ACE) concept has enabled rapid deployment from dispersed locations, enhancing readiness and deterrence in accordance with NATO-led missions' objectives.

2024 also witnessed an unprecedented increase in multinational training activities, with Romanian Air Force personnel engaging in joint international exercises in Czech Republic, Spain, Turkey, Hungary, Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Portugal, and the Netherlands. The RAMSTEIN LEGACY 24 exercise, a cornerstone of the Integrated Air and Missile Defense program, highlighted the effective integration of Romanian forces within NATO's air defense framework. International engagement remained a key

focus, as demonstrated by the deployment of the first rotation of a detachment – including military personnel and four helicopters – to Bosnia and Herzegovina under the EUFOR ALTHEA mission, scheduled to continue throughout 2025. Preparations are also underway for the deployment of four F-16 aircraft for the extended Air Policing mission in the Baltic States, complemented by the positioning of an Explosive Ordnance Disposal detachment in Kosovo. Ongoing investments in training, recruitment, and professional development of own personnel continue to serve as the cornerstone of operational readiness.

**The achievements of 2024 reflect the Air Force's unwavering commitment to safeguarding national airspace and fortifying military alliances at both European and international levels, proving that Romania is a key security provider and a respected NATO member. Through continuous modernization and strategic adaptability, the Romanian Air Force is well-suited to deliver rapid, decisive responses to emerging threats, thereby reinforcing national security and regional stability.**



Photo by Alex Nițu



## ROMANIAN AIR FORCE F-16 FIGHTERS SAFEGUARDING BALTIC AIRSPACE

# BALTICA 2025

### Commitment to Collective Defense

In alignment with the North Atlantic Alliance's overarching goals and responsibilities, Romania, as a steadfast NATO member, reaffirms its commitment to collective defense by contributing to the Air Policing mission over the Baltic States' airspace. This mission underscores NATO's dedication to safeguarding the sovereignty and security of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

### Carpathian Vipers Ready for Baltica 2025

At the beginning of March, an extensive evaluation of the detachment assigned to the upcoming Air Policing mission in Lithuania was conducted at Borcea Air Base. During this phase, the Carpathian Vipers underwent rigorous training to achieve peak operational readiness.

### Proven Readiness for NATO Air Policing

Building upon Romania's proven track record in such operations – including the successful MiG-21 LanceR mission in 2007 and Romania's participation in the 2023 Air Police mission in the Baltic countries with F-16 Fighting Falcon fighters – the Romanian Air Force will once again provide critical air defense assets in 2025. The mission will feature a four-month rotation of Romanian F-16 fighters at key operational sites that have been established and expanded to support NATO Air Policing since the Baltic States' accession to NATO in 2004.

### Ongoing Assurance Measures

The upcoming deployment is a continuation of NATO's Assurance Measures, initiated in 2014 in response to heightened security concerns following Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. By maintaining a persistent Air Policing presence, NATO ensures rapid readiness and operational flexibility, also with Romanian fighters standing by to respond to potential airspace incursions or other security threats under the command of NATO's Combined Air Operations Centre Uedem.

### Host Nation Collaboration

Host nation support from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania remains essential to the success of this mission, encompassing air command and control capabilities, ground infrastructure, and skilled personnel. Romania's participation reflects its unwavering dedication to the principle of collective defense, contributing not only to regional security but also to the Alliance's cohesion and deterrence posture.

### A Trusted Contributor

The 2025 mission solidifies Romania's standing as a trusted contributor to NATO's defense structure, demonstrating the Romanian Air Force's tactical expertise and dedication to bolstering interoperability while defending Allied airspace.







# NATO'S AIR POLICING MISSION: A STEADFAST COMMITMENT BY THE ALLIANCE

**NATO's Air Policing mission stands as a cornerstone of the Alliance's commitment to maintaining the integrity and security of NATO airspace. This collective defence initiative ensures that even member countries without their own air defence capabilities are protected under NATO's unified command.**

Allied nations contribute to Air Policing along NATO's eastern flank. Italy and France are currently deployed in Lithuania, the Netherlands in Estonia, and Spain in Romania. These deployments maintain a continuous 24/7 Air Policing presence within the Supreme Allied Commander Europe's (SACEUR's) area of responsibility.

## "Air Policing is an extremely delicate mission"

### ITALIAN CONTRIBUTION: A DECADE OF COMMITMENT IN THE BALTIC SKIES

Deployed at Šiauliai airport in Lithuania since August 2024, Italy's Task Force Air 36<sup>th</sup> Wing, equipped with Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft, have been a committed contributor to NATO's Air Policing mission. Achieving a milestone of 1,300 operational flight hours, the unit has completed over 40 "Alpha Scrambles," intercepting more than 60 unidentified aircraft.

During a joint exercise event, and for the first time in the Baltics, Italy deployed a SAMP-T Task Group from the Anti-Aircraft Artillery Command (COMACA) at the Šiauliai base, under the direct control of Task Force Air (TFA)

36<sup>th</sup> Wing, 2025 marks a monumental 10-year milestone for Italy; completing their first Baltic Air Policing mission in 2015, when deployed with four Eurofighter Typhoons from Lithuania. They have continued to support the Baltic Air Policing with a further nine rotations, from Air bases in Lithuania, Estonia and Poland. A decade of commitment and dedication has

ensured the safety of the Baltic skies within the NATO context. Italian jets have also supported Air Policing from Malbork, Poland, initially with F-35s and later with the Eurofighter. Colonel Roberto Massarotto, Task Force Wing Commander, emphasized: "Air Policing is an extremely delicate mission that is conducted by responding to 100% of activations without critical issues thanks to the professionalism and competence not only of our pilots, but of all the women and men of the Task Force."

**FRENCH CONTRIBUTION:  
A CONSISTENT AND ROBUST PRESENCE**  
Currently air policing with the Italian detachment at Šiauliai, Lithuania, France has been a consistent and robust contributor to

NATO's Air Policing. The French Air and Space Force has participated in the Baltic Air Policing mission on multiple occasions, first deploying advanced fighter jets to safeguard the airspace over the Baltic states in December 2024. French Rafale fighters have supported NATO's mission from Lithuania a total of eight times, the current rotation operating alongside the Italian Eurofighters provides a robust air defence presence that demonstrates solidarity and support for the Baltic States. The additional detachment at Šiauliai allows for more flexible operational planning of

NATO Air Policing in the region. The deployed Allies benefit from additional opportunities to conduct training with other regional air, ground, naval, and special forces and to practice Agile Combat Employment concepts, further enhancing the skills, interoperability, and resilience of our air forces. The deputy spokesperson for the French Chief of Defence highlighted: "By deploying fighter jets to Lithuania, France reaffirms its commitment to Nato Air Policing missions and its determination to protect and defend European airspace" During the deployment the French forces detachment have routinely intercepted military aircraft failing to conform with international aviation regulations, they have

executed around ten A-scrambles since their arrival and more than two hundreds training flights have been achieved alongside with Allies.

### THE DUTCH CONTRIBUTION: FIFTH-GENERATION CAPABILITIES IN ESTONIA

The Royal Netherlands Air Force (RNLAf), deployed at Ämari airbase in Estonia, has been actively engaged in NATO's Air Policing efforts, particularly in the Baltic region. During the current deployment, Dutch F-35s have executed approximately ten Alpha Scrambles, successfully identifying nearly 20 aircraft, including transport jets, reconnaissance aircraft, and electronic intelligence platforms which were not adhering to standard safety procedures. Beyond interception missions, the RNLAf has participated in a number of activities and training exercises to enhance interoperability. Notably, Exercise Pikne; Dutch air units collaborated with Estonian and French ground troops, maritime assets from Standing NATO Maritime Group 1 (SNMG1), and the recent training mission where the F-35 landed at Lielvarde, Latvia demonstrating the agility of the force. They also participated in a training event based on NATO's Agile Combat Employment (ACE) concept. In this event, Estonian Air Force specialists participated in preparing the Dutch fifth-generation fighter

jets further enhancing rapid combat readiness. "The F-35 is a 5<sup>th</sup> generation fighter that belongs to NATO's most advanced and capable platforms. By deploying the F-35s at the eastern flank, The Netherlands contributes towards credible military deterrence towards Russia." Said Lieutenant Colonel 'Swinger', RNLAf detachment commander, "In the past months, our jets have proven their capabilities, and we successfully conducted our mission: securing the Baltic airspace together with our allies" he added.

### THE SPANISH CONTRIBUTION: REINFORCING THE EASTERN FLANK IN ROMANIA

Since December 2024, Spain's detachment, codename PAZNIC, has played a pivotal role in reinforcing NATO's eastern flank in Romania. Six Eurofighter Typhoon jets from Albacete have enhanced the surveillance and defence of NATO airspace alongside Romanian Air Force F-16s on the Black Sea coast. The Spanish jets arrived in Romania in August 2024, the F-18s were initially tasked with safeguarding the skies and in December, 2024 they were relieved in place by the Eurofighter jets. In late January, the detachment's capabilities were further augmented with the addition of an A400 aircraft from Zaragoza. This expansion introduced air-to-air refueling capabilities, extending the operational range and endurance of the fighters.

The detachment has also engaged in both air-to-air and air-to-ground training missions, collaborating closely with NATO allies, including France, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Türkiye, the United Kingdom and the United States. A notable operational highlight occurred in February, when the PAZNIC detachment's alert aircraft were scrambled in response to a drone attack on the Ukrainian town of Reni. The swift and decisive response underscored the detachment's readiness to address real-world threats.

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**The air bases in Šiauliai, Lithuania, Ämari, Estonia and Romania's Mihail Kogalniceanu, play a key strategic role in NATO's Air Policing, these highly sophisticated hubs where Allies combine their high-end capabilities under the Integrated Air and Missile Defence System. With the posture of Italian, French, Dutch, and Spanish fighter jets, NATO has a robust air capability in place that sends a clear signal to potential adversaries of the Allies' collective readiness and commitment to preserving territorial integrity.**

*Story by Allied Air Command  
Public Affairs Office | Archive photo  
courtesy by the ROU AF PAO*



Archive photo courtesy by ROU AF PAO



Four United States Air Force B-52H Stratofortress bombers arrived at Royal Air Force Fairford, United Kingdom, on February 11, 2025 marking the start of Bomber Task Force (BTF) Europe 25-2. While transiting into Europe, the U.S. bombers conducted a routine mission with Finland, France and Sweden; and throughout the month long deployment, the bombers will participate in a series of exercises and training flights alongside Allied air forces, building cohesion and sharpening collective capabilities.

# UNITED STATES AIR FORCE B-52H STRATOFORTRESS ARRIVED IN THE UNITED KINGDOM FOR BOMBER TASK FORCE EUROPE 25-2

"Bomber Task Force missions reinforce our ability to rapidly project combat power, demonstrating U.S. lethality and readiness in a dynamic security environment," said Major General Joseph Campo, U.S. Air Forces in Europe – Air Forces Africa Director of Operations, Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration. "Training alongside our Allies and partners ensures seamless integration, enhancing our collective deterrence and warfighting capability across Europe and Africa" he added.

The bomber aircraft will continue to integrate with NATO Allies and partners, conducting joint training missions designed to enhance interoperability and readiness across the theatre. This integration highlights the importance of dynamic force employment, which ensures U.S. forces are strategically postured to deter aggression while adapting to the evolving security environment. The missions will also demonstrate the bombers' ability to operate from multiple forward locations. "Training with NATO allies

strengthens our ability to operate as one team," said Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Cangealose, commander 69<sup>th</sup> Expeditionary Bomb Squadron. "These missions reinforce our partnerships and prepare us to deliver decisive capabilities whenever and wherever they're needed." For European Allies, such deployments offer training and integration opportunities to refine and enhance common tactics, techniques and procedures. The missions enable crews to maintain a high state of readiness and

validate the U.S. Air Force's global strike capability in multi-domain operations. The routine deployments of U.S. strategic bombers provide critical touch points to train and operate alongside Allies whilst bolstering a collective response to any global threat. BTF 25-2 will demonstrate Agility in a dynamic security environment and global strike capabilities in support of assurance and deterrence objectives also in a NATO context with one focus on the Baltic region.



In a historic milestone for 2024, U.S. Air Force B-52H Stratofortresses landed in Romania for the first time. Two aircraft from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Wing at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, touched down at Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base on Sunday, July 21, as part of Bomber Task Force 24-4. Archive photo courtesy by ROU AF PAO

# NATO ALLIES TRAINED TOGETHER IN ROMANIA, ENHANCED ALLIED CLOSE AIR SUPPORT CAPABILITIES



Throughout December, six Eurofighters engaged in Close Air Support (CAS) exercises with multinational JTACs under challenging conditions, including night operations and adverse weather. Photo courtesy of the Spanish and Space Force

Spanish Eurofighters trained with US and French Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTACs) in December at Mihail Kogalniceanu Airbase, Romania, reinforcing NATO's interoperability and combat readiness. Throughout December, six Eurofighters engaged in Close Air Support (CAS) exercises with multinational JTACs under challenging conditions, including night operations and adverse weather. These missions tested the operational limits of the aircraft while maintaining precision and mission success. CAS operations require meticulous coordination between air and ground forces, with JTACs guiding aircraft to deliver support without risking friendly forces or causing collateral damage. By adhering to NATO's standardised procedures, the Spanish 14<sup>th</sup> Wing achieved effective outcomes, showcasing their advanced training and expertise. "These types of missions are crucial for practising and enhancing joint operations with NATO Allies," said Lt. Col. Garrido, Commander of the Paznic detachment. "Overcoming challenges like language barriers, weather, and geography reflects the skill and professionalism of our pilots and the capabilities of our Eurofighters." The Paznic detachment remains committed to ongoing collaboration with Allied forces, aiming to refine NATO's operational procedures and strengthen interoperability. These efforts underscore Spain's dedication to the Alliance and its collective security commitments. This collaboration demonstrates NATO's unified approach to maintaining security across the Euro-Atlantic region, leveraging shared expertise to respond to evolving threats.

# BOMBER TASK FORCE MISSION 'ONYX CROSS' STRENGTHENS READINESS AND LETHALITY

U.S. Air Forces in Europe integrated with air forces from Romania, Croatia, and Bulgaria for ONYX CROSS, a Bomber Task Force 25-2 mission over Eastern and Southern Europe on March 3. A U.S. Air Force B-52H Stratofortresses operating out of RAF Fairford in the United Kingdom partnered with Romanian F-16 Vipers, Croatian Rafales, and Bulgarian MiG-29s to execute aerial maneuvers and refine combat tactics.



"BTF missions serve as an assurance and deterrence initiative – they aim to provide a strategic element to NATO's collective defense," said U.S. Air Force Capt. Aaron Gurley, U.S. Air Forces in Europe – Air Forces Africa BTF planner. The complexity of missions like ONYX CROSS demands agility from all participants, requiring seamless coordination and adaptability across air forces. The mission began with B-52s integrating with F-16s for a standoff weapons simulation, practicing an advanced missile release while staying outside an adversary's threat range. The bombers then executed a simulated bomb drop on pre-planned targets, integrating with Bulgaria for a dynamic

targeting objective as MiG-29s provided close-air support. "The B-52 integrates seamlessly with Allied and partner forces through combined operations like ONYX CROSS," said U.S. Air Force Capt. Jacob "Crash" Carlson, 69<sup>th</sup> Expeditionary Bomb Squadron pilot. "We refine tactics, communication, and operational coordination. Using secure networks, we share real-time data, ensuring close integration for strategic deterrence, close-air support, and precision strike missions." Since arriving at RAF Fairford, the 69<sup>th</sup> Expeditionary Bomb Squadron has flown seven missions, working with Allied and partner forces across multiple theaters.

"Operating alongside partners has very much shaped my approach by emphasizing clear communication, adaptability to different frameworks, and leveraging coalition strengths to achieve mission success," Carlson said. "These experiences have refined how we plan for contingencies, execute complex operations, and assess mission outcomes, ensuring we can operate as one unified force when called upon." By integrating airpower across nations, missions like ONYX CROSS enhance NATO's ability to operate as a cohesive force, reinforcing collective defense and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region.

Story by USAFE-AFAFRICA Public Affairs Office





## NATO F-35S ENHANCE READINESS AND INTEROPERABILITY DURING SPARTAN LIGHTNING EXERCISE

**On February 6-7, 2025, Service members from the Royal Netherlands, Royal Norwegian and United States Air Forces demonstrated readiness, interoperability and maintenance proficiency during Spartan Lightning at Ramstein Air Base, Germany.**

A total of seven F-35A Lightning II aircraft participated in the exercise, with pilots and maintainers from the Dutch, Norwegian and United States air forces working to achieve key training objectives. The exercise provided the maintainers cross-servicing opportunities; and simulated combat scenarios for the pilot, focusing on both offensive and defensive counter-air missions, designed to sharpen operational capabilities.

"This Spartan Lightning iteration was the first of its kind because we flew in seven F-35s to Ramstein for the pilots to participate in the simulator training and for the maintenance personnel to participate in cross-servicing of each other's airplanes," said Lieutenant

Colonel Jared Marvin, 5<sup>th</sup> Combat Training Squadron D Flight Commander.

The exercise integrated F-35 tactics and intelligence experts, facilitating mission planning and executing complex scenarios. These scenarios provide an opportunity for participants to leverage their individual and collective training to develop tactical solutions.

Traditionally a simulated exercise, Spartan Lightning introduced the new concept of flying aircraft and personnel into the event, this allowed for cross-servicing opportunities under NATO's Agile Combat Employment (ACE) concept.

"We wanted to focus on learning the differences and similarities between how each of our NATO Allies and partners accomplishes aircraft maintenance, with the ultimate goal being to support Agile Combat Employment objectives," said Master Sergeant Chris Bryant, of the U.S 495<sup>th</sup> Fighter Generation Squadron avionics section chief from RAF Lakenheath,

United Kingdom. "This way we can have any of our allies and partners send their fighter aircraft and pilots to locations around the NATO theatre and have the confidence that everyone is on the same page and the mission can continue to run smoothly" he added.

Spartan Lightning demonstrated the key role of interoperability in modern combat operations. The exercise created a collaborative environment for nations operating the F-35 to strengthen partnerships and develop shared tactical solutions.

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**NATO Allies are increasingly embracing this operational scheme of manoeuvre designed to improve resilience and survivability. The concept envisages generating air combat power from both home bases and geographically dispersed locations. It can be used proactively or reactively involving main or deployed operating bases or contingency locations.**

## NATO SPACE DOMAIN, A NEW FRONTIER OF SECURITY

**The space domain has rapidly evolved from a realm of scientific exploration to a strategic arena. From civilian industry to military operations and individual use, dependence on space-enabled technology impacts almost all aspects of modern day life.**

Enhancements in space capabilities provide support to many facets of our lives; navigation aids in modern vehicles, maritime and air assets, all rely on precision Global Positioning Systems (GPS). Communication from mobile phones to video conferencing; hospital, emergency services, stock markets, trading, intelligence gathering and sharing

all utilise space assets for efficiency, speed and accuracy. The space domain is innovative and competitive, with emerging technologies and opportunities, and NATO remains steadfast in its commitment to protecting and preserving freedom of action in space.

NATO established the NATO Space Centre (NSpC) in 2020, after it

formally recognized Space as an operational domain alongside air, land, maritime and cyber in 2019. With the continued growth of the Space Domain within NATO, the NSpC evolved to become the NATO Space Operations Centre (NSpOC), under the Combined Force Space Component Command (CFSpCC). Both elements are located at Allied Air Command Ramstein (Germany) and are supported with expertise from 16 Allied nations.

With new opportunities come evolving threats, and space is

already a contested and congested domain.

The Alliance is working to develop a comprehensive approach to space security, with the CFSpCC and NSpOC serving as focal points for this work on behalf of the Alliance - coordinating efforts, operations and fostering cooperation with partner nations and commercial industry. As the space domain continues to develop, NATO remains vigilant in addressing both the challenges and opportunities presented.



**In 2019, Space was recognized as an operational domain alongside air, land, maritime and cyber and the NATO Space Centre (NSpC) opened in 2020. Photo by Allied Air Command**



**The NATO Space Operations Centre (NSpOC), along with the Combined Force Space Component Command (CFSpCC) are located at Allied Air Command Ramstein. Photo by Allied Air Command**



**This year's exercise, which runs in conjunction with the Dutch-led Frisian Flag series, is designed to provide Allied forces with advanced training in a complex, contested operational environment. Photo Courtesy: Royal Netherlands Air Force**

## NATO ALLIED AIR COMMAND AND ROYAL NETHERLANDS AIR FORCE TO HOST RAMSTEIN FLAG 2025

NATO Allied Air Command (AIRCOM) is set to launch Ramstein Flag 2025 (RAFL25), a large-scale tactical-level live-fly exercise, from 31 March to 11 April 2025.

Originating in 1975, the Flag-series exercises conduct multiple scenarios designed to provide realistic combat settings. A Flag exercise involves participants from Allied Air Forces and provides them with lifelike training in a complex, contested environment. Based on traditional designations of red, i.e. enemy, and blue, i.e. friendly, aerial systems simulate Air Defence assets that engage offensive or adversary assets.

Hosted by the Royal Netherlands Air Force (RNLAf), this event will involve over 90 aircraft operating from 12 Allied air bases supported by over 15 NATO nations.

This year's exercise, which runs in conjunction with the Dutch-led Frisian Flag series, is designed to provide Allied forces with advanced training in a complex, contested operational environment. Priorities for RAFL25 include exercising Counter Anti-Access/Area Denial (C-A2AD), Integrated Air and Missile Defence (IAMD), Agile Combat Employment (ACE), and seamless information sharing across Allied nations. These objectives reflect AIRCOM's focus on ensuring the air component's readiness to respond rapidly in Article 5 scenarios, where NATO's collective defence commitments are invoked.

Additionally, RAFL25 will exercise the NATO

air component's agile and immediate ability to execute the first five days of an Air Tasking Order (ATO) during such a scenario.

"Ramstein Flag 2025 underscores the Alliance's determination to adapt, evolve, and deter potential threats across the Euro-Atlantic region," said General James Hecker, Commander of NATO Allied Air Command. "This year's exercise builds on the successes of Ramstein Flag 2024 and continues to push the boundaries of realistic, high-intensity training to enhance NATO's deterrence and defence posture."

Following the inaugural RAFL24, which involved 130 aircraft and over 2,000 sorties in Greece, RAFL25 sets a new standard for operational integration across air, land, maritime, cyber and space domains. Scenarios will focus on defending NATO airspace and sovereignty, while executing distributed operations across NATO.

Unlike RAFL24, this year's iteration will involve 12 Allied air bases across the Alliance. NATO's Airpower benefits from the unique capabilities of its 32-member nations, pooling together a wide array of assets from myriad different Allied Air Bases. This covers nearly 25 million square kilometers of NATO territory to execute distributed operations in any scenario or contingency. Distributing air operations across various locations across NATO requires speed, flexibility, and adaptability, which will be exercised during Ramstein Flag 2025.

The multinational exercise also highlights NATO's collective strength, with Allied fighter jets, support aircraft, and assets working alongside special forces and maritime units, showcasing NATO's multi-domain capabilities. Participating aircrews will face dynamic challenges, honing skills essential for achieving air superiority and defending against emerging threats. This collaboration strengthens interoperability, ensuring NATO can effectively operate as a cohesive force.

"We are proud to host this year's edition of Ramstein Flag in the Netherlands, ready to test our limits, push our capabilities and reinforce interoperability across the Alliance," said Lieutenant General André Steur, Commander of the Royal Netherlands Air Force. "When push comes to shove, many will depend on us as a First Responder – tonight if need be. The ability and will to fight together among Allied Air Forces remains NATO's most significant deterrent. This high-end exercise offers a unique opportunity for the Alliance and its member nations to enhance their readiness."

RAFL25's focus on distributed operations and integration of multi-domain capabilities is critical in maintaining NATO's ability to counter evolving threats. By providing cutting-edge training and fostering innovation, the exercise reflects NATO's enduring commitment to shared security and stability.



## ROYAL NORWEGIAN AIR FORCE F-35S DETECTED AND INTERCEPTED RUSSIAN BOMBER STRIKE GROUP IN ARCTIC ZONE



*Two Russian Flanker-D was escorting the TU-95 Bear Hotel flying in international space north of Norway. Photo Courtesy: Royal Norwegian Air Force*

**Two Royal Norwegian Air Force F-35 jets scrambled on the 4 of February 2025, when two Russian TU-95 Bear H Bomber Aircraft escorted by two Flanker-D flew close to NATO Airspace up in the High North.**

The Norwegian F-35 pilots quickly located and identified the Russian aircraft, maintained a safe but vigilant distance, enabling them to closely monitor the aircraft's movements. The F-35 advanced capabilities allowed them to gather important information and ensure that the Russian aircraft did not violate NATO airspace.

"Our Quick Reaction Alert mission in the High North is important for our national defence and NATO's collective security. The ability to

respond swiftly ensures the safety of our airspace and highlights the strength of our allied forces in maintaining peace and stability." – Major General Øivind Gunnerud, Norwegian Air Chief.

Intercepts like this underscore the importance of NATO's Air Policing mission. The ability to detect, intercept, and monitor potential threats is crucial for maintaining regional security and stability. It involves the continuous presence and readiness of fighter jets, which can be scrambled to respond to potential communication loss, airspace violations or activities that do not adhere to international aviation law.

NATO Air Policing is a peacetime collective

defence mission that aims to ensure the integrity and security of the Alliance's airspace. In the High North and Arctic, this mission takes on added significance due to the region's unique geographical and geopolitical characteristics.

A combination of military interests, technological advancements and climate changes point to an increasingly contested High North, the changing security environment will require careful navigation. NATO continues to prepare the Alliance for the challenges of today and tomorrow to develop and maintain NATO's decisive military advantage, including those in the Arctic region.

## NATO ALLIES MULTI-DOMAIN EXERCISE IS KEY TO ASSURANCE

**On 6 March 2025, NATO Allied aircraft from NATO nations, the U.S., and The Netherlands, supported by NATO's Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) and German Tankers, executed a routine and pre-planned Find, Fix, Track and Target (F2T2) exercise in Estonian airspace. Once again NATO Allies have executed a multi-domain exercise to train as we fight. Allied Air Forces and Alliance capabilities from other domains worked together, showcasing NATO unity, interoperability, strength, unity and resolve. NATO AWACS worked closely with a U.S. Bomber Task Force while conducting a Dynamic Targeting Exercise.**

The exercise offers excellent training opportunities in a realistic and complex operational environment to strengthen the Alliance's deterrence posture. "Find, Fix, Track and Target potential threats from the ground shows that NATO, as a defensive Alliance, is prepared to timely respond to any possible challenges", said General James Hecker, Commander of NATO Allied Air Command.

Allied aircrew on NATO's AWACS and Estonian CRC-coordinated actions during a F2T2. The exercises are designed to improve

interoperability by integrating ISR assets with strike-capable aircraft in real-time targeting scenarios. Air Command and Control (Air C2) is one of the priorities of NATO Allied Air Command.

"This successful exercise highlights our collective capability to defend and deter any threats with the strength and unity of our Allies. The seamless cooperation between different domains and countries involved further strengthens our shared commitment to peace and stability in the region," said Estonian Air Force Commander

Brigadier General Toomas Susi. For the first time, Estonian Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (GMLRS) participated in the F2T2. A good example of the integration of different NATO-assets working together to achieve intended effects of the simultaneously combined joint ground targeting process. With synchronized F2T2, the Allied F-35 Lightning II and B-52 Stratofortress could execute the pre-planned training mission successfully.

F2T2 exercises are designed to improve interoperability by

integrating ISR assets with strike-capable aircraft and GMLRS in real-time targeting scenarios. Participants were tasked with locating and tracking potential targets and then coordinating a simulated strike within a specified timeframe, both pre-planned and dynamic targets. These exercises are vital in enhancing NATO's Counter Anti-Access/Area Denial (C-A2AD) and Integrated Air and Missile Defence (IAMD) capabilities, two key operational priorities for NATO's air forces. This exercise builds on NATO's commitment to maintaining a high level of operational readiness ahead of Ramstein Flag 2025, a large-scale NATO airpower exercise set to take place in the coming months. By continuously refining its multi-domain operational capabilities, NATO reaffirms its ability to deter threats and defend Allied territory.

## RAMSTEIN DUST 2025 ANOTHER STEP FORWARD FOR NATO'S INTEGRATED AIR AND MISSILE DEFENSE

**NATO's Deployable Air Command and Control Center (DACC) in Poggio Renatico, Italy, today began the deployment of the mobile DARS (Deployable Air Control Centre, Recognized Air Picture Production Centre, Sensor Fusion Post) system for the Ramstein Dust exercise.**

This year's deployment, includes a DADR (Deployable Air Defense Radar) and two GAG (Ground-Air-Ground) modules as well, required 64 vehicles, 56 of which belong to NATO and 8 to the German 467<sup>th</sup> Logistic Battalion, which left this morning for 3 different locations in the Netherlands and Germany.

The DARS is an advanced mobile command and control system designed to integrate data from multiple sources, including active and passive sensors that contribute to the definition of the Recognized Air Picture (RAP), a comprehensive graphical

representation of all available air situation data essential for airspace management and rapid and effective response to threats by controlling air and Surface Based Air and Missile Defense (SBAMD) assets. DADR extends radar surveillance capabilities by increasing radar coverage in theater, while GAG modules provide robust communications between ground and air assets by extending radio coverage and tactical link availability. Together, these systems form an integrated network that enhances the DACC, a critical component of the NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defense System (NATINAMDS).

The deployment of DARS is not just a technical exercise, but a demonstration of NATO's ability to respond quickly and efficiently to air threats by fully integrating into NATO's air and missile defense system.



*This year's deployment, which included a DADR and two GAG modules, required 64 vehicles – 56 from NATO and 8 from the German 467<sup>th</sup> Logistic Battalion – that departed for three different locations in the Netherlands and Germany*

## HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED TRAINING TO COUNTER POTENTIAL THREATS POSED BY THE MALIGN USE OF DRONES



**The 5<sup>th</sup> March, an intense exercise performed over the Estonian coastal waters, tested the F-35s capabilities in detecting, identifying and neutralizing unmanned aircraft systems (UAS).**

The training was jointly initiated by the Netherlands and Estonia. Two Dutch F-35 fighter jets, deployed in Amari for the NATO enhanced Air Policing mission, exercised multiple practices, techniques and procedures in countering drones as part of the training. The Estonian Air Force managed the execution of the training activities through its air operations squadron, coordinated the necessary airspace and

maritime area allocation, ensured exercise security, and handled post-exercise cleanup. They also supplied the drones used in the training event.

"In today's security situation, drones are becoming an increasing threat both during war and peacetime, which is why it is important to carry out such exercises. The exercise can be considered successful, as all training objectives were met" said Estonian Air Force Commander Brigadier General Toomas Susi. The exercise was an excellent opportunity to practice tactics, such as neutralizing multiple drones at the same time. Indeed, nowadays, swarm of drones pose

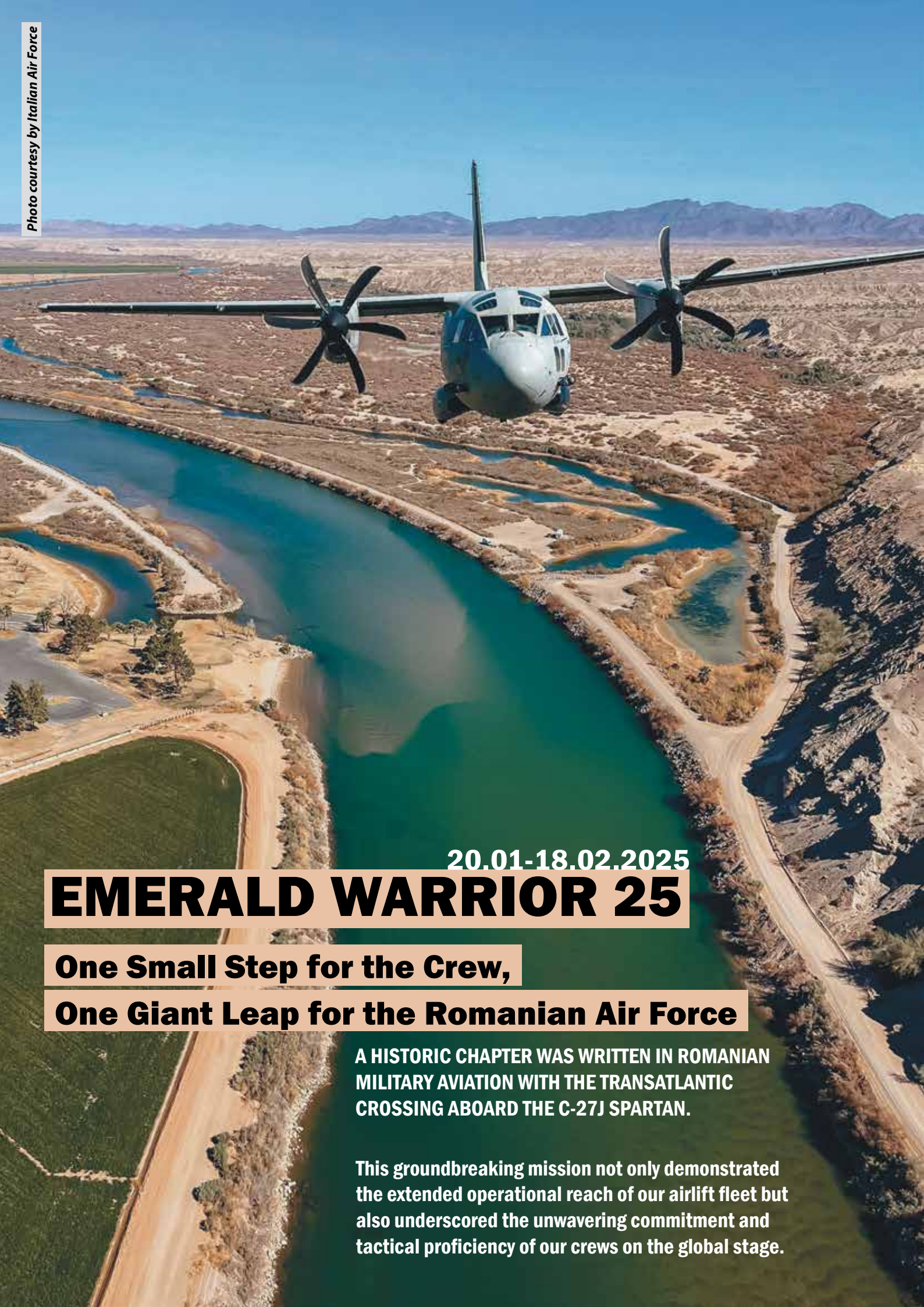
a real threat. The misuse of small and widely available drones has grown exponentially, increasingly the opportunities for being used as weapons. Constantly improving the ability of counter-drone systems to operate together helps to strengthen Allied air defence and deterrence and defence.

Lieutenant colonel Swinger, commander F-35 detachment said: "Our mission in Estonia is clear: securing the Baltic airspace. One of the primary mission sets of the F-35 is Integrated Air and Missile Defence, therefore this counter-UAS exercise provided a great opportunity to once again demonstrate our capabilities in this realm. To plan and execute

this with our ally Estonia, underlines our shared efforts to defend NATO territory"

The Dutch F-35s have been deployed in Amari to support Baltic Air Policing mission. The Royal Netherlands Air Force has stationed four F-35s in Estonia since the end of last year to safeguard and secure the NATO's eastern flank. During the current deployment, they have executed approximately ten Alpha Scrambles, successfully identifying nearly 20 aircraft, including transport jets, reconnaissance aircraft, and electronic intelligence platforms which were not adhering to standard safety procedures.





20.01-18.02.2025

# EMERALD WARRIOR 25

**One Small Step for the Crew,  
One Giant Leap for the Romanian Air Force**

**A HISTORIC CHAPTER WAS WRITTEN IN ROMANIAN MILITARY AVIATION WITH THE TRANSATLANTIC CROSSING ABOARD THE C-27J SPARTAN.**

**This groundbreaking mission not only demonstrated the extended operational reach of our airlift fleet but also underscored the unwavering commitment and tactical proficiency of our crews on the global stage.**

**If one word defines the 902<sup>nd</sup> Squadron, it is CHALLENGE. This dynamic unit of pilots, engineers, and technicians embraces every task with a resolute “yes,” undeterred by any obstacle. They have forged strong ties with European nations renowned for military airlift capabilities, making us proud by proving that professionalism and dedication drive operational excellence.**

In the unforgiving landscape of Arizona, where clear skies meet arid terrain, the Romanian Air Force's C-27J Spartan and its accompanying military teams once again demonstrated exceptional professionalism and adaptability during the multinational exercise Emerald Warrior 25 – a mission far from routine. Approximately 30 service members underwent a grueling test of endurance and seamless synergy between special operations and aviation. This exercise provided a realistic combat scenario where NATO allies learned to operate as a unified force under hostile conditions. Romania's role was critical, contributing the specialized expertise of its Air Force and its highly trained crews. A historic milestone was reached when the Romanian Air Force executed an Atlantic crossing with the C-27J Spartan. This mission

showcased not only the aircraft and crew's long-range operational capabilities in complex international environments but also demonstrated force projection and interoperability with our global partners. Pilot Virgil Daniel Motoroiu of the 902<sup>nd</sup> Squadron captured the profound emotion of this first-of-its-kind operation. Throughout the exercise, the Romanian aircraft executed vital missions alongside American, Italian, and French counterparts. These operations included low-altitude formation flights, landings on runways as short as 900 meters, personnel and container airdrops, and tactical maneuvers in hostile environments. Each operation contributed to enhanced interoperability by refining unified tactics, techniques, and procedures among participating forces. On February 4, 2025, one of the most challenging missions unfolded when the Special Operations Medical Team (SOST) conducted in-flight training for resuscitation and surgical procedures aboard a C-27J Spartan. This demanding exercise rigorously tested the team's ability to deliver critical care in a confined and dynamic environment, underscoring the vital coordination between flight crews and medical personnel.



*"A young crew, driven by an unwavering work ethic and a determination to master new mission execution tactics in support of Special Operations Forces. This is a crew that has successfully accomplished its objectives. Moreover, we earned the appreciation of our American partner and the other allied nations involved in the exercise, including the French and Italian Special Forces."*

**Lieutenant Colonel Florin Băltoiu,  
Commander of the Romanian Detachment**



*"In this mission, we chose to deploy three command pilots on a rotation basis because the operation was unlike any we had executed before, and we decided to have three experienced pilots in command. There were challenges, of course, as we flew with other nations – conducting formation flights with the Italian, French, and American Air Forces, and carrying out medical evacuation missions. One mission was entirely new for us: our medical team performed an in-flight procedure on a training mannequin. It took me about ten minutes to realize it wasn't a real patient, but the exercise was executed flawlessly. This mission required flying level, without maneuvers, to provide the most optimal conditions for conducting the in-flight medical procedure. Other tasks included formation parachute drops, container airdrops, and tactical flights that pushed the aircraft to its operational limits. We were also fortunate to have an exceptionally proficient technical team that maintained the aircraft in excellent flying condition for five weeks."*

**Major(AF) Mihai Virdol**

*"The transatlantic flight was exhausting – extremely exhausting for us. Consider that the time difference between Arizona and Romania is nine hours, which made adapting a significant challenge. We encountered arctic weather conditions during the flight, landing in temperatures as low as -27°C, and then operating in the Arizona desert at +30°C. I want to thank the crew for their rigorous preparation, as the weather in northern regions and in Arizona during this time of year is extremely volatile. I also extend my gratitude to the technical team for keeping the aircraft in top condition and performing maintenance at an extraordinary level. This mission provided an outstanding opportunity to train alongside our foreign partners, and we learned a tremendous amount. The team demonstrated our ability to adapt to unforeseen circumstances. We executed numerous insertion and extraction missions with our American and Italian partners, and I observed firsthand that we can further enhance our capacity to adjust to challenging conditions."*

**Lieutenant Colonel(AF) Virgil Daniel Motoroiu,  
902<sup>nd</sup> Squadron**







***Using three simulated casualties, the training scenario challenged the Special Operations Surgical Team (SOST) and Italian SOF doctors to deliver immediate care aboard the Romanian Air Force's C-27J Spartan, underscoring the critical importance of joint interoperability.***

This simulation presented a formidable challenge, requiring operations in a constrained environment that lacked the stability of a conventional hospital. Romanian and Italian medical teams executed complex maneuvers – from life-saving resuscitations to emergency surgical procedures – demonstrating an exceptional ability to adapt and perform under pressure. Pilot Mihai Virdol emphasized that their flawless execution of

flight missions was a direct result of their ongoing tactical training, honed through weekly flights in Romania. Emerald Warrior 25 is as much about shaping the future of NATO cooperation as it is about demonstrating current operational capabilities. Lieutenant Colonel Florin Băltoiu, commander of the Romanian detachment, stressed that the exercise offered invaluable opportunities to evaluate the tactical



***The exercise sharpened the SOST's life-saving skills in a confined, dynamic environment – covering everything from resuscitation to complex in-flight surgical techniques – while also testing the flight crew's capabilities during takeoffs and landings at an uncontrolled airfield. This unconventional setting demanded exceptional levels of coordination and precision.***

performance of the C-27J Spartan and refine integration with allied air forces. Romania's participation underscores not only our national commitment to global security but also the high level of training and readiness of our military personnel. Whether executing tactical flights, special operations, or airborne medical interventions, the Romanian team proved its ability to meet any challenge, reinforcing our reputation as a reliable NATO

partner. The commander had nothing but praise for the soldiers under his command. As any seasoned aviator understands, success in aviation is built on teamwork, coordinated effort, and mutual support. Behind every aircraft configured for a transatlantic mission are countless engineers and supervisors who work in all conditions to ensure the aircraft is mission-ready. Their expertise, coupled with the disciplined adherence to standard





*The Romanian detachment in Exercise Emerald Warrior showcased professionalism, seamless multinational integration, and the capability to overcome any challenge, reaffirming our reputation as a reliable NATO partner.*







*Leveraging their expertise and rigorous discipline, the detachment's technicians executed complex inspections, repairs, and system checks, proactively preventing malfunctions that could jeopardize mission execution.*

operating procedures, is critical to every successful mission.

Engineer George-Alexandru Lupu, a key member of the Romanian technical team, recounted his experience during Emerald Warrior 25: "Participating in Emerald Warrior 25 was an extremely valuable experience. Operating in a complex, high-tempo environment alongside top aeronautical specialists significantly advanced my professional capabilities. My role was to deliver the necessary technical support for the operation and maintenance of our aviation equipment, ensuring that all systems remained

functional and met rigorous safety standards. Working from a new aerodrome presented minor technical challenges related to handling and coordinating ground equipment essential for flight preparation. However, thanks to the similarity of certain procedures and the collaborative efforts of our technical team, we overcame these obstacles swiftly. This experience clearly demonstrates that we continue to implement cutting-edge techniques and procedures while gaining invaluable insights from this exchange."

In Arizona, the operational environment posed minimal challenges regarding temperature,

though certain environmental factors necessitated adjustments to our operating tempo.

Handling equipment during pre-flight and post-flight preparations, as well as during maintenance in dusty conditions, was challenging – but the rapid mobilization of our technical team ensured that no significant issues arose.

Collaboration with NATO's technical and medical teams was exemplary. A constant exchange of information, along with the sharing of equipment and tools among allied forces, streamlined task execution.

Continuous, efficient communication and unwavering mutual support were indispensable in ensuring the overall success of the exercise.

We also had the opportunity to observe new technical procedures, particularly in the handling of liquid oxygen – protocols that involve a more intricate sequence of operations and impose much stricter safety measures. Integrating these procedures was essential for the smooth conduct of routine maintenance activities. Additionally, we observed an innovative equipment-handling technique designed to expedite the safe startup of

aerodrome machinery. These advancements were crucial to meeting the operational demands of the exercise while simultaneously enhancing our technical expertise and capability.

The technical team's training proved indispensable for ensuring a swift and effective response to any technical malfunction. Rigorous pre-exercise training and hands-on familiarization with mission-specific equipment were critical to our readiness. Every team member exhibited a high standard of preparedness, capable of reacting immediately to unforeseen circumstances. Equally, seamless

communication, tight coordination, and problem-solving skills were key factors that underpinned the success of the exercise.

\* \* \*

**In an era where security challenges are in constant flux, exercises such as Emerald Warrior are vital for maintaining a rapid, decisive response to emerging threats. Romania made a resounding impact, reinforcing alliances and elevating the standards of military training.**

*Story by Maria Ioniță  
Photos by Bogdan Pantilimon*





# ROMANIA'S AIR DEFENSE CAPABILITY EXPANDS AS 48<sup>TH</sup> SQUADRON REACHES FULL STRENGTH

**CÂMPIA TURZII, ROMANIA – On January 30, 2025, an F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft, acquired by Romania from the Kingdom of Norway, landed at the 71<sup>st</sup> Air Base, completing the 48<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron with its full complement of 16 aircraft.**

**The procurement of these F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft, along with an integrated logistics package and mission-critical support systems, enhances Romania's air defense capability. This fleet will execute national and NATO airspace defense operations, both in peacetime and crisis scenarios, under the Permanent Combat Service - Air Policing framework, operating both under national and NATO command-and-control structures.**

In alignment with the Air Defense Capability Development Plan, under the "Air Force Multirole Aircraft" program, the Romanian Government has signed a contract with the Kingdom of Norway for the acquisition of 32 F-16 aircraft. This agreement includes initial logistical support and an auxiliary package of equipment and services procured via the U.S. Foreign Military Sales program. All aircraft will be delivered in fully operational condition, ensuring mission readiness throughout the transition period to fifth

generation fighter aircraft, projected for post-2030 integration. This capability transfer between two NATO Allies strengthens regional deterrence, reinforces interoperability, and contributes to NATO's collective defense posture.

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On Tuesday, March 11, the 71<sup>st</sup> Air Base in Câmpia Turzii hosted a ceremony to mark the fielding of F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft to the newly activated 48<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron at the base.

The event was attended by Minister of National Defense Angel Tîlvăr, H.E. Hilde Svartholm, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway in Bucharest, and Lieutenant General Leonard - Gabriel Baraboi, Chief of the Romanian Air Force Staff.

Minister Tîlvăr emphasized the critical importance of the seamless execution of the contract to procure 32 F-16s from the surplus stocks of the Norwegian Air Force – a move that significantly enhances Romania's security posture and reinforces NATO's eastern flank. "The completion of this modernization phase will soon enable the Romanian Air Force to execute air defense missions across both national and allied airspace with three F-16-equipped squadrons deployed at three separate air bases," Minister Tîlvăr stated.

*Story by ROU AF PAO  
Photo by Alexandru Aioanei*





# ROU AF Rejoins EUFOR Operations: Reinforcing Balkan Security Architecture

# EUFOR ALTHEA

Story by Ioana Teișanu

Photos by Denis Dobre and Lucian Irimia

**20** YEARS AGO, the Romanian Air Force recorded a premiere - the first deployment in a theater of operations after World War II by participating in the European Union led mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina - EUFOR ATLHEA.



## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA:

### A COUNTRY SHAPED BY HISTORY AND CONFLICT

To fully understand Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) current political landscape, it is essential to review its recent history in the post-Yugoslav sphere. Formerly one of the six republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, BiH has endured a complex legacy influenced by Slavic roots, centuries of Ottoman rule beginning in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and incorporation into the Austro-Hungarian Empire between 1878 and 1918.

Following World War I, Bosnia and Herzegovina became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia). The interwar years saw ongoing territorial and political disputes, with BiH divided in 1929 between Croatia and the rest of the kingdom. During World War II, Bosnia and Herzegovina was subsumed under the German-backed Independent State of Croatia, turning the region into a battlefield for German forces, Croatian units, Serbian Chetniks, and Josip Broz Tito's communist partisans.

After the war, BiH was integrated into the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (later the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), experiencing relative stability and development from 1945 to 1992. The breakup of Yugoslavia triggered a violent conflict in BiH from 1992 to 1995, resulting in over 100,000 casualties. The Dayton Agreement of 1995 ended the hostilities and set BiH on a long path toward recovery and reconciliation.

## LAUNCH OF OPERATION ALTHEA

On December 2, 2004 – nine years after the conclusion of the war in the former Yugoslavia – the European Union (EU) initiated Operation ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This move followed NATO's decision to transfer responsibility for its peacekeeping mission, which had maintained security in the region since the end of the war. Under Operation ALTHEA, the EU deployed a robust military contingent (EUFOR) to uphold the Dayton/Paris Agreement and help maintain a Safe and Stable Environment (SASE) in BiH.

Operation ALTHEA is part of the EU's comprehensive approach in BiH, complementing political engagement, assistance programs, and law enforcement and monitoring missions. The primary goal is to sustain a SASE through close coordination with BiH's Armed Forces, law enforcement agencies, and civilian authorities. EUFOR supports the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina (AF BiH) by conducting regular joint training sessions and large-scale annual exercises. Troops from 20 EU member states and partner nations contribute to the mission, including Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Chile, the Czech Republic,

France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of North Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

## ROMANIA IN THE EUFOR ALTHEA MISSION

In 2005 Romanian Air Force joined the EUFOR ALTHEA mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina through its "ALPHA" and later "BRAVO" detachments. This marked Romanian Air Force's first overseas deployment to a post-war theater of operations since World War II. The mission area remained volatile, with multiple ethnic groups grappling with residual tensions and unclear threats. The nation's infrastructure and environment bore evident scars of conflict, reflecting the toll of the war on both territory and population.

**Romania's one-year mission commenced just one year after the country joined NATO on April 1, 2004. Simultaneously, Romania was in the final stages of negotiating its accession to the European Union, eventually achieving full membership in January 2007. For the Romanian Air Force, the deployment represented a pivotal milestone, demonstrating its capability to operate effectively in a complex multinational environment and affirming Romania's commitment to contributing to international peace and stability.**







Lieutenant Colonel Eugen Suciu,  
ALPHA detachment commander



2005 – the mission marked the Romanian Air Force's first overseas deployment to a post-war theater of operations since World War II

### ALPHA Detachment, 2005

Under these operational conditions, maintaining security and stability was the paramount mission of EUFOR forces under the aegis of the European Union in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Throughout 2005, the IAR-330 SOCAT helicopters from Air Transport Base 90 Otopeni stood as a testament to the credibility of Operation ALTHEA. Commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Eugen Suciu for the ALPHA Detachment and Lieutenant Colonel Valerică Vrăjescu for the BRAVO Detachment, Operation ALTHEA validated both individual initiative and team performance.

The initial Romanian detachment, designated ALPHA and led by Lieutenant Colonel Suciu, commenced the mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the winter of 2004. Comprising four IAR-330 SOCAT helicopters and approximately 50 soldiers deployed in Banja Luka, the unit faced significant challenges from rugged mountainous terrain and adverse weather. These conditions, coupled with the need to synchronize procedures with multinational partners, tested the mettle of Romanian aviators. Their primary missions included the transport of personnel and materials, search and rescue operations, MEDEVAC, reconnaissance, and routine en route flights – all executed with outstanding precision and dedication.

Lieutenant Colonel Suciu encapsulated the mission's challenges and rewards during a 2005 interview with *CER SENIN* magazine: "The challenge of these missions lies in the fact that everything is new – every operation is an exercise in innovation and discovery. Conditions evolve rapidly, demanding swift decisions with no time for hesitation. Our success hinges on our flight experience and the disciplined training tailored to each mission. While responsibility is collectively acknowledged in name, in practice, each individual is accountable based on his competence. In the operational theater, the detachment commander flies combat missions side-by-side with his crews. While a home-base air commander ensures the installation runs like clockwork, the deployed commander executes missions – often the toughest ones." He further stressed the value of experience and teamwork: "Experience is invaluable. The men I served with in Bosnia demonstrated true teamwork and embodied the spirit of a cohesive crew. They understood that excellence is not just individual – it's about mutual respect and support."

This deployment not only showcased the Romanian Air Force's operational capabilities in a post-conflict environment but also highlighted the critical role of leadership, rigorous training, and effective teamwork in executing challenging peacekeeping missions.

Comprising four IAR-330 SOCAT helicopters and approximately 50 military ALPHA detachment deployed in Banja Luka; the unit faced significant challenges from rugged mountainous terrain and adverse weather



2005 – two Romanian SOCAT units also participated in a demonstration exercise during Operation "Spring Lift," designed to train reserve forces for rapid air assault actions



Lieutenant Colonel Valerică Vrăjescu,  
BRAVO detachment commander

### BRAVO Detachment, 2005

The second Romanian detachment, BRAVO, carried forward the mission under EUFOR ALTHEA. Led by Lieutenant Colonel Valerică Vrăjescu, the detachment reinforced the professionalism and commitment of Romanian military personnel. The exchange of experience with international partners further validated that the training and expertise of Romanian aviators met high operational standards.

"We have already begun executing our first missions and we are actively performing alert duties. One of our helicopters has deployed to Sarajevo for a mission, and another is set to launch today. Our operational scope is expanding as we take on a broader range of missions," stated

Lieutenant Colonel Valerică Vrăjescu at the outset of the BRAVO Detachment's deployment.

By the end of 2005, Romanian military aviators returned home with the mission successfully completed, having logged approximately 1,200 flight hours and executed over 600 missions. More importantly, they returned with invaluable operational experience – gaining firsthand knowledge of conducting missions in a multinational environment, under challenging and unpredictable terrain and climate conditions. Their enhanced performance and adaptability prepared them for future missions while enabling them to pass on critical lessons learned to the next generation of Romanian military aviators.

Archive photos by CER SENIN

The second Romanian detachment, BRAVO, carried forward the mission under EUFOR ALTHEA; the detachment reinforced the professionalism and commitment of Romanian military personnel. By the end of 2005, Romanian military aviators successfully completed their mission, logging roughly 1,200 flight hours over 600+ sorties. They gained vital operational experience in multinational environments under harsh terrain and weather conditions, enhancing their readiness and passing on critical lessons to the next generation







*The DACIAN PUMAS Detachment maintains 24-hour MEDEVAC readiness and executes tactical mobility/reconnaissance missions in support of EUFOR ALTHEA operations, ensuring stability and security across Bosnia and Herzegovina*

#### **A CONTINUED COMMITMENT: ROMANIA'S RETURN TO BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA THE "DACIAN PUMAS" DETACHMENT (2025)**

Twenty years after the Romanian Air Force's first deployment in a theater of operations since World War II, our military aviators are once again serving in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Beginning in January 2025, the first rotation of the DACIAN PUMAS Detachment—comprising four IAR-330 PUMA helicopters (LRM and M variants) and specialized personnel—joined approximately 36 Romanian soldiers already stationed at the Butmir military base. This mission, distinct from that of 2005, reflects an improved security environment and evolving military mandates.

"In 2025, the Ministry of National Defense fields armed forces in fulfillment of Romania's international commitments—particularly within the European Union—to support Bosnia and Herzegovina in maintaining internal security and stability. Under EU leadership, our participation in the EUFOR ALTHEA operation has nearly doubled Romania's deployed assets. Among these assets is our detachment of

four IAR-330 helicopters, tasked with transport, reconnaissance, and medical evacuation missions. The detachment, consisting of 100 military personnel and specialized equipment, is configured to execute two primary lines of operation in support of COM EUFOR: first, MEDEVAC, search and rescue, and second, air transport missions including reconnaissance, material, and passenger transport. Our objective remains clear—to contribute decisively to the sustained security of this fragile yet stable environment, while respecting the sovereignty of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina," explained Colonel Răzvan Roșca, commander of the Carpathian Pumas Detachment, Rotation I. The soldiers of the first rotation trained for several months at 95<sup>th</sup> Air Base in Bacău, where terrain and weather conditions closely simulated those expected in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Pilots from various air bases—some veterans of operations such as MINUSMA in Mali and others seasoned through multinational exercises—brought a wealth of experience to the mission.

On January 20, 2025, the DACIAN PUMAS Detachment officially assumed its role in the EUFOR ALTHEA operation. Under the operational command of the Joint Forces Command, four IAR-330 helicopters are

set to conduct dedicated transport, reconnaissance, and 24/7 medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) missions over the next four months.

Major George Neagu, a pilot with the DACIAN PUMAS Detachment, remarked: "We operate on a 24-hour cycle for MEDEVAC and SAR missions with dedicated crews, and we also execute pre-planned missions per EUFOR's directives. Our flights have been conducted within weather constraints—visibility between 5 and 8 kilometers, and ceilings of 1,500 to 3,000 meters. The operational area's rugged terrain, dotted with obstacles such as medium and high voltage power lines at altitudes between 500 and 1,000 meters, imposes significant flight risks. The weather here changes rapidly, requiring constant liaison with our meteorologist on duty."

This renewed commitment in Bosnia and Herzegovina not only underscores Romania's dedication to international peacekeeping but also enhances the operational expertise and readiness of our military aviators for future challenges.

Colonel Răzvan Roșca, Detachment Commander, stated: "Being the first Romanian helicopter detachment to operate in the Bosnia and Herzegovina in over 20 years is both an honor and a tremendous responsibility. Our predecessors were key figures in Romanian military aviation, and the experience they amassed in this theater of operations has been instrumental to the evolution of our Air Force over the past two decades. We are convinced that our mission will positively influence the continued evolution of the Romanian Air Force.

The pre-mission training at the 95<sup>th</sup> Air Base, coupled with our first month in Bosnia and Herzegovina, has proven to be an ideal environment for forging strong team bonds, facilitating the transfer of knowledge from experienced operators to our younger personnel, and rigorously testing our tactics, procedures, and techniques—paving the way to declare Full Combat Capability.

Thanks to comprehensive training, a high level of expertise, and a strong commitment to teamwork, I commend our soldiers for their exemplary performance during this demanding period and for quickly adapting to the unique challenges of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The missions executed thus far have been performed with outstanding proficiency, clearly reflecting the professionalism of our Air Force personnel. In my view, high morale and rigorous training are the cornerstones of mission success. Accordingly, our command team places special emphasis on sustaining morale, which remains robust and is expected to continue.

Operating in an international environment—and specifically within a theater of operations—adds real value by allowing us to test the tactics, techniques, and procedures that we have honed domestically in real-world scenarios where lives depend on the precise application of high-performance standards. Working in such a multinational setting





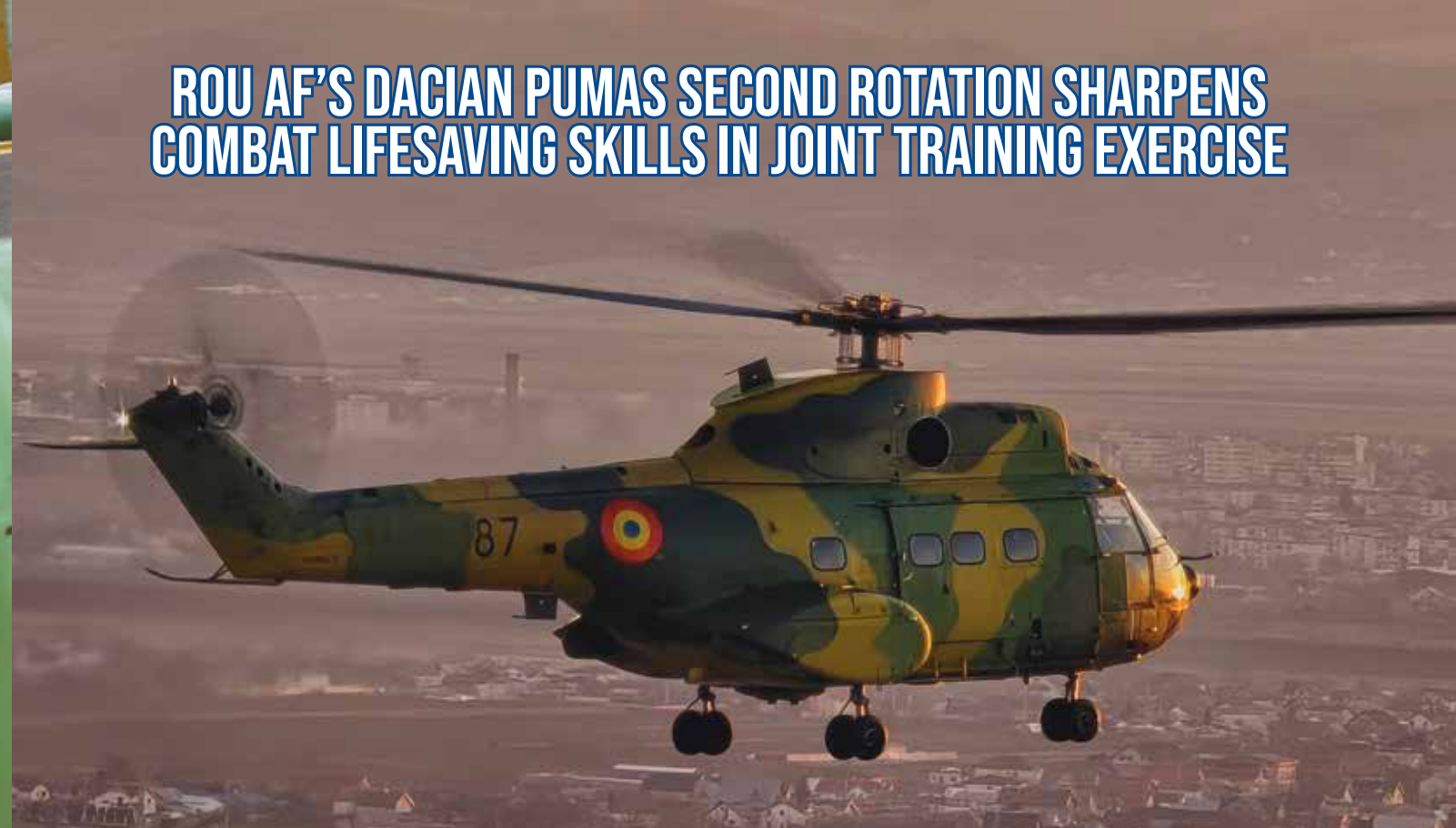


enables us to integrate seamlessly with our allies and to accumulate invaluable experience that only an operational mission can provide. Our detachment has unequivocally demonstrated its capability to operate effectively in a multinational environment, supporting our two primary lines of operations: 24/7 medical evacuation, search and rescue, and comprehensive air transport and reconnaissance missions. The impact of our efforts is consistently recognized by our international partners, as our detachment remains the only aerial asset capable of executing cost-effective, round-the-clock aero-medical evacuation missions and rapidly projecting forces to challenging, hard-to-reach areas.

Romania's active participation in EUFOR ALTHEA underscores our nation's unwavering commitment to European security and the strengthening of international relations. From our initial deployment in 2005 to our return in 2025, the Romanian Air Force has consistently showcased its professionalism, adaptability, and operational capability in complex environments, actively contributing to the maintenance of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina." This statement by Colonel Răzvan Roșca encapsulates the pride, responsibility, and continuous commitment of the Romanian Air Force in supporting international peacekeeping efforts.



## ROU AF'S DACIAN PUMAS SECOND ROTATION SHARPENS COMBAT LIFESAVING SKILLS IN JOINT TRAINING EXERCISE



**The second rotation of the "Dacian Pumas" detachment was fully prepared in coordination with personnel and rotary-wing assets from the 95<sup>th</sup> Air Bacau Base to execute personnel recovery operations. Training was conducted using established PR techniques, tactics, and procedures designed to extract isolated personnel and deliver medical aid both on the ground and during in-flight evacuations.**

Also, from March 10 to 21, the Romanian Air Force participated in Personnel Recovery Week 25,

hosted by the Italian Air Force at Gioia del Colle Air Base in Bari. The Romanian detachment,

comprised of two IAR-330 helicopters, provided the military personnel assigned to the second rotation of the "Dacian Pumas" detachment under the Eufor Althea mission. The exercise underscored interoperability among NATO allies and served as a critical opportunity to refine training in search and rescue combat

operations and rotary-wing personnel recovery. This initiative reaffirms the Romanian Air Force's commitment and capability to respond swiftly and effectively to both domestic and international emergencies.

**Story and photo by**  
**Mădălina Burlacu**







## ROMANIAN AIR FORCE STUDENTS TRAINED IN SPAIN UNDER ERASMUS+ PROGRAM

**Seville, Spain –** In the first two weeks of February, 18 students from "Traian Vuia" Air Force Military School for Warrant Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers participated in an intensive hands-on training program at ADA Instituto Técnico Superior in Seville, Spain. This initiative is part of the Erasmus+ VET project, designed to enhance the professional training of military aviation warrant officers.

Accompanied by two instructors, the Romanian students were engaged in specialized training within a modern educational environment, utilizing cutting-edge facilities and learning from experienced aviation professionals. This program provided them with an international perspective on aeronautical practices and strengthened their practical skills, preparing them for the challenges of modern military aviation.

As part of the Erasmus+ program's implementation and evaluation phase, the school's commander, Colonel Cătălin Bănescu, participated in assessment activities from February 6-9. His presence reaffirmed the Romanian Air Force's commitment to high educational standards and the continuous development of international partnerships in military technical training.

This Erasmus+ exchange underscored the importance of international cooperation in military education and played a crucial role in preparing future Romanian Air Force specialists to operate in complex and dynamic aviation environments. By integrating global best practices, the program ensured that graduates of the "Traian Vuia" Air Force Military School are equipped with the skills and expertise necessary to excel in their careers.

*Story by Laura Baştorea*



## ERASMUS PLUS: A TRAINING AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION EXPERIENCE

From January 13 to 17, 2025, a delegation of eight Air Force instructors from the "Traian Vuia" Military School for Warrant Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers participated in the Erasmus Plus program focused on school education. The delegation was led by the school's commander, Commander Cătălin Bănescu, and attended the "Digital Classroom" course at the Idevelop Center in Lisbon, Portugal. This training aimed to enhance digital proficiency, introduced innovative teaching techniques, and facilitated the exchange of best practices among educators from various academic systems.

The Erasmus Plus program offers vital opportunities for professional development and fosters international partnerships. The school's participation underscored its commitment to embracing modern educational and cultural perspectives.

During this assignment, the delegation was invited by Mr. Dinu Gându, Director of the Romanian Cultural Institute in Lisbon, to a reception honoring Romania's National Culture Day. Hosted at the José Saramago Foundation, the event brought together members of the diplomatic and cultural community, including Her Excellency Ambassador Daniela Gîțman and the Romanian military attaché.

This engagement provided an occasion to highlight Romanian cultural heritage on the international stage, underscoring the important connection between education and culture. Participation in the Erasmus Plus program further advances the professional growth of military personnel and bolsters the school's integration into the broader European education network, thereby reinforcing its mission to train highly qualified specialists.

*Story by Laura Baştorea*



**Colonel Cătălin Bănescu, Commander of the "Traian Vuia" Military School for Warrant Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers, alongside His Excellency Ambassador Daniela Gîțman and Mr. Dinu Gându, Director of the Romanian Cultural Institute in Lisbon**



**The delegation of military instructors and educators from the "Traian Vuia" Military School for Warrant Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers participating in the Erasmus Plus program in Lisbon**



## "HENRI COANDĂ" AIR FORCE ACADEMY ENGAGES IN EMILYO CONFERENCE TO STRENGTHEN EUROPEAN MILITARY EDUCATION COLLABORATION



From 24 to 26 February 2025, a delegation from Romania's "Henri Coandă" Air Force Academy participated in the 65<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Implementation Group for the European Initiative for the Exchange of Young Officers (EMILYO). Hosted by the Security and Defense Academy of Cyprus, the event united representatives from military institutions across Europe to advance cross-border collaboration, knowledge sharing, and interoperability among next-generation military leaders.

Discussions centered on pressing security and defense challenges, including evolving hybrid threats, modernization of officer training



curricula, and strategies to enhance joint operational readiness. Attendees analyzed emerging trends in military education and explored frameworks for deepening partnerships between European defense academies.

The conference reinforced Romania's commitment to fostering multilateral collaboration within NATO and EU frameworks. By aligning training standards and sharing best practices, the event strengthened ties between participating nations, paving the way for sustainable partnerships that enhance collective resilience.

*Story by Henri Coandă Air Force Academy Public Affairs Office*



# CREW RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Flight operations are widely recognized as complex activities requiring not only physical and mental aptitudes but also strong interpersonal and communication skills – particularly in multi-crew environments. Working as a crew entails multiple critical elements such as flight planning, task delegation, effective communication, information processing, and individual personality traits. All of these factors are essential to ensure mission success under the highest safety standards.

Origins and Evolution of **Crew Resource Management (CRM)** emerged in 1979 at a NASA center with the primary goal of enhancing flight safety. NASA's research identified human error as the principal cause of aviation accidents, with deficiencies in communication, leadership, and decision-making in the cockpit being key contributing factors. CRM is part of the broader human factors domain, extensively discussed in civil aviation. Training in CRM covers a wide range of knowledge and skills, including communication, situational awareness, problem-solving, and teamwork. In the specialized literature, CRM is defined as a management system that maximizes the use of all available resources – equipment, procedures, and personnel – to promote safe and efficient flight operations. Unlike technical flight knowledge and skills, CRM focuses on the interpersonal abilities necessary for managing flights within controlled airspace. Over time, CRM in civil aviation has progressed through **five generations**:

**First Generation:** United Airlines introduced psychology-based CRM training, emphasizing psychological testing and general leadership concepts. **Second Generation:** Training expanded to include aviation-specific topics such as team building, briefing strategies, situational awareness, and stress management.

**Third Generation:** CRM programs incorporated organizational culture and automation, extending training beyond cockpit crews to flight attendants, air traffic controllers, and maintenance personnel.

**Fourth Generation:** In 1990, the



Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) launched an Advanced Qualification Program (AQP) for all crew members.

**Fifth Generation:** Emphasis shifted to the inevitability of human error, focusing on recognizing and correcting errors before they lead to incidents.

CRM in Military Aviation Within the U.S. military, the first formal CRM program was introduced by the Military Airlift Command (MAC) of the U.S. Air Force in the mid-1980s.

Differences in organizational culture between civilian and military pilots prompted the standardization of requirements for developing, implementing, and administering CRM training. In 1994, the Cockpit/Crew Resource Management Program was published, later revised in 1998 as the Cockpit/Crew Resource Management Training Program.

From 1997 to 1998, the French Air Force implemented CRM training for Puma helicopter crews, addressing each member's role, communication, decision-making, task management, human error, fatigue, and

attention.

Implementation in Romanian Military Aviation In Romania, the Manualul instrucției personalului navigant – F.A./Av.-7 (Manual of Flight Personnel Training – F.A./Av.-7) lists "Cabin/Crew Resource Management" training as an additional requirement for all pilot qualifications (BAQ, BMC, MR, CMR). At the 90<sup>th</sup> Airlift Base in Otopeni, C-130 Hercules aircrews undergo annual simulator refresher training – the C-130 Aircrew Refresher Course – conducted by CAE in Tampa, Florida. Alongside normal and emergency procedures, this course includes CRM and human factors modules.

From an applied standpoint, CRM is addressed through evaluating human performance factors – namely pilot proficiency, the operating environment, and interpersonal relations. A group of German, French, Dutch, and British researchers developed a methodology for training and assessing pilots' abilities in cooperation, managerial/leadership skills, situational

awareness, and decision-making.

Building on this research, a 2013 study at the Otopeni, Bacau, and Fetesti Air Bases examined the perceived importance (on a 1-to-4 scale) of four core CRM-related skills during flight operations. Each skill was ranked distinctly to establish a clear hierarchy. Results were analyzed by aircraft type (transport, helicopter, fighter) and age group (23–34 and 35–51). Regardless of age or airframe, situational awareness and decision-making ranked highest – an unsurprising finding given their criticality during in-flight emergencies. Transport pilots rated cooperation as somewhat less important, highlighting a potential area for future research aimed at underscoring the significance of crew cooperation.

Over the years, Romanian Air Force bases have incorporated CRM topics and materials into their specialized training curricula for aviation personnel, recognizing CRM as an integral element of the broader human factors discipline. CRM remains a key component of flight operations, especially in transport aviation, where communication, teamwork, and problem-solving are vital for ensuring flight safety.

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ROU AF Rejoins EUFOR Operations:  
Reinforcing Balkan Security Architecture  
**EUFOR ALTHEA**





# EMERALD WARRIOR 25

**One Small Step for the Crew,  
One Giant Leap for the Romanian Air Force**

