

Hot Blade 13 Helicopter Exercise

From 17 to 31 July 2013, the 6th helicopter exercises under the umbrella of the Helicopter Exercise Programme (HEP) will be executed in the area of Ovar, Portugal.

Five of the HEP CMS (AT, BE, DE, NL, PT) have committed to participate in the exercise with 26 helicopters, 7 fixed wing aircraft and 700+ military personnel.

Observers are coming from BG, CZ, IT, UK, DK, NSHQ (total 8).

Contingents/Personnel

PT: 264 (does not include 2.000 PRT army troopers, airborne, special forces, etc. and 200 PRT Navy Special Forces)

AT: 62

DE: 116

BE: 41

NL: 267

TOTAL: 758

Nation	Force Offering	Unit expectations
Austria	3 x AB 212 3 x OH-58	To perform a multirole play. OH-58 are NVG qualified and will fly at night.
Belgium	4 x A 109	To perform a multirole play. Unit is NVG qualified and will be able to fly at night.
Germany	6 + 2 x UH-1D	To perform a multirole play. Unit is NVG qualified and will be able to fly at night.
Netherlands	3 + 1 CH-47D Chinook 1 x CH-47F Chinook 1 x AS532 Cougar	To perform a multirole play. Unit is NVG qualified and will be able to fly at night.
Portugal	2 x EH-101 4 x F16 2 x C295 1 x P3C	To perform a multirole play. Unit is NVG qualified and will be able to fly at night.
Total	26 x Helicopter + 4 x Fast Jets + 2 x Transport A/C + 1x ISR A/C	

A Distinguished Visitors Day (DVD) for EX HOT BLADE 13 is planned for the 25 July at OVAR Air Base, Portugal.



Overview

Exercise HOT BLADE 2013 (HB13) as a Multinational Helicopter Exercise of the HEP is delivered by the Portuguese Air Force. The HEP is part of the EDA Helicopter Training Programme (HTP) which is consisting of the HEP (Helicopter Exercise Programme), HTC (Helicopter Tactics Course), EHTIC (European Helicopter Tactics Instructors Course), OELC (Operational English Language Course), DisSim CCD (Distributed Simulation Capability Concept Demonstrator) and the Basic Helicopter Flying Training (BHFT) projects/programmes. It proves that at very low cost immediate operational output can be realised.

HB13 is designed to allow European helicopter crews to practice operations in a hot, high and dusty environment, simulating the challenge and the dynamic conditions that participating forces encounter when they deploy to a current Theatre of Operation (TO).

Besides the focus on flying in challenging environmental conditions, the exercise is developed to implement "Joint Interoperability Training" based on joint interoperability tasks including Air Assault (AA), Special Operations Aviation (SOA), Combat Service Support (CSS), Close Air Support (CAS) including Urban CAS and Emergency CAS, Convoy/helicopter escorts, Reconnaissance and Security (R&S) operations, Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR), Personnel Recovery (PR), Military/Non Military extractions (NEO Ops), Medical Evacuation (MEDEVAC) and Casualty Evacuation (CASEVAC).

All missions are executed from OVAR air base, functioning as Deployable Operating Base (DOB), towards working areas and will return to the DOB each day. This model allows to maximize coordination inherent to all missions, as well as to ensure a joint briefing and debriefing, where emphasis is given to flight safety and lessons learned. As air operations are developed largely in a TRA (Temporarily Restricted Airspace), a Helicopter Forward Operating Base (FOB) is implemented in the civilian aerodrome of Seia. This option increases operations flexibility and ensures the dynamics and realism of the scenario.



Exercise aim and objectives

1. The aim of EX HOT BLADE 13 is 2-fold:
 - a. To develop joint interoperability through the integration of multinational elements, both in the air and on the ground, to achieve a range of aviation tasks.
 - b. To facilitate individual instruction and training in an environment similar to that of a possible theatre of operations (hot, dust and high conditions, mountain areas).
2. The aim of the Exercise is achieved with the following Objectives:
 - a. Maximize integration of interoperability and operational tasks (formation, coordination, complementarity, mutual support, etc.). The units fly a diverse set of missions replicating day and night operations with a focus on the integration and synchronization of helicopters as members of combined arms teams. The purpose is to provide adequate tactical training to all participating units, involving aircrews in a spectrum of missions the most complete and realistic as possible.
 - b. Maximize missions in high temperatures, high altitude, and dusty conditions in order to increase aircrew skills and qualifications to operate under adverse weather conditions. This includes all tactical aspects, with lots of dust landings and carriage of underslung-loads during night and day, both in the flat and mountain areas.

Geo-strategic situation

The HB13 exercise is set within a scenario of a failing state where our forces encounter opposition from both conventional and insurgent forces. The operations may consist of several major operations occurring simultaneously: humanitarian assistance, peace support operations and combat operations.

Concept of the exercise

The exercise delivers tactical training, over a two to three weeks period duration, offering participants a unique opportunity to plan and execute missions within a joint combined framework. One of the main challenges of the exercise is to ask participants to integrate capabilities rather than simply de-conflict operations.

The exercise is developed on a building block approach design, starting with cross-training activities on small COMAO missions, in order to build a mutual understanding of each participant's equipment and standard operational procedures. As the exercises progresses the complexity and numbers of assets in each COMAO missions increase.

HB13 is the first exercise of the HEP based on a commonly agreed SOP (Standing Operating Procedures) which might become the baseline for further European cooperation in the field of helicopters.

Broader view

During the HOT BLADE Exercise of the Helicopter Exercise Programme (HEP) in Portugal, many of the freshly trained instructors, coming out of the first EDA EHTIC (Helicopter Tactics Instructors Course) held in April to May 2013, meet together with UK instructors at OVAR Airbase and form together the first Mentor Team for an HEP Exercise, ready to support the multinational crews in preparation and execution of the challenging COMAO missions.

Especially this link between the HEP the HTIC and the HTC (Helicopter Tactics Course) with its high priority, assures the participation of Instructors in all three parts of the "triangle", what contributes to an increased exchange of knowledge, as well as to the establishment of a standardised European wide training pipeline. Additionally this interaction is providing the opportunity to use the HEP for the evaluation of the participating units, as executed by some of the cMS on a purely national basis.

HB13 delivers an outstanding opportunity to expose helicopter crews to the training methodology and tactical knowledge of another Member State. Together with the exchange of knowledge regarding the integration of the Mentor Team, HB13 fosters not only the common understanding and methodologies of how others operate military helicopters. It furthermore fosters the building of trust amongst the European military helicopter community as a key factor for future multinational operations.