

# European Air-to-Air Refuelling Training 2014 (EART14)

From 31 March to 11 April 2014, the European Defence Agency together with the European Air Transport Command (EATC) and the Netherlands organises the first European Air-to-Air Refuelling (AAR) training at Eindhoven Air Base.

As the fuel capacities of many transport and most combat aircraft are not sufficient to cover intercontinental distances in just one sortie, AAR is essential to allow forces to reach far away missions in adequate time. Air refuelling maximizes the use of combat and support assets by increasing its flight time. This increased flight time lets combat aircraft strike more targets on the same sortie and lets support assets increase station time. In addition, increasing aircraft's flight time makes additional aircraft available for reassigning towards other objectives, thus achieving effective and efficient use of force. This makes AAR a critical enabler and a necessary requirement in sustained air combat operations.

Despite the importance of AAR, European armed forces have suffered from both a lack of equipment and a lack of interoperability in this field. EU Member States have around 40 tankers of ten different types while the US has over 550 tankers of just three types. This has led European countries to rely heavily on US assets in recent years, as was clearly demonstrated in operations over Libya in 2011 where 80% of sorties were flown by US assets.

## Recognition of the need for better cooperation

Air-to-Air Refuelling was endorsed by the EDA Steering Board in November 2011 as one of eleven Pooling & Sharing priorities. At the subsequent board meeting in March 2012, Ministers declared their willingness to support further development of AAR capabilities and to better coordinate them. They agreed that aerial refuelling capabilities should be developed in Europe as a matter of priority; and that these capabilities should be made available for potential use during CSDP, NATO, or other framework operations.



In response to this the EDA developed a global approach to AAR in Europe. This involved three objectives: increasing the overall AAR capacity, reducing fragmentation of the fleet, and optimising the use of assets. This approach was implemented in close cooperation with the European Air Transport Command (EATC), who jointly developed and organised EART14.

## Aims and objectives of the training

The primary aim of EART14 is to get all participants proficient in their qualifications with their dedicated assets and to improve multinational cooperation for AAR in Europe.

To achieve this overall mission, the training will involve:

- Different RV procedures
- Multiple Air-to-Air Refuelling formations
- Tactical AR/Cell procedures e.g. Link16, EMCON 3
- Bailout procedures, SAR
- Involvement in planning processes
- Achieving further Italian KC-767 certification process
- Implementing successfully Eindhoven AFB as a tanker FOB and to build up an AAR cell.
- Assist Frisian Flag 2014 in all aspects of AAR



## What EART14 involves

EART14 takes place over a two-week period, offering participants a unique opportunity to plan and execute missions within a multinational framework. To ensure the aircrews have realistic training scenarios within a modern air combat environment the AAR training is being held in cooperation with and providing AAR support to the Dutch hosted Frisian Flag 2014 fighter exercise.

EART14 will be developed gradually with exercises becoming increasingly complex in nature over the two weeks, starting from single ship missions and evolving to become part of COMAO missions within Frisian Flag 2014.

## Participants

Three countries are taking place in EART14, using three different aircraft:

- Germany (Airbus A310 MRTT)
- The Netherlands (KDC-10)
- Italy (Boeing KC-767A - the second week)

## More information

More background and details about EDA initiatives in AAR are available on the project pages of the EDA website.

Pictures of the exercise are available in Flickr.

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