EUROPEAN DEFENCE AGENCY

Fact sheet

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European Air-to-Air Refuelling Training 2015 (EART15)

EART 2014 © EDA

From 13 to 24 April 2015, the European Defence Agency will support the second edition of the European Air-to-Air Refuelling Training event organised by the European Air Transport Command (EATC) and the Netherlands at Eindhoven Air Base.

EART15 takes place over a two-week period, offering participants a unique opportunity to plan and execute missions within a multinational framework. To ensure aircrew benefit from realistic training scenarios in a modern air combat environment, EART15 is organised in support of the Dutch-hosted fighter exercise "Frisian Flag 2015".

Aims and objectives

The overall objective of EART15 is to address the lack of interoperability amongst European tanker crews and to develop knowledge in air-to-air refuelling (AAR) planning and tasking through a dedicated exercise – the only of its kind in Europe. The first edition of EART took place in April 2014 in Eindhoven.

EART15 will build-up gradually with increasingly complex scenarios, starting with single-ship missions and evolving to become part of tanker cells in support of COMAO missions within Frisian Flag 2015.

The exercise will focus on the following training points:

- Rendez-vous procedures
- Tactical AR/Cell procedures e.g. Link16, EMCON 3
- Bailout procedures, search and rescue
- Combined planning processes
- Implementation of Eindhoven AFB as a tanker forward operating base and AAR cell
- Support to Frisian Flag 2015 in all aspects of AAR

Participants

Why EART?

Air-to-air refuelling (AAR) is a critical enabler for air power projection and is required to enable sustained air combat operations. As a unique force multiplier, it is a fundamental technical characteristic embedded in modern aircraft design; not just in combat aircraft, but across the full spectrum of air platforms – including in the near future Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems.

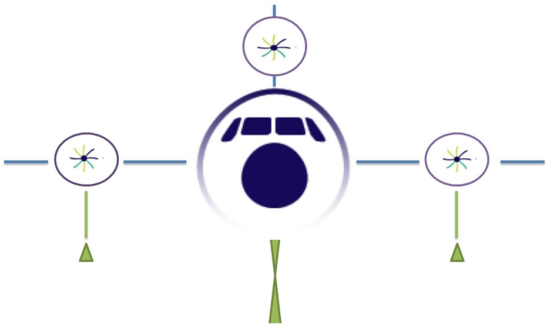
Despite the importance of AAR, European air forces have systematically relied on American assets over the last decades. This was clearly demonstrated in the Kosovo campaign in 1999 and confirmed during the operations over Libya in 2011. Today, Europe is only able to field about 40 tanker aircraft which, when compared with the US resources of over 500 tankers, is a clear indication of the European shortfall in this field.

The lack of dedicated training for the European AAR community is also recognised as a shortfall and is being addressed through the EART series of exercises, which also help streamlining procedures and thus increasing interoperability amongst the European AAR community. Through other work strands, EDA is also addressing this lack of interoperability by organising certification campaigns in order to increase the number of receiver aircraft that are able to refuel on European tankers.

The need for more 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, EDA has 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 for training under the leadership of the European Air Transport Command (EATC), which jointly developed and organised EART together with the Dutch air force and the EDA.



EART 2015

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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