

# BLACK BLADE 2016 (BB16)



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From 14th of November to 2nd of December this year, the 10th helicopter exercise under the umbrella of the Helicopter Exercise Programme (HEP) will be executed from airbase Florennes in Belgium.

Austria, Belgium, Slovenia and the UK are the countries of the HEP CMS committed to participate in the exercise with a total of 14 air assets and roughly 400 military personnel (Helicopter Exercise Forces, Special Operations Ground Forces, Exercise Direction, Logistical and Medical Support). Additionally, observers are coming from Ireland and Italy. The seamless coordination and integration of the Belgium Special Operations Ground Forces into individual scenarios for the benefit of training will be one of the main focuses of exercise BLACK BLADE 2016.

A Distinguished Visitors Day (DVD) for Exercise BLACK BLADE 2016 is planned for the 30th of November at airbase Florennes, Belgium. The aim is to provide all pMS the opportunity to get first-hand information from the participating crews and to demonstrate the environmental training within HEP.

## Overview

Exercise BLACK BLADE 2016 as a Multinational Helicopter Exercise of the HEP will be delivered by the Belgium Defence Forces. The HEP is one of the EDA helicopter training projects and programmes. Together with Helicopter Tactics Course (HTC) and Helicopter Tactics Instructors Course (HTIC), it proves that at very low cost, immediate operational output can be realized.

## Participants\*



\* List subject to change

Besides the HEP focus on flying in challenging environmental conditions, the exercises are developed to implement "Joint Interoperability Training" and efforts will be made to maximize integration of joint interoperability tasks, including Special Operations and Medical Evacuation (MEDEVAC). The exercises adopt the lessons identified during previous HEP exercises, the collection and implementation of these lessons is done by the EDA. The HEP project is designed to adapt its training objectives to reflect the actual security situation as well as actual deployments with their geographical specifics.

BLACK BLADE 2016 will be designed to allow European helicopter crews to train, adopting joint procedures while operating in a challenging scenario.

## Exercise Aim and Objectives

1. The aim of Exercise COLD BLADE 2016 is 2-fold:
  - a. To enhance interoperability at tactical level between helicopter units by using the COMAO concept in a combined, joint, realistic and challenging environment and to teach and learn helicopter Techniques, Tactics and Procedures.
  - b. To co-operate with Belgium Special Operations Forces (SOF) both in the air and on the ground.
2. The aim of the Exercise will be achieved with the following objectives:
  - a. To maximize integration of interoperability in training and operational tasks (low flying, formation, FARP training, gunnery, etc.): the units will fly a diverse set of day and night training missions, with a focus on SOF operations.
  - b. To execute Special Reconnaissance and Direct Action SOF operations during Personnel Recovery missions, Night flying, MEDEVAC missions, Closed Combat Attack (CCA) and NOE missions.
  - c. To train special procedures like marshalling procedures, Fast rope and abseiling techniques, Special Patrol Insertion/Extraction (SPIE), Pick-up and drop off procedures, air-to-surface live helicopter shooting and helicopter parachuting.
  - d. Provide opportunity to practice multinational and national formation and training with the SOF units (infil and exfil) during the exercise.
  - e. To promote EDA CMS dialogue and cooperation.
  - f. To enhance skill of Helicopter crews in using HEP Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and COMAO planning procedures in the conduct of flight planning and operations.

## Concept of the Exercise

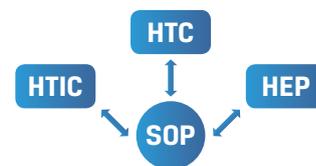
The exercise will deliver tactical training, over a three week period, offering participants a unique opportunity to plan and execute missions within a joint combined framework. One of the main challenges of the exercise will be to ask participants to integrate capabilities rather than simply de-conflict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

The exercise is developed on a building block approach design, starting with a Combat Enhancement Training and Force Integration Training (CET/FIT) phase, 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 will increase.

BLACK BLADE 2016 will be based on a commonly agreed HEP SOP. During the BLACK BLADE 2016 planning phase, the SOP was completely reviewed to reflect the lessons captured during previous HEP exercises as well as the latest operational experience.

## Mentor Team

During BLACK BLADE 2016, trained instructors coming out of the HTIC will form together the Mentor Team for an HEP Exercise, ready to support the multinational crews in preparation and execution of the challenging COMAO missions. The mentor team for BLACK BLADE 2016 will include 5 instructors from Sweden, Germany and the UK. The EDA Chief Instructor (CI) will manage and supervise the Mentor Team to ensure the consistency of the output and the proper exchange of the captured lessons between other programmes (HTC and HTIC). Links between the HEP, the HTIC and the HTC assure the implementation of best practice and Lessons Learned in all three parts of the "triangle", what contributes to an increased exchange of knowledge, as well as to the establishment of a standardized European wide training pipeline.



BLACK BLADE 2016 delivers an outstanding opportunity to expose helicopter crews to the training methodology and knowledge of other Member States. BLACK BLADE 2016 fosters not only the common understanding and methodologies of how others operate military helicopters. It furthermore fosters the building of interoperability and trust amongst the European military helicopter community as a key factor for future multinational operations.

The ultimate goal for Exercise BLACK BLADE 2016 is to develop and improve immediate output through pooling and sharing training skills among European countries for flying in different environments and to train for future European crisis management operations.