



EXERCISE FIRE BLADE 2022 (FB22)

Context & importance

FIRE BLADE 2022, the 16th helicopter exercise organised under the umbrella of the European Defence Agency's (EDA) Helicopter Exercise Programme (HEP), will take place at **Pápa Airbase in Hungary from 7 until 24 June 2022**.

A total of 25 air assets (20 helicopters + 5 aircrafts) and some 550 military personnel from five countries – **Austria, Belgium, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary** – will participate in this exercise hosted by the Hungarian Air Force. In addition, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Italy, Switzerland and several international organisations will participate with exercise observers.

FIRE BLADE 2022 will allow crews to practice operations in various environments during day and night sorties, replicating the conditions that participant forces are expected to encounter when deploying to different theatres of operation.

The exercise's main focus will be on enhancing interoperability at the tactical level between helicopter units by using the Composite Air Operations (COMAO) concept in a joint, combined, realistic and challenging environment.

A Distinguished Visitors Day (DVD) is planned for 21 June 2022 when representatives from EDA participating Member States as well as Switzerland and Slovakia will attend and observe a live training session. The Joint Air Power Competence Centre (JAPCC), the NATO Special Operations Headquarters (NSHQ) and the European Air Group (EAG) are also invited to the DVD.

Objectives

The objectives of FB22 are manifold, notably:

- › enhance tactical interoperability between helicopter units from the participating countries by using the COMAO concept in a combined, joint, realistic and challenging environment and to learn and practice common helicopter Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs).
- › train and practise TTPs with and against fighter jets and electronic warfare threats;
- › improve interoperability in training and operational tasks with ground forces involvement during day and night in a live and full spectrum environment.

Programme

Participating crews will fly diverse day and night COMAO missions and execute, among others, 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 Surveillance (R&S), Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR), Personnel Recovery (PR), Medical Evacuation (MEDEVAC) and Casualty Evacuation (CASEVAC). This will include live firing drills.

It will also provide opportunities for attack operations, Special Operation Forces (SOF) training, and the possibility to train special procedures like fast rope and abseiling techniques, Special Patrol Insertion/Extraction (SPIE), pick-up and drop

off procedures and air-to-surface live firing (helicopter door gunnery and sniper training). Finally, the EAG will deliver a Forward Arming Refuelling Point (FARP) Force Integration Training.

FIRE BLADE 2022 will also provide opportunities to practice multinational and national formation and training with SOF units and enhance crews' skills in using the HEP Standard Operating Procedures (HEP SOP) and COMAO planning procedures in the conduct of flight planning and operations, which will be supported by the ATP-49.

Concept

The exercise will follow a building block approach, meaning that it will start with an academic session, a familiarisation phase and cross-training activities on small COMAO missions to create mutual understanding of each participant's equipment and standard operational procedures. As the exercise progresses, the complexity of each COMAO mission will also increase, as well as the number of flight assets involved. FIRE BLADE 2022 will be based on the commonly agreed HEP SOP.

Mentor Team

Seven instructors from Austria, the Netherlands, and Sweden trained in EDA's Helicopter Tactics Instructors Course (HTIC) will form the FIRE BLADE 2022 Mentor Team, ready to support the multinational crews in preparation and execution of the challenging COMAO missions. EDA's Chief Instructor (CI) Team will manage and supervise the rest of the components of the Mentor Team to ensure consistency and the best possible uptake of previous lessons learned in other programmes and during deployment.

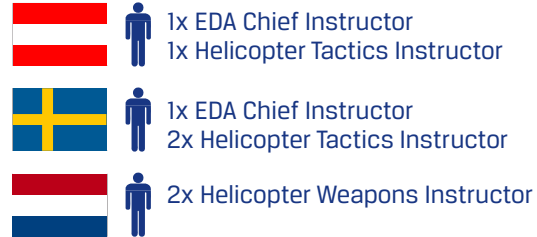
Background

The Helicopter Exercise Programme (HEP) is part of EDA's wider Helicopter Portfolio aimed at providing Member States with a joint European framework to develop, consolidate and share best practices to meet the challenges of flying helicopters in a modern operational environment. Other components of this portfolio are the Helicopter Tactics Course (HTC) programme, the Helicopter Tactics Instructor Course (HTIC) programme and the future Multinational Helicopter Training Centre (MHTC).

Participants



Mentor team



Observers

