

EART 2018: “Eindhoven air base for two weeks the tanker town of Europe” (Lt.Col Harry Oostema)

“Air-to-air refueling (AAR) capacity is the backbone of modern day air power. Without it, we don’t do much. Air power needs its fuel,” said Lieutenant- colonel Harry Oostema, Head of Operations at Eindhoven air base at the opening of the European Air-to-Air Refuelling Training (EART) exercise on 9 April 2018 in Eindhoven.

The goal of AAR operations is to enhance combat effectiveness by extending the range, payload and endurance of receiver aircraft. It allows air power to be projected at greater distances or concentrated where and when it is needed mostly. The primary effect of providing additional fuel to airborne aircraft is spatial and temporal extension of air capabilities. This confirms AAR as a significant force enabler and multiplier.



“Delivering a guaranteed, continuous coverage of air-to-air refueling capacity is challenging. That’s why we need to train together. During the European Air-to-air refuelling Training (EART) at Eindhoven air base in the Netherlands, we have that unique opportunity”, Lieutenant-Colonel Oostema stated.

EART is a dedicated AAR focused multinational training for tanker, air- and maintenance crews. It provides the nations with an excellent opportunity to train their air crews in planning and executing missions within complex and realistic multinational scenarios they are not exposed to in peacetime AAR operations.

The exercise is in support of the multinational fighter exercise Frisian Flag that concurrently takes place from Leeuwarden air base also in the Netherlands. With over 70 (fighter) aircraft participating in Frisian Flag, EART provides the participating Nations an unique opportunity to train their tanker crews and increase the interoperability and standardization. No other exercise focusses solely on AAR like EART.

EART 2018 is the fifth edition of this multinational training and runs from 9 - 20 April 2018. *“For two weeks Eindhoven air base will be the Tanker Town of Europe”,* said Lieutenant-Colonel Oostema.

The European Air Transport Command (EATC) based on Eindhoven, is the driving force behind EART with Eindhoven air base being the Host Nation and having the role of Project Leader.

NATO’s air campaigns in Kosovo and Libya have identified air-to-air refueling as a critical shortfall in European military capabilities. Individual Allies, as well as NATO and the EU, have been working to address this shortfall. That is why NATO and the European Union initiated a major boost to the ability to refuel aircraft with the new Multinational Multi Role Tanker Transport Unit (MMU) that will be operating from Main Operating Base Eindhoven air base (Netherlands) and a Forward Operating Base in Cologne (Germany).

Operation Inherent Resolve

Somewhere late 2016 the Dutch Ministry of Defence received a request from Central Command. During several periods in 2017 there was a shortage of AAR-capabilities within Operation Inherent

Resolve (OIR). This created a unique opportunity for the Dutch KDC-10 aircraft because many of the airpower missions flown in support of OIR depend on tanker aircraft.

“With an employability of 95 percent and an offload of almost 6,5 million liter to more than a 1000 coalition aircraft, this deployment was a great success. During OIR we saw tanker-aircraft overhead strengthen the resolve of other forces because our coalition brothers know we’ve got their back,” explained Lieutenant- Colonel Oostema.

See also EDA webnews on the opening of EART 2018: <https://www.eda.europa.eu/info-hub/press-centre/latest-news/2018/04/09/5th-european-air-to-air-refuelling-training-takes-off-in-the-netherlands>