

Italian Blade 2015 (IB15)



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From 22 June to 3 July 2015, Italian Blade 2015, the 8th helicopter exercise supported by the European Defence Agency under the umbrella of the Helicopter Exercise Programme (HEP) will take place in Viterbo. Eight nations are expected to take part with a total of 40 helicopters and more than 1000 military personnel. Observers from Portugal and Latvia will also attend the event.

In addition to Italian ground forces, Germany also intends to send over 170 infantry personnel to take part in the joint missions, as integration of ground forces into the exercise scenarios will be one of the focuses of this year's HEP exercise.

IB 15 is designed to expose helicopter crews to the training methodology and tactical knowledge of other Member States. The exercise fosters common understanding and helps build trust amongst the European military helicopter community, which is key to the success of future multinational operations.

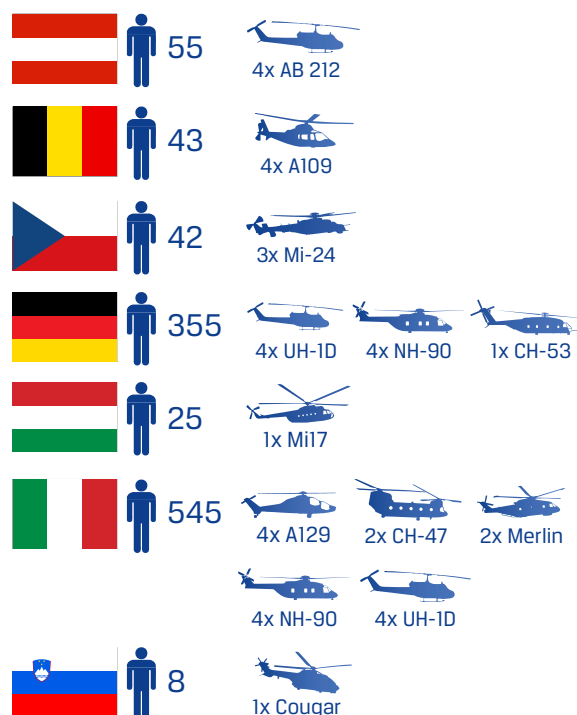
Overview

Italian Blade 2015 (IB15) will be delivered by the Italian Army Aviation as a Multinational Helicopter Exercise organised under the framework of the Helicopter Exercise Programme. The HEP is one of multiple projects undertaken by the European Defence Agency to increase the overall availability of European military helicopters, such as the Helicopter Tactics Course (HTC) or the Helicopter Tactics Instructor Course (HTIC). These efforts demonstrate that at very low-cost, quick operational benefits can be yielded.

IB15 will be designed to allow European helicopter crews to train together by adopting joint procedures and operating as a joint/combined Task Force in crisis response operations (CRO) simulating a challenging, realistic and dynamic scenario. Besides the focus on flying in demanding environ-

mental conditions, the exercise will be developed to implement "Joint Interoperability Training" and efforts should be made to maximise integration of joint interoperability tasks, including 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 Security (R&S) operations, Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR), Personnel Recovery (PR), Military/Non Military extractions (NEO Ops), Medical Evacuation (MEDEVAC) and Casualty Evacuation (CASEVAC).

Participants*



* List subject to change

Aims and objectives

The aim of Italian Blade 2015 is 2-fold:

- To train European helicopter crews and staffs to plan, fly and operate in conditions likely to be faced on possible future operations, adopting joint procedures while operating as a joint/combined aviation battalion in CRO.
- To promote cooperation in helicopters training by adopting the pooling and sharing concept, and to develop joint interoperability through the integration of multinational elements, both in the air and on the ground.

The aim of the exercise will be achieved with the following objectives:

- To maximise integration of interoperability in operational tasks (formation, coordination, complementarity, mutual support, etc.). The units will fly a diverse set of missions, replicating day and night operations, with a focus on the integration and synchronisation of helicopters as members of a combined unit.
- To perform missions at high temperature, high altitude, and dusty conditions, in order to increase aircrew skills and qualifications to operate under adverse weather and environmental conditions.
- To promote dialogue and cooperation between EDA participating Member States.
- To implement, use and test the validity of a common procedures plan for joint and combined operations.
- To enhance the skills of Heliops Command/Units and crews in using standard procedures in the conduct of flight operations.

The exercise will involve forces deployed in a friendly and recent pro-democracy state, where they will encounter opposition from insurgent forces with a scenario reflecting military operations other-than-war (MOOTW).

The Helicopter Aviation Regiment will be tasked to perform several combat, combat support and combat service support operations, acting in the assigned area of responsibility under the authority of a Regional Command (Brigade-level). The scenario will help simulate EU Crisis Management Mission, endorsed by the UN Security Council, where an EU Combined Joint Task Force is supposed to be deployed. Threats will be materialised by Illegal Armed Group.

Exercise concept

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

The exercise is developed on a building blocks design, starting with cross-training activities on small Combined Air Operations (COMAO) missions, in order to build a mutual understanding of each participant's equipment and standard operational procedures. The complexity of the missions will increase over time.

Italian Blade 2015 will be based on commonly-agreed SOP (Standing Operating Procedures). During the IB15 planning phase, the SOP were completely reviewed to reflect lessons learned during previous HEP exercises as well as recent operational experience.

Staff personnel from the participating nations will be embedded in the exercise's Command & Control structure and hold intelligence, operations, logistics or liaison positions.

Mentor team

During IB15, a mentor team of six instructors from Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom will support multinational crews in the preparation and execution of the challenging COMAO missions. This year's edition of the HEP exercise will introduce the position of Chief Instructor, an active-duty UK Royal Air Force Squadron Leader who will manage the mentor team to ensure consistency of the output and proper exchange of lessons learned during HTC and HTIC events.

This link between HEP, HTIC and HTC ensures involvement of qualified instructors 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. Additionally this interaction is providing the opportunity to use the HEP for the evaluation of the participating units, as executed by some of the cMS on a purely national basis.

More information on helicopter initiatives available on: <http://www.eda.europa.eu/projects/projects-search/helicopter-initiatives>

Last update: 5 June 2015