

Exercise HOT BLADE 2018



Context & importance

HOT BLADE 2018, the 12th helicopter exercise organised under the umbrella of the European Defence Agency's (EDA) Helicopter Exercise Programme (HEP), will take place at **Beja airbase in Portugal** from **7-24 May 2018**.

A total of 29 air assets (21 helicopters + 8 fixed wing) and some 500 military personnel from six countries - **Portugal, Belgium, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Slovenia** - participate in this exercise hosted for the 4th time by the Portuguese Air Force.

HOT BLADE 2018 will allow crews to practice operations in a hot, high and dusty environment replicating the challenging conditions that participant forces are expected to encounter when deploying to a theater 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 combined, joint, realistic and challenging environment.

A Distinguished Visitors Day (DVD) is planned for 22 May 2018 when representatives from all EDA Member States and representatives of CH, NO and RS will have the opportunity to attend and observe various live training sessions.

Objectives

The objectives of HB18 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 teach and learn helicopter Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs). The focus will be on Composite Air Operations (COMAO), Air Assault and Special Operations Forces (SOF) missions in dust, hot and mountain environment with live firing and trooping;
- » train and practise Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) with/against F-16 fighter jets and electronic warfare means on the ground;
- » co-operate with Portuguese SOF both in the air and on the ground;
- » improve interoperability in training and operational tasks (low level flying, formation flights, FARP training, gunnery, etc.).

Programme*

Participating crews will fly diverse day and night COMAO missions and execute Close Air Support (CAS), Special Reconnaissance & Direct Action SOF operations, Personnel Recovery missions, night flights (with/without NVG), MEDEVAC missions and flying in Nap Of Earth (NOE) missions.

They will also 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 firing (helicopter door gunnery and sniper training).

HOT BLADE 2018 will also provide multiple opportunities to practice multinational and national formation and training with the SOF units (infiltration and exfiltration) and enhance crews' skills in using the HEP Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and COMAO planning procedures in the conduct of flight planning and operations.

Concept

The exercise will follow a building block approach, meaning that it will start with a familiarisation phase and cross-training activities on small COMAO missions in order 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. HOT BLADE 2018 will be based on the commonly agreed HEP SOP. During the planning of the exercise, the SOP was thoroughly reviewed to integrate the lessons learned during previous HEP exercises.

Mentor Team

Six instructors from Austria, Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom trained in EDA's Helicopter Tactics Instructors Course (HTIC) will jointly form the HOT BLADE 2018 Mentor Team, ready to support the multinational crews in preparation and execution of the challenging COMAO missions. The EDA's Chief Instructor (CI) will manage and supervise the Mentor Team to ensure consistency and the best possible uptake of previous lessons learned in other programmes (HTC, HTIC, COMAO planning and the EW Course).

Background

The 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 in order to meet the challenges of flying helicopters in

a modern operational environment. Other components of this Portfolio are the annual HEP Symposium, the Helicopter Tactics Instructor Courses (HTIC), the Helicopter Tactics Courses (HTC) and the COMAO Planning and Electronic Warfare (EW) Courses.

Participants



Mentor team



Observers

