

EXERCISE HOT BLADE 2021 (HB21)



Context & importance

HOT BLADE 2021, the 15th 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 **16 until 30 June 2021**.

A total of 23 air assets (15 helicopters + 8 fixed wing) and some 550 military personnel from five countries – **Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Portugal** – will participate in this exercise hosted by the Portuguese Air Force. In addition, Italy, Serbia, Slovakia, Switzerland and several international organisations will send exercise observers.

HOT BLADE 2021 will allow crews to practice operations in various environments during day and night sorties, replicating the challenging conditions that participant forces are expected to encounter when deploying to different theatres of operation.

A Distinguished Visitors Day (DVD) is planned for 24 June 2021 when representatives from EDA participating Member States as well as Switzerland and Serbia will attend and observe various live training sessions. The Joint Air Power Competence Centre (JAPCC), the NATO Special Operations Headquarters (NSHQ), the European Personnel Recovery Centre (EPRC) and the European Air Group (EAG) are also invited to the DVD.

Objectives

The objectives of HB21 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). The focus will be on COMAO with live firing and trooping;
- train and practise TTPs with and against fighter jets and electronic warfare threats on the ground;
- improve interoperability in training and operational tasks with ground forces involvement (Night Vision Goggles operations, low level flying, formation flights, Forward Arming and Refueling Point training, gunnery, etc...) in a live/simulated, 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, Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR), Personnel Recovery (PR), Medical Evacuation (MEDEVAC) and Casualty Evacuation (CASEVAC).

They will also train special procedures like marshalling procedures, fast rope and abseiling techniques, Special Patrol Insertion/Extraction (SPIE), and air-to-surface live firing (helicopter door gunnery and sniper training).

HOT BLADE 2021 will also provide opportunities to practice multinational and national formation and training with the Special Operations Forces (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 an academic sessions, 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. HOT BLADE 2021 will be based on the commonly agreed HEP SOP.

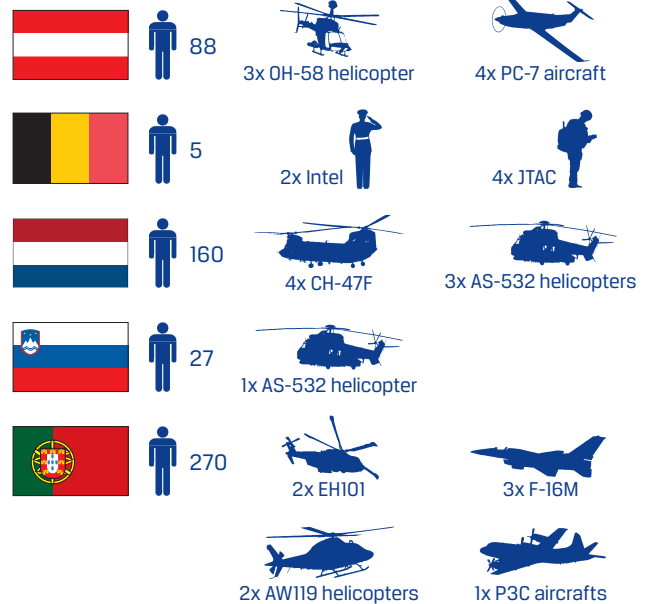
Mentor Team

Eight instructors from Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden trained in EDA's Helicopter Tactics Instructors Course (HTIC) accompanied with an Instructor from the Netherlands trained on the Dutch Helicopter Weapons Instructor (HWI) course will jointly form the HOT BLADE 2021 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

