

Air Policing – NATO's Eyes and Ears in the Sky

By Daniel Stanescu, ROM AF
CC-Air Ramstein, Operations Division

Although this headquarters is preparing for NRF 13 and 14, our "daily job" of Air Policing continues apace as it is one of the most important and challenging peacetime missions of CC-Air Headquarters Ramstein. The personnel of both air and ground assets assigned to conduct the air policing mission of preserving the integrity of NATO airspace remain ready to respond immediately to any threat or, when required, to assist aircraft in distress. NATO members without the necessary national assets to conduct air policing are assisted by other NATO members

to ensure that air sovereignty is maintained. This is the case in North Eastern European airspace in the three Baltic States: Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Since accession in April 2004, various countries of the Alliance have, on a rotational basis, provided fighter aircraft and personnel to the NATO Baltic Air Policing mission. The presence of NATO fighter planes in the skies above the Baltic States is a very clear and visible demonstration of Alliance solidarity, resolve and determination. In October last year, this commitment was further enhanced by the introduction of a one-day live flying training event involving the in-place Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) aircraft and external contributions from neighbouring NATO nations. This event was extremely successful and widely appreciated by the indigenous populations. As a training platform, it exercised NATO's air Command and Control (C2) in the Baltic Area of Responsibility (AOR) as well as its access to Baltic airspace. It had the added benefit of demonstrating NATO's commitment to preserving the integrity of NATO airspace as a collective task. CC Air Ram-

stein's intention is to have this as a recurring event. In April 2009 the second Baltic Air Sovereignty Training Event (BAST-E) took place and involved fighters from Denmark, Poland and the Czech Republic, assets under the command of HQ USAFE as well as Lithuanian and Estonian aircraft. The exercise was supported by USA-

the NATO Integrated Air Defense System (NATINADS) and, at the request of the Icelandic government, NATO member countries now deploy for a limited period of time with fighters and personnel to preserve the integrity and sovereignty of Icelandic airspace. In 2008 France was the first nation to deploy, providing Mirage 2000 for six weeks for the inaugural presence. Danish F16 aircraft were deployed in March 2009 and they will be followed by F-16s from Norway later this year. Usually approximately 50 support personnel deploy with the aircraft.

NATO's Air Policing mission remains a cornerstone of Alliance Collective Defence and solidarity and NATO will continue to demonstrate the cohesion and commitment employing its forces efficiently to maintain safety and commercial freedom of movement in its airspace.

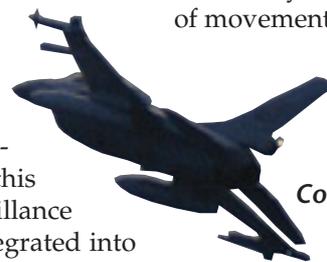
FE tankers and a NATO E-3A AWACS platform. The entire flying programme was controlled by CRC Karmelava (LTU) and CRP Āmari (EST) and it provided an excellent opportunity for their fighter controllers to practice and enhance their skills.

On the western edge of CC Air Ramstein's Area of Functional Responsibility (AOFR) a similar situation exists. After the withdrawal of the US forces from Iceland in 2006, this country's radar surveillance and C2 facilities were integrated into



FRA Mirage 2000D

Courtesy SIRPA Air



*NOR F-16
Courtesy Royal Norwegian
Air Force*



*DNK F-16
Courtesy Royal Danish Air Force*

