

Baltic Region Training Events (BRTE)

NATO has had an Air Policing presence since 2004, but regular training events had not been a part of this mission. Regularly scheduled training events not only provide NATO forces with new training areas, but also showcase the growing capability of the respective Baltic air forces.

The first event, titled Baltic Air Sovereignty Training-Event, took place in October of 2008, and focused on the core strength of Air Policing. Aircraft and air defence units from Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the United States of America all played a significant role in the execution of this event.

The programme's name was later changed to Baltic Region Training Event, recognizing the broader range of training and capabilities that would become part of the event series. The next event occurred in April 2009, again with a focus on Air Policing.

However, the training bar was raised as the NATO AWACS was integrated into the scenario in addition to fighter, tanker and transport aircraft. Additionally, fly-bys of NATO aircraft near the Baltic States' Capitals enhanced the visibility and increased the recognition of the event.

The third event in July of 2009 was even more complex and included other dimensions of airpower, such as electronic warfare (EW) and aerial delivery. A previously scheduled electronic warfare exercise was combined with BRTE III to enhance the scenario and increase the training value to all, especially the ground radar operators. The radar operators were challenged to accomplish their task in a realistic electronic warfare environment, as jamming was provided by NATO-contracted DA-20 aircraft.

A Ramstein based C-130 participated in the air-to-air portion of the event as an evasive slow-moving target and then went on for an airdrop to Nurmssi airfield. The pallet dropped by the C-130 not only demonstrated the precision aerial delivery capability that resides within NATO, it also opened

up a new surveyed drop zone that can be used for future training by other NATO forces. The aerial delivery element was significant as this capability is vital not only for humanitarian missions, but also a

variety of other missions that NATO's Air Component Command at Ramstein may be tasked to execute under the NATO Response Force (NRF).

The programme progression sought for BRTE IV was enabled by the

requirement for Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTACs) in ISAF, also known as Forward Air Controllers (FACs). An Estonian contingent is slated to deploy to ISAF this November, and their JTACs, although already certified, would be even better prepared to protect if their unit took part in advanced training scenarios. The training would be even more valuable if it included the use of ROVER (Remotely Video Enhanced Receiver) equipment. ROVER enables the JTAC to view the same targeting pod video as the aircrew in the fighter.

Within two weeks of concept development Baltic JTACs were flown to Ramstein for the preparatory ground training at the USAFE Air to Ground Operations School. The week-long training included simulators and live controls with A-10 and Mirage 2000 aircraft. The ROVER, which is an incredibly valuable component of the ISAF JTAC mission, was the highlight of the training. Having completed the



German Air Force EUROFIGHTER during pre-flight check

courtesy PIZ Luftwaffe



preparatory training, integration training in a complex scenario with their own Estonian Army Company was the next mission for the JTACs. BRTE IV-A featuring USAF F-15E Strike Eagles from RAF Mildenhall provided this integration training and occurred on 14 and 15 September in Estonia. The event comprised two hours of hands-on ROVER training each day with the F-15Es. The training

was followed by the aircraft landing at Tallinn International Airport. Estonian helicopters were then used to shuttle the F-15E aircrew back out to the training area for face-to-face debriefs with the JTACs to reinforce the training.

An additional element of the BRTE IV programme was termed BRTE IV-B and was a subset of the larger NATO



USAF C-130 upon landing at Tallinn International Airport by Lt Col Parker



Czech Air Force Siauliai QRA on mission

by Lt Col Schreier

exercise BOLD AVENGER based out of Karup, Denmark. The BRTE IV-B training mission on 22 September not only provided training for the participating BOLD AVENGER aircrews, but also for the German EUROFIGHTER detachment based at Siauliai, Lithuania, conducting NATO's Baltic Air Policing.

BRTEs are planned to continue quarterly and will, as always, be a visible demonstration of NATO's commitment and resolve in the Baltic region. Air Policing will continue to be a prime mission demonstrated by the BRTE programme, but as the value of the training areas within the Baltics are further realized, expect a wide variety of Air Power elements to be displayed in the future.

Change of Air Policing Responsibility in the Baltic States

On 1 September, the Czech detachment completed its four-month tour of Baltic Air Policing at Siauliai Air Base, Lithuania. It was a successful mission for all personnel involved. During this deployment, the Gripen fighter aircraft flew more missions and hours than initially intended and they even performed a record number of live scrambles. All the scrambles were executed flawlessly and all ended with visual identification.

As for the Czech Republic, this deployment will remain a historic one for several reasons. This mission was

the first time the Czech Republic deployed troops outside their borders in 64 years and also marked the first operational usage of Gripen aircraft in the Baltic Region.

Following the conclusion of the Czech rotation, it is Germany's turn to mark another "first" in the skies above Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Though it is the third German Air Force deployment to the Baltic States, it is the first time for the fourth generation "Eurofighter" (EF) jets to deploy beyond the borders of Germany. For the first two months of the Ger-

man rotation, four EF jets from Fighter Wing 74 based in Neuburg an der Donau will guard the Baltic skies.

They will hand the mission over for the second half of the rotation to six F-4F Phantom II jets from Fighter Wing 71 "Richthofen" in Wittmund. This time, the German fighters will be supported by approximately 100 personnel.

At the time the article was written, Eurofighters emblazoned with the iron cross performed their inaugural live scramble.

