



# CC-Air Ramstein

Allied Air Component Command Headquarters Ramstein

Public Information Office



## Press Release

### Mission: Policing Riga Airspace

#### **NATO Summit is real mission for NATO soldiers from Ramstein**



**Riga/Ramstein (ang).** In addition to its permanent tasks, Allied Air Component Command Headquarters Ramstein recently had accomplished another mission: integrated in the so-called "Forward Air Element", i.e. the operational forces providing Air Policing support to the Latvian security authorities on site during the summit of NATO Heads of State and Government, Ramstein-based personnel were in charge of securing the airspace above the Latvian Capital of Riga.

The air component of these operational forces were of particular importance. Latvia, like neighbouring Estonia and Lithuania, does not yet have her own military air defence assets. Therefore, since March 2004, NATO allies have been providing what is called Air Policing tasks for the Baltic States. Since that date, the Ramstein NATO air headquarters has been responsible for this task.

In the field of air defence, the existing Air Policing Concept for the Baltic States was applied during the NATO Summit. Decisive elements had been reinforced and supplemented owing to the elevated security situation.

At the request of the Latvian government, a team of some 25 specialists were sent to Riga headed by the commander of the Air Component Command, General William T. Hobbins. They had set up an Air Operations Centre, which allows them to constantly monitor the air situation. In case of any conspicuous air movement or airspace violation they would have alerted the Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) assets in coordination with other assigned air command and control elements. The QRA would have been able to identify the air craft and provide additional information to assist any further procedures as well as possible operational options.

In order to carry out such a complex task, the team would have fallen back on a range of formations and units including elements of air surveillance, data transmission, air refuelling and of course the QRA interceptors.

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The planning for this major support started already back in April this year. At Ramstein's CC-Air Headquarters, German Lieutenant Colonel Jimmy Hartwig was the responsible planning officer and had been a key-player in the operations centre as well. The 42-year-old pilot has worked at the NATO air headquarters in Ramstein for one year; in Riga he had been NATO's Air Representative responsible for procedural coordination. "It is perhaps not totally accurate to describe my task as that of a spider waiting in its web," he said smiling, "but it is true that since I worked all the preparations, the threads all end in my hands and I am focused on the procedural fine tuning."

On the whole, a multitude of agencies from all armed services and from almost all NATO States had been involved in providing security for the two-day event. Navy units from the United Kingdom and the United States of America were deployed in the Riga bay and together with Latvian vessels they took care of seaward security.

A German NBC Defence Battalion was deployed to Riga, canine teams were flown in from France, the United Kingdom and Norway, a Bundeswehr field hospital was established with Canadian surgeons working together with their German colleagues. Barracks of the Latvian armed forces accommodated NATO's Support Forces' Command Post which was also both multinational and joint and allowed staff to coordinate unit employment and to control operations in accordance with Latvian requirements. Behind the scenes of the NATO Summit at Riga a scenario based on military planning was carried out in a tight and functional way— and Ramstein-based soldiers had an important part to play in this.

The picture shows LTC Jimmy Hartwig (left) in the combined joint atmosphere of the Forward Command Element in RIGA. On the picture as well a Canadian Navy Commander, a Helicopter pilot from the UK, a Belgian Air Force LTC, acting as the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Force Command Element and in the background a German Navy Captain (from left to right).