

3rd Annual NATO Rotary Wing Summit

16 – 17 October 2017, Krakow Poland

Interoperability in Rotary Wing Aviation

Recommendations and Best Practices from the Field

NATO's Air Command, U.S. Army Europe, and the 12th Combat Aviation Brigade hosted the 3rd Annual NATO Rotary Wing Summit in Krakow, Poland from 16-17 October, 2017. Attendees addressed interoperability challenges faced by rotary wing forces. Rotary Wing Summit participants also identified best practices, lessons learned and future opportunities and exercises to deter potential adversaries and to improve integration in the future.

Nine speakers from multiple nations and breakout sessions focused on past exercise lessons learned, future rotary wing training opportunities, air defense, and the future of rotary wing aviation in Europe; highlighted takeaways and best practices were identified:

1. **Train aviation as a maneuver force.** Rotary wing aviation must be utilized as a maneuver force, versus a training enabler. Rotary wing training objectives must be identified and integrated at the earliest opportunity in exercise planning cycles.
2. **Enhance rotary wing cross border freedom of maneuver.** Navigating across European borders and throughout the European area of operations is complex and time-consuming because of varying entry requirements for each member. Depending on the materials being transported, clearance times can fluctuate between a few days to upwards of a month. Build and improve relationships to understand host nation requirements, decrease the impact to freedom of maneuver/operations, and address both during planning conferences and exercises.
3. **Develop and improve aviation-capable live fire ranges.** Live fire exercises increase training complexity during maneuver and logistics. Ranges throughout NATO countries should be able to support (at a minimum) an attack aviation company combined arms live fire exercise. Aviation Commanders should use live fire exercises to train multinational aviation task forces to operate together and understand and support the ground commander's mission requirements and intent.
4. **Understand & operate within national caveats.** Few NATO members operate in the European theater without any national caveats. Units and commanders must learn to work within these restrictions in order to induce rigor and maximize realism during training, including life support activities and logistics (in a multi-national environment, units must "overcommunicate" constraints and limitations regarding force posture, ability to operate in austere operating conditions, etc.).



5. **Develop sustainment interoperability.** Multi-national aviation task forces must operate under one common sustainment environment without obstacles in ground maintenance, refuel, or re-arm standards and procedures. Multi-national concepts of support and forward arming and refueling operations (FARPS) should be built into our exercises.
6. **Develop an intelligence sharing mindset.** Partner nations can still improve intelligence sharing. The mission command/intelligence infrastructure and systems must be identified early in the planning cycle to allow all nations to build a common understanding and knowledge of intelligence products.
7. **Use common doctrine.** When rotary wing units from NATO or partner countries are operating together or in the same area of operations, common doctrine must be used and practiced. Utilizing and improving these tactics, techniques and procedures will alleviate some of the more difficult challenges we face as a force with respect to systems interoperability. (See Allied Tactical Publication #49)
8. **Support the JAPCC's knowledge management efforts.** Standardization of rotary wing tactics, techniques, and procedures across the Alliance remains an ongoing challenge. The Joint Air Power Competence Centre (JAPCC) has agreed to act as the repository of standard operating procedures for conducting multinational rotary wing operations. Their collection/database of information will be online at the start of FY2018 and NATO Allies and Members should continue sharing their best practices and SOPs with the JAPCC. In addition, the Joint Multi-National Readiness Center serves as a focal point for integrating rotary wing forces under common practices. See the JAPCC's website, here: <https://www.japcc.org/> and the JMRC's website, here: <http://www.eur.army.mil/7atc/JMRC.html>.

While there were many other important discussions, the selected topics serve as the basis for 'our way forward'. As we plan future training events and work towards truly being interoperable, we must address each of these takeaways and bring those lessons learned to the entire Strong Europe and NATO rotary wing force.

Rotary Wing Summit Sponsoring Organizations:

NATO Allied Air Command: <https://www.airn.nato.int/>

Delivers Air and Space Power for the Alliance.

U.S. Army Europe: www.eur.army.mil

The U.S. Army in Europe trains and leads United States Army Forces in support of U.S. European Command and Headquarters, Department of the United States Army by:

- *Training and preparing full spectrum capable forces for global employment*
- *Strengthening alliances and building partner capacity and capability*

12th Combat Aviation Brigade: <https://www.army.mil/12thCAB/>

The 12th Combat Aviation Brigade provides theater expertise and continuity of aviation support to USAREUR that enables CONPLAN readiness, NATO integration and Theater Security Cooperation, while providing mission command for organic aviation units

