1. INTRODUCTION

RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation, in cooperation with Croatia, Germany, Hungary, and Montenegro organized an Open Skies Treaty (OST) Aerial Observation Course (CSE-05-C) in the period of 11-22 October 2010. This kind of course has been held annually since the year 2002, as a part of continuous efforts made by RACVIAC to train military personnel of the South East European (SEE) countries in terms of planning and carrying out observation flights according to the provisions of the OST.

This year the course was sponsored by Germany. It comprised presentations and a practical phase. The theoretical part took place at RACVIAC facilities in Croatia. Participants also visited the Croatian OST photo laboratory at Pleso Airbase. The practical part of the course was hosted by Montenegro and the training flight was carried out over its territory. Hungary as a contributor has made available the observation aircraft AN-26, certified for the purposes of the OST.

Course Participants in front of the Hungarian AN-26

2. PROGRAMME/METHODOLOGY

The total length of the course was two weeks, travel dates included. The course was carried out as a combination of lectures and practical activities. The time intended for the theoretical and the practical part were equal, providing thus a unique opportunity of participation in a training observation flight. The course was carried out in English language.
2.1 Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this course was to train personnel from SEE countries in planning, organizing and executing an observation flight based on the provisions of the OST, thus to increase the administrative capacity in the field of security cooperation.

The objectives of the course were:

- To overview specific elements of the OST, highlighting the most comprehensive and commonly followed rules and procedures of its execution;
- To provide the participants with information on the current situation in the implementation of the OST;
- To deepen contacts between representatives of national organizations and agencies engaged in the accomplishment of arms control and/or confidence- and security-building measures;
- To set the example of security cooperation on national, regional and international level.

2.2 Participation

Thirteen participants from nine countries took part in the course, namely from Albania (2), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2), Croatia (2), the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* (2), Montenegro (1), Poland (1), Slovakia (1) Slovenia (1) and Spain (1). Most of the participants represented the air forces and verification centres of their countries and already had some knowledge of the provisions of the OST.

RACVIAC hosted altogether five lecturers from Croatia (1), Germany (3) and Hungary (1). During the course, several other specialists supported us with briefings on different topics, such as the work of the photo laboratory (at Pleso Airbase), and the ATC information and weather forecasts (at Podgorica (Golubovci) Airbase, Montenegro). In addition to that, serving the purposes of the course, members of the Hungarian team prepared numerous briefings concerning the Hungarian Open Skies Observation System.

2.3 Overview of the Course

The first phase (12–15 October) was conducted as a combination of presentations, lectures, visit to the photo laboratory at Pleso Airbase, and a practical work on a mission plan as a preparation for the accomplishment of the observation flight in Montenegro. The presentations covered the following topics:

1. *The Treaty on Open Skies (I. II.)*
2. *OS platforms and sensor suits*

*Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.
1. **OSCC Decisions, Chairman statements**
3. **Preparation of receiving an OS mission (Formats, logistics, OSCC Dec. 1.)**

**Captain Vlado Pavlinec from Croatia**

1. **Mission planning I. (Basic information and considerations)**
2. **Mission planning II. (Introduction to practical exercise)**
3. **Mission planning III. (Practical exercise in small groups)**

**LtCol Andreas Weller from Germany**

1. **OS Notifications, Formats**
2. **Certification, pre-flight inspection, demo flight.**
3. **Mission rundown I. II. (Possible timetable of an active mission)**

**Major István Zombori from Hungary**

1. **Film processing, duplication, access to information**
2. **OS platforms and sensor suits (detailed information)**

**CMSgt Michael Laufs from Germany**

The lecturers covered all the topics efficiently and presented a comprehensive overview of the relevant parts of the Treaty.

The visit to the photo laboratory at Pleso Airbase included detailed briefings by our specialists and colleagues from the airbase at all workstations of film processing, analysis and duplication. Participants had a chance to touch the equipment and examine samples of aerial photographs taken during observation missions.

During the practical exercise, participants were divided into three teams and practiced the preparation and review of a “Mission Plan” for the accomplishment of a real observation flight under the supervision of the lecturers.
The second week (18-22 October) activities were carried out in compliance with the OST and with similar time schedule to a real OS mission. The Hungarian aircraft took on board all participants in Zagreb and landed at Podgorica (Golubovci) Airbase. From that moment, our colleagues from Montenegro took over hosting the course. The preparation for training flight included the following elements pertaining to the Treaty:

- POE procedure
- Pre-flight Inspection
- Mission Plan Negotiation (background activities)
- Preparation for the Flight (in flight duties)
- OSF 14 analyzing

The participants had full information and access to the Hungarian AN-26 and the installed observation system. During the slightly more than one-hour flight, they practiced their duties, both as members of the Observation Team, and Escort Team on a real mission.

3. SUMMARY/RECOMMENDATIONS

According to experts’ and participants’ assessments provided at the end of the event, the course proved to be successful. The professional lectures, personal experience of lecturers attracted the attention of the participants and generated open discussion on all aspects of the OST. Moreover, the real life observation flight made the participants highly motivated. Participants significantly improved their knowledge about the OST and its implementation. They have taken back to their air forces, national arms control agencies and verification centres the knowledge and skills gained in those two weeks, which they can use in their current or future positions.

RACVIAC has been organizing courses on the OST since 2002, and it is recommended to continue the successful series of courses also next year, to the benefit of the SEE region. It is important to carry out a training flight during these courses, since it gives the participants a unique opportunity to be involved in a mission very close to reality.

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