



CENTRE FOR SECURITY COOPERATION

Cooperative and Security Environment with Focus on Arms Control Pillar

Open Skies Aerial Observation Course 2014

**24 February – 06 March 2014, Rakitje –
91st Airbase (Pleso), Croatia**

Organised in cooperation with the Verification Centre of the Ministry of Defence of Croatia, the Arms Control Unit of the Ministry of Defence of Hungary, the Defence Forces of Hungary, the Arms Control Verification of the National Defence of Canada and the Bundeswehr Verification Centre of Germany.

Introduction

The Open Skies Aerial Observation Course 2014 is a part of the traditional project activity carried out by the RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation in cooperation with the Verification Centre of the Ministry of Defence of Croatia, the Arms Control Unit of the Ministry of Defence of Hungary, the Defence Forces of Hungary, the Arms Control Verification of the National Defence of Canada and the Bundeswehr Verification Centre of Germany.

The purpose of the course was to train personnel from SEE countries to plan, organize and execute an Aerial Observation Mission based on the provisions of the Treaty on Open Skies (OST), thus increasing the administrative capacity in the field of security cooperation.

The objectives of the course were:

- to overview the specified elements of the OST, highlighting the most comprehensive and commonly followed rules and procedures of its execution;

- to provide the participants with information about the current situation in the development and implementation of the OST;
- to carry out a training Aerial Observation Mission, thus providing practical experience;
- to deepen contacts between representatives of national organizations and agencies engaged in the accomplishment of arms control and/or security- and confidence-building measures;
- to set an example of security cooperation on national, regional and international level.



Opening remarks of the leader of the Hungarian team, Maj Zsolt Zsivkó

The course participants (18) came from the following countries: Albania (2), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1), Croatia (2), Hungary (3), the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* (2), Montenegro (1), Norway (1), Poland (1), Portugal (2), Slovakia (1),

Slovenia (2). They were both senior and junior military men dealing with OST.

The course was conducted with the assistance of seven (7) lecturers: Maj Peter Jaeggi (CA), LtCol Tomislav Kaštelan (HR), Maj Zsolt Zsivkó (HU), LtCol Andreas Weller, Cpt Karsten Kubitz, SMSgt Michael Laufs and MSgt Stefan Gygas (DE).



First working day

Execution

The first phase (25 - 28 February) was conducted as a combination of presentations and a classroom exercise on a mission plan as a preparation for the accomplishment of the training observation flight. The presentations covered the provisions of the Treaty on Open Skies, the OSCE Decisions and Chairman's Statements augmenting the original text of the Treaty, notifications and the used formats, OS platforms and sensor suits used by the Member States, certification procedures, pre-flight inspection, film processing, duplication and procedures of access to information, mission planning, mission rundown and tasks related to receiving an OS mission, mission plan negotiation and preparation of the mission report.

During the classroom exercise, participants were divided into four teams and practiced preparation and review of a mission plan by conventional methods, under the supervision of the lecturers.



The arrival of the Hungarian plane crew, headed by Maj Péter Popelyák

The excellent lecturers covered all topics in a most efficient way and shared their personal experiences they gained during real OS missions.

In the second week (3 - 5 March), the activities were carried out in compliance with the OST and with close similarity to the time schedule of a real OS mission. This phase included the training in point of entry (POE) procedure, real life meteorological and ATC briefings, pre-flight inspection, mission plan negotiation and mission plan review, preparation for the observation flight, observation flight, development of the aerial photographs, preparation and signature of the mission report.

The participants were provided with full access and in small groups were given detailed explanation of the different computer systems used by Canada, Croatia, Germany and Hungary for the mission planning, mission plan and flight data verification. Also, the Hungarian AN-26 aircraft and the installed observation system were presented in detail by the Hungarian OS team. During the training flight, participants practiced performing their duties, both as members of the observation and escort teams.

The participants had a chance to touch the equipment of film processing, analysis and duplication, take part in the development of the aerial photographs taken during the observation flight and examine the results.

Conclusion



Work on board

According to experts' and participants' assessments provided at the end of the event, the Course proved to be successful and it achieved all of the objectives. Highly professional lectures and their personal experience attracted participants' attention and generated open discussion on all aspects of the OST. DE suggested during the final evaluation meeting: it would be useful to set up the Preliminary Meeting earlier, possibly even in the final months of the previous year. According to CA it would be worthwhile to invite participants from more countries, i.e. the Baltic states, and to provide the participants with relevant materials, documents at the start of the Course. At the same time, the training observation flight increased participants' motivation and significantly contributed to the learning process. Participants 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 these two weeks, which they can use in their current or future positions.



Group photo taken directly after the landing

Countries considering accession to the Treaty in the future can rely on the knowledge of their new experts who received the training at our Course.

RACVIAC has been organizing courses on the OST since 2002, and it is recommended to continue the successful series of courses at least every two years, to the benefit of the SEE region. Therefore, as one of the conclusions, the next course is scheduled for 2015. 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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* *Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.*