



HEADQUARTERS ALLIED AIR COMMAND

D-66877 Ramstein-Miesenbach, Germany



Ramstein Flag 24 - The details

NATO is an essential pillar of stability in an unpredictable world. Our military posture is defensive in nature. Our aim is not to provoke conflict, but to prevent conflict and to preserve the peace. NATO does not seek confrontation, but we will not compromise on the principles on which the Alliance and security across the Euro-Atlantic area rest. We continue to adapt to ensure that our deterrence and defence posture remains credible, coherent, and resilient. We continue to strengthen and regularly exercise our ability to rapidly reinforce any Ally that comes under threat, from any direction.

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, there has been an increased use of missiles, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and combat aircraft close to the borders of NATO nations. This increases the air and missile threat to NATO territory and populations, primarily due to miscalculation or loss of guidance or control.

Fully committed to our values and our mission, NATO Allied Air Command along with Hellenic Air Force, will conduct the first iteration of a 'Flag' series exercise, as a clear demonstration of Alliance determination and capacity to implement and execute the 'Deter and Defend' concept across the Euro-Atlantic area nations.

Now more than ever, it is important that exercises like Ramstein Flag 24 (RAFL24) provide Allied units the opportunity to practise NATO Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) in a realistic multi-domain scenario.

The concept behind creating exercise Ramstein Flag (RAFL)

RAFL is Allied Air Command's newest exercise series, building on theory and academia to provide a sophisticated multi-domain tactical level live-fly exercise that includes realistic problem sets in a complex operational environment. Combining the synthetic training environment, RAFL offers a unique opportunity for the Alliance to exercise Counter Anti-Access/Area Denial (C-A2/AD) and Integrated Air and Missile Defence (IAMD) tactics, techniques and procedures.

In 2025, there will be a further RAFL live exercise hosted by the Royal Netherlands Air Force, as Allied Air Command continuously refines tactics, training and procedures to ensure the most robust integration leading to stronger deterrence.

Why are we exercising?

RAFL 24 is a live-fly multi-domain exercise that integrates Allied air, land, maritime, space and cyber under NATO command and control. The main objective of RAFL24 is to strengthen cooperation, interoperability, and integration and to demonstrate NATO's resolve, commitment and ability to deter potential adversaries and defend the Alliance through multi-domain operation. Additionally, demonstrating NATO's C-A2/AD and IAMD capability and contributing to the increased collective defence posture.

Following the Weapons and Tactics conference in 2023, it was decided to further exercise NATO's deterrence and defence with concepts derived during the conference. Messaging for RAFL series exercise could be connected to future WEPTACs messaging as well.

The reason for a 'Flag Series' exercise

Flag exercises date back to 1975, through a need to create a new programme to provide realistic training against a realistic threat to test hardware and tactics. So out of Nellis Air Force Base exercise Red Flag was born. Red Flag paved a pathway to a radically new type of fighter training developed to help the United Air Force to "train as it fights." The concept of "train as we fight" is now well established also in NATO and Allied exercises.

In general, Red Flag exercises are air combat exercises conducted with multiple scenarios designed to provide realistic combat settings. Based on traditional designations of red ie. enemy and blue ie. friendly, air forces are distinguished into those simulating Air Defence assets that are engaging offensive or adversary assets.

The U.S.-led exercise Red Flag is the U.S. Air Force's premier air combat training exercise, held primarily at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada. It involves participants from the U.S. and allied air forces, providing them with realistic training in a complex, contested environment. The exercise aims to simulate the first 10 combat missions that a fighter pilot might experience.

International examples of Flag Series exercise are Israel-led exercise Blue Flag or Canada-led exercise Maple Flag.

NATO AIRCOM has now adopted the Flag principle for its main training event – the first edition is taking place out of Greece with participation of more than 140 fighter and enabler aircraft from 13 Allies.

Missions being conducted during RAFL24

RAFL24 will enable the Alliance to exercise and refine Counter Anti-Access/Area Denial (C-A2/AD) and Integrated Air and Missile Defence (IAMD) tactics, techniques and procedures. The design of RAFL24 will also allow for NATO Nations to execute IAMD and Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) strategies. A highly responsive, robust, time-critical and persistent capability that ensures NATO protects populations, territories and forces against any ballistic missile threats

General James B. Hecker, Commander Allied Air Command stated that "as geopolitical tensions continue to evolve, so too must NATO's exercise design. Ramstein Flag signifies the future of NATO exercises, focusing on current and future threats. Along with concepts developed during the Weapons and Tactics Conference, ongoing work with our Allies and Partners as well as our 'Lessons Learned' program, we will execute improved tactics, more robust integration leading to stronger deterrence."

The activities are conducted in compliance with international laws and standards. It is a clear expression of NATO's commitment to readiness which enhances and promotes regional security and stability.

How the flying activity be controlled during RAFL24

During Ramstein Flag, NATO's CAOC at Torrejón, Spain oversees and coordinates exercise air activities with the Hellenic Air Force Control and Reporting Centre. The flying programme has been pre-planned; an Air Tasking Order – featuring all flight activities and aircraft – has been prepared for every day of the RAFL 24 exercise.

An exercise control cell and national representatives will be in charge of tactical decision-making e.g. go-no-go of take-offs and landings during the flying days.

All RAFL24 air activity will take place in reserved and temporarily segregated airspace. Security during flying is a priority during any military exercise involving live flying activity.