

Exercise Iniochos 2018

“Sound of freedom” echos over Greece



At the Andravida Air Base, home of the 117th Combat Wing situated on the western coastline of Greece, the FWS or SOT (*Scholeio Oplon Taktikis*) was founded in 1976 as a training centre to provide advanced operational flight training to Greek pilots in aerial combat. The Air Tactics Centre or KEAT (*Kentro Aeropirikis Taktikis*) was created in 1983 and the FWS was incorporated into this new centre, which is now a part of the 117th Combat Wing. The first training course was organised in 1976 and was focused on interception tactics and for, pilots flying the F-4E, F-5E and F-1CG.

Apart from training, the FWS has also designed a three-week helicopter course, of which, the first week is mostly academic and the next two weeks used for practical training. The course focuses on imparting high quality training to crews in complex airborne and ground threat situations.

The Hellenic FWS is responsible for advanced operational flight training during tactical air operations; use of weapons and electronic warfare systems in realistic threat environment; academic training on weapon systems (electronic warfare, air-to-air and air-to-surface tactics); planning and observing test and evaluation of air tactics; supporting small and medium scale exercises of the HAF with specialised personnel; testing of weaponry and electronic warfare systems and supporting flight test programmes.

Conceived in the 1980s, *Iniochos* was first established as an annual Hellenic Air Force small scale air warfare exercise to provide advanced training, in planning and conducting Composite Air Operations (CAMAQ). In 2013, the HAF added some operations to Exercise *Iniochos* such as developing interoperability and standardisation for HAF units and allied nations; integration of tactics, techniques and procedures in particular air-land and air-sea operations; use of legacy and modern assets and preparing air crews for future battlefield in a hostile environment.

In 2014, a new concept was introduced, being a medium scale INVITEX exercise, bringing together hundreds of participants at one airfield. The concept focused on face-to-face planning, briefing and debriefing with the opportunity to cooperate and exchange ideas and information about tactics between participants with different levels of experience. It was designed to test all aspects of interoperability during high tempo of operations (intense battle rhythm), with maximum use of limited air assets. Pilots were exposed to multiple threat environments such as anti-access area denial, with the use of long range surface-to-air defence systems, 3rd generation *Red Air* aircraft and TBM (Theatre Ballistic Missiles). During the operations, the aircraft used the Athens Flight Information Region, a specified region of Athens airspace in which a flight information service is provided.

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From 12 to 23 March 2018, the Hellenic Air Force hosted this medium-sized multinational Exercise *Iniochos 2018* at base of the 117 Combat Wing in Andravida, home of the Greek Phantoms. The fourth edition of Exercise *Iniochos* had six participating countries including NATO partners and from the Gulf.

The exercise was divided into three phases, with phase one dedicated to organisation/ preparation, phase two focussing on

deployment of all participants to Andravida AB and phase three showcasing the LIVEX/ Execution Phase. With the deployment of around 76 aircraft, the exercise witnessed participation from Hellenic Air Force, Army, Navy and Special Operations forces, Cyprus National Guard, Italian Air Force, Royal Air Force, United Arab Emirates and the United States of America. The Israeli Air Force joined in later with four F-16Cs on 19 March and flew one mission while the Cyprus National Guard participated with an AW-139 SAR helicopter. With nine operational flying days and more than 1000 sorties flown in thirty waves with missions in the morning, afternoon and some in the evening, the Exercise certainly witnessed much action !

Apart from the Air Force, the Greek Navy and Army also took part in the exercise, with the Navy conducting missions in Northern and Central parts of the Aegean Sea with the support of some ten vessels, including four frigates. The Army's POLIFIMOS exercise was completed with the help of tanks and armoured vehicles, some twenty helicopters and nine special operation teams.

Vincent Martens

The author would like to thank the Greek Air Force's press office and the Andravida Base Commander.



A Greek Mirage 2000BG just moments before touch down