

complete makeover. All the concrete-paved taxiways, the flightline and the runway have been taken up and replaced by asphalt.

During the exercise, Graf Ignatievo was used exclusively for fighter and helicopter operations. Five Swedish Recce Viggens and three Romanian Lancer-Cs operated alongside the Bulgarian MiG-21s and MiG-29s from the south-side flightline. Parked at several dispersals on the south side of the runway were four Bulgarian Su-25s and two Su-22s deployed from the 22nd Iztrebitelno-Bombardirovachna at Bezmer air base in Bulgaria.

The shelter area on the north side of the base was used exclusively for parking helicopters, which included three Austrian and one Italian Agusta Bell AB 212, two Slovenian Bell 412s, two Hungarian Mi-8s, a Slovak Mi-17, a Swiss Super Puma and two Romanian SOCAT upgraded Pumas. The Helicopter Combat Support Squadron 4 (HC-4) *Black Stallions*, based at NAS Sigonella, sent three US Navy MH-53Es, while four Bulgarian Mi-17s and Mi-24s (two of each) operated separately from a platform at the west end of the runway.

At Krumovo airport, a joint civil/military airfield, both the parking ramp and the runway have been renewed. Landing lights, a new fence, a railway crossing and a newly-paved access road to the civil terminal have been installed. The civilian ramp at Krumovo was used exclusively for transport aircraft, which used the airfield to transport people to and from the Dutch field hospital or the nearby mock UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) camp. The military side of Krumovo south of the runway houses 24 VAB (Vertolet'nyi Aviatsiya Base, helicopter aviation base).

The renovation was an impressive achievement, considering that work at both bases only began at the end of May 2001, and that the entire project was completed in a record time of three and a half months by the Stara Zagora-based company, Putstroy Engineering. Many exercise participants who had visited Bulgaria during the preparation phase were impressed to see that all the work had been completed on time.

### The Exercise

The overall aim of this exercise is to allow NATO and the partner nations to practise and refine their interoperability in support of Peace Support Operations (PSO) and to assess the capabilities offered by partner forces.



The four A-10As from the 81st FS based at Spangdahlem AB, Germany, were kept on stand-by at Graf Ignatievo air base for nearly a week after the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington, awaiting possible orders to be deployed in the fight against terrorism. MARNIX SDF/MIAS



Above: The Romania-based CK00 exercise saw Pumas perform in the medevac and air transportation role. In 2001, because recently upgraded SOCAT models were used, close air support and force protection tasks could be added to the roles undertaken by the two helicopters of this type in the exercise. MARNIX SDF/MIAS

Below: The Grazzanise-based 9<sup>o</sup> Stormo Francesco Baracca and its 609<sup>o</sup> Squadriglia Collegamenti e Soccorso sent host-equipped Agusta Bell AB 212AM MMB1160 '9-16' to CK'01. MARNIX SDF/MIAS



Participants learn NATO standard procedures and terminology for communications, logistics, planning and safety.

Through a series of conferences and workshops which began as far back as October 2000, the participating units prepared themselves gradually, first by training trainers, who then passed on their knowledge to individual countries in preparation for the exercise.

The official PIP workshop programme offers a selection of courses which can be used to construct a programme aimed at specific PSO exercises. The general aims are approved by COMAFSOUTH (Commander Air Forces South), and with the input of the individual countries participating, a final scenario is configured. Just before the LIVEX (live exercise) kicked off, a final two-day workshop programme acted as a 'last check' for the entire training part of the exercise.

The first day started with a general exercise briefing for all participants, after which the aircrews and Air Operations Center (AOC) staff were briefed on air control procedures, and the land forces were instructed on the planned land ops. Then just as the first working day was about to end, the news of the terrible events in the USA reached Bulgaria.

Apart from the disbelief and the immense shock caused by the attacks on September 11, there was great uncertainty over whether the exercise would continue. Since the Americans had contributed heavily with four A-10s, three MH-53s and more than 150 ground troops (including special forces from the Army, USMC, USAF and ANG), their departure would have a serious impact - one which would not only hit the ground operations but would also