



Austria - AB 212 (above)

A regular participant in Co-operative Key is the Austrian air force, with Agusta-Bell AB 212s from Hubschrauber Fliegerregiment 1 based at Langenlebarn. Until the 2002 exercise the Austrians sent several Twin Hueys to operate in the medevac and CSAR roles. In 2002 the Österreichische Luftstreitkräfte was gearing up for the process of equipping with the Sikorsky S-70 Black Hawk. Several experienced personnel were on a course in the US, learning to fly the new helicopter. The first crew began training in July 2002 at Sikorsky's plant at Stratford, Connecticut. Consequently, the Austrians did not participate in CK'02.

Italy - AB 212 (below)

The Italian air force employed its hoist-equipped Agusta-Bell AB 212AMs for the first time during CK'01 in Bulgaria, where they operated alongside the Austrian Twin Hueys. During CK'01, a typical scenario involved the medical evacuation of wounded civilians on the ground to a nearby field hospital. Before the ground troops had established their positions, Close Air Support (CAS) was called in to assist in suppressing and eliminating enemy forces. USAF A-10 Thunderbolts and Bulgarian Su-25K 'Frogfoots' provided the necessary CAS during the exercise, while Bulgarian Mi-24 'Hind' gunships flew over the targets in support of the transport or medevac helicopters, ensuring their safe arrival. As soon as the area was secured, a medical facility was established to give initial treatment to the injured. Medevac helicopters, like the Hungarian Mi-17s and the AB 212AMs from the Grazzanese-based 9^a Stormo 'Francesco Baracca' and its 609^a Squadriglia Collegamenti e Soccorso, took the wounded and flew them out to the field hospital at Krumovo.

During CK'02 in France, refined but still unclassified CSAR tactics and procedures were practised and employed, as were more regular Search and Rescue (SAR) operations. For these purposes a single Aeronautica Militare AB 212AM was present at Saint-Dizier, this time belonging to the 651^a Squadriglia Collegamenti e Soccorso of the 51^a Stormo.



Switzerland - AS 332M (above)

The Force Offering by the Troop Contributing Nations (TCNs) at Co-operative Key 2002 at Saint-Dizier, France, amounted to 29 fighters, 12 transport aircraft, 20 helicopters and one French AWACS, nearly reaching the maximum force permitted by the size of the air base. The Schweizer Luftwaffe sent in a brand new TH89 Cougar, piloted by Captain Ines Widmer, one of several female helicopter pilots in the Swiss Air Force. It only had 60 hours on the clock when it arrived for the exercise. The Swiss had first participated in Co-operative Key exercise during CK'01 at Graf Ignatievo, providing a TH89 Super Puma. (Note that the numerical suffix corresponds to the fiscal year in which the aircraft were ordered.)

The culmination of the CK'02 combat rescue missions was CSAR Task Force 6 flown on 3 October. It was a classic downed fighter aircraft scenario with two survivors (one Swedish and one American), and was led by two French Pumas. Two Romanian SOCAT gunships served as helicopter escorts, while a Swiss Cougar served as a mobile surgical centre. Mission Lead and Escort was provided by four USAF A-10s, supported by a USAF AC-130H Gunship which provided the initial on-scene commander. A French E-3F AWACS served as Airborne Mission Coordinator.

