

# Anatolian Eagle Air Warfare Training: A Valuable Turkish Contribution to NATO, the United States, and the World

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## Brief Analysis

**A**natolian Eagle is one of the largest and most complex joint air force exercises in the world, paralleled only by Red Flag, held periodically at Nevada's Nellis Air Force Base, and the annual Maple Flag exercise in Canada. The Turkish Air Force (TUAF) is now preparing for the multinational leg of the next Anatolian Eagle, scheduled to take place September 12-23. Anatolian Eagle has obvious public relations value for Turkey and its air force as hosts of the event. Moreover, as an exercise mimicking realistic aerial war minutes away from the U.S. forces, it also serves as an important component of U.S.-Turkish military cooperation.

## Background

Turkey initiated Anatolian Eagle in 2001 to simulate air warfare scenarios in the context of national and multinational training (simulations of tactical firing and electronic warfare were initially based on the Red Flag model). The task of hosting Anatolian Eagle is borne by the 3rd Main Turkish Jet Base in Konya. This base, which sits on the periphery of the vast Konya plain in Central Anatolia -- a sparsely populated flat basin -- was an ideal choice for an exercise of this magnitude.

The extensive training area for Anatolian Eagle was established between 1998 and 2001. It is 100 miles in length and 95 miles in width, with five separate smaller zones ranging between 1.5 and 3.2 square nautical miles. The grounds consist of a command and control center, a main briefing auditorium, and four separate buildings for the participant groups known respectively as the White, Blue 1, Blue 2, and Red Forces.

The White Forces, composed of TUAF personnel and allied observers, are in charge of planning; they develop training and intelligence scenarios, establish levels of training, plan air tasking orders, monitor real-time executed training, and direct training from the ground. The Blue Forces are composed of allied air forces as well as Turkish army and naval units. The Red Forces are TUAF units: one squadron of F-16 and F-5/2000 flyers along with a surface-to-air missile unit.

Anatolian Eagle provides the most accurate simulated war environment possible. Its training grounds are equipped with the latest technology, including an electronic warfare area; real-time data concerning aircraft movement is relayed to ground control through air combat maneuvering instrumentation pods. Anatolian Eagle enables the TUAF

to introduce and assess new weapons systems, while testing the knowledge and capability of participants by presenting various kinds of surface-to-air threats.

Training sessions, two weeks in duration, are held four times a year: one for Turkish forces and three with multinational participation. Since the beginning of 2001, eight training sessions have been completed, with the participation of 461 aircraft and 4,275 personnel.

The success of Anatolian Eagle is apparent in the fact that since its inception, the number of participants in the exercise has increased dramatically. While two countries (the United States and Israel) and sixteen aircraft joined Turkey in the first exercise in 2001, other countries, including Germany (2003), the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (2002), Pakistan (2004), and Jordan (2004), have since participated in the multinational training sessions. (Israel also participated in 2003 and 2004, while the United States has participated in all sessions. All participating countries pay fees toward the total cost of Anatolian Eagle.) This year, the air forces of Turkey, France, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United States will participate; the United Kingdom, Germany, Korea, and UAE will join as observers.

### The Value of Anatolian Eagle

The TUAFAF hosted national and multinational training exercises prior to Anatolian Eagle's inception. But this event provides a diverse playing field unequalled in other joint force activities. Indeed, input from other countries contributes to the success of the exercise. Turkey and its armed forces take pride in the fact that Anatolian Eagle makes a valuable contribution to international cooperation, particularly among Western countries.

Europe. In the early 1990s, surrounded by changing threat landscapes, most European countries reduced defense spending, downsized their armed force capacities, and introduced narrow airspace and environmental restrictions on military training exercises. In the context of this diminished capacity, Anatolian Eagle provides European militaries with the kind of training ground that they can no longer maintain independently.

NATO. Turkey regards NATO, along with the UN, as the vital pact for the maintenance of international peace and order. As one of the unique air-to-air, air-to-ground, and electronic warfare training exercises in the world, Anatolian Eagle is the only event of its kind in the region with both NATO and non-NATO participants; the exercise provides NATO-standard training (allowing non-NATO countries to study NATO benchmarks) while promoting interoperability among forces.

Because of the importance Turkey attaches to NATO, it has offered Anatolian Eagle, a nationally funded exercise, to NATO as a Tactical Air Center of Excellence. This offer provides an invaluable opportunity for NATO member forces to train together for future operations, improve interoperability, test and develop doctrine, and validate operational concepts. Not least, Anatolian Eagle nurtures positive and productive dialogue among the air forces of NATO countries.

The United States. With its new global priorities, the United States has a significant force projection -- particularly air force units -- on Turkey's periphery, including in Europe, Central Asia, and Iraq. Given the demonstrated importance of high-quality air power in these areas since Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, air force training exercises have taken on new significance. The United States has supported Anatolian Eagle by participating in each training session with eight to ten aircraft and 150 personnel. Such cooperation shows that despite the occasional strains in U.S.-Turkish military relations, the two countries continue to pursue mutual interests.

During the recent annual convention of the American Turkish Council in Washington, representatives of both countries elaborated substantially on the need for improving military ties as the backbone of U.S.-Turkish relations. Exercises such as Anatolian Eagle give the U.S.-Turkish military partnership a solid, rhythmic agenda. As they seek other avenues of cooperation in the post-Iraq war period, Washington and Ankara have good reason to promote

Anatolian Eagle.

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