

Multinational Special Aviation Programme (MSAP)

Letter of Intent ¹ signed	Memorandum of Understanding ² signed	Academic training	Flight training
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Participants



What is MSAP?

The Multinational Special Aviation Programme (MSAP), is a training facility for helicopter crews who conduct the insertion and extraction of Special Operations Forces. The facility, located in Zadar, Croatia, officially opened on 11 December 2019.

Multinational effort

The MSAP High Visibility Project³ brings together four Eastern European Allies – Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, and Slovenia, with Croatia acting as the host nation. As all of the participating Allies were assigned NATO targets to establish Special Operations aviation units with vertical lift

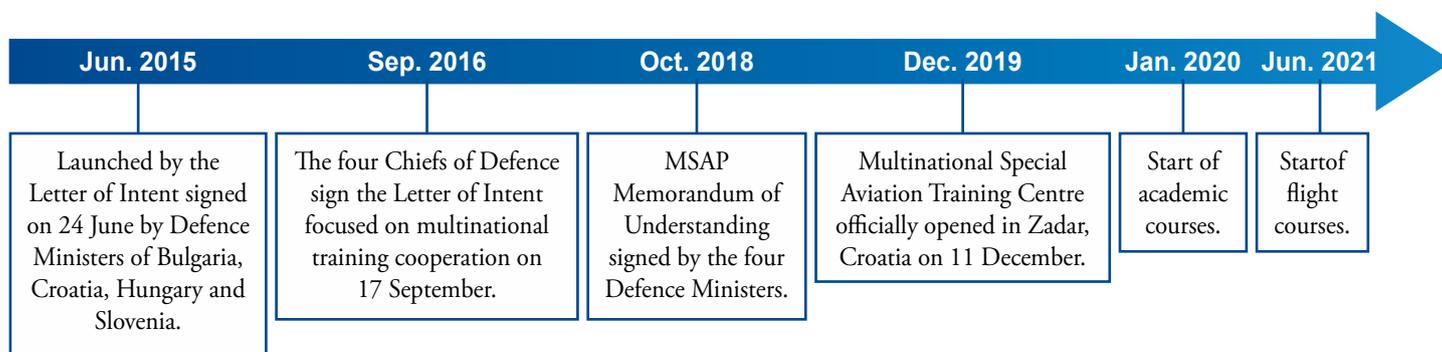


Demonstration of helicopter crew training during the official opening on 11 December, 2019.

capabilities by 2025, they made the decision to work together to fulfil those targets.

The initiative was launched by four Allies with a Letter of Intent on multinational cooperation for the provision of a Special Operations Air Task Unit⁴, signed in June 2015 by their Defence Ministers. The training component was identified as the most promising opportunity for cooperation, and a training-specific agreement was signed by their Chiefs of Defence in September 2016. Finally, in October 2018, the four Allied Defence Ministers signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish MSAP.

1 Initial non-binding document outlining participants' will to explore the area in question further.
 2 Legally binding document specifying details of cooperation.
 3 Multinational initiative tailored to address key capability areas, usually launched at Defence Ministers' level.
 4 The Special Operations Forces Air Task Unit is dedicated to airlifting Special Forces so that they can conduct their operations.



Why is it important?

Special Operations Forces are highly trained soldiers who conduct a broad range of operational scenarios. MSAP is an important and unique facility enabling Special Operations Forces aviation crews to train together in one place. As such, it strengthens interoperability, helps increase readiness, and enhances NATO's deterrence and defence.

As Special Operations Forces are small, elite units, there are challenges in providing the necessary training in an economical manner. By pooling their resources, MSAP enables the participating Allies to provide cost-effective, specialist training on one site. By applying NATO standards, MSAP will increase interoperability among NATO Allies and partners.

How does it work?

In 2020, the centre in Zadar started with academic training, and in 2021, flight training began. Over time, MSAP will further expand its training opportunities. MSAP's location, close to mountains, the sea, and surrounding islands, offers excellent conditions for versatile helicopter training.

The facility is funded and staffed equally by the four participants. In addition, host nation Croatia provides the necessary infrastructure. Each participant has a right to use MSAP in proportion to its financial contributions and contributions in kind.

MSAP is supported by the NATO Special Operations Headquarters in Mons, Belgium, and two mentor nations – Poland and the United States.

Did you know?

1. MSAP is one of three High Visibility Projects covering the area of Special Operations Forces. The other two are sister projects are C-SOCC (Composite Special Operations Component Command) and R-SOCC (Regional Special Operations Component Command).
2. The official opening of MSAP in December 2019 was hosted by the Croatian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, and attended by Defence Ministers of the other three participating Allies, as well as the Croatian Armed Forces' Chief of General Staff, the NATO Assistant Secretary General for Defence Investment, and the Commander of the NATO Special Operations Headquarters.
3. The four Allies will continue to explore the feasibility of similar multinational arrangements in other areas essential for the provision of Special Operations aviation units, such as acquisition, logistical support, or infrastructure.

