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ARMY HELO-DECK OPERATIONS TRAINING

The Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) has just completed a period of training with the assistance of a Belgian Navy Mobile Training Team (MTT) aimed at further preparing elements of the Maritime Squadron and Air Wing for helicopter operations from AFM patrol vessel P61's flight deck .

This follows contacts between the Belgian Armed Forces and the AFM which have, in the past, seen Air Wing technical personnel undergo on-the-job training in Belgium. These contacts have also been facilitated by the invaluable assistance of the Belgian Ambassador to Malta, H.E. Mt Thomas Baekelandt.

The value of such training is based upon the fact that not only does the Belgian Navy operate Alouette III helicopters very similar to those in AFM service, but does so from the flight deck aboard the auxiliary vessel BMS GODETIA which deck is very similar in dimensions to that of P61.

Two Belgian Navy officers, Lieutenant Commander Walter Van Gool and Lieutenant Stefan Coens formed the training team. The training provided included practical flight training for two AFM helicopter instructor pilots as well as detailed assistance in the most appropriate manner in which to organise the crew of the receiving vessel in order to provide for the safety of the crews, the vessel and the aircraft during this difficult manoeuvre.

The training culminated in a practical session which saw an AFM ALIII helicopter conducting numerous dummy approaches aboard P61 which approaches were terminated just short of actual landings. These approaches have proved that the basic crew competencies are all in place and provide the platform for further activities designed to achieve a flight-operations capability by the end of 2007.

This effort follows earlier training conducted onboard French and German Navy assets in Maltese territorial waters.

In order to reach this aim, the AFM will now embark on a number of local and overseas technical and training activities through the Italian Military Mission in Malta, so as to ensure the full compliance of both crews and equipment with the stringent standards set out for such operations.

Such capability will enable the AFM to maximise the use of existing resources thus gaining greater effectiveness and range whilst engaged in maritime operations.

(ENDS)



PICTURE & CAPTION: Air Wing AFM's Alouette helicopter during deck-landing training onboard P-61. (Pic Credit – AFM)

HI-RESOLUTION PIC URL WEBLINK AT:
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