

## TEXT 4

### **Air Force**

The air force, together with the ground forces, represents the main combat element of any armed forces. The primary mission of the air force is to ensure sovereignty of the national airspace.

The air force has to be built up so that it may gradually achieve interoperability with an integrated system of air defence and, at the same time, to be able to perform other missions enhancing operational capabilities of ground forces of both the coalition and non-coalition forces as well as the capabilities of intended task forces of own ground forces.

The main parts of the air force usually are tactical, rotary-wing and military transport air force. It may also include air defence missile elements and command, control, communication, reconnaissance and warning units.

The air force comprises support and command elements, and combat elements – air bases and surface-to-air missile units.

The air force also performs peacetime tasks falling under national responsibility such as military SAR operations (search for and rescue of crews in distress), transportation of government officials, etc.

To provide required capabilities allowing forces to be airlifted to their assigned area of operation in a timely manner and to be sustained there, an air force should have at its disposal transport aircraft of an adequate capacity. In this respect, it is necessary to resolve the issue of their operation. An air force not having a large-capacity transport aircraft then relays on the good will of the allies or, preferably, needs to hire a commercial company for strategic airlift operations.

In peacetime the air force is to be able to ensure:

- Participation in NATINADS (NATO Integrated Air Defence System);
- Air defence of important objects and areas on the territory of the state (depending on the level of possible non-military threats, e.g. terrorism, etc.);
- Airlift of personnel and material;
- Transport of government officials and constitutional representatives;
- Search and rescue service;
- Military air rescue service in benefit of the integrated rescue system;
- Air reconnaissance;
- Air traffic control of the air force and its co-ordination with the civilian air traffic control;
- Topographic air photography and reconnaissance of the territory.

During a crisis the air force should be able to react rapidly to the arising situation, and use its assigned forces and means to perform its missions within the allied system as well as to perform its national tasks.

Enhancement of total operational capabilities of the air force requires procurement of new equipment as well as substantial upgrade of the existing one.