



Safety in wide-ranging military exercises

16 November 2020



LARA database, used for coordination between ENAIRe and the Air Force.

Traffic Management Division
(ASM/FUA Department)

Civil-Military Coordination
Management

In order to carry out their missions, the Armed Forces need to be sufficiently equipped and trained. Their training plans include different types of exercises that, by simulating combat situations, allow crews to train on procedures, tactics and manoeuvres, thus enabling units to achieve and maintain the operational level of readiness that is required of them.



Among the different types of exercises, the ones that are larger and require more preparation, coordination and logistics are the so-called "wide-ranging military exercises".

Wide-ranging military exercises

Their characteristics and scopes are different: for example, "Eagle Eye" is a national exercise involving the Army, Navy and Air Force, while the TLP (Tactical Leadership Program) is an international course involving pilots from different NATO countries.

In the case of aerial exercises, ensuring the safety of both military and civilian operations requires all the parties involved to coordinate as effectively as possible to determine how the conduct of the aerial military flights will affect commercial aviation. To ensure that all the necessary aspects are taken into account during the

coordination process, Eurocontrol is working to standardise the planning processes.

To this end, it has included a description of the planning and tasks that have to be undertaken in Annex 13 of the "Airspace Management Handbook" (ASM Handbook).

ENAIRe is coordinating with the Air Force to transfer this planning to the national procedures applicable to strategic, pre-tactical and tactical areas. The goal is to ensure that the different planning phases involve all the stakeholders and are allotted the necessary time.

ENAIRE, through the affected regions that analyse the operational implications, **is involved in defining the exercise scenario**, which requires striking a balance between the proper scenario to conduct the exercise, complying with the military objectives set and considering the effects that this activity could have on traffic flows and on the capacity of the affected sectors. All of this must be done while taking safety into account at all times, studying how operational changes can be minimised for both crews and air traffic controllers.

The result of this process is the “**coordinated exercise scenario**”. The tasks of drawing up specific operational documentation, doing a safety analysis, updating the database, informing EUROCONTROL, publishing the AIP, publishing the NOTAMs, and more, then begin.

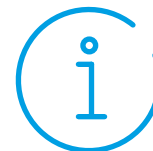
Preparing specific operational documentation isn't always necessary, since not all military exercises involve significant changes to the usual ATC operations in the affected units. The criticality of the military activity in question is also a factor, since an exercise with a small number of Spanish fighter jets isn't the same as an international military exercise with 20 participants. This determines the **need to set aside certain areas of the exercise in cases of adverse weather conditions** in the vicinity, which, in this type of activity, is the most common contingency and can pose a real hazard. This protection is provided by **creating a bubble around the area** such that, depending on the location where adverse weather is expected, the flight plans of the traffic near the area where the military activity is taking place and that, due to poor weather, could suffer deviations in their flight paths, can be blocked.

The next step is to **publish all the relevant information for airspace users**. EUROCONTROL task forces are working on detailing the information that should be included in the aeronautical publication for this type of exercise. This information is published by AIRAC cycle, usually in an AIP

Supplement, and includes the areas that will be required, specifying their lateral and vertical limits, and anticipates how ATC will be impacted on the days of the exercise. This information is sent to EUROCONTROL so that it can update its database and define the ASM tools that are necessary to manage the activity correctly, and which must also be incorporated into its systems.

All of these modifications are imported into the **LARA database**, a EUROCONTROL tool **used by ENAIRE and the Air Force for civil-military coordination**. The day before the operation, using this tool, the AUP/UUP (Airspace Use Plan/Updated Airspace Use Plan) is prepared. This document, containing all the information on reserved areas, routes available and applicable restrictions, is sent to EUROCONTROL daily and determines whether its systems accept or reject the flight plans filed by airlines. **Thirty days before the start of the activity, NOTAMs are published** advising users of the specific times when the areas specified in the Supplement will be used. This information is also taken into account when preparing the AUP/UUP.

On the day of the exercise, the military units hold a **briefing**, and the controllers of the affected units, along with the **military controllers (ECAO) and the supervisors of the affected ACC, hold a joint briefing**. Once the activity starts, the corresponding areas are activated on the controllers' displays and the fighters leave their bases, controlled by their ECAO, normally as operational air traffic, toward the areas of activity. Any flight plan that passes through the areas and their vicinity, if adverse weather is forecast, is automatically rejected by EUROCONTROL systems. **Any setback is managed tactically** between controllers, supervisors, managers, ECAO and those responsible for military control centres, in order to ensure the safety of military and civil traffic at all times.



For more information:

[ERNIP Part 3 - ASM Eurocontrol Handbook Annex 13](#)

[LARA handbook](#)



Ensuring safety is the main objective of each and every phase of planning a wide-ranging military exercise.

Numerous safety barriers are set up to ensure that everything goes smoothly on the day of the operation.

On the day of the exercise, tactical coordination and the application of established procedures again work as mitigations to guarantee the safety of the operation in the event of an unexpected incident.