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## FACT SHEET

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### **846 NAVAL AIR SQUADRON SUPPORT TO ARRCADe FUSION 2015**

A detachment of 2 Merlin Mk3 helicopters, aircrew, engineers and support staff from 846 Naval Air Squadron (NAS) of the Commando Helicopter Force (CHF), based at Royal Naval Air Station (RNAS) Yeovilton in Somerset, UK have deployed to Lielvarde AFB in Latvia in support of Ex ARRCADe FUSION 15.

The detachment, commanded by Lieutenant Commander Richard Bartram Royal Navy, will provide a Command Support Flight capability to ARRC across Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia throughout the duration of Ex ARRCADe FUSION.

### **Background**

846 NAS was established in April 1943 at the Naval Air Station Quonset Point, Rhode Island, USA during WW2 and has seen operational service in Borneo, the Falklands War, the first Gulf War, Northern Ireland, Former Yugoslavia, Iraq and most recently, Afghanistan.

Following a brief period of stand down when the squadron converted from the Sea King Mk4 helicopter to the Merlin Mk3 helicopter, the squadron stood up on 1 October 2014 at RAF Benson before relocating to their spiritual home of RNAS Yeovilton in March 2015. 846 NAS has supported exercises both at sea and by land in the UK, Norway, Kenya, Morocco, Jordan and the USA and now, the Baltic States.

Despite the ability to support operational and exercise tasking on land, 846 NAS remains primarily an amphibious assault squadron, providing aviation lift to 3 Commando Brigade, Royal Marines, delivering troops from ship to shore. 846 NAS is trained and maintained at Very High Readiness (VHR) to deploy to any environment world-wide within a very short period.

### **846 NAS operate the Merlin Mk3**

The Merlin Mk3 is based on the Augusta Westland AW101 and is an advanced, medium support helicopters designed to operate in the most demanding environments. It is an all-weather, day and night, multi-role helicopter used in both tactical and strategic operational roles.

Its diverse range of cargo carried internally or underslung can include artillery, Land Rovers or light-strike vehicles and more than five tonnes of freight. The aircraft carries an impressive defensive-aids suite and can be fitted with up to 5 General Purpose Machine Guns

(GPMGs). Navigation at night is enhanced by display night-vision goggles and by the aircraft's multi-function turret, with forward-looking infrared. To increase the aircraft's range, the Merlin can be equipped with extended range fuel tanks. The spacious cabin can accommodate up to 24 fully-equipped combat troops and, when required, will convert to carry 16 stretchers for casualty evacuation or during humanitarian and disaster relief operations.

The Merlin Mk3 will shortly undergo a multi-million pound upgrade to the Mk4 standard. The upgrade will update the aircraft avionics, fit a folding main rotor head and tail and strengthen the undercarriage to allow the aircraft to operate at sea in the amphibious assault role, from the new Queen Elizabeth Class Aircraft Carriers of the Royal Navy.

### **Merlin Mk3 Key Facts**

Aircrew: 4 (2 x Pilots, 2 x Aircrewmen)

Max Speed: 167 Kts

Capacity: 24 x Combat Troops, 16 x Stretchers

Endurance: 3 Hours (without extended range tanks)

### **Key Quotes**

- "Arcade Fusion provides a chance to fly and train in a cold environment and we're happy to support the Army and a multinational NATO HQ any chance we can."

- Lieutenant Commander Richard Bartram Royal Navy

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