

BALTICA 2007 – Romanian QRA Detachment to Šiauliai Air Base in Lithuania

By LtCol Laurentiu Chirita, ROM AF
Romanian Detachment Commander "BALTICA 07"

On 31 October 2007 a Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) detachment from Romania comprised of 4 MiG-21, upgraded version, and a total staff of 67 completed their Air Policing mission at Šiauliai Air Base in Lithuania, dubbed "Operation BALTICA 07".



MiG-21 during night takeoff

Photos: Courtesy MOD Romania, Detachment to Šiauliai Air Base

Exactly three months after the Romanian Air Force had taken over NATO's Air Policing mission over Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia from the French MIRAGE detachment, LtCol Laurentiu Chirita passed on the symbolic key to the Baltic Air Space to his Portuguese successor, LtCol Paulino Honrado.

"Having been the commander of the Romanian QRA detachment was an honour for me," says LtCol Laurentiu Chirita, "this was the first time after joining NATO in 2004 that my country stationed fighter aircraft for an operational deployment abroad."

During the three months of their deployment the Romanians accumulated more than 240 flying hours in the interceptor role. In what was the thirteenth rotation of a NATO QRA at Šiauliai Air Base, the Romanian MiG-21 ensured security and sovereignty of the Baltic airspace. The Romanian aircrews and their ground support staff accomplished the mis-

sion most successfully and professionally. With the support from Host Nation Lithuania, they efficiently demonstrated their ability to meet NATO requirements and specifically the Romanian Air Force's capability to make a significant contribution to Alliance operations.

The Romanian Air Force's deployable unit has its home at Campia Turzii Air Base. Prior to their deployment the unit had been evaluated during national and NATO joint exercises. These tests confirmed that the MiG-21 QRA detachment is able to perform sustained operations in executing assigned missions.

NATO's Air Policing mission over Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania was launched on 29 March 2004 as the countries on the shores of the Baltic



Sea acceded to NATO. On 24 July 2007, the North Atlantic Council extended the mission through the end of 2011. Using NATO Air Policing assets from member nations ensures that a single standard is maintained for the Alliance airspace in its entirety. It also demonstrates NATO's resolution and integrated approach at ensuring security and territorial integrity of its members states' airspace.



Romanian MiG-21 Detachment at Šiauliai Air Base headed by its Commander LtCol Laurentiu Chirita (fifth pilot with helmet from the right)

