



EXERCISE ADVENT EXPRESS



ONE of the biggest NATO exercises ever held in Britain began when over 4000 Allied troops and equipment were flown into RAF Fairford, Oxfordshire, on November 26 1975. Exercise Advent Express, which involved a total of 7000 soldiers and airmen from five NATO countries, had begun.

Transport aircraft of four nations flew around the clock airlifting troops and equipment of the Allied Command Europe (ACE) Mobile Force from continental Europe for their first-ever exercise in Britain. The soldiers and airmen from Belgium, West Germany, Italy, United States and the United Kingdom lived day

and night on Salisbury Plain until the exercise finished on December 7.

Besides being an international fighting force, one of the primary missions of the ACE Mobile Force, created in 1960, is a political one, namely, to demonstrate NATO's solidarity in a crisis situation.

The exercise involved more than 100 offensive aircraft and 35 helicopters; the RAF content included Harriers, Phantoms and Jaguar strike aircraft, Puma and Wessex helicopters. Army Air Corps Westland/Aerospatiale Gazelle helicopters supported the ground forces. All these aircraft are powered by engines built by Rolls-Royce.

General Alexander M Haig, Supreme Allied Commander Europe, who visited the troops during the exercise, said that the aim of Advent Express was to practise land and air components of the ACE Mobile Force in deployment, deterrent and combat roles.

A Hercules aircraft from RAF Lyneham dropping supplies to the opposing force; five aircraft were used on the operation at five-minute intervals. Rolls-Royce

RAF Westland/Aerospatiale Puma helicopters, powered by two Turbomeca/Rolls-Royce Turmo gas turbines built at Leavesden, lifting off one-ton loads from the dropzone.
Rolls-Royce



UNITS TAKING PART

Allied Command Europe (ACE) Mobile Force

Belgian Forces

One parachute commando battalion group; one artillery battery (105mm how); one squadron (Mirage V), RNAS Yeovilton.

German forces

One wire troop of 9th Airborne Signal Battalion; one medical unit; LE Heeresflieger Regiment 30 (UH 1D); 432 Squadron (Fiat G91), RNAS Yeovilton.

Italian Forces

One artillery battery (105mm pack how); 28 Squadron (RF 104), RAF Conningsby.

United Kingdom

C Squadron Life Guards (force reconnaissance unit); B Squadron The Queen's Own Hussars (Chieftain); RHQ 19 Field Regiment Royal Artillery (force artillery headquarters); 13 Light Battery Royal Artillery (105mm light gun); 1st Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment; Signal Troop 30 Signal Regiment (force radio troop); The Logistic Support Battalion; 50 Movement Control Squadron Royal Corps of Transport; Force Air Support Cell (38 Group RAF); 72 Squadron RAF (Wessex), RAF Odiham (force helicopter unit); 1 Squadron RAF (Harrier), RAF Wittering; 38 Group RAF Tactical Communications Wing; 38 Group RAF Tactical Supply Wing.

United States Forces

1st (Airborne) Battalion 509 Infantry Combat Team; HQ Company; B Company 78 Engineer Battalion; One army aviation detachment (UH 1D); 48 Tactical Fighter Wing (F4E), RAF Lakenheath.

Opposing Force

16 Parachute Brigade; B Squadron 1 Royal Tank Regiment (Fox); Two squadrons 4/7 Royal Dragoon Guards (Chieftain); 41 Squadron RAF (Phantom FGR2), RAF Conningsby; 6 Squadron RAF (Jaguar), RAF Coltishall; 54 Squadron RAF (Jaguar), RAF Odiham; Hercules aircraft, RAF Lyneham; Units from 38 Group Tactical Communications Wing; Units from 38 Group Tactical Supply Wing; 33 Squadron (Puma), RAF Odiham.

Above right: Field preparation of an Army Air Corps Westland/Aerospatiale Gazelle (single RR-built Astazou) during the exercise. *Rolls-Royce*

Right: A Puma from 33 Sqn, RAF Odiham, co-operating with a British Army Chieftain tank. *Rolls-Royce*

