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MFG-5 fly out on 23rd June was a typical celebration for helicopter crews together. From different German helicopter units and from surrounding countries they gathered together for this event marking a new period for this German naval aviation unit. Since a long time they operate from the air base at Kiel-Holtenau but are now facing disclosure and more is to come caused by changing structure in near future.

MOVE TO NORDHOLZ

Actually the real fly out will be later on this year in October but duties will not be seized. Marinefliegergeschwader -5 was for years the Search and Rescue unit for the Coast of Germany of both North and Baltic Seas and the northern part of Schleswig Holstein. The squadron operated since 20-03-1975 a fleet of 22 Westland Mk.41 Sea King helicopters and 20 of these are still in active duty. First only guarding the West-German coastline and later on facing an area of responsibility extended with previous Eastern German coast line the Sea King did a lot of splendid work. Although very suitable in range MFG-5 deployed in better times Sea Kings on the island of Borkum, Helgoland and Sylt.

Later these permanent locations were reduced to only Helgoland (SAR10) in the North Sea and Warnemünde (SAR21) in the district of Rostock. Defence cuts changed the policy since 2007 to operate not permanently from these areas anymore but only during very bad weather conditions. Now that Kiel is up to for abandoning from military use the fleet of MFG-5 will be transferred to Nordholz to merge with MFG-3 in a new structure still the German Navy will held responsibility of SAR coverage in the Rostock district and no change in policy is expected about the stationing of a Sea King in near future.

As mentioned the 'fliegerhorst of Nordholz', currently hosting MFG-3 'Graf Zeppelin' will accept MFG-5's Sea King fleet from Kiel. Both units operate helicopters which are nominated for replacement however the actual situation is that the Lynx helicopters from MFG-3 and sea King helicopters from MFG-5 will have to soldier on until replacement is available. Some 30 NH-90 NFH (in Germany called 'Marine Hubschrauber 90 or MH-90) capable as multi role helicopter will take over duties from both units and a new unit will be formed. Based upon the requirements the helicopter will be able to perform ASW and ASuW missions as well as search and rescue and Special Ops Support operations mainly from naval ships such as the F125 frigates which are expected to enter service in 2015. The helicopters will be equipped for day and night operations and should be able to deal with adverse weather and severe ship motion conditions. During the last few years the program of delivery of the NH-90 was delayed as happened for other European countries likewise and the final replacement in time has somehow the character of a mystery. Requests to NHI industries comprised deliveries between 2015 and 2020. Until then Germany has to rely on both Lynx and Sea King helicopters for maritime tasks. In the prelude of changes at Nordholz there will be in coming October a reform of command.

MFG-5'S SEA KINGS STILL OF GREAT VALUE

After some 10 years operating in the primary SAR role it was decided that the Sea Kings would adopt a secondary role enabling the navy to deploy the helicopters in offensive role

such as attacking light surface forces with ability of launching Sea Skua anti-ship missiles and operating as a surveillance platform equipped with Sea Spray radar. The Sea King was given a capability for coastal defence. Also the Sea Kings were going to operate with German Special Forces for anti terror actions

This resulted in deployment over sea under multinational flag. For example during 1991 three MFG-5 Sea Kings were stationed in Bahrain and tasked with clearing Iraqi mines in the Persian Gulf. In 2004 aid was given after the Tsunami disaster in Asia and since 2008 the Sea Kings take their turn in EU-NAVFOR operation 'Atalanta' which is a multinational operation around 'the horn of Africa' near the Somali coasts as task force against piracy. Especially for this operation two Sea King examples were modified with night vision devices (NVD), infra-red camera and AIS which is an information system shared with ships and applying images. Two Sea Kings embark the 'Berlin' with one constantly on QRF and one in the hangar, both due to exposure at sea climate requiring intensive maintenance. The helicopters do have extra armour inside to counter machinegun bullets and for self protection a M3M heavy machinegun is mounted in the doorway.

They are tasked with ISR which means Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance and cooperate closely with Special Forces called 'kampfschwimmer' operating from the Sea Kings or with their fast speedboats. Amphibious operations are possible to threaten the pirates and the turn around time is short because the Sea King can take fuel while hovering alongside the ship which is equipped with special features for this. During operation Atalanta also Orions of MFG-3 were active so both units know each other very well. MFG-5 just returned home from the coast of Africa but the operation is stretched until 2014 and almost for sure the participation of Germany will still be an issue.

FLY-OUT DEMO

MFG-5 held its fly-out on June 23 for invited colleague SAR squadrons. In the spotlight was the special painted Sea King 89+55 with a scenery of sunset and sunrise symbolising farewell and new beginning which performed a demonstration flight above the Kiel Bay. On the black painted bottom in orange the words 'Goodbye Kiel' were painted with the same shade as the orange of the sky in the painting on the sideward fuselage.

Alongside helicopters of different German units the most interesting and attractive visitors were a Canadian air Force CH-146 Griffon, a Lithuanian Air force Mi-8MTV-1, a Polish Air Force Mi-14PL and a Dutch Lynx colleague flying his Lynx helicopter 'last Dutch Lynx Caribbean 2012 'Bunny Flight Ve5' in the last hours before retirement.

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