

NATO AWACS Surveillance Aircraft Support to the Counter ISIL Coalition



AIM: In view of the threat posed by ISIL, NATO is enhancing its contribution to the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL with AWACS surveillance aircraft. NATO's advanced Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft are supporting the Coalition's overall air picture by providing surveillance and situational awareness, thereby making the skies safer.

Since October 2016, NATO's AWACS aircraft have been supporting the Coalition with air surveillance and situational awareness. They do not coordinate Coalition air strikes or provide command and control for fighter aircraft. AWACS only fly over international airspace or over Turkey. AWACS can detect aircraft hundreds of kilometers away so they can monitor airspace in Iraq and Syria from inside Turkey.

This is an important contribution to the Counter-ISIL effort and a clear signal of NATO's determination to help fight terrorism. By providing AWACS support, NATO is demonstrating its resolve to tackle security challenges coming from the south.

AWACS - Airborne Warning and Control System Aircraft

NATO operates a fleet of 16 AWACS surveillance aircraft. They are currently the only military equipment that NATO owns itself as an Alliance. Derived from the Boeing 707, AWACS can provide air surveillance, command and control, battle space management and communications.

Using a radar dish mounted on top of the airplane, AWACS have the ability to detect aircraft and ships at great distance. NATO's AWACS are based at the NATO Airbase Geilenkirchen in Germany, with forward operating airfields in Greece, Italy, Turkey and Norway. AWACS aircrews are drawn from 15 NATO member countries.

AWACS have played an important role in NATO activities for over three decades, including over Afghanistan, Libya and the Balkans. In response to Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in March 2014, NATO AWACS started reconnaissance flights over Eastern Europe.

General Characteristics

AIRFRAME: Boeing 707

CREW: 16-30

OPERATING ALTITUDE: Around 10km.

RADAR COVERAGE: An AWACS flying at 10km altitude has over 312,000 km² in its field of view. AWACS can detect low flying targets within 400km and at medium altitude targets within 520 km.

RANGE: AWACS have an unrefueled range of around 6,000 km or eight to ten hours of flying.

PARTICIPATING ALLIES: 16 Allies contribute to the AWACS programme, 15 Allies provide aircrews.



Public Diplomacy Division (PDD) – Press & Media Section

Tel.: +32(0)2 707 5041

E-mail: moc@hq.nato.int

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