



The first F-16C Block 50 fighter for the Chilean Air Force performed its initial production acceptance flights on 23 June at Lockheed Martin's Fort Worth plant. All ten aircraft on order (six Cs and four Ds) are planned for delivery in 2006. (Photo: Lockheed Martin)

1 maritime patrol squadron (VP-1) with 4 UP3A ORIONs and 4 EMB111ANs; 1 transport/liaison squadron (VC1) with 3 C212 AVIOCARs; 1 helicopter squadron (HU-1) with 5 Bo-105s and 5 UH-57Bs; Naval Aviation School with 7 PC7s and 8 Cessna O-2A SKYMASTERS

Naval Aviation Force No. 2 (Punta Arenas) with 3 detachments and air stations with P-111s, CASA 212s and UH-05 and 1 Bell 412 helicopters

1 shipborne attack helicopter squadron (HA-1) with 3 HA-1 AS.532SC COUGARs (directly under the Commander of the Fleet).

NB: The COUGARs and one of the two FALCONs are wired for AM39 EXOCET surfacetoair missiles.

Major naval bases: Talcahuano, Valparaiso, Punta Arenas, Iquique, Puerto Montt, Concon (Naval Aviation).

Air Force

Personnel: 12,000.

Organisation:

Under the Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force there are the General Staff and three Commands (Logistics Command, Personnel Command, Combat Command). Operational units are organised in five air brigades with a total of 12 squadrons (Grupos) as follows:

Air Brigade I (Iquique): Grupo 1 (training/light attack) with 10 T36 and 4 A-36 HALCON IIs; Grupo 2 (liaison) with 4 C-212s, Beech 99As, O2-OAa and UH-1H helicopters; Air Defence Group 24; Communication Group 34

Air Brigade II ("Los Cerrillos" AB, Santiago): Grupo 9 (helicopters) with some 20 UH1Hs and 1 Bell 412, 3 Bo-105s, 1 S70 BLACK HAWK (for sale); Grupo 10 (Pudahuel)(transport) with 2 C130Hs, 4 C130Bs, 1 Boeing 707 PHALCON (AEW), 4 Boeing 707s (1 modified for air refuelling), 2 Beech 200 KING AIRs, 1 GULFSTREAM IV (VIP); Air Defence Group 22; Communication Group 32

Air Brigade III ("El Tepual" AB, Puerto Montt): Grupo 5 (light transport) with 1 B105 CB4, 3 CITATION CJ-1s and 8 DHC-6 TWIN HOTTERs; Air Defence Group 25; Communication Group 35

Air Brigade IV ("Chabunco" AB, Punta Arenas): Grupo 4 (fighter/ground attack) with 12 MIRAGE 50/PANTERAs (to be replaced, see notes); Grupo 6 (special operations) with 4 DHC6s and 4-5 UH-1H; Grupo 12 (currently cadre, to be re-equipped with the F-16C/Ds); Grupo 19 (King George Island) (antartic patrol) with 1 DHC6s, 1 Bo.105 CB4; Air Defence Group 23; Communication Group 33

Air Brigade V ("Cerro Moreno" AB, Antofagasta): Grupo 7 (interception) with 12 F5Es and 2 F5Fs (modernised to the TIGER III configuration); Grupo

8 (ground attack) with 19 MIRAGE 5MA/5MB ELKANs (to be replaced, see notes) and 2 Bell 412s; Air Defence Group 21; Communication Group 31

Aviation School: The training organisation located at El Bosque, Santiago with 48 ENAER T35 PILLANs remains outside the brigade structure.

Airborne: Air Force personnel also forms a para-troop battalion.

Air Defence: Five groups: Groups 21, 22 and 25 operate AAA systems (MIGUEL FCS) as well as BLOWPIPE and MISTRAL SAMs, while Groups 23 and 24 each field 6 MYGALE system (each MYGALE has a SAMANTHA truckmounted radar and three ASPIC truckmounted fourcell launchers for MISTRAL missiles).

NB: 10 F-16C/D Block 50 fighters (6 Cs and 4 Ds) are on order, with deliveries to be completed by mid-2006. 18 F-16 MLU single-seaters and 4 F-16Bs are being procured from Dutch surplus with deliveries in 2006-2007 to replace the entire PANTERA/ALKAN inventory. An KC-135A tanker on order (to be reconfigured to KC-135R). The single PHALCON AEW&C aircraft is to be supplemented by a lighter, less expensive system.

A decision on principle has been announced to join the A400M airlifter programme with the purchase of 3 aircraft.

Negotiations are underway for the possible purchase of four HAL DHRUV light helicopters.

Major air bases: El Bosque (Santiago), Punta Arenas, Puerto Mott, Iquique, Los Condores. Although there are no plans to change the current structure on 5 Air Brigades, studies are underway for combat assets to be concentrated on two bases (one for MIRAGE types and one for US aircraft, respectively) a reduced number of bases in order to implement savings.

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Major naval bases: Burgas, Varna.

NB: Six Black Sea nations (Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine) have signed a Letter of Intent to establish a joint naval force (BLACKSEAFOR) to participate in training exercises under the PIP programme as well as perform mine-clearance operations and SAR missions.

The DRUZKI (ex-WANDELAAR) was transferred from Belgian Navy surplus in October 2005. A programme for the design and construction of four corvette-size multi-purpose patrol vessels is underway; Armaris had been selected as the preferred supplier by the previous government, but the new administration apparently regards the competition as being still open. Six AS.565MB PANTHER helicopters on order to replace the Mi-14s. A requirement for two second-hand submarines has been approved.



The Bulgarian Air Force has twelve AS.532AL COUGAR helicopters on order, including eight configured for tactical transport missions and four for CSAR.

(Photo: Bulgarian Air Force)

Air Force

Personnel: 10,851 (2004).

Adapted CFE Treaty Ceilings: 235 combat aircraft, 66 armed helicopters.

Structure:

Air Force AF HQs (Sofia)

Air Defence Corps (Sofia):

3rd 31 Fighter Air Base (Graf Ignatievo) with 2 fighter squadrons: 1/3 Sqn with 20 MiG-21Bis and 6 MiG-21Us, and 2/3 Sqn with 16 MiG-29As and 4 MiG-29UBs

“Long-Term Vision for Development of the Armed Forces – 2015”
(Excerpts from the official document)

The new missions and tasks require a transformation of the organisational structure, functional links and administrative practices within the Ministry of Defence, the General Staff and the Bulgarian Armed Forces. The purpose of this transformation shall be to build up modern, usable and effective Armed Forces. A new approach is required to implement the principles of jointness, modularity, functionality and deployability. Major efforts shall be focused on multifunctionality in order to increase operational effect and reduce cost of personnel, infrastructure, combat equipment and training.

The functional structure of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria shall consist of:

- *Active forces*, including both a package of modularly structured deployable forces that could be used across the full spectrum of NATO-led operations, as well as a small package of highly capable forces that generate immediate reaction forces to contribute to national security in peacetime and counter potential asymmetric threats in particular;
- *Support elements and forces of lower readiness*, including in-place forces for logistic and maintenance support, bases, depots, etc.

The leadership of defence and Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria is carried out by the National Assembly, the President and the Council of Ministers in conformity with the Constitution and national legislation. On the strategic level the Ministry of Defence is the main body charged with the implementation of the Government’s defence policy. The operational level of the Armed Forces’ command structure shall comprise a Joint Operational Command (JOC), which shall execute the planning and the operational management of units from the Bulgarian Armed Forces during their participation in operations both inside the country and abroad. The services HQ shall also be responsible for the recovery of personnel and refill of units that have participated in an operation. The tactical level of the Armed Forces command structure comprises units (brigade, air base and naval base), and sub-units, which are directly subordinated to the services HQ as to their training and to JOC as to their participation in operations.

The *Land Forces* shall comprise: two mechanised brigades; one light infantry brigade; one SOF brigade; one artillery, one engineer, and one logistics regiments; units for combat support and combat service support, as well as a system of training centres and ranges.

The *Air Force* shall maintain: one fighter base; one helicopter base; one transport/airlift base; one flying training base; and in case of a need for aircraft repositioning, one forward operational base. The system of ground based air-defence units shall consist of one SAM brigade and one radar regiment. An infrastructure for combat training and combat support shall also be maintained.

Along with the decommissioning of surplus armaments and equipment, the *Navy* shall reduce its structures to two naval bases, with the respective combat support, combat service support and training elements.

(Tactical Aviation Corp) (Plovdiv):

22nd Attack Air Base (Bezmer) with 1/22 Sqn and 2/22 Sqn with a total of 30 Su-25Ks and 4 Su-25KBs
16th Transport Air Base (Sofia) with 1/16 Sqn with 5 An-26s (see notes), 7 L-410s, 1 An-30 (“Open Skies”) and 1 PC-12
24th Helicopter Air Base (Krumovo) with 2 helicopter squadrons: 1/24 with 18 Mi-17s and 2/24 with 18

Mi-24s, plus Training Flight with 6 Bell 206s
12th Training Base (Kamenetz) with 1/12 Sqn with 12 L-39ZAs, independent flight with 6 PC-9Ms.
SAMs: SA2/-3/-5/-6/-10. 21 sites with approximately 104 launchers.

NB: Procurement of a modern multi-role fighter is planned to replace the entire current inventory of MiG-21s, MiG-29s and Su-25s. 12 AS.532AL

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