

Defence secretary announces new maritime patrol aircraft squadrons

DEFENCE SECRETARY ANNOUNCES NEW MARITIME PATROL AIRCRAFT SQUADRONS

The Defence Secretary announced the numbers of the UK's two new Maritime Patrol Aircraft squadrons and the first commanding officer on Thursday, 13 July 2017.

Nine new P-8A Poseidon Maritime Patrol Aircraft will be operated by number 120 Squadron and number 201 Squadron from RAF Lossiemouth in Moray.

120 Squadron was the RAF's highest scoring anti-submarine unit in the Second World War with 14 kills. 201 Squadron can trace its origins back to the formation of No 1 Squadron, Royal Naval Air Service in 1914. Wing Commander James Hanson will oversee the formation of 120 Squadron from April 2018. 201 Squadron will form in 2021.

The aircraft's key role will be to help protect the UK's submarine-deployed nuclear deterrent and its two new aircraft carriers.

The UK Government is investing £3 billion over the next decade in its Maritime Patrol Aircraft capability.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

"Our nine new Poseidon aircraft are part of our plan to monitor and deal with increased threats to our country. They can operate at long range without refuelling and have the endurance to carry out high and low-level airborne maritime and overland surveillance for extended periods, helping keep us safe. The P-8A aircraft will allow us to work more closely with our allies, improve our surveillance coverage and will provide value for taxpayers' money."

The Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier said:

"Today is an important milestone in the P-8A Poseidon programme which will bring to the Royal Air Force an unrivalled maritime patrol capability. The advanced state-of-the-art sensors aboard the P-8A will provide global protection to UK, NATO and our Allies' submarines and warships, and enhance and complement the UK's standing search and rescue responsibilities.

"It is also a great pleasure to welcome back 120 and 201 Squadrons. Both have long and distinguished records serving in the maritime role and together they will help forge the next generation Royal Air Force."

Poseidon will add to the UK's surveillance capabilities and is designed to conduct anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare, search and rescue and intelligence gathering. They can carry torpedoes and anti-shipping missiles.

As a leading members of NATO, the UK Ministry of Defence has already signed agreements with the US and Norwegian militaries to cooperate closely on operating their P-8A aircraft across the North Atlantic.

With the first aircraft due to arrive in the UK in 2020, the RAF has maintained its Maritime Patrol Aircraft skills by embedding aircrew within MPA squadrons of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA.

Poseidon will bring wider economic benefits with an additional 400+ service personnel to be located at RAF Lossiemouth, where £400m is also being invested in new support infrastructure for the aircraft.

As the Poseidon P-8A is based on the Boeing 737, it will help support several hundred direct UK jobs, and create opportunities for UK firms to bid for training and support contracts.

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[Identity of F-35 Lightning Training Squadron Announced](#)

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The squadron which will train future Royal Air Force and Royal Navy F-35B Lightning pilots at RAF Marham has been announced as 207 Squadron.

The announcement was made during a visit to RAF Marham by the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier, and the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Philip Jones, to view the progress being made to prepare for the arrival of the fifth generation fighter at the Norfolk base next summer.



Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier said:

“I am very pleased to announce that the Operational Conversion Unit for the UK’s F-35B Lightning fleet will be 207 Squadron. The squadron has a proud and distinguished history, not only as an RAF squadron but as one of the earliest squadrons of the Royal Naval Air Service which, with the Royal Flying Corps, came together to form the Royal Air Force on 1 April 1918.

“Preparations for the arrival of the first UK Lightnings next year are progressing well. The investment of £250m in infrastructure here at RAF Marham will ensure the station has the facilities to match this world-class aircraft when it arrives next year. As the home of the UK Lightning Force the

station will be at the heart of UK airpower for decades to come.”



Admiral Sir Philip Jones First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff said:

“207 Squadron will play an important part in the future of both the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy, and rightly reflects our shared aviation heritage. I was in the United States earlier this month to meet some of the pilots and maintainers who are getting to grips with the F-35B. They’re working brilliantly together and today I’ve seen the same sense of purpose from those readying RAF Marham for their arrival.

“HMS Queen Elizabeth is the first carrier in the world designed from the outset to operate a fifth generation combat aircraft. Crucially, a second ship – HMS Prince of Wales – is on its way, which will give the UK a continuous Carrier Strike capability. I have every expectation that, in time, this combination of carriers and jets will represent a powerful and important strategic conventional deterrent.”



The new infrastructure currently being built at RAF Marham includes vertical landing pads, the renewal of runways and taxiways and new technical and training facilities, offices and hangars.

The first Lightnings will arrive at RAF Marham in summer next year when the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy pilots currently training in the United States, will return as 617 Squadron, the Dambusters. The Lightning OCU will stand up as 207 Squadron on 1 July 2019.

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[Record year for Armed Forces Day 2017](#)

Record year for Armed Forces Day.

The RAF made a full show of force with multiple displays, performances and public engagement at the Armed Forces Day 2017 National Event. Hosted by the City of Liverpool, the event led the nation in the annual opportunity for members of the public to say thank you to the entire Armed Forces community for the outstanding work they do. All three Services were represented along with reserve and cadet forces plus members of the veteran community.



This year was a record Armed Forces Day with over 300 events being held across the UK and overseas. In Liverpool the Lord Mayor highlighted during his closing address that an estimated 200,000 people had visited the Armed Forces National Event over the weekend. This level of support from the public shows their appreciation for those serving personnel who dedicate their lives to defending our country and keeping British people safe. It also demonstrates the public's gratitude to the veterans who in their turn gave so much.



In Liverpool more than 300 RAF personnel were involved with the event. The Queen's Colour Squadron marched in the grand parade accompanied by the Band of the RAF Regiment and flypasts were performed by the Typhoon, the Red Arrows and the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight. On the ground the 'RAF Military Village' was sited in a prime location on the Pier Head in front of Liverpool's three iconic buildings and was visited by the Earl of Wessex, the Prime Minister, the Defence Secretary, VCDS along with the Lord Mayor of Liverpool and many other local dignitaries. The RAF Village, manned by 90 personnel, was an extremely vibrant place to be and here visitors could get a close look at the equipment currently used by the RAF plus the public also had the chance to talk to serving men and women from the RAF and RAuxAF.



Wing Commander Chris Lindsay, the RAF lead for the National Event, said "I am so proud of everyone who took part. The people of Liverpool have made us all feel very welcome and valued for what we do".

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[**Grave of brave Nottingham born WW2
Airman finally rededicated**](#)

Grave of brave Nottingham born WW2 Airman finally rededicated

Flight Sergeant (Flt Sgt) Frank Edward Reed's final resting place has been identified after his aircraft, RAF Stirling Bomber EH945, part of 620 Squadron, was shot down in Germany on 27 September 1943. To honour the bravery and sacrifice of Flt Sgt Reed, a rededication service was held on 20 June 2017 at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Hanover War Cemetery, Germany.



Flt Sgt Frank Edward Reed

The service, organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), part of Defence Business Services, was conducted by The Reverend Father (Flight Lieutenant) James Mealy, Station Chaplain RAF Coningsby.

Flt Sgt Reed was a Flight Engineer and part of a seven man crew onboard the Bomber aircraft which took off from RAF Chedburgh in Suffolk at 19:55 hours on 27 September 1943. Research undertaken by JCCC and Air Historical Branch showed that Stirling EH975 was shot down and crashed later that evening. Subsequent reports stated that some of the crew were taken as prisoners of war, including Flt Sgt Reed who was badly injured; others were unfortunately killed during the crash. Flt Sgt Reed was taken to a hospital in Hanover where it is unclear how he died but most probably from his wounds.

Flt Sgt Reed was just one month short of his 21st birthday when he was killed.

Tracey Bowers, JCCC said:

"This has been an incredibly rewarding case to work on and to be able to bring closure after such a long search for answers by Frank's son, Nigel, who has travelled from New Zealand to be with us today, is a real privilege."

"Unfortunately we may never know exactly how Flt Sgt Reed died but we know he ultimately lost his life serving his Country. Now finally, his grave can bear his name and we're very lucky to have his son and members of his RAF family here with us today."



Nigel Reed

Rev. Fr (Flt Lt) James Mealy said:

"By God's grace it is right and proper that we gathered today in prayer and thanksgiving for the sacrifice of Flt Sgt Reed. It was a privilege for me as an RAF Padre to lead this rededication service for the family and representatives today."

"This is the first rededication service I have had the honour of leading and

I will remember this day for the rest of my life."

Flt Sgt Reed's son, Nigel Reed, said:

"Today has opened up a new chapter in my relationship with my father whom I now feel a real connection and closeness to. I would like to thank all those who made this ceremony, and the one held in Chedburgh, possible, it has meant so very much to me."



The moving ceremony rededicating the new headstone bearing Flt Sgt Reed's name, as provided by the CWGC, was held in the cemetery in Hanover near to where the crash site was.

To further honour Flt Sgt Reed's memory a simultaneous ceremony was held in Chedburgh, Suffolk (where 620 Squadron was based). It was organised by former members of The Blues and Royals, Nigel's former regiment and attended by his regimental brothers.

For more information, please contact Andy Eden, MOD JCCC Media Officer;
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[RAF soar over Buckingham Palace for HM The Queen's Birthday](#)

On Saturday, 17 June 2017, 29 Royal Air Force Aircraft soared over Buckingham Palace, Central London, in an impressive flypast to mark the annual Queen's Birthday Parade.

15 types of RAF aircraft took part in the Flypast, including two of the RAF's world-class display teams – the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight (BBMF) and the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team – the Red Arrows.

 The formation flew over the Palace at 13:00BST, divided into eight elements, in roughly 30 second intervals.

Squadron Leader Jim Furness, Formation Lead and flying in one of the Tornado GR4s, said: "It's an honour to take part in Her Majesty's Birthday Flypast. Extensive preparation has taken place over several weeks and months to make sure that the different aircraft from all over the country deliver a safe and

successful flypast over London – made more challenging by it being one of the busiest airspaces in the world.”

Air Vice Marshal Gerry Mayhew CBE MA RAF, the Air Officer Commanding No. 1 Group, said: “It is an honour for the Royal Air Force to mark HM The Queen’s 91st birthday with a flypast. The magnificent sight of over 25 aircraft flying over Buckingham Palace is another example of the superb efforts being made by the men and women of the Royal Air Force, who should be proud of their achievements both at home and overseas.”



The flypast was led by a Chinook and a Puma helicopter, representing the backbone of the UK’s tactical troop-lifting capability. Currently deployed in Afghanistan the Puma has recently undergone a fleet upgrade programme, hugely enhancing its capability in supporting the Afghan National Army in Kabul.



Following the helicopters was the unforgettable sound of Merlin engines powering a Supermarine Spitfire and two Hawker Hurricanes from the BBMF. Today these aircraft represent the rich 99 year history of the Royal Air Force and the sacrifices made by a great many of its personnel. This year BBMF are celebrating their 60th anniversary, having been formed in July 1957.

BBMF were followed by a Shadow R1 – an Intelligence, Surveillance, and Target Acquisition Aircraft which was taking part this year for the first time. The Shadow was flanked by two King Air B200s. The King Airs from RAF Cranwell represent training aircraft from across the RAF but are specifically employed in multi-engine Pilot and Rear Crew training.

Next up were four of the RAF’s transport aircraft – demonstrating the RAF’s global reach and its ability to project air power around the world. First up, the C-17 Globemaster III, the RAF’s hugely capable strategic heavy-lift aircraft. With its cavernous cargo hold it is often found supporting the UK across the globe, flying long distance sometimes at very short notice. Behind it was the BAe 146. This aircraft provides transport to members of the Royal Family, senior Government Ministers, and Ministry of Defence personnel.

The second Air Transport element consisted of the state of the art A400M Atlas, only its second time in the flypast, and the C-130 Hercules. Whilst being able to employ impressive strategic reach, the Atlas is set to take over more of the tactical airlift role from the C-130. Both aircraft are based at the RAF’s largest base at Brize Norton, which is celebrating its 80th birthday this year.



Next followed the Sentinel R1 – a long-range battlefield surveillance aircraft. This key capability is providing vital support to operations in the Middle East. Following the Sentinel R1 was four multi-role Typhoons. With control of UK sovereign airspace a vital task these agile, capable multi role fighters secure our skies 24/7. Currently deployed on operations in Romania,

Cyprus and the Falkland Islands, Typhoon is the core of the Royal Air Force's Combat Air capability.

The penultimate element consisted of the Voyager and Tornado GR4. The Voyager is the Royal Air Force's largest aircraft and one which has provided a step change in strategic freight and troop carrying capability. It also is capable of air refuelling a variety of aircraft and is currently supporting operations at home and around the world. The Voyager was flanked by two Tornado GR4s from RAF Marham. This superbly capable aircraft continues to perform outstandingly on operations today, over 45 years since it first flew. Tornado GR4 crews tirelessly support our coalition partners in the Middle East.



Finally, the iconic nine-strong Red Arrows, flying in a 'Big Wing' formation in their distinctive red Hawk aircraft, ended the flypast. The Red Arrows' 53rd season is now underway, with the team expected to display more than 60 times across the UK and beyond. Since 1965 – which was the Red Arrows' first season – more than 4,800 displays have been performed in 57 countries, which is equivalent to a quarter of the world.

Editor: Charlie Haines

Images: Sgt Mackie, Cpl Chapman, Cpl Hawke, Cpl Laurence, SAC Egan

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