

End of an era for RAF Lossiemouth Tornados

End of an era for RAF Lossiemouth Tornados

XV(Reserve) Squadron, the Tornado Operational Conversion Unit, completed its final formal flying on Friday 17 March 2017. The disbandment of the Squadron, after 102 years' of service, on Friday 31 March 2017 will see the end of the Tornado GR4 era at RAF Lossiemouth.



To mark the end of this period in the Station's history, Tornados from XV(Reserve) Squadron carried out a final sortie that included flying by Aberdeen and Leuchars airfields and Tain Air Weapons Range. These sites have all been instrumental in the training of aircrew at RAF Lossiemouth to operate the Tornado. The aircraft returned to RAF Lossiemouth in the early afternoon and carried out a series of flypasts over the Station.

The Tornado Weapons Conversion Unit was based at RAF Honington in Suffolk when it received the XV (Reserve) Squadron title in 1992. It moved to RAF Lossiemouth in November 1993 and then with the closure of the Tri-national Tornado Training Establishment in March 1999 XV (Reserve) Squadron assumed responsibility for the training of all of the RAF's Tornado GR4 pilots and Weapon Systems Operators in both initial training on the aircraft and in post-graduate courses. Over the past 24 years the Squadron has been the life-blood of the front line ensuring the squadrons were provided with combat capable aircrew. The final ab-initio pilot finished his training at the end of January, and the last refresher pilot, returning from a tour instructing at RAF Valley, graduated at the end of February.



Whilst the Tornado Operational Conversion Unit will cease from 31 March, the RAF will continue to utilise the Tornado GR4 until it is finally withdrawn from service

in 2019. RAF Marham in Norfolk is the base of the RAF's front line Tornado squadrons from where aircraft and personnel are deployed to support current operations.

Wing Commander Paul Froome is the Officer Commanding of XV(Reserve) Squadron, and took part in the flypast. He said:

"The disbandment of XV(Reserve) Squadron is a milestone in the drawdown of the Tornado fleet, but I can say hand on heart that every member of the Squadron, past and present, has delivered an exceptional level of service and commitment to the Tornado fleet and the RAF."



Three frontline Tornado squadrons have been based at RAF Lossiemouth since the early 1990s:

12 (Bomber) Squadron was already based at RAF Lossiemouth with the Buccaneer when it was re-equipped with the Tornado GR1B in October 1993 in the Maritime Strike role. The Squadron was disbanded at RAF Lossiemouth on 31 Mar 2014, however it was resurrected on 12 Jan 2015 at RAF Marham.

14 Squadron was based at RAF Bruggen with the Tornado GR1 before returning to the UK and was based at RAF Lossiemouth from 1 Jan 2001. The Squadron was disbanded on 1 Jun 2011. The number plate was passed to a new ISTAR unit which had been operating as part of V(Army Co-operation) Squadron at RAF Waddington.

617 Squadron was equipped with the Tornado GR1 at RAF Marham when it relocated to RAF Lossiemouth in May 1994. It was at this point that it adopted a Maritime Strike role as well as its overland strike role. The Squadron was disbanded in March 2014, however it has since been reformed and is re-equipping with the F-35 Lightning II.

Each of these squadrons deployed personnel and aircraft to Operations TELIC, HERRICK and ELLAMY where the Tornado GR4 exploited its range and payload in the Close Air Support and Interdiction roles.



RAF Lossiemouth will maintain the provision of Quick Reaction Alert (Interceptor) North, or QRA as it is commonly called,

as
its primary role. The
strategically important position of the Station on the northern Scottish
coastline makes it an ideal location to maintain aircraft and crews on high
alert, in order
to scramble and intercept unidentified aircraft approaching UK airspace. This
is the basis of QRA and is a duty that
has been maintained by the Royal Air Force on a 24/7 basis for decades. The
Station will also see growth in the near
future as a fourth Typhoon squadron is formed here and 9 P8 Poseidon
Maritime
Patrol Aircraft are based here.

Editor: Flt Lt Ian Smith

© MOD Crown Copyright 2017

[Let's block ads! \(Why?\)](#)