

News story: Joint UK-Qatari Typhoon squadron stands up as defence relationship deepens

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson hosted the Amir Of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani at the standing up ceremony of the UK-Qatar Joint Typhoon Squadron today (24th July).

The event, held at Horse Guards, marked an important milestone in the two countries' defence relationship and included defence talks to further strengthen the close partnership between the UK and Qatar.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Qatar remains a close and important friend to the UK and it is the only nation with which we have a joint squadron. This requires a level of trust, born from our long-shared history and our commitment to a shared future.

Our formidable Typhoon jets will boost the Qatari military's mission to tackle challenges in the Middle East, supporting stability in the region and delivering security at home.

As part of the multi-billion-pound contract to supply Qatar with 24 Typhoon aircraft and 9 Hawk T2 aircraft, No.12 Squadron will integrate Qatari personnel, including pilots and ground-crew, from 2019. The personnel will be initially stationed at RAF Coningsby, and then in Qatar, undertaking a package of training and co-operation with their UK counterparts. It represents a unique initiative, and not since the Second World War and the Battle of Britain has the RAF formed a squadron with another nation.

The Joint Squadron will provide the Qatari Amiri Air Force (QAAF) with valuable experience operating the aircraft and speed up their preparation for when the first QAAF Typhoon are delivered in 2022.

At the ceremony at Horse Guards, the Amir also received his Sandhurst Medal, coinciding with the 20th anniversary of his graduation from the Academy. The ceremony celebrated the historic and enduring links between UK and Qatari defence training academies.

The two countries share mutual interests in countering violent extremism, and ensuring stability in the region, and this formation will further reinforce those ties by helping to prevent terrorism from spreading and protecting the prosperity and security of the UK at home.