

PM's remarks at Farnborough Air Show: 18 July 2022

It is fantastic to be here at Farnborough the scene of many of the most exciting developments in the history of powered flight

It was here that the de Havilland comet ushered in the jet age

here that the world first saw the Vulcan bomber, a beautiful machine I remember from my childhood

and here that spectators saw first the amazing aeronautical ability of the Typhoon

which I experienced myself last Thursday

With the help of wing commander Paul Hanson I took off from RAF Coningsby straight up like a vertical firecracker

we slipped the surly bonds of earth

as the poet Magee puts it

and danced the skies on laughter silvered wings

we flung that eager craft through footless halls of air

and generally put it through its paces, I can tell you

and after a while the wing commander said to me

do you want to have a go

and I said are you sure

it seems very expensive to me

we only have 148 of them and they cost about £75m a pop

and he said don't worry

you can't break it

and I thought oh well famous last words

and so I pushed the joystick right over to the right and we did an aileron roll and then I hauled the joystick right back and we did a fantastic loop the loop

and then I did a more complicated thing called a barrel roll in which I

pushed the stick up and right a bit
and we started to pull a few Gs, as they say
and when I came back to consciousness I could see
the sea getting closer and closer
and I started to dream about the incredible forest of wind farms I could see
and I thought about the way this government in the last few years has been
reclaiming doggerland
harvesting the drowned prairies of the north sea
and harvesting them once again with gigawatt after gigawatt of clean green
energy
helping to deliver a long term sustainable solution to our energy needs
ending any dependence on Putin whatsoever
and this reverie must have gone on for a while because my colleague said er I
am taking back control now
and we headed happily home
and I was absolutely stunned by the typhoon
because it is now more than 25 years since I first flew a fast jet
I went out, thanks to the RAF, to Seymour Johnson air force base in north
Carolina and flew an F15E strike eagle
and I remember sitting in that cockpit and looking at wires running either
side of me that were attached to pedals at the pilot's feet
and were pulling the flaps
and I looked at that and I thought this really isn't so different from
a sopwith camel
and on Thursday last week at Coningsby I asked them afterwards, as you ask
about what would happen in a fight between a tyrannosaurus rex and a Killer
whale
what would happen in a fight between a typhoon and an F15E strike eagle
and they said it would be no contest
almost 30 years ago when I went up in a F15E
the strike eagle seemed to me to be the last word in strength and power and
aggression

but compared to the typhoon, according to the RAF, it would be so motionless and defenceless that a dogfight

in the brutal words of one typhoon pilot would be like clubbing seals

and so the lesson I draw is about the scale and the pace of technological change

It was only 85 years ago that my grandfather was flying wellington bombers

with equipment so primitive that you really have to marvel at the bravery of the men and women who were involved in that war

in fact he used up quite a few wellington bombers

he crashed twice – the second time into a church

I am afraid he was always prone to religious doubts

I marvel at the bravery of that generation

and let's face it – it was only 120 years ago that this whole enterprise began – of heavier than air powered flight –

in machines, barely more than a century ago, that looked like laundry baskets

lashed together with leather and canvas

and propelled by lawnmower engines

and if you can go from a laundry basket to a typhoon in a century

I just want you to imagine what the next 20 years and the next 50 years will bring

and I want you to know that this government believes in British aviation

and British technological genius and its power to bring jobs and growth across our whole country, uniting and levelling up across the whole country

and that is why we are investing so massively in defence, the biggest uplift since the end of the Cold War,

and that is why I am so obsessed with the FCAS

with Team Tempest and everything that that involves

I think it is a fantastic project

There are already 560 UK companies playing their part

more than a thousand apprentices and new graduates involved

and I am a passionate believer in the potential of our burgeoning partnership – not just with Italy, but with Japan

an incredible thing to be doing now 80 years after the end of the Second World War

and of course, FCAS is not just a plane

it is a whole platform for technological change and industrial spin-offs of all kinds

because the combat aircraft systems of the future will be very different even from the typhoon

and some of them will be manned, some of them will be crewed and some of them won't be

and in developing these new technologies

and maintaining the air superiority that we have luxuriated in for so long and which is so crucial for our long term security

I want our country to be in the lead

and then on this scorching day

with the thermometer about to blow and temperatures here apparently higher than the Sahara

there is the next great technological challenge

which is how to send a plane across the Atlantic without burning tonnes of kerosene and adding the carbon tea cosy that is heating our planet to destruction

we know that we must fix it

we know that time is running out

and that is why one of the first things I initiated 3 years ago was a project called Jet Zero

in which I think many of you are participating and thank you very much for what you are doing – a zero carbon plane

and people think it's impossible

they say pigs might fly

well let me tell you

this is not only the country that built the first jet engine, but the first plane across the Atlantic

In 1909 a pilot by the name of John Theodore Cuthbert Moore Brabazon took off with a six week old piglet in a waste paper basket tied to the strut of a Short Brothers biplane

We showed that pigs could fly a hundred years ago
and we are going to fix zero carbon aviation as well
not just because it's right for our planet but because it will drive jobs and
growth around the country
and that is why, today, we are investing a further quarter of a billion today
in UK aviation technology and innovation
and so, in conclusion, I want you to know that after 3 happy years in the
cockpit
and after performing some pretty difficult if not astonishing feats
getting Brexit done and restoring this country's ability to make its own laws
in parliament
vaccinating our population faster than any other comparable country and
ensuring the fastest growth in the G7
and being the first European country to give the Ukrainians the vital
military help they need see off Putin's aggression
not to mention, cutting neighbourhood crime by 31 per cent
lowest unemployment for almost 50 years
gigabit broadband from 7 to 69 per cent households in this country
and many many other statistics
I am now going to hand over the controls
seamlessly to someone else
I don't know who
but whoever it is I can tell you that the twin engines, the great Rolls Royce
twin engines of this conservative government will roar on
fantastic public services
a dynamic free market economy
each boosting the other and developing millions of tons of thrust
and there could be no better example of that relationship
that symbiosis between government and the private sector than the aviation
industry
and if you want a final example of this government's ambition I give you not
just FCAS, not just Jet Zero but space flight as well

This year if all goes well

we will launch the first UK satellite in history to enter space from UK soil
as Newquay becomes this country's equivalent of Cape Kennedy, shortly to be
followed by Shetland as well

and I leave it to you to imagine who

at this stage I would like to send into orbit

Perhaps a volunteer could be found from the green benches of parliament

I leave that entirely to your speculation

but for now, with so much to look forward to in this incredible sector and
with the UK at the leading edge of progress

not just for our national security, the security of our friends and
neighbours

not just for our economic prosperity around the whole country

but for the protection of the planet itself

I declare this great Farnborough air show open