

RAF jets in Lithuania intercept Russian aircraft

News story

Royal Air Force Typhoon fighter jets deployed to Lithuania have conducted their first intercept of Russian aircraft as part of the NATO Baltic Air Policing mission.



A Russian aircraft is intercepted by an RAF Typhoon flying from Siauliai Air Base in Lithuania.

The Typhoons launched on 2 June 2020 to intercept a Russian intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) aircraft operating over the Baltic Sea.

Around 150 personnel, who together form 135 Expeditionary Air Wing (EAW), are in Lithuania to fly over Baltic skies to deter any threats to NATO Allies' airspace – monitoring and investigating any aircraft flying near Lithuanian airspace with transponders switched off or without a flight plan.

A Typhoon pilot from 6 Squadron, attached to 135 Expeditionary Air Wing, was on Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) duty when the scramble was called. He said:

The scramble was called to intercept a Russian IL-20 COOT ISR aircraft. The initial scramble was a real shot of adrenaline, but once airborne it was important to remain calm and professional and make the intercept as expeditious as possible to ensure we maintained both the safety and integrity of NATO airspace. This is what all of our training is designed to prepare us for however, at the end of the day it's just my job.

This intercept is part of the routine NATO Air Policing mission that has been conducted to police the skies since 2004. The current RAF mission began on 1 May 2020 when 135 EAW took over the enhanced Air Policing role working alongside the Spanish Air Force detachment at Siauliai Air Base.

Wing Commander Stu Gwinnutt, 135 EAW Commander stated:

It is great to see all of the training come together in a timely response and a successful QRA mission for NATO Baltic Air Policing.

The RAF contribution to NATO deployments supports efforts to reassure our Allies and demonstrates the UK's wider commitment to the security of the region.

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