

RAF Typhoons begin NATO Air Policing mission in Lithuania

News story

Royal Air Force Typhoon jets will be in Lithuania for the summer, patrolling and protecting NATO airspace.



An RAF Typhoon FGR-4 from RAF Lossiemouth arrives at Siauliai Air Base in Lithuania

The aircraft from RAF Lossiemouth in northern Scotland will be stationed at the Siauliai Air Base in Lithuania for the UK's latest contribution to the NATO Baltic Air Policing mission.

Alongside F-18 fighters from the Spanish Air Force, the RAF Typhoons will fly over Baltic skies to deter any threats to NATO Allies' airspace. They will safely monitor and investigate any aircraft flying near Lithuanian airspace with transponders switched off or without a flight plan.

Around 150 RAF personnel – together forming 135 Expeditionary Air Wing – have deployed to Lithuania for the mission. All necessary measures have been taken to ensure that both UK and Lithuanian mandated COVID-19 precautions have been followed. The deployment, known as Operation Azotize, is a core defence task that the RAF is able to complete without impacting the military's ongoing support to the UK Government's COVID-19 response.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

Britain's adversaries will not let Covid-19 stop them threatening our citizens and allies. It is for that reason the UK Armed Forces continue their operations at home and abroad – ensuring the collective defence of NATO and our national security.

This summer's deployment is the latest example of the UK's enduring and

active commitment to Euro-Atlantic security, the bedrock of which is the NATO Alliance.

In nearby Estonia, over 800 British Army personnel stand sentinel on NATO's eastern flank as the lead of the country's NATO enhanced Forward Presence multinational battlegroup.

Last summer the RAF also deployed to Estonia for Baltic Air Policing, where Typhoons from RAF Coningsby conducted a total of 21 interceptions of 56 Russian aircraft over the course of four months. Previous RAF contributions to the mission occurred in 2016 in Estonia and 2014 in Lithuania.

Additionally, the RAF supported NATO Southern Air Policing in Romania in 2018 and NATO Icelandic Air Policing last year.

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