

RAF Typhoons complete NATO air policing mission in Estonia

Over the four-month deployment, known as Operation Azotize, RAF Typhoons conducted a total of 21 interceptions of 56 Russian aircraft in the skies above Estonia.

The RAF fighter jets were in Estonia as the UK took its turn in a routine NATO deployment. The deployment was at the request of the Estonian Government, to provide the country with a Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) force. This force is drawn in turn from NATO partners and is ready to respond at any time to potential threats and to intercept aircraft straying towards NATO airspace.

The deployment has been a further demonstration of the UK's enduring commitment to the security of the Baltic region and the wider NATO alliance.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

Throughout their deployment in Estonia, the world-class pilots, engineers and support personnel of our RAF Typhoon detachment have ensured that the Baltic skies have been patrolled safely and skilfully. Our presence in the region has served to reinforce that the UK remains ready to support our allies wherever and whenever required.

The Typhoon squadron was supported throughout the deployment by 121 Expeditionary Air Wing (EAW), also based at RAF Coningsby. The EAW comprised men and women from a range of branches and trades needed to keep four state of the art aircraft operating for several months away from home.

During a busy four months for the deployed RAF Typhoon detachment, the jets intercepted a wide range of Russian aircraft from transports to Flanker fighters. On 25th June, Typhoons launched twice in a single day to intercept three Russian aircraft.

A clear demonstration of the UK's ongoing commitment to NATO enhanced air policing, this was the third time the UK has committed RAF Typhoon aircraft to Baltic Air Policing missions in Estonia, following deployments in 2015 and 2016. Later this year they will also undertake a similar NATO air policing mission in Iceland at the request of the Icelandic Government.

As part of its leading role in the transatlantic alliance, the Prime Minister will welcome NATO leaders to the UK later this year.

Elsewhere around the world RAF Typhoon jets are also deployed in the Falklands Islands on QRA missions, as well as on Operation Shader against Daesh in Syria and Iraq. They also provide the national QRA capability for

the UK, to safeguard our domestic airspace.