

[News story: RAF typhoons investigate Russians over Black Sea](#)

Launching from the Romanian Mihail Kogălniceanu Air Base, the RAF Typhoons responded yesterday (August 23) to a Russian Be-12 heading south west over the Black Sea from Crimea. It's the second time in a week that RAF jets, on NATO's Air Policing mission, have been scrambled to deter provocative Russian aircraft and reassure Romania and NATO allies.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Our commitment to NATO and European security is unwavering. Whether in the skies over the Black Sea and the Baltic, or on the ground in Estonia our actions send a clear message – we are collectively ready to respond to any act of aggression and will support our Eastern European allies to deter any threats faced.

1 (Fighter) Squadron, based at RAF Lossiemouth, is deployed to Romania as part of the NATO 'Enhanced Air Policing' mission, where assistance is provided to the Romanian Air Force's own fleet of fast-jet aircraft.

A Typhoon pilot from 1(Fighter) Squadron, attached to 135 Expeditionary Air Wing (EAW) and on Quick Reaction Alert duty when the scramble was called said:

"We launched in response to a Russian Be-12 aircraft that was manoeuvring over the Black Sea. It is exactly what the RAF has been brought to Romania to do and it felt great to have been able to contribute towards the mission."

[News story: HMS Queen Elizabeth sets off for F-35B fighter jet trials](#)

Eight years since a British aircraft carrier last flew a fast jet from her decks, the 65,000-tonne carrier will embark two F-35B test aircraft, from the Integrated Test Force (ITF), based out of Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland.

Around 200 supporting staff, including pilots, engineers, maintainers and data analysts will be joined by two 'orange wired' test aircraft, belonging to the ITF, which are expected to conduct 500 take offs and landings during their 11-week period at sea.

The aim of these initial, or 'developmental' trials are to ascertain, through the specially equipped aircraft and sensors around the ship, the operating parameters of the aircraft and ship, in a range of conditions. Similar successful trials were conducted by HMS Queen Elizabeth at sea earlier this year for Rotary Wing aircraft.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

HMS Queen Elizabeth is a true statement of our national power, and the whole country can be proud to see this magnificent symbol of our engineering prowess and international ambition leaving port to sail onto the world stage.

Her voyage to America not only shows her global reach, but strengthens our special relationship with the US Forces who we have worked hand-in-hand with on this iconic programme. As she sails along the east coast of the USA, she will signal our determination to keep fighting alongside our allies in all corners of an ever more complex and uncertain world.



F-35B aircraft will join HMS Queen Elizabeth when she arrives in the USA. Crown copyright.

Four F 35B Lightning developmental test pilots, who are members of the ITF, will embark to fly the aircraft; three British, one American. The British personnel comprise a Royal Navy Commander, a Squadron Leader from the Royal Air Force and one civilian test pilot. They will be joined by a Major from

the US Marine Corps.

The trials follow the recent arrival into the UK of the first joint Royal Navy, Royal Air Force F-35B jets, based at RAF Marham. 'Operational testing', utilising British F-35B aircraft are scheduled to take place on board HMS Queen Elizabeth next year.

The deployment, known as 'WESTLANT 18', will be the first-time HMS Queen Elizabeth will have sailed across the Atlantic. As well as the vital deck trials, it will also involve exercises to prove the ability to operate with other nations' maritime and aviation assets, as well as the landing of Royal Marines and their equipment ashore in the United States, to conduct training with their US counterparts.

HMS Queen Elizabeth Commanding Officer, Capt Jerry Kyd said:

This deployment to the United States will be another first for my ship. Crossing a major ocean with 1500 sailors, aircrew and Marines embarked and the spectre of the first F-35B Lightning landing on the deck in September is very exciting for us all.

It has been an incredible journey since we left Rosyth just over a year ago and we are all looking forward to this next, seminal chapter in HMS Queen Elizabeth's life.



HMS Queen Elizabeth departs for the USA to land fast jets on deck for the very first time. Crown copyright.

As the ship's work-up continues, so too does the regeneration of the UK's Carrier Strike capability. Commander UK Carrier Strike Group (COMUKCSG), Cdre Andrew Betton, will take command of the ship and other units of his task group, embarking in HMS Queen Elizabeth with his Carrier Strike Group headquarters staff.

He said:

As a critical step towards delivering the UK's new Carrier Strike Group, this deployment demonstrates the astonishing collaborative effort that will enable the new F-35 jets to fly routinely from our Queen Elizabeth class aircraft carriers.

At the heart of the Maritime Task Group, the aircraft carrier is well protected and sustained, ready to operate around the world as a potent and exceptionally flexible instrument of our foreign policy. These first F-35B embarked trials in a UK aircraft carrier are not only key to future operational success, but represent an iconic moment for the modern Royal Navy.

The ship will conduct trials in UK waters over the coming days, before departing for the USA later this month. She will be joined by RFA Tiderace and Plymouth-based type-23 frigate HMS Monmouth, as well as Merlin Mk2 helicopters from 820 Naval Air Squadron, RNAS Culdrose, Mk 4 Merlins from 845 Naval Air Squadron, RNAS Yeovilton and a contingent of Royal Marines from 42 Commando, Plymouth.

[News story: Defence Ministers reaffirm Scotland's central role in UK defence](#)

Defence Ministers Tobias Ellwood and Stuart Andrew toured Scotland this week, visiting some of the UK's most important military bases that have had billions of pounds of investment in recent months.

Minister for Defence People & Veterans, Tobias Ellwood, visited RAF Lossiemouth where he saw progress being made on the £132 million invested in the site ahead of the arrival of the 9 new P-8A Poseidon aircraft. The new Lossiemouth facility will be completed by 2020, to coincide with initial operating capability of the Poseidon aircraft being available in the UK.

These state-of-the-art submarine hunters will help keep Scotland and the rest

of the UK safe and secure from intensifying threats, protecting the new aircraft carrier and nuclear deterrent.

The aircraft will work alongside eight cutting-edge new Type 26 warfare frigates, which also have their roots firmly in Scotland.

Minister for Defence Procurement Stuart Andrew met with BAE business leaders as he visited BAE Systems' yard in Govan, which is producing the frigates.

The Type 26 frigate programme will sustain 1,700 BAE Systems jobs in Scotland and safeguard 4,000 jobs across the wider UK supply chain until 2035.

Stuart Andrew's visit comes just after a year since the first steel was cut on HMS Glasgow, marking the beginning on the build of Britain's first Type 26 frigates.

The importance of this programme was also emphasised when Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson visited the site alongside his Australian counterpart Marise Payne last month.

Gavin Williamson outlined how Australia's decision to choose BAE Systems to build nine British warships could be worth £20 billion hailed as the biggest Naval ship deal for a decade.

Tobias Ellwood and Stuart Andrew also visited HMNB Clyde that has recently had £1.3 billion invested in the infrastructure that will see it become the home of all the Royal Navy's submarines by 2020.

The Ministers capped off their visit in Scotland at the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo. This year the Tattoo will celebrate the 100 year anniversary of the RAF with the 'Sky's the limit' theme.

Defence Minister Stuart Andrew said:

From the Scottish shipyards building our cutting-edge new Type 26 Royal Navy fleet, to our brave servicemen and women tirelessly working to protect our national security, Scotland is crucial to defence.

We invest £1.6 billion every year in the Scottish economy, supporting thousands of jobs and hundreds of businesses, as our industry partners pioneer world-leading technology to ensure our forces remain a step ahead of our adversaries.

This is my first visit to Scotland as Minister of Defence Procurement and I am extremely proud of the work going on in every corner of the nation to ensure our country remains safe in a climate of intensifying threats.

The visit comes at an important time for defence's footprint in Scotland. Under the Better Defence Estate strategy, the department is reducing the Scottish estate to 14 key sites.

Reducing the number of estates will allow for greater investment in the key sites such as HMNB Clyde, RAF Lossiemouth, as well as building the new radar facility Saxa Vord in Shetland.

It will also benefit local economies as the Department will work closely with Local Authorities and the Scottish Government to make the best use of the released land.

News story: RAF helicopters ready to support French in Mali

The helicopters, from RAF Odiham, are providing niche logistical support to French combat forces conducting counter-terrorism operations as part of Operation Barkhane. UK forces have built three temporary aircraft hangers on the ground, enabling the Chinooks to fly multiple missions each week.

Armed Forces minister Mark Lancaster said:

This deployment demonstrates the vital role our Armed Forces play, working alongside our French allies to tackle terrorism and reduce threats to European and UK security.

The deployment is in addition to the UK's long-standing support of UN, EU and G5 Sahel Joint Force operations in Mali aimed at preventing extremists from using the ungoverned space in the Sahel to plan and launch attacks on Europe, as well as countering the illegal trade in people, drugs, weapons and wildlife.

Minister for Africa Harriett Baldwin said:

This helicopter deployment demonstrates the UK's commitment to do more in the Sahel, alongside £50m of UK Aid providing lifesaving humanitarian support, and a bigger diplomatic network.

News story: Medical team train in Oman

for Exercise Saif Sareea 3

SS3 will take place across Oman in October and November. It is the UK armed forces' lead exercise this year and the largest in 17 years. It is also the third UK-Oman joint exercise, with the previous two taking place in 1986 and 2001.

SS3 will showcase the UK and Oman's ability to operate together in austere conditions through the deployment of a Coalition Joint Task Force.



Members of the Joint Medical Group prepare to transfer a simulated casualty to a waiting ambulance © MOD Crown Copyright

Joint Forces Command's (JFC) unique role in the exercise is in planning and enabling, demonstrating its world-leading ability to deploy internationally in challenging environments and run the vital functions of a successful exercise, such as logistics, command and control, and medical.

The Joint Medical Group will play a fundamental role in the safe delivery of the exercise. This week, as part of preparations for SS3, a Medical Emergency Response Team (MERT) were put to the test in the 40-degree heat of the Omani desert.

As part of this week's training, a doctor, nurse and two paramedics from MERT field tested a new method to transport life-saving blood.

They experimented with transporting blood for up to 72 hours, vastly

increasing their capability to successfully treat casualties in the field.

Captain Murphy said:

We now store the blood from its arrival in theatre and maintain the cold chain throughout. We then prepare the Golden Hour Box in order to transport blood to a casualty.

The Golden Hour Box refers to the 72-hour cold storage that maintains the blood between 2-6°C.

Lieutenant Colonel Matthew Boylan, the MERT Consultant, added:

It has to stay in a very specific temperature range, which is challenging in this sort of environment.

The Medics, who are part of 5 Medical Regiment, are based in Duqm, Oman in preparation for SS3. Located in such an isolated part of the country, they must be prepared to treat a wide range of casualties. The nearest trauma hospital is many hours drive and up to four hours flight from Duqm.



Members of the Joint Medical Group pose by their ambulance © MOD Crown Copyright

Medical training and preparation will continue in the lead up to the exercise, including the testing of equipment and processes to confirm that

the medical chain can deal with challenges before the bulk of UK forces arrive.

A series of Mutual Medical Drills Training packages will also run at Shafa, where Omani field medical unit personnel will join UK Joint Medical Group counterparts inside the deployed British facilities to work through a series of clinical scenarios.