

RAF soar over Buckingham Palace for HM The Queen's Birthday

On Saturday, 17 June 2017, 29 Royal Air Force Aircraft soared over Buckingham Palace, Central London, in an impressive flypast to mark the annual Queen's Birthday Parade.

15 types of RAF aircraft took part in the Flypast, including two of the RAF's world-class display teams – the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight (BBMF) and the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team – the Red Arrows.

✘ The formation flew over the Palace at 13:00BST, divided into eight elements, in roughly 30 second intervals.

Squadron Leader Jim Furness, Formation Lead and flying in one of the Tornado GR4s, said: "It's an honour to take part in Her Majesty's Birthday Flypast. Extensive preparation has taken place over several weeks and months to make sure that the different aircraft from all over the country deliver a safe and successful flypast over London – made more challenging by it being one of the busiest airspaces in the world."

Air Vice Marshal Gerry Mayhew CBE MA RAF, the Air Officer Commanding No. 1 Group, said: "It is an honour for the Royal Air Force to mark HM The Queen's 91st birthday with a flypast. The magnificent sight of over 25 aircraft flying over Buckingham Palace is another example of the superb efforts being made by the men and women of the Royal Air Force, who should be proud of their achievements both at home and overseas."

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The flypast was led by a Chinook and a Puma helicopter, representing the backbone of the UK's tactical troop-lifting capability. Currently deployed in Afghanistan the Puma has recently undergone a fleet upgrade programme, hugely enhancing its capability in supporting the Afghan National Army in Kabul.

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Following the helicopters was the unforgettable sound of Merlin engines powering a Supermarine Spitfire and two Hawker Hurricanes from the BBMF. Today these aircraft represent the rich 99 year history of the Royal Air Force and the sacrifices made by a great many of its personnel. This year BBMF are celebrating their 60th anniversary, having been formed in July 1957.

BBMF were followed by a Shadow R1 – an Intelligence, Surveillance, and Target Acquisition Aircraft which was taking part this year for the first time. The Shadow was flanked by two King Air B200s. The King Airs from RAF Cranwell represent training aircraft from across the RAF but are specifically employed in multi-engine Pilot and Rear Crew training.

Next up were four of the RAF's transport aircraft – demonstrating the RAF's

global reach and its ability to project air power around the world. First up, the C-17 Globemaster III, the RAF's hugely capable strategic heavy-lift aircraft. With its cavernous cargo hold it is often found supporting the UK across the globe, flying long distance sometimes at very short notice. Behind it was the BAe 146. This aircraft provides transport to members of the Royal Family, senior Government Ministers, and Ministry of Defence personnel.

The second Air Transport element consisted of the state of the art A400M Atlas, only its second time in the flypast, and the C-130 Hercules. Whilst being able to employ impressive strategic reach, the Atlas is set to take over more of the tactical airlift role from the C-130. Both aircraft are based at the RAF's largest base at Brize Norton, which is celebrating its 80th birthday this year.



Next followed the Sentinel R1 – a long-range battlefield surveillance aircraft. This key capability is providing vital support to operations in the Middle East. Following the Sentinel R1 was four multi-role Typhoons. With control of UK sovereign airspace a vital task these agile, capable multi role fighters secure our skies 24/7. Currently deployed on operations in Romania, Cyprus and the Falkland Islands, Typhoon is the core of the Royal Air Force's Combat Air capability.

The penultimate element consisted of the Voyager and Tornado GR4. The Voyager is the Royal Air Force's largest aircraft and one which has provided a step change in strategic freight and troop carrying capability. It also is capable of air refuelling a variety of aircraft and is currently supporting operations at home and around the world. The Voyager was flanked by two Tornado GR4s from RAF Marham. This superbly capable aircraft continues to perform outstandingly on operations today, over 45 years since it first flew. Tornado GR4 crews tirelessly support our coalition partners in the Middle East.



Finally, the iconic nine-strong Red Arrows, flying in a 'Big Wing' formation in their distinctive red Hawk aircraft, ended the flypast. The Red Arrows' 53rd season is now underway, with the team expected to display more than 60 times across the UK and beyond. Since 1965 – which was the Red Arrows' first season – more than 4,800 displays have been performed in 57 countries, which is equivalent to a quarter of the world.

Editor: Charlie Haines

Images: Sgt Mackie, Cpl Chapman, Cpl Hawke, Cpl Laurence, SAC Egan

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RAF Typhoons on NATO Exercise in Hungary

Royal Air Force Typhoons deployed to Romania have taken part in a major NATO exercise in Hungary.

Two RAF Typhoons from 135 Expeditionary Air Wing (EAW) joined several NATO allies at Papa airbase in Hungary as part of Exercise LOAD DIFFUSER 17. Deployed as part of a force of four aircraft to Mihail Kogalniceanu (MK) airbase near Constanta in Romania, the two Typhoons were a huge hit with the Hungarian public.



Representing the EAW, Paul, a senior RAF pilot, said:

"During the two days we were there we were absolutely mobbed by a range of media who wanted to see our aircraft up close and to learn what it was like to fly. It was a privilege to show so many VIPs around the Typhoon, to answer all their questions, and to see how impressed they were."

The main purpose of the exercise was to test and increase the interoperability of the various NATO partner air forces. As a change from the Quick Reaction Alert duties that they had been carrying out in Romanian since May, the Typhoons acted as 'Red Air' on 7 June to test themselves and their allies. Paul added:

"Playing as 'Red Air', pretending to be the enemy, gave us the opportunity to fly against a range of aircraft that we would not normally encounter. It was also a superb opportunity to show off how capable and World-leading the Typhoon is."

Held from 22 May until 9 June, this was the biggest air exercise in Hungary in for many years. Alongside the Typhoons were some 400 people from the air forces of Hungary, the United States,

Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia and the Czech Republic.



Explaining why the trip across the border from Romania was so worthwhile, Paul explained:

“Exercises like this allow us to fly in a range of roles with our NATO partners; essential to strengthening relationships with allied and partner nations, helping to maintain joint readiness and interoperability, and to reassure European allies and partners”.

The RAF aircraft deployed to Romania are part of the UK’s contribution to reassurance measures to ensure the operational capability of NATO’s eastern flank. The enhanced Air Policing mission demonstrates NATO’s flexible capabilities and readiness, underlining the commitment of Allies to each other.

Editor: Sqn Ldr Toby Watkins

Images: Sgt Neil Bryden

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Secretary of State Pays First Visit to RAF in Romania

The Defence Secretary has today visited Royal Air Force personnel deployed to Romania as part of the NATO Southern Air Policing mission in the country.

The detachment of four Typhoon fighter jets from 3 Fighter Squadron has been based in Mihail Kogalniceanu Airbase in south east Romania since May. Deployed for up to four months, they are working alongside the Romanian Air Force to police the skies over the Black Sea.

Noting the partnership between the United Kingdom and Romania, Sir Michael said:

“The UK is stepping up in its support for NATO’s collective defence from the north to the south of the alliance. Through this deployment, RAF planes will be ready to secure NATO airspace and provide reassurance to allies in the Black Sea region.”

The Southern Air Policing mission is the first time that NATO has deployed aircraft to reassure allies in the Black Sea region, with the UK being the first country in rotation.

The visit was part of a 2-day tour of Romania on 14 and 15 June which also included Exercise NOBLE JUMP based at the Training Centre in Cincu where a thousand British soldiers are taking part in the NATO military exercise.



Defence Minister Gabriel Les was also present at the airbase where he in turn addressed the gathering of British and Romanian Air Force personnel, saying:

“We have great appreciation for the deployment of Royal Air Force aircraft in Romania as part of the process to implement the Action Plan for increasing NATO’s operational capacity and as part of our Strategic Partnership”.

“The presence in Romania of the Typhoon aircraft, which are some of the very best fighter aircraft, is an excellent opportunity for joint training and action and contributes to increasing air defence capacity for reaction and deterrence as well as to strengthening interoperability between the two military forces”.

The EAW comprises four Typhoon aircraft from No. 3 (Fighter) Squadron from RAF Coningsby in Lincolnshire supported by around 150 personnel drawn from stations across Britain.

Southern Air Policing is part of NATO’s Assurance Measures introduced in 2014 to demonstrate

the collective resolve of Allies, the defensive nature of NATO, and to deter Russia from aggression against Allies.

The RAF aircraft deployed to Romania are part of the UK's contribution to reassurance measures to ensure the operational capability of NATO's eastern flank. The eAP mission demonstrates NATO's flexible capabilities and readiness, underlining the commitment of Allies to each other.

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[NATS sign Armed Forces Covenant with the MOD](#)

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NATS, the UK's leading provider of air traffic control services, has signed a formal declaration of support to acknowledge its close co-operation with the Armed Forces community.

The Armed Forces Covenant was jointly signed at NATS Control Centre in Swanwick, also home to RAF(U) Swanwick, on behalf of the Ministry of Defence by Air Vice Marshal Chris Elliot and NATS' HR & Corporate Services Director Julie Elder. It means that NATS has committed to a number of key principles, primarily:

- Ensuring that no member of the Armed Forces Community faces disadvantage compared to any other citizen
- Offering special treatment to those who need it in circumstances such as injury or bereavement



In addition, NATS has made further commitments to supporting military personnel by ensuring they can participate in key events such as Armed Forces Day, advertising job vacancies amongst the armed forces community and supporting the employment of Services spouses and partners.

NATS sites are based in areas where there is a significant military presence and NATS colleagues work side-by-side with military personnel on a daily basis. Many NATS employees are in fact either former Service personnel or belong to military families.

Ewan Kelbie, Director MOD Capability for NATS, said: “We are very lucky that our control centres in Swanwick, Hampshire and Prestwick in Ayrshire and our corporate office in Whiteley, Fareham are all located in areas of the country with a rich military history and numerous existing military bases.

“Having people in the organisation with a deep understanding of the Armed Forces enables us to continue to develop our relationship with the MOD and to improve the services we provide now and into the future.”



Air Vice Marshal Chris Elliot said: “I am delighted to be signing the Armed Forces Covenant with NATS on behalf of Defence, as it is an important step in further developing the mutually beneficial relationship between ourselves in support of our Armed Forces Community.

“The RAF has a long association with NATS, with regular, reservist, former members, and family members of the Armed Forces working alongside their civilian counterparts. This is a positive commitment by NATS, which I am certain will be fully appreciated by all our community who work within the organisation.”

The UK is a global pioneer of civil and military partnerships in Air Traffic Management and NATS is committed to ensuring that this partnership widens and deepens over the coming years.

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[RAF Engineering Competition](#)

2018 is the National Year of the Engineer and to coincide with that, the RAF has just launched its first ever Engineering Competition.

The competition is an 18-month team challenge, with cash prizes, that aims to encourage a widespread interest in engineering across the Whole Force and to inspire people of all ages to get involved in Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths (STEM).



There will be 2 competitions run in parallel: a Senior Competition and a separate Youth Engagement Competition. The Senior Competition is open to: all RAF personnel across all trades and branches; the Whole Force & Joint participants in teams comprising a majority of RAF personnel; the Defence Technical Undergraduate Scheme (DTUS); and University Air Squadrons (UAS). The Youth Engagement Competition is open to: RAF Air Cadets including CCF(RAF), Air Scouts and the Girls Venture Corps.

To encourage maximum breadth of thought and vision and to promote innovation, ingenuity and Thinking to Win (T2W), entries can be submitted against 4 broad themes:

- * Royal Air Force – the next 100 years.
- * Size, weight and power.
- * Height, reach, speed and endurance.
- * The Information Age.



The Competition will run in 2 distinct Phases. Phase 1 is when teams can register their interest and then submit their concept (what, why, how) with a rough outline design. All submissions will then be judged and sifted with 15 entries from both competitions proceeding to the Finals.

In Phase 2, each of the 30 Finalist teams will receive £3000 to aid concept refinement and production of a prototype or concept demonstrator. They will also have access to a pool of Industry Mentors. The overall Competition will culminate with a finale event in Autumn 2018 which will include a pitch to a panel of expert judges drawn from senior RAF, Industry, PEI, Entrepreneurs & Inspirational figures followed by an Awards Ceremony with the following prizes.

Senior Competition	Youth Engagement Competition
Winners: £5000	Winners: Flight Sim for the unit + STEM Bundle
Second Place: £2000	Second Place: STEM Bundle + VIP visit (Industrial visit, Red Arrows, RAF Stn, or Bloodhound Project)
DTUS/UAS Academic Excellence Award: £1000	All Finalists: STEM Bundle
Women in Engineering Award for best all-female team: £1000	
Ingenuity Award for originality of thought: £1000	

The Competition launches on 18 Apr 17 and to view the rules, FAQs and promotional material simply go to the Competition website [here](#)

Teams need to Register by 1 Aug 17, with concept entries submitted by e-mail by 1 Oct 17. The outcome of Phase 1 judging will be announced in Nov 17.

The central STEM theme gives the wider RAF Family a chance to participate in the national drive to inspire the next generation. The Competition is aligned with the RAF's Strategic Objectives of Building a Workforce Fit for the Future and Delivering the Next Generation Air Force Capability. It will also Embrace 'T2W' through innovation in engineering and deliver activities that help to Promote Women into Science and Engineering (WISE) whilst retaining and attracting RAF personnel in STEM roles.

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