

No. 2 Mechanical Transport Squadron Rolls out for Exercise Frisian Flag

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The Netherlands is the destination for No. 2 Mechanical Transport Squadron as RAF Wittering's famous drivers set off in support of Exercise Frisian Flag on 21st March 2017.

A blustery afternoon saw seventeen trucks loaded with enough equipment to support six tornado jets and 140 personnel leave Cambridgeshire's historic air station. During Exercise Frisian Flag the RAF will operate alongside many European air forces and the United States Air National Guard.

Squadron Leader Rick Longworth is Officer Commanding No. 2 Mechanical Transport Squadron. He said: "Not everything can be moved by air; sometimes you need the economy and flexibility of surface transport, which helps us to keep our valuable transport aircraft available for tasking."



2MT, as the Squadron is known, provides the RAF with its only heavy-lift transport capability by road or sea, supporting operations and exercises across the globe. In addition to HGVs, the Squadron also boasts airfield support vehicles like aircraft towing tractors and fuel bowsers.

Squadron Leader Longworth continued: "This is not the sort of work you can just give to a haulage company. Trained airmen and airwomen are needed for this job; military drivers who understand how to work around an operational airfield and move aviation equipment."



The Squadron was formed during the Battle of Britain when spares for the Spitfires and Hurricanes, ammunition and equipment had to be urgently ferried from airfield to airfield. In Exercise Frisian Flag, the air forces of the world will practise defensive and offensive mixed-fighter operations.

In addition to the RAF Tornados, F-16s, F-15s, Mirage 2000's and the distinctive Typhoon will be operating in the Dutch skies for the duration of the exercise. When Frisian Flag ends, 2MT will be sent to recover all the UK equipment and return it in good order.

Group Captain Rich Pratley is the Station Commander at RAF Wittering and Commanding Officer of the A4 Force Elements, of which 2MT is a part. He said: "Frisian Flag is an important exercise; in deployments like these the Royal Air Force projects the UK's global influence by working in close partnership with our international allies."



Group Captain Pratley continued: "This is the second time in as many days that 2MT has been dispatched to support an exercise, this tells us that the Squadron offers Defence a very useful capability and one that the RAF is happy to showcase to our international partners."

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Duke of Edinburgh visits RAF Northolt

His Royal

Highness Prince Phillip, The Duke of Edinburgh made an official visit to RAF

Northolt on Friday 17 March.

The Duke

made the visit in his capacity of Honorary Air Commodore for the unit, which is

home to 33 units from across Defence and wider Government.



As part

of the visit programme The Duke received an update on operations on the unit and met 120 personnel from all three Armed Services and Civil Servants.

Corporal Loz Prior, who works on the unit as

a Physical Training Instructor was part of the group that met The Duke, he

said: 'I felt immensely proud to be part

of the occasion. A big part of my role

is to ensure that our people are fit to do their job, and His Royal Highness

was very interested in the various ways we manage to achieve that. It was a real honour to meet and speak with a

member of the Royal family.'



The Duke

last visited RAF Northolt in March 2015, when he awarded a new standard to

(The Royal) Squadron as part of the unit's centenary celebrations.

Editor: Squadron

Leader James Tenniswood

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RAF Sportswomen Top of Their Game

RAF SPORTSWOMEN TOP OF THEIR GAMES

Wales-based RAF servicewomen are competing at the top levels in a range of sports, either representing the Service, civilian teams and even their countries.

SAC Sian Williams, 26, serves as a Logistics Mover at MOD St Athan. For the majority of the time, however, she trains and plays for the senior women's Welsh international rugby team and RAF Women's Rugby. She has 25 caps for Wales and is currently training for Women's Rugby World Cup in 2017, a tournament she has fond memories of.



"The highlight of my career so far has definitely been playing against New Zealand in the 2013 World Cup," said Sian. "It was a privilege to represent Wales and play against the best."

SAC Catherine Sharples, 43, is a reservist with Number 614 (County of Glamorgan) Squadron, where she serves as a photographer. She plays for Newport County's women's football team and is a regular goalscorer. She has played football for over twenty years and credits the RAF with helping to keep her fit enough to play alongside colleagues less than half her age. She said:

"One of the reasons I became a reservist is the military's emphasis on fitness. I was already fit when I joined, scoring light blue on the fitness test, but over two years of service now see me regularly achieve dark blue scores, which has only helped my speed and endurance on the pitch."



LAC Olivia Blok, 27, is a civil engineer in civilian life but serves in personnel support in the RAF Reserves. She has been a triathlon and duathlon competitor for the past four years and puts in between 10-15 hours a week training in swimming, cycling and running. She enjoys the emphasis that the RAF puts on fitness and competition and hopes to represent the Service in the near future.



“That’s definitely something I’m working towards if the opportunity is there,” said Olivia. “I was honoured to represent the United Kingdom in my age group at the European Duathlon Championships in 2014 and it would be great to do so for the RAF or UK again.”

Finally, Kate Gale, 24, is a reservist soon to become a regular as she is about to start Initial Officer Training. She plays for Cardiff City women’s basketball and after seeing a poster for RAF ladies team, she signed up and hasn’t looked back. In the course of a year, she has made fast friends and has been selected to play for the RAF at the inter-services tournament in May.



“I’ve always taken my fitness and sports seriously as a reservist,” said Kate. “But playing competitive basketball for the RAF has taken my motivation to another level. The training days can be long and intense but are all the more enjoyable for it, and in a funny way will help prepare me for officer training. I’m really looking forward to continuing RAF basketball as a regular.”

Images by SAC Cathy Sharples

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[RAF A400M 'ATLAS' demonstrated to NZ Air Force](#)

A glorious day in Wellington, New Zealand, provided the perfect backdrop for the RAF to show-off the Airbus A400M ‘Atlas’ to the Royal New Zealand Air Force as part of a prestigious partnership between the two nations.



The A400M, based at RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire is the newest aircraft in the RAF’s fleet. It boasts cutting edge technology, combined with sheer brute strength to make it a formidable strategic and tactical air lift platform. Able to deploy globally, it specialises in carrying over-sized loads and can transport a load of 25 tonnes over a range of 2,000 nautical miles.



The A400M combines huge lifting power with agility, with manoeuvrability akin

to a fast-jet rather than an Air Transport Aircraft. It is a phenomenally capable aircraft and able to fly at a staggering 170 degrees angle of bank.



Number 70 Squadron demonstrated the aircraft to Air Commodore Darryn Webb, the New Zealand Defence Force Air Component Commander on a short flight around New Zealand's stunning islands.



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[Chief of the Air Staff celebrates NZ Air Force 80th Anniversary](#)

This year marks the Royal New Zealand Air Force's 80th anniversary and the RAF is proud to have been invited to take part in the celebrations at the Ohakea Air Tattoo.



The Airbus A400M 'Atlas', the RAF's cutting-edge tactical and strategic airlift aircraft, impressed the public, international air forces, and defence chiefs alike in New Zealand this weekend.

The highly-capable aircraft, which provides a wealth of options in both operational and humanitarian environments, played host to a meeting between the Chief of the Royal New Zealand Air Force and the Chief of the Royal Air Force. Later, gifts were exchanged and both thanked the crew and engineers for bringing the aircraft 11,600 miles from RAF Brize Norton, Oxfordshire, to Ohakea to celebrate a great partnership between the two nations.

Air Chief Marshall Sir Stephen Hillier, Chief of the Air Staff, said: "As Chief of the Air Staff I am delighted the Royal Air Force has been able to come to New Zealand to help celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Royal New Zealand Air Force. We have a long and rich history together going back over decades, going back over operations, and everything we do today.



"It's a fantastic new capability for the Royal Air Force, showing our ability to deploy all the way from the UK to the other side of the world really underlines the Air Forces Global Mobility capability in support of operations, wherever they might be. We get here quickly and effectively in this fantastic new aircraft."



The A400M Atlas is the newest aircraft in the RAF's fleet. It boasts cutting edge technology, combined with the ability to move outsized loads vast distances, making it a formidable strategic and tactical air lift platform. Able to deploy globally, it can transport a load of 25 tonnes over a range of 2,000 nautical miles.

Air Vice-Marshal Tony Davies Chief of the Royal New Zealand Air Force said: "I did get to see the aircraft and have a good introduction with it last July, when I was kindly hosted by 70 Squadron. I got to fly the simulator and go flying in the aircraft, which was really impressive. Great range and payload. I am really envious that you've got them. This one has a lot of capability and a lot of credibility."



"We have a huge shared history together, our roots are from the RAF. It is very meaningful that in our 80th year the RAF is first and foremost the prime guests at our own party. To take the time and effort to come out here, especially for your Chief of the Air Staff, is really meaningful."

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