

# End of an era for RAF Lossiemouth Tornados

## **End of an era for RAF Lossiemouth Tornados**

XV(Reserve) Squadron, the Tornado Operational Conversion Unit, completed its final formal flying on Friday 17 March 2017. The disbandment of the Squadron, after 102 years' of service, on Friday 31 March 2017 will see the end of the Tornado GR4 era at RAF Lossiemouth.



To mark the end of this period in the Station's history, Tornados from XV(Reserve) Squadron carried out a final sortie that included flying by Aberdeen and Leuchars airfields and Tain Air Weapons Range. These sites have all been instrumental in the training of aircrew at RAF Lossiemouth to operate the Tornado. The aircraft returned to RAF Lossiemouth in the early afternoon and carried out a series of flypasts over the Station.

The Tornado Weapons Conversion Unit was based at RAF Honington in Suffolk when it received the XV (Reserve) Squadron title in 1992. It moved to RAF Lossiemouth in November 1993 and then with the closure of the Tri-national Tornado Training Establishment in March 1999 XV (Reserve) Squadron assumed responsibility for the training of all of the RAF's Tornado GR4 pilots and Weapon Systems Operators in both initial training on the aircraft and in post-graduate courses. Over the past 24 years the Squadron has been the life-blood of the front line ensuring the squadrons were provided with combat capable aircrew. The final ab-initio pilot finished his training at the end of January, and the last refresher pilot, returning from a tour instructing at RAF Valley, graduated at the end of February.



Whilst the Tornado Operational Conversion Unit will cease from 31 March, the RAF will continue to utilise the Tornado GR4 until it is finally withdrawn from service

in 2019. RAF Marham in Norfolk is the base of the RAF's front line Tornado squadrons from where aircraft and personnel are deployed to support current operations.

Wing Commander Paul Froome is the Officer Commanding of XV(Reserve) Squadron, and took part in the flypast. He said:

"The disbandment of XV(Reserve) Squadron is a milestone in the drawdown of the Tornado fleet, but I can say hand on heart that every member of the Squadron, past and present, has delivered an exceptional level of service and commitment to the Tornado fleet and the RAF."



Three frontline Tornado squadrons have been based at RAF Lossiemouth since the early 1990s:

12 (Bomber) Squadron was already based at RAF Lossiemouth with the Buccaneer when it was re-equipped with the Tornado GR1B in October 1993 in the Maritime Strike role. The Squadron was disbanded at RAF Lossiemouth on 31 Mar 2014, however it was resurrected on 12 Jan 2015 at RAF Marham.

14 Squadron was based at RAF Bruggen with the Tornado GR1 before returning to the UK and was based at RAF Lossiemouth from 1 Jan 2001. The Squadron was disbanded on 1 Jun 2011. The number plate was passed to a new ISTAR unit which had been operating as part of V(Army Co-operation) Squadron at RAF Waddington.

617 Squadron was equipped with the Tornado GR1 at RAF Marham when it relocated to RAF Lossiemouth in May 1994. It was at this point that it adopted a Maritime Strike role as well as its overland strike role. The Squadron was disbanded in March 2014, however it has since been reformed and is re-equipping with the F-35 Lightning II.

Each of these squadrons deployed personnel and aircraft to Operations TELIC, HERRICK and ELLAMY where the Tornado GR4 exploited its range and payload in the Close Air Support and Interdiction roles.



RAF Lossiemouth will maintain the provision of Quick Reaction Alert (Interceptor) North, or QRA as it is commonly called,

as  
its primary role. The  
strategically important position of the Station on the northern Scottish  
coastline makes it an ideal location to maintain aircraft and crews on high  
alert, in order  
to scramble and intercept unidentified aircraft approaching UK airspace. This  
is the basis of QRA and is a duty that  
has been maintained by the Royal Air Force on a 24/7 basis for decades. The  
Station will also see growth in the near  
future as a fourth Typhoon squadron is formed here and 9 P8 Poseidon  
Maritime  
Patrol Aircraft are based here.

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## [SRUC Vets' advice on Schmallenberg virus in Scotland](#)

In the past two week SAC Consulting Veterinary Services has confirmed two diagnoses of Schmallenberg Virus (SBV) infection in malformed lambs in two Scottish flocks close to the border with England.

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## [The Drever Commemoration Lecture](#)



**University of Dundee – Saturday Evening Lecture Series 2017 – Dundee to the World**

Saturday 25th March 2017

An evening with three graduates who shaped and reported on global events. This is also the Drever Commemoration Lecture.

This event will celebrate three of our prestigious graduates who studied here during James Drever's time as Principal. James Drever was a massive advocate

for political discourse, encouraging students to strike and make stands against funding cuts. Each of these graduates has gone on to make an impact in the field of politics:

- Sir William Patey has played a leading personal role in some of the most challenging diplomatic events of our times during his Ambassadorial roles in Sudan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan.
- Lord George Robertson is a former politician and was Secretary of State for Defence between 1997 and 1999.
- John Suchet is a former foreign correspondent, presenter and a commentator on major ceremonial occasions.

You can register for this event [here](#).

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## [Greens issue stinging rebuke to Princess Anne after GM intervention](#)



# Green Party

22 March 2017

**Keith Taylor MEP: 'This is a right royal stitch up; Princess Anne holds no elected public office and is supposed to remain politically neutral. Yet she is using her considerable unearned status to push a nakedly political agenda.'**

**Molly Scott Cato MEP: 'The opinions expressed by Princess Anne are not helpful in terms of the public debate, which is often dominated by misunderstanding and agribusiness hype.'**

Green MEPs are condemning Princess Anne's 'historically ill-informed' suggestions that Britain should embrace GM crops post-Brexit.

Princess Anne, who is supposed to remain politically neutral, was speaking to the Farming Today programme on Radio 4 when she echoed the suggestion of some Conservative Ministers that Britain should [water down EU GM crop safeguards](#) following the UK's exit from the European Union.

The royal intervention comes just days after MEPs in the European Parliament's Environment Committee voted against the import of a range of

genetically modified maize varieties for use in feed and food.

The majority of MEPs [voted against proposals](#) to authorise several genetically modified maize varieties from Syngenta.

**Keith Taylor, Green MEP for the South East and a member of the European Parliament's Environment Committee, said:**

"This is a right royal stitch up; Princess Anne holds no elected public office and is supposed to remain politically neutral. Yet she is using her considerable unearned status to push a nakedly political agenda and doing so with a flimsy grasp of agricultural history and science. It's fair to say that she doesn't speak for the average UK farmer, let alone the average British citizen."

"In stark contrast, just this week, I joined elected MEPs from across Europe to vote against the import and use of untested GM maize in the EU. It is the sixth time in just over a year that the European Parliament has signalled its opposition to the approval of new GM foods. EU GM safeguards are vitally important."

**Dr Molly Scott Cato, Green MEP for the South West and a member of the European Parliament's Agriculture Committee, said:**

"The opinions expressed by Princess Anne are not helpful in terms of the public debate, which is often dominated by misunderstanding and agribusiness hype. Genetic modification has failed to live up to its promised benefits particularly in terms of yield."

"Perhaps the Princess should have a word with her brother, who has a deep understanding of ecological and systemic risks from GM crops, which are intended for intensively farmed monocultures which threaten biodiversity and soil fertility."

"There is also the issue of corporate power. The planned merger between German pharmaceutical giant Bayer and American seed-maker Monsanto would strengthen the arm of the GM seed lobby. If this takeover is ever allowed to take place it would create one giant corporation controlling 30% of the world market for seeds and 24% of the pesticide market."

"Agri-business argues we need GM to feed the world, but the world already produces enough food for 10bn people. Our focus should not be on increasing production, but rather on reducing food waste and radically reorganising our wasteful and inefficient food distribution system."

**Mr Taylor concluded:**

"Worryingly, Princess Anne appears to be [supporting Tory Ministers](#) who have suggested Brexit could be 'an opportunity' to water down GM crop regulations in Britain. As Greens, we will be fighting to make sure this doesn't happen; it is vital we maintain and strengthen EU GM safeguards post-Brexit. For the health of British people, the environment and farmers, the UK must not be flooded with untested genetically modified crops."

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## **More affordable houses for urban poor sanctioned for Puducherry, Telangana and Himachal Pradesh**

Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation has sanctioned 3,128 more affordable houses for the benefit of urban poor in Puducherry, 924 for Telangana and 2,655 for Himachal Pradesh under the Prime Minister's Awas Yojana (Urban).