

Cranwellian Association – December 2021 (Q3/Q4) Update

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HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH RETURNS HOME AS HISTORIC GLOBAL DEPLOYMENT COMES TO AN END

- 3,700 sailors, marines and aviators return from a seven month deployment
- The group has visited or exercised with 44 countries
- Carrier Strike Group 21 has crossed three oceans and five seas; the ships have sailed 500,000 nautical miles

Royal Navy's flagship aircraft carrier [HMS Queen Elizabeth](#) returns to Portsmouth today after her global seven month maiden operational deployment leading [Carrier Strike Group 21 \(CSG21\)](#). Sailors, aviators, ships and aircraft have returned to their home bases in the Netherlands, United Kingdom and United States of America.

HMS Queen Elizabeth's crew are being welcomed back to their home base of Portsmouth after sailing 49,000 nautical miles to the Indo-Pacific and back. [HMS Kent](#) will join her tomorrow.

3,700 personnel from nine ships, a submarine, five air squadrons and a company of Royal Marines will arrive home in time for Christmas having [departed the UK](#) in early May.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

"Today we pay tribute to the 3,700 personnel in the Carrier Strike Group that have been our global ambassadors on this historic and ground-breaking deployment.

"The personnel and their families have made considerable sacrifices to make this deployment the success it has been. We thank them for all their efforts in strengthening our relationships with our allies and partners around the world."

Families and friends gathered in Portsmouth to meet their loved ones. Those deployed will transit straight home where they will take a PCR test and quarantine until they receive the result. 25 of those deployed on CSG21 met their babies who were born in the last seven months for the first time today.

Chief of the Defence Staff Admiral Sir Tony Radakin said:

"Throughout the past seven months HMS Queen Elizabeth and her Strike Group have been furthering the UK's interests and strengthening our partnerships around the globe. With involvement from across the Armed Forces, and our allies integrated throughout, this deployment has been a truly joint, truly international endeavour, which represents the very best of Global Britain.

"I thank everyone involved for their efforts to make this deployment such a resounding success, and I wish our returning sailors, aviators, soldiers and marines a very happy reunion with their families this Christmas."

return with their families and children.

Earlier this week, the Carrier Air Wing departed the group after clocking up 4,723 flying hours. The Air Wing consisted of [UK F-35 jets](#) from 617 (The Dambusters) Sqn based at RAF Marham, [Wildcat helicopters](#) from RNAS Yeovilton and [Merlin helicopters](#) from RNAS Culdrose.

US Marine Corps F-35 jets from VMFA-211 departed CSG21 in late November. United States' Destroyer USS The Sullivans returned to her base port of Jacksonville, Florida in time for Thanksgiving last month and Dutch Frigate Evertsen recently returned to her home base of Den Helder.

Many families and friends greeted frigate [HMS Richmond](#) who arrived in Plymouth today, meanwhile [HMS Defender](#) and [HMS Diamond](#) returned to Portsmouth.

The Carrier Strike Group sailed across three oceans and five seas, cumulatively covering around 500,000 nautical miles. The group has engaged with 44 countries, strengthening partnerships with allies including Australia, Canada, New Zealand, France, Greece, Israel, India, Italy, Japan, Oman and the Republic of Korea.

The most significant peacetime deployment in a quarter of a century, Carrier Strike Group 21 has been more than just a military endeavour, bringing together elements of defence, diplomacy and prosperity and flying the flag for Global Britain.

RAF personnel help deliver successful first week of Exercise MAGIC CARPET

Over 350 personnel from across a wide range of branches and trades have been working in the Omani heat over the last ten days to ensure the success of Exercise MAGIC CARPET, a two-week exercise in the Air Exercise area in Dhofar Governorate, Oman.

The Air Force personnel work night and day to ensure that the jets of [2 \(Army Cooperation\) Squadron](#), [12 Squadron](#) and the [Voyager](#) of [101 Squadron](#) are available to fly a wide range of exercise scenarios, testing pilots, engineers and ground crew.



Personnel from 101 Squadron work with the Voyager to contribute to the success of Exercise MAGIC CARPET, in Oman.

The medical team comprising Doctor, Nurse, Medic and Physiotherapist are on hand for any

The medical team comprising Doctor, Nurse, Medic and Physiotherapist are on hand for any medical issues and the deployed Physical Training Instructor delivers a wide range of activities to help keep the personnel fit and active.



"It's my first deployment and it's a completely different environment to working back in the UK. I really feel like I'm doing my job here."

Senior Aircraftman Cope
Medic, RAF Lossiemouth



While based in Oman, the team need to be able to communicate with aircraft and ground controllers as well as access to communications back to the UK. The deployed team from 90 Signals Unit, normally based at RAF Leeming, maintain the vital communications network and equipment that allows the detachment to talk in real-time between distant locations.



RAF Chefs have also contributed to the success of the Exercise, by ensuring deployed personnel are fed.

"It's my first time away as a Junior Non-Commissioned Officer (JNCO) in charge of a small team and this exercise is a fantastic development opportunity."

Corporal Hill
90 Signals Unit



The flying programme of the Exercise will complete this week and personnel will depart from Oman over the next two weeks.





The Exercise strengthens the RAF's role as a key partner for Oman, demonstrating its ability to deploy world class capabilities and deliver high quality training opportunities. The Exercise provides further evidence of the UK's integrated approach to defence and foreign policy and the UK's enduring commitment to working with Oman and Gulf partners on promoting regional security and stability.



RAF helicopters celebrate 90 years of service with joint flight



A formation flight of specially painted Chinook and Puma helicopter has taken place to mark over 90 years of combined service. The occasion saw the aircraft make a commemorative flight over a number of locations in the South of England displaying their bespoke anniversary tail art.

The two uniquely painted airframes celebrated their individual anniversaries earlier this year, but this is their first formation flight as a pair. The Puma (XW224), from RAF Benson, has completed 50 years of service; while the Chinook (ZD984), from RAF Odiham, has completed 40 years of service. Each aircraft's tail art was especially commissioned to commemorate the significant anniversaries of their entry into service with the RAF. The flightpath included several iconic sites, stretching from the Isle of Wight to central London; with each location offering unique joint training opportunities for the crews who will often work together on operations.



Both the Pumas and Chinooks have operated as part of the Joint Helicopter Command for over 20 years. The longest serving of the two aircraft, the Puma is a medium-lift support helicopter which entered service on 20th January 1974. Over the last five decades, it has supported a number of

entered service on 29th January 1971. Over the last five decades, it has supported combat and humanitarian operations around the world, including:

- Northern Ireland
- Bosnia
- Kosovo
- Iraq
- Afghanistan
- Mozambique
- The Caribbean

In the UK it has also supported critical Defence tasks such as security for the Olympic Games in London and support for the Scottish Ambulance Service during the Coronavirus Pandemic.



"It's an absolute honour to command the Puma Force in its 50th anniversary year. The Support Helicopter Force has made a vast contribution to operations around the world and in the UK, with the Puma and Chinook delivering over 90 years of combined service. All those who have worked for or with the Puma Force over the last five decades should be incredibly proud of the part they have played, and continue to play, in its successes."

Group Captain Paton
Puma Force Commander

The Chinook, a heavy-lift helicopter with its distinctive twin engine, tandem rotor heads, arrived into RAF service on 22th November 1980. Throughout its 40 years of service, the Chinook has operated in every major conflict since the Falklands War in 1982 including life-saving me





dical evacuations. It has made an immeasurable contribution to the Service, supporting communities across the UK with its extensive and adaptable lift capability including flood relief efforts and life-saving patient transfers in the UK.

"For a combined 90 years, the Chinook and Puma have played a vital role in the UK's defence capability, supporting our people at home and overseas. I am privileged to command the Chinook element of the Support Helicopter Force and I look forward to seeing the Chinook play an equally important role as part of the next generation RAF."

Group Captain McGurk
Chinook Force Commander



The helicopters are expected to be returned to their standard operational markings early next year.

Air-to-air refuelling first for RAF Atlas





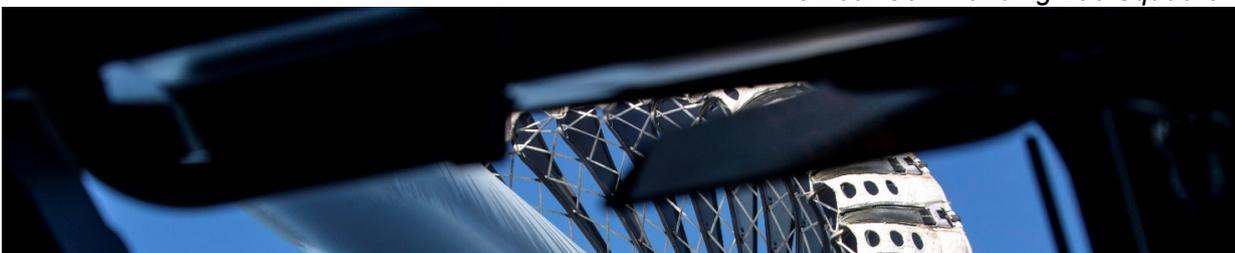
A RAF Atlas C1 (A400M) transport aircraft has been refuelled in the air for the first time.

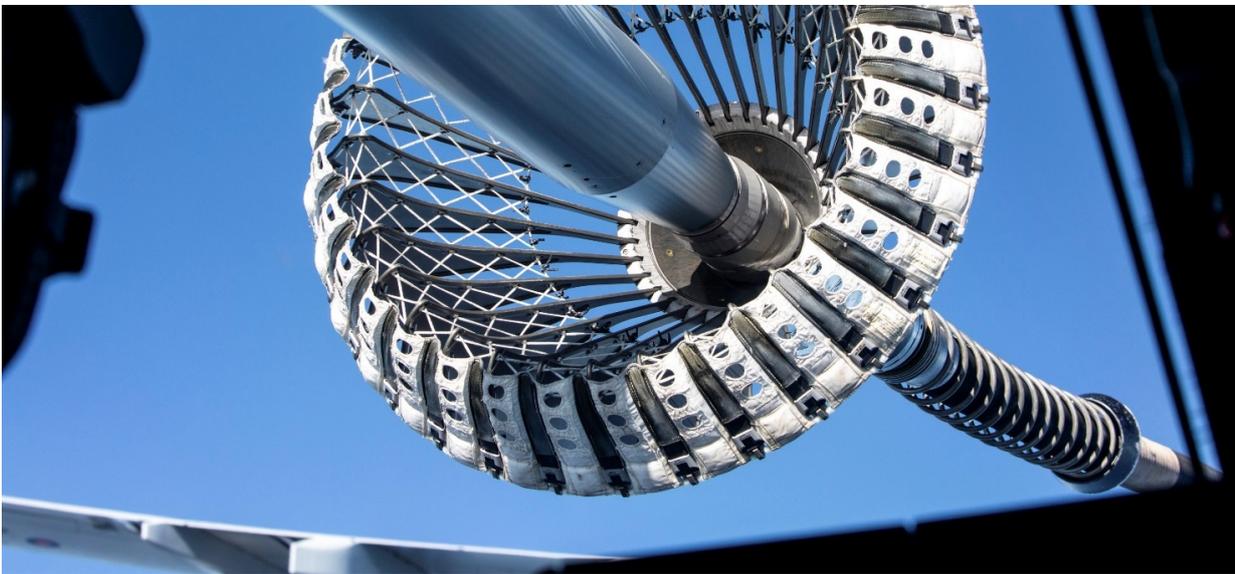
In trials conducted recently by RAF Brize Norton based 206 Squadron, the large transport aircraft received fuel from a Voyager air-to-air refuelling tanker.



"Our test pilots have conducted previous flight test campaigns; however, this is the first with this platform in the UK. The A400M is unique, thanks to its fly-by-wire flight control system. This makes it much easier to maintain formation to make contact and take fuel. This trial has given us the capability to hand over to front line instructors by the end of the year which will enable them to roll out to the remaining A400M Squadrons, 24, 30, and 70 Squadrons at RAF Brize Norton."

Wing Commander Woolven
Officer Commanding 206 Squadron





Both Atlas (A400M), which provides tactical airlift and strategic airlift, and the dual role transport and tanker Voyager, recently played pivotal roles in the evacuation of civilians from Afghanistan.

"This is the very first air-to-air refuelling on this platform in the UK. We have undertaken simulation training to make sure we were familiar with how the aircraft would perform. Air-air refuelling enables the aircraft to reach further, fly for longer and lift more weight around the world more effectively."

Flight Lieutenant Crow
Flight Test Engineer 206 Squadron

206 Squadron are based at RAF Brize Norton, their tasks include testing and evaluating UK Defence heavy aircraft, including the Hercules and Atlas.



RAF Poseidon aircraft named after Canadian Victoria Cross recipient





The newly named Poseidon ZP807 leaving Seattle.

The UK's seventh Poseidon MRA Mk1 Maritime Patrol Aircraft will be known as 'William Barker VC' in honour of the Canadian pilot awarded a Victoria Cross whilst serving with 201 Squadron in the First World War.

In October 1918, Major Barker was flying a Sopwith Snipe overhead the Western Front when he became embroiled in a dogfight with 15 enemy aircraft. Despite being wounded three times in the legs and having his left elbow blown away, he managed to control his biplane and disable three enemy aircraft before making a forced landing.



Portrait of Wing

Commander Barker, Victoria Cross. Photo credit: National Defence Canada.

Regaining consciousness several days later he was informed that he was to receive the Victoria Cross, the highest military decoration awarded for valour 'in the face of the enemy.' In a short note

to the Commander of 201 Squadron Barker wrote:

"BY JOVE, I WAS A FOOLISH BOY, BUT ANYHOW I TAUGHT THEM A LESSON...."



Wing Commander William Barker with a Sopwith Camel in which he shot down 46 enemy aircraft. Photo credit: DND Archives, AH-517.

"The Royal Air Force has always enjoyed the closest of ties with the Royal Canadian Air Force and it is entirely fitting to name this aircraft after William Barker Victoria Cross whose exceptional gallantry continues to serve as an inspiration to military aviators. Major Barker won his Victoria Cross in 1918 while serving on 201 Squadron who now operate the Poseidon. This also provides an appropriate link to the Royal Canadian Air Force's subsequent key role within Coastal Command during the Battle of the Atlantic in World War II, and their continuing contribution to North Atlantic maritime security today."

Group Captain O'Dell
ISTAR Force Headquarters



The Poseidon ZP807 name written on the side. Photo credit: Boeing.

Today, 201 Squadron operates the Poseidon in the anti-submarine warfare role from RAF Lossiemouth on the Moray Firth in Scotland. The RAF Poseidon fleet, which will total nine aircraft

Essex on the moray fish in Scotland. The RAF Escort fleet, which will contain aircraft, is already providing cutting-edge maritime patrol working side-by-side with the Royal Navy and other Allies to secure the seas around the UK and abroad.

A royal graduation for RAF College Cranwell Officers



Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, was the Reviewing Officer for the Sovereign's Review at RAF College Cranwell, on the 23rd September 2021.

Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal arrived on the College Parade Square escorted by the Commandant of the RAF College to take the Royal Salute whilst a Spitfire and Hurricane from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, RAF Coningsby provided a fly past overhead. After reviewing the graduating officers, Her Royal Highness presented the course prizes to the top performing cadets from the course.





Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, reviewing the Parade.

"I am delighted to watch Modularised Initial Officer Training Course 6 and Commissioned Warrant Officer Course 23 graduate today, on what is my last parade as Commandant Cranwell. The day has been extra special for the graduating officers, their families, and the Squadron staff with Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal in attendance. I wish the newly graduated officers all the very best in their future Royal Air Force careers."

Air Commodore Suraya Marshall
Commandant of the RAF College



Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, also presented the Annual Prizewinners Awards to top performing cadets who have completed Modular Initial Officer Training this year and the first recipient to receive 'The Jackie Moggridge Spitfire Award.'

"I have aspired to commission as an Engineering Officer since 2014 when I first joined the Royal Air Force. Today marks the end of two years of hard work going through a Commissioning Degree Scheme at Royal Air Force Cosford and now Modular Initial Officer Training at Royal Air Force College Cranwell. It is a hugely proud moment that I am fortunate enough to share with my family and friends. A true honour, this special day is being reviewed by HRH, The Princess Royal."

Officer Cadet Mike Trokis
Graduate





Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal on the Dias.

The Sovereigns Review comprised of Officer Cadets from Modular Initial Officer Training Course Number 6 and Commissioned Warrant Officers Course Number 23.



The Parade concluded with a C130J Hercules fly past from 47 Squadron, RAF Brize Norton. Musical accompaniment was provided by the Band of the Royal Air Force College, under the direction of Flight Lieutenant Chris l'Anson, Director of Music.

"It is an honour to represent the Chief of the Air Staff at the graduation of No 6 Modular Initial Officer Training and No 23 Commissioned Warrant Officer courses. It is great to see a mix of experiences here today, with many starting out on their journey; amassing knowledge, skills and experience and others beginning a new phase of their careers. As Director General of the Defence Safety Authority, I believe the level of diversity of thought that is represented at this graduation will ensure the Royal Air Force has the best leadership and culture to deal with the challenges of safely maintaining existing capabilities as well as bringing new capabilities into service."

Air Marshal Sue Gray
Director General Defence Safety Authority





After the Parade, Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, met with the graduating Officers. In keeping with tradition, Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, was then invited to plant a Cherry Blossom tree beside the College Parade Square.

RAF Typhoon flies the flag over iconic white cliffs ahead of Battle of Britain Anniversary





The **RAF Typhoon Display** team have retraced the footsteps of the heroic **Battle of Britain** pilots, known as the 'The Few,' by flying over the **White Cliffs** of the southern British coastline ahead of the anniversary of the **Battle of Britain**.

The Typhoon, callsign **Blackjack**, which is based at **RAF Coningsby** made several passes along the landmark as part of their return flight from the south coast after a successful four days of displays at the **Bournemouth Air Festival**.



The sortie provided essential training for **Quick Reaction Alert**, which is the pilots primary role based at **RAF Coningsby**. The aircraft was conducting a training exercise to intercept a low slow target in unfamiliar airspace.



"It was an honour to fly the Union Flag over the White Cliffs to commemorate the anniversary of the Battle of Britain. Looking down to see the stunning coastline and the pure whiteness of the cliffs, as the Fighter Pilots who fought in the Battle of Britain would have done many years ago, was an incredible experience."

Flight Lieutenant Sainty
Typhoon Display Pilot



The Cliffs saw plenty of action in the summer of 1940 and has a long history as a location for observation and warning. The location hosted a Chain Home Radar Station, which helped provide an early warning system along the east and south coasts of Britain. By 1940 the chain was completed and could detect low-flying aircraft which proved invaluable in getting RAF Fighters airborne.



"After shutting down the engines, I sat in the cockpit as the stillness of the air that day enveloped me and I reflected on how they must have felt in the summer of 1940, returning to base after fighting in the skies of the UK. This was a sortie that I will remember for the rest of my life."

Flight Lieutenant Sainty
Typhoon Display Pilot



Charged with capturing the imagery from the air was Senior Aircraftman Lewis, from the Photo Section at RAF Coningsby; he was also joined by aviation photography specialists Center of Aviation Photography Media for the sortie.



"Having the opportunity to photograph the Typhoon Display team aircraft over the Cliffs was a real privilege and something I won't ever forget. Having such a unique vantage point looking down as the Typhoon flew the Union Flag colours over one of the country's most iconic locations was a photographer's dream."

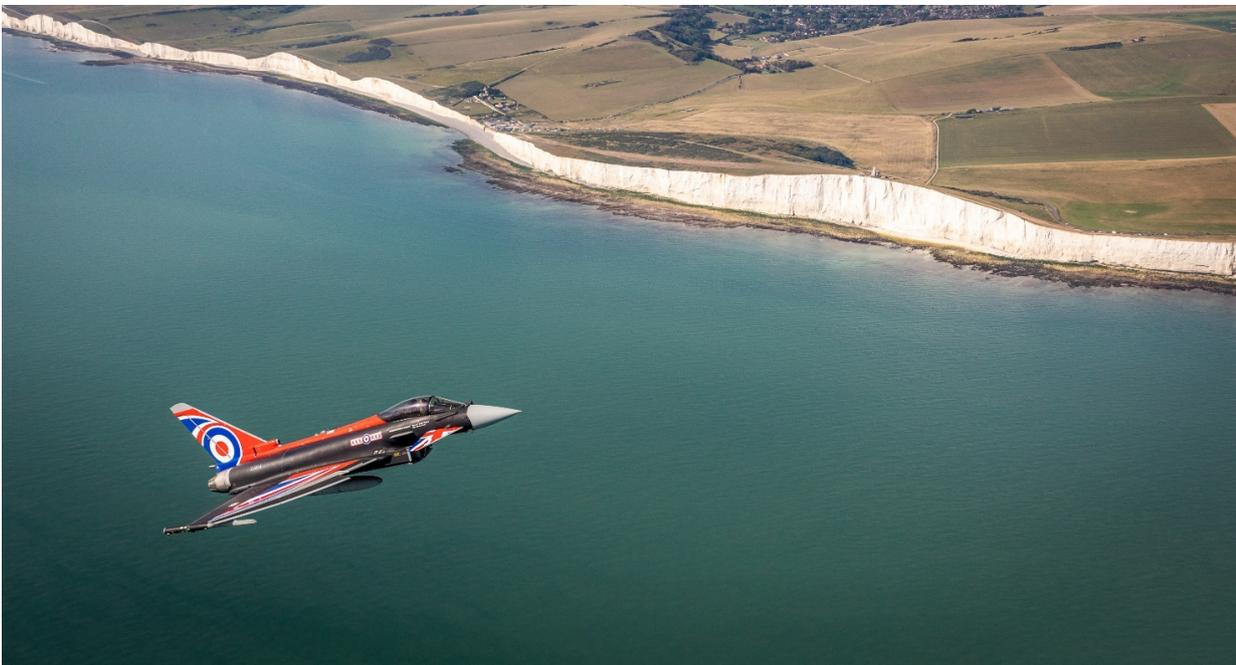


Although fighting continued for another few weeks, the action on 15th September was seen as an overwhelming and decisive defeat for the Luftwaffe. For this reason, this date is celebrated in the United Kingdom as Battle of Britain Day.



The RAF will commemorate the Battle of Britain at the traditional service this Sunday (19th September) at Westminster Abbey attended by the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston.





RAF's next-generation Remotely Piloted Aircraft takes to UK skies



A pre-production example of the UK's new Protector aircraft has taken to the UK skies as part of preparations for the arrival of Protector to RAF Waddington.

The air station has been selected as the home of the Protector International Training Centre, as part of a £94 million investment into infrastructure improvements to assist with housing the aircraft ahead of its entry into service in 2024.





The UK has ordered 16 Protector aircraft from General Atomics-Aeronautical Systems Inc (GA-ASI), all of which will be based at RAF Waddington, the RAF's ISTAR hub.

“Today marks a huge milestone in the Protector programme, bringing us one step closer to delivering this world-leading capability to the RAF.”

“This £94 million investment cements RAF Waddington’s place as the UK’s ISTAR hub, ensuring our Protector fleet can operate safely and effectively for many years to come.”

Ben Wallace
Defence Secretary

A key feature of the investment at RAF Waddington will be the development of a new campus which will include the Protector International Training Centre. Housing the Synthetic Training System for the aircraft, the Centre will enable crews from the RAF and international partners to conduct a significant amount of their training in a secure environment, linking in future with the Defence Collective Training environment under the UK Gladiator programme.



The new campus will support many jobs in the local area, with contracts awarded in the coming

The new campus will support many jobs in the local area, with contracts awarded in the coming months for infrastructure improvements at the base. The campus will feature new Single Living Accommodation for Protector ground crews, a hangar, office facilities, a new road to the Protector area of [RAF Waddington](#) and a new taxiway.

Operating this summer from the Lincolnshire station, the SkyGuardian aircraft has undertaken a number of sorties showcasing its impressive capabilities while also providing vital information for personnel at RAF Waddington preparing for the aircraft's permanent arrival in 2024. SkyGuardian will be known as Protector when it enters RAF service.



Today's investment marks an important step in the development of the revolutionary Detect and Avoid technology, permitting Protector to fly in unsegregated airspace safely – as the world's first Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) Remotely Piloted Aircraft System, Protector will significantly boost the RAF's armed Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition, and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) capability.

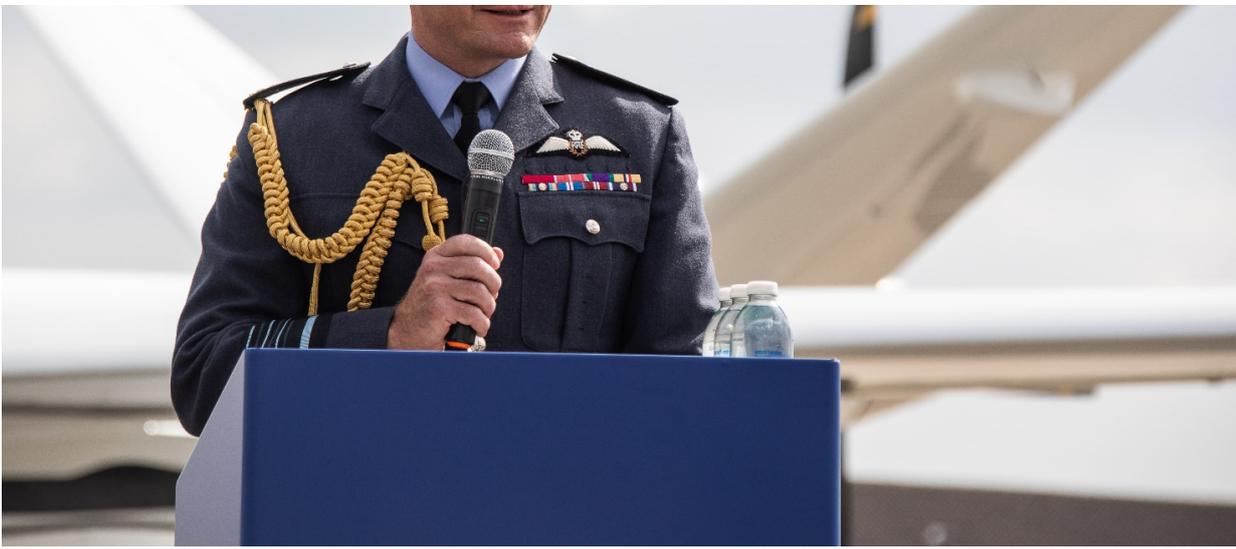
The UK's Protector programme and the investment at [RAF Waddington](#) form part of commitments outlined in the Defence Command Paper to ensure the RAF are equipped to face future threats. This is further enhanced by the £24 billion increase in defence spending over the next four years announced by the Prime Minister last November.

“The Protector aircraft is a huge leap forward in performance and autonomous technology. It can fly for 40 hours anywhere in the world, providing critical surveillance and precision strike to protect the UK and our allies.”

“As the lead customer for this aircraft, I am delighted the Royal Air Force is once again at the cutting edge of air power innovation.”

Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston
Chief of the Air Staff





SkyGuardian's visit to the UK has also enabled refinement of the requirements needed to fully integrate Protector operations into Waddington, where personnel will be able to deploy the aircraft across the globe whenever and wherever needed.

Protector will be able to conduct missions of up to 40 hours and fly in non-segregated civil airspace allowing it to respond rapidly and offer flexibility to deliver an array of military missions and support to civil authorities, including search and rescue.



While in the UK, pilots from GA-ASI have been operating the aircraft. Later this month they will participate in Joint Warrior, a multi-national large-scale military exercise.

The UK Protector programme involves 12 UK industry partners and brings together world-leading technology and service providers to work with GA-ASI, with £400 million being reinvested into UK industry supporting over 200 UK jobs.





Double milestone for RAF Lossiemouth



Aerial shot of Atlantic Building and parade.

RAF Lossiemouth celebrated two major events today with a new Standard being presented to CXX Squadron and the formal naming of the £100 million Poseidon Strategic Facility as the Atlantic Building.

With the impressive Atlantic Building as a backdrop, flanked either side by two sub-hunting Poseidon aircraft, sixty personnel from CXX Squadron formally paraded for the first time since re-forming in 2020. The parade opened with a flypast of a Poseidon aircraft supported by a pair of Typhoon aircraft from II (AC) Squadron.





Air Marshal Gerry Mayhew inspects the parade.

Accompanied by the RAF Lossiemouth Pipes and Drum Band and in the presence of families and distinguished guests including local dignitaries and civic leadership, Air Marshal Gerry Mayhew, Deputy Commander Operations, took the formal salute and inspected the parade. The Chaplain-in-Chief and Archdeacon for the RAF, the Venerable Air Vice Marshall John Ellis QHC RAF officiated at a Drumhead ceremony to consecrate the new Standard.



CXX Squadron Standard is paraded in front of a Poseidon aircraft.

"The state-of-the-art 'Atlantic Building' enables our Poseidon fleet to perform their vital role for UK defence. The building's name reflects the heritage of CXX Squadron and the importance of the aircraft's mission to protect our maritime interests. This fantastic facility is a key part of Defence's £360m investment in RAF Lossiemouth, which has created and supported hundreds of jobs in Moray."

Mr Jeremy Quin
Defence Minister





Poseidon and Typhoon flypast formation.

"This crucial facility serves as an important reminder as to why RAF Lossiemouth is one of the most key military air stations in western Europe. The fleet of Poseidon submarine hunting aircraft based here are vital to maintaining the security of the UK and our NATO allies by providing constant vigilance to threats on and under the sea and protecting the UK's nuclear deterrent. The Atlantic Building - part of a £360m investment in the air base, creating and supporting hundreds of jobs locally - demonstrates powerfully how important defence is to Scotland and how important Scotland is to the defence of the UK and NATO."

Alister Jack
Scottish Secretary



Air Marshal Gerry Mayhew takes the formal salute during the flypast. The day also signalled a new era for CXX Squadron with Wing Commander Hanson handing over command to Wing Commander Livesey.





Air Marshal Gerry Mayhew, Group Captain Chris Layden and representatives from Boeing, DE&S and Robertson as the naming plaque is unveiled.

"The heart of CXX Squadron is its people and as I look back at 3 years in command, the highest privilege has been to have led the most talented, motivated and exceptional people any commander could have hoped for. They have overcome every challenge imaginable – and some we couldn't have imagined – to rebuild the Squadron to once again become the successful warfighting unit it is today, regularly delivering on live operations in a way that our predecessors who stood under the CXX Squadron standard would be proud of."

Wing Commander Hanson

Previous CXX Squadron Officer Commanding

The Atlantic Ocean was, and remains, of vital strategic importance to the United Kingdom. During WWII the UK required more than a million tons of shipping to be delivered per week to survive which was jeopardised by the devastating losses inflicted on Allied shipping convoys by enemy submarines. CXX Squadron re-formed as a Maritime Patrol Squadron and deployed to Iceland in 1941 where they served with distinction and courage in the Battle of the Atlantic rapidly becoming the most successful Antisubmarine Warfare Squadron in history.

"Maritime patrol is of vital importance to the United Kingdom, and the contribution provided by those at RAF Lossiemouth is paramount to its success. I am privileged to take command of 120 Sqn at an exciting time in its history, as we continue to build in capability."

Wing Commander Livesey

New 120 Squadron Officer Commanding

Today the situation is different, but the Atlantic Ocean remains as important to the UK and to the mission of the RAF as ever. Undersea cables provide internet links to the Americas, transmitting trillions of pounds of financial transactions which if disrupted could cripple the economy. RAF Lossiemouth's sub-hunting P8s provide constant vigilance to threats above and below the waves and protect the UK's nuclear deterrent. This is the frontline of UK defence delivered every day from RAF Lossiemouth's strategic location and the building name reflects the heritage of the Squadron and the importance of the mission currently being undertaken.





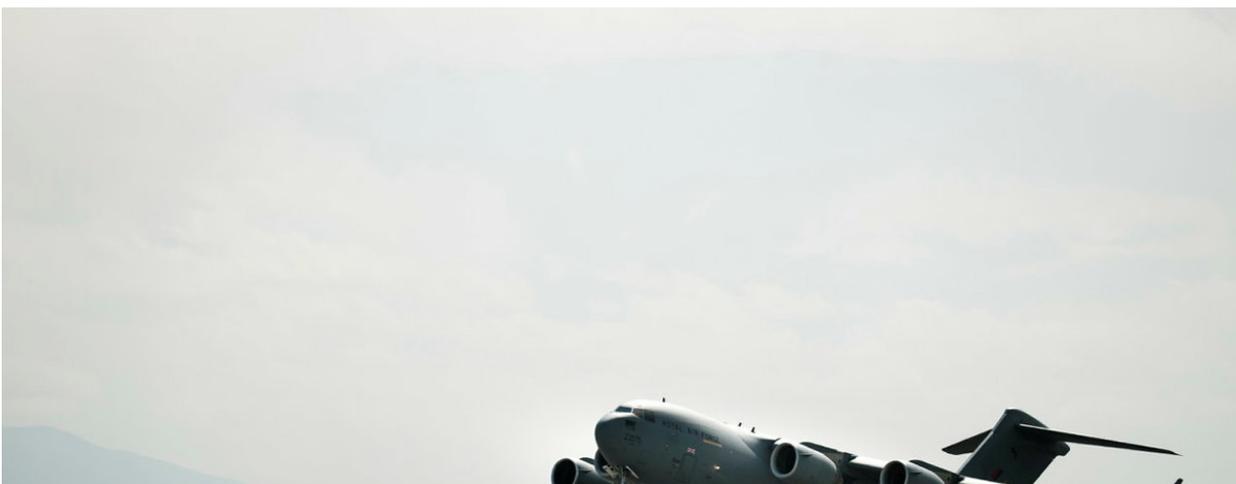
Poseidon and Typhoon flypast formation.

Operation PITTING - The Moving Story



As the RAF prepared to undertake the largest humanitarian aid operation for over 70 years, 1 Air Mobility Wing augmentees from the Joint Movements Squadron were forward deployed to the Middle East at 24 hours notice.

Once in theatre, they supported 906 Expeditionary Air Wing for Operation PITTING where their combined efforts were vital to the extraction of over 15,000 evacuees from Kabul, Afghanistan. This included the record carriage by an RAF Globemaster, 439 passengers out of Kabul on a single flight. The supplies they carried ranged from clothing and baby food for the evacuees, to the transportation of explosives, weapons and ammunition.





An RAF Globemaster carried 439 passengers out of Kabul on a single flight.

"I personally found it challenging, nothing can prepare you for the heat and the intensity of such a high-octane operation. I felt I learnt a lot from the experience and can now deliver movements on a much larger scale. Overall, I found it highly rewarding to be involved with Operation PITTING and to have contributed to the efforts of saving thousands of lives."

Senior Aircraftman Wallace
Specialist Mover, 1 Air Mobility Wing



The RAF flew 15,000 people out of Kabul, as part of an overall evacuation of over 122,000. Operation PITTING, the UK's evacuation of civilians from Afghanistan, began on 14th August 2021 as part of a multi-national extraction of entitled persons by respective countries. Between the start of the operation and the final flight on 28th August 2021, in excess of 15,000 people were flown out of Kabul by the RAF as part of an overall evacuation of over 122,000.





"The team should be extremely proud of themselves for what was achieved. They had no previous operational experience and responded with less than 24-hours notice, working on minimal sleep and completing busy 16-hour days. The work ethic shown was incredible to witness. Our primary focus was on the C-17 and around 10,000 evacuees were saved by that aircraft. This displayed the true operational capabilities of Joint Movements Squadron, where a small team can work tirelessly to get the job done."

Sergeant Lenehan



Personnel from Joint Movements Squadron, 1 Air Mobility Wing and 906 Expeditionary Air Wing all contributed their efforts to Operation PITTING.

The team of specialist movers were deployed to Joint Movements Squadron at RAE Akrotiri from their home base at 1 Air Mobility Wing, RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire. However, the unprecedented scale and urgency of the evacuation of civilians from Kabul, meant they were in turn moved to support 906 Expeditionary Air Wing at its Middle East location for the duration of the operation. Working from 906 Expeditionary Air Wing, the conduit between RAF Brize Norton, RAF Akrotiri and Kabul Airport, the team handled 165 aircraft in seven days.





"The wider 1 Air Mobility Wing effort supported all elements of Operation PITTING including the rapid deployment of personnel and equipment from RAF Brize Norton. At short notice we deployed teams forward to Kabul and the United Arab Emirates to provide movements support to all aircraft operating into and out of those locations; we provided movements support for all aircraft returning to Brize Norton with the evacuees, as well as the recovery of the military personnel and their equipment. I am extremely proud of the hard work, professionalism and determination displayed by all of my team; they were critical to the success of Operation PITTING and should be proud of their vital contribution to the operation."

Wing Commander Lewis
Officer Commanding 1 Air Mobility Wing



RAF Typhoons scrambled to monitor Russian aircraft approaching UK airspace





Quick Reaction Alert Typhoons were scrambled from RAF Lossiemouth in the north of Scotland today.

Royal Air Force Typhoons were scrambled today to intercept and monitor Russian aircraft approaching UK airspace.

Quick Reaction Alert Typhoons were scrambled from RAF Lossiemouth in the north of Scotland and were joined by a Voyager from RAF Brize Norton to provide air-to-air refuelling to the Typhoons.



A pair of TU-142 'Bear-F' Maritime Reconnaissance and Anti-submarine warfare aircraft were intercepted and monitored by RAF Typhoons.

A pair of TU-142 'Bear-F' Maritime Reconnaissance and Anti-submarine warfare aircraft were tracked by NATO as they transited within NATO's northern air policing area.

As they continued to fly towards UK airspace, RAF Typhoons were launched. Intercepting the two cold war era aircraft over the North Sea, the RAF Typhoons shadowed the aircraft throughout their time in our area of interest.

time in our area of interest.



To ensure the RAF was able to respond to any potential threats, the Voyager tanker also remained on station to provide air-to-air refuelling for the live-armed Typhoons, providing additional endurance and flexibility.

“We worked closely with units from around the Royal Air Force to carry out this successful intercept, maintaining the integrity of UK and NATO airspace throughout.

“We were routed directly to the TU-142 by the RAF Control and Reporting Centre and kept informed by our NATO colleagues. Air-to-air refuelling from an RAF Voyager ensured we were able to stay on task until the mission was complete, and the aircraft departed from the UK’s area of interest.”

RAF Typhoon pilot
RAF Lossiemouth

RAF Typhoons are scrambled during these incidents to secure and safeguard the skies of the United Kingdom. Russian military aircraft entering the UK Flight Information Region, the UK’s policed zone of international airspace, can pose a hazard to other air users. These Russian aircraft often do not talk to air traffic control or ‘squawk’, broadcasting a code ensuring they are visible to other air users and air traffic controllers on the ground.

Once the incident concluded, the Typhoons and Voyager returned to their bases and have returned to a state of readiness which ensures that they can respond to any potential threats to the United Kingdom, 24/7/365.