

Chief of the Air Staff visits RAF personnel on NATO mission

CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF VISITS ROYAL AIR FORCE PERSONNEL ON NATO MISSION

The Chief of the Air Staff has visited Royal Air Force personnel conducting the NATO air policing mission which safeguards the integrity of Allies' sovereign airspace.

On arrival at Mihael Kogalniceanu Air Base in Romania, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier was greeted by Wing Commander Andrew Coe, Commanding Officer 135 Expeditionary Air Wing (EAW) and given a tour of the detachment which operates four Typhoon aircraft.



The multi-role fighters have been based in Romania since May as part of wider NATO assurance measures designed to demonstrate the commitment of Allies to collective defence and deterrence.

After meeting personnel from the individual sections which comprise the EAW, ACM Hillier met with his Romanian counterpart, Lieutenant General Laurian Anastasof whom he thanked for the support afforded to the RAF detachment.

ACM Hillier said: "This is our first significant detachment into Romania, and demonstrating that commitment I know is reassuring to them. It's also an important message for the UK overall in NATO is to say that the breadth of our capability is significant."



"I think it very much demonstrates with air power, what the Royal Air Force can contribute for a relatively small detachment, we're really sending an important strategic message which is definitely heard by others."

The Chief of the Air Staff then visited the NATO Command and Air Operation Centre (CAOC) which monitors NATO airspace over an area greater in size than the continental United States.

Situated north of Madrid, CAOC Torrejón has been fully operational since October 2014 forming part of a new NATO command structure established following the Lisbon Summit in 2010.



The CAOC monitors NATO airspace from the Canary Islands to the Turkish-Syrian border, from the Azores to Romania, an area covering about 6,500 kilometres from east to west, including all the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and part of the Atlantic.

While receiving a brief from the CAOC Commander, Lieutenant General Ruben Servert, news came through that an RAF Typhoon had been scrambled in Romania in response to Russian military aircraft over the Black Sea. ACM Hillier was able to observe first-hand how the multi-national team, which includes 17 RAF personnel, controlled the launch of fighter aircraft from four different locations to intercept the Russian Tu-22 Backfire bombers.



In common with their colleagues in Romania personnel were then afforded the opportunity to put any questions regarding the RAF to ACM Hillier and the Chief of the Air Staff's Warrant Officer (CASWO), Warrant Officer Jon Crossley who said: "There is a real desire on my part and the senior leadership team to make people feel comfortable in being able to put forward their thoughts and opinions."

He added, "I firmly believe these opportunities allow people to feel empowered that they have a say in the future of their Air Force."

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