

News story: UK fighter jets intercept Russian bombers approaching UK airspace

Today (Mon 15 January), RAF Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) Typhoon aircraft scrambled from RAF Lossiemouth to monitor two Russian planes approaching UK airspace. The Russian Blackjack Tupolev Tu-160 long-range bombers were not talking to air traffic control, making them a hazard to all other aviation.

The RAF worked closely with NATO partners to monitor the jets as they passed through a variety of international airspace, before they were intercepted by the RAF in the North Sea. Subsequently, our fighters escorted the Russian Blackjacks north, out of the UK's area of interest. At no time did the Russian bombers enter UK sovereign airspace.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The threats this country faces are intensifying and we will not hesitate in defending our skies from acts of aggression.

Our excellent RAF tracked the Russian aircraft every step of the way, and they continue to police UK and international airspace every hour of every day, to help keep the British people safe.

RAF QRA was launched today because the Russian Military aircraft were not talking to air traffic agencies.

The RAF routinely intercept, identify and escort Russian aircraft that transit international airspace within the UK's area of interest and continue to be on call; 24/7, 365.

Speech: Statement on behalf of NATO allies, 24th OSCE Ministerial Council

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM
(ALSO ON BEHALF OF ALBANIA, BELGIUM, BULGARIA, CANADA, CROATIA, THE CZECH REPUBLIC, DENMARK, ESTONIA, FRANCE, GERMANY, GREECE, HUNGARY, ICELAND, ITALY, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, LUXEMBOURG, MONTENEGRO, THE NETHERLANDS, NORWAY, POLAND,

PORTUGAL, ROMANIA, SLOVAKIA, SLOVENIA, SPAIN, TURKEY, THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

This statement is delivered on behalf of the following participating States: Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, and the United States of America, as well as my own country, the United Kingdom.

Mr. Chairperson,

Arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation continue to play an important role in the achievement of our security objectives. Both the success and failure of these efforts can have a direct impact on our security environment. We welcome the Decision on small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunitions.

Enhancing military transparency and confidence in Europe is a top priority. We remain committed to conventional arms control as a key element of Euro-Atlantic security. Full implementation and compliance with these commitments is essential to rebuild trust and confidence in the Euro-Atlantic region. Russia's unilateral military activity in and around Ukraine continues to undermine peace, security, and stability across the region, and its selective implementation of the Vienna Document and Open Skies Treaty and long-standing non-implementation of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty have eroded the positive contributions of these arms control instruments. We call on Russia to fully adhere to its commitments and treaty obligations. Reciprocal military transparency and risk reduction have the potential to improve stability and security in the Euro-Atlantic area, helping to avoid miscalculation and misunderstanding. We are determined to preserve, strengthen, and modernise conventional arms control in Europe, based on key principles and commitments, including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, reciprocity, transparency, and host nation consent.

We remain, inter alia, committed to improving implementation of and achieving concrete progress in 2018 on modernising the Vienna Document to adapt it to the evolving security environment, including through its substantive update. We welcome the wealth of concrete proposals aimed, inter alia, at strengthening risk reduction mechanisms, enhancing military transparency, preventing military incidents and rendering verification more effective. We call on Russia, which has a very substantial conventional military force, to constructively engage by joining other Participating States in the ongoing discussions in the OSCE to modernise the Vienna Document, so that we can reach agreement on meaningful updates. Full implementation and modernization of Vienna Document will help to avoid miscalculation and misunderstanding. We also underline that the OSCE remains a relevant and inclusive forum to rebuild trust and confidence through multilateral military dialogue.

We welcome the Structured Dialogue as an opportunity to renew a meaningful

exchange of ideas among all of the stakeholders of European Security in the OSCE area to rebuild trust. The process will take more time but we value the significant, initial work done in the Structured Dialogue at OSCE during 2017, including discussions of threat perceptions, challenges to the rules-based order, military to military contact, and analysis of trends in military force postures and exercises. We look forward to the continuation of the Structured Dialogue in 2018.

Mr. Chairperson,

The participating States subscribing to this statement request its inclusion in the journal of this Ministerial Meeting.

Thank you.

News story: Bids open to host annual Armed Forces Day National Event in 2019

In 2019, Armed Forces Day will celebrate eleven years of supporting our Armed Forces Community, from serving personnel and reserves to veterans, cadets and families.

The eleventh Armed Forces Day, on Saturday 29 June 2019, will be a chance for the British public to show their gratitude to the Armed Forces for their hard work and sacrifice, to keep us safe at home and abroad.

Defence Minister for the Lords, Earl Howe, said:

This is a fantastic opportunity for a town or city to be at the centrepiece of the nationwide celebration as events and celebrations take place up and down the country.

In recent years the Armed Forces Day National Event has been held right across the country, showing the spectrum of British society – from the nation's capitals like Edinburgh and Cardiff to Liverpool and coastal communities like Cleethorpes and Blackpool.

This year's event will be hosted by the historic North Wales seaside town of Llandudno. The hosts, Conwy Council, have a spectacular range of celebrations planned to show their gratitude to the Armed Forces community. Councillor Gareth Jones, Leader of Conwy County Borough Council, said:

We are proud and privileged to be named as the Host of the National Armed Forces Day in 2018.

Conwy County has a deep affiliation with the Armed Forces and a strong historical link. Llandudno will be a great destination to showcase the outstanding work of the Armed Forces past and present.

The event will be supported by all the North Wales Councils and key colleagues across Wales. Serving personnel and veterans of our Armed Forces Community will be assured of a very warm welcome and an event that thanks them for their commitment to keeping the country safe.

Anyone interested in becoming the 2019 host should contact the Ministry of Defence Armed Forces Day team for more information by email at armedforcesday-events@mod.uk or by telephone on 020 7807 0970. The deadline for applications to be considered as host is 15 March 2018.

More information about Armed Forces Day is available at armedforcesday.org.uk

News story: Could it be Edward, urgent appeal for family of Bedfordshire sergeant killed in World War 1

Edward Norton was a Sergeant of the 7th Battalion Durham Light Infantry when he lost his life in September 1918. His body was never found. Today, the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre is appealing for his family to get in touch after a set of human remains were discovered near the town of Gavrelle in northern France, the place where he fell a century ago.

Born in Stotfold, Bedfordshire in 1881 to Augustus and Mary Ann Norton. Edward originally served in the Bedfordshire Regiment before transferring to the Durham Light Infantry. He married Susan Agnes Bushwell in 1907 and according to the 1911 census, his last known address was 22 Pondwicks Road, Luton.

Now an appeal has been launched by the MOD JCCC to trace Edward's surviving relatives so they can be invited to undertake a DNA test to prove whether or not the remains are his. If there is a match, the family will be invited to attend a full military burial service in March.

Louise Dorr from the JCCC said:

As a result of our extensive research, these remains are very

likely to be 1 of only 2 missing soldiers, so there should be a very good chance of identifying him. He is to be buried in France on 15 March. Rather than bury him as an unknown soldier, I would love to be able to identify him so that his headstone may bear his name.

She added:

There are still so many 1000s of men lost in the Great War who have no known grave. To be able to identify just 1 of them takes a huge amount of research. Most importantly, it brings their individual story to an end and fills in the gaps in their family history.

If you can help with tracing Edward's family, please call Louise on 01452 712612 extension 5465 or via email: DBS-JCCCCommem4S03@mod.uk.

Government response: The Vancouver Principles

The '[Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers](#)' were launched at the United Nations Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial in Vancouver on 15 November 2017. They are a set of political commitments made on preventing child recruitment in the context of peacekeeping operations, including with regard to early warning and the active prevention of recruitment.

The UK is one of the UN Member States to endorse the Vancouver Principles, with the following declaration:

The United Kingdom reaffirms the Paris Commitments to Protect Children Unlawfully Recruited or Used by Armed Forces or Armed Groups on their 10th anniversary. The United Kingdom draws particular attention to Paris Commitment 3, to ensure that conscription and enlistment procedures comply with applicable international law, including the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and Paris Commitment 5, to seek the release of all children unlawfully recruited or used by armed forces or armed groups unconditionally and at all times including during armed conflict.

Having regard to the legal framework concerning the recruitment and use of children and the Paris Commitments the United Kingdom endorses the guidance set out in both the Paris Principles and the Vancouver Principles, which seek to prioritise and further operationalise child protection within UN

peacekeeping missions, in advance of the launch of the Vancouver Principles on 15 November 2017.