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Coningsby Typhoons train in Estonia

Four Typhoons from 3 (Fighter) Squadron have this week been undertaking Air-Land Integration training with the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence battlegroup in Estonia.

The aircraft based at RAF Coningsby have been operating with the British Army Battlegroup currently deployed in Estonia. The training focused on working with the Joint Terminal Attack Controllers and those of NATO allies; Estonia, Latvia and Slovenia.



Joint Terminal Attack Controllers usually known just as JTACs are personnel who are able to direct the action of combat aircraft engaged in close air support and other offensive air operations from a forward position on the ground.

The training has also gave the pilots flying time over an unusual and challenging environment, whilst continuing to build upon strong relationships between the UK and other allied NATO nations.

The UK led multi-national battlegroup, which also has personnel from France and Denmark, is part of the 1st Estonian Infantry Brigade.



It forms part of the wider NATO Enhanced Forward Presence, with multinational forces deployed across the Baltic States and Poland, led by the US, Canada and Germany.

The UK has a further 150 soldiers based in Poland, part of the US led battlegroup and RAF Typhoons have recently completed a four month deployment to Romania, patrolling the Black Sea skies.

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New Red Arrows team pilots announced for RAF centenary year

Red Arrows announce new team pilots for RAF centenary year

A new line-up of Red Arrows pilots who will be part of the team in the Royal Air Force's 100th anniversary year has begun training.

The latest appointments to the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team will spend seven months preparing and working towards the 2018 season, which is the Service's centenary.

Among those pilots joining is a new Team Leader – Squadron Leader Martin Pert, who will fly as Red 1.

It is his second term with the Red Arrows, having been a team pilot between 2012 and 2014, and is now returning following a tour flying the Typhoon aircraft on the frontline.

The 37-year-old said: "I'm hugely proud to be leading the nine Red Arrows aircraft as the Service enters RAF100.

"Every member of the Royal Air Force will no doubt acknowledge the significance of being part of the Service in such a momentous year but, in some ways, it will be business as normal for the Red Arrows.



"We always strive to the highest levels of precision and excellence, so however the team assist in marking the anniversary, those watching can be assured it is befitting such a unique event and all that the celebrations honour.

"In increasingly unpredictable times, honouring 100 years of the RAF with our iconic red, white and blue trails will hopefully bring some comforting familiarity to all those celebrating with us."

Born in Scotland but educated at Parmiter's School, Garston, Squadron Leader Pert was commissioned into the Royal Air Force in 2000.

Team Leaders are always former Red Arrows display pilots and are responsible for all aspects of the aerobatic show, running the training programme and creating the routines.

He succeeds Squadron Leader David Montenegro, whose three-year tour with the team officially finishes this month.

Squadron Leader Pert said: "During my previous tour on the team I was proud of seeing the impact the Red Arrows team had on youngsters.

"Whether it is simply taking time to wave at an airport, or engaging at the numerous science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) events the team support, I'm looking forward to engendering more ways to keep young people interested in all things flying.

"Having also seen the effect digital media has had in just the three years since I was last on the team, I will also be keen to embrace novel ways to bring the Red Arrows, and the Royal Air Force, to more people."

Completely new to the Red Arrows, and flying alongside the six other pilots continuing from the 2017 line-up, are Flight Lieutenants Jon Bond and David Stark, who passed a tough team recruitment process.



To apply to join the Red Arrows, Royal Air Force pilots need to have at least 1,500 fast-jet flying hours, to have completed a frontline tour and be

assessed as above average in their flying role.

If they make the shortlist, they then have to attend a week-long selection of tests, interviews and peer review.

Once they have finished their three-year tour with the team, the pilots return to frontline, instructional or staff duties.

Flight Lieutenant Bond, who was born in Epping and attended Chigwell School before going to Loughborough University, joined the Royal Air Force in 2006 and has also flown the Typhoon operationally.

The 33-year-old, who will fly as Red 2 in 2018, said: "My dream was to become a pilot from a very young age and through a series of fortuitous opportunities it eventually became a reality.



"I used to drag my parents around to airshows across the UK when I was a boy and the Red Arrows were probably the main attraction for that.

"We lived next to North Weald airfield and I used to see them from the back garden whenever they were displaying there and can remember saying that's what I wanted to do!"

Born in Geneva, Switzerland, before moving to the UK, Flight Lieutenant Stark was educated at Nottingham High School. He joined the Royal Air Force in 2005.

Flying the Tornado GR4 operationally, the 35-year-old, will be Red 3 for the 2018 season, said: "It will be an incredible challenge but I can't wait to earn the honour of wearing the red flying suit with everything that it represents.

"The Red Arrows reflect the excellence of the UK Armed Forces and the nation as a whole.



"Core values such as determination, professionalism, teamwork and innovation are vital to the delivery of the flying displays and can be found in every member of team, from engineers to aircrew.

"I'm very proud to be in a position to fly for the team and help to highlight such fundamental UK values."

Also joining the team is a new Red 10 – the Squadron's Supervisor – and the first change in this position since 2011.

Squadron Leader Adam Collins takes over this safety role, which also involves commentating on the team's display at shows, from Squadron Leader Mike Ling, who completed a record six consecutive seasons.

Red 10 is the team's Supervisor for all practices and displays, maintaining radio contact with Red 1 from the ground.

He also coordinates the season, takes the spare aircraft between locations and flies the team's photographers.

Squadron Leader Collins attended Solihull School in the West Midlands, where he was a member of the Combined Cadet Force and received an RAF Sixth Form Scholarship.

He went on to study aeronautics and astronautics at Southampton University and was a keen member of the University Air Squadron where he flew the Bulldog at Boscombe Down.

After completing fast-jet flying training, Squadron Leader Collins' first operational tour was flying the Tornado GR4.



The 39-year-old said: "The Red 10 role is certainly unique and its sheer

variety is what really appeals.

"I will have the opportunity to fly regularly with the team, both in the backseat during rehearsals and also as the pilot of the 10th aircraft, transiting between displays and photo-chasing formations.

"I'm looking forward to having the opportunity to give people a greater understanding of what we do, through conversation or display commentary, which will be very rewarding."

A former Red Arrows display pilot has also recently returned to the team to take overall responsibility for the Squadron.

Wing Commander Andrew Keith officially took over as Officer Commanding, Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team (OC RAFAT), in August – succeeding Wing Commander Martin Higgins.

He is responsible for the Squadron's flying, engineering, administrative and safety matters.

Wing Commander Keith was commissioned into the Royal New Zealand Air Force in 1994 and graduated as a fast-jet pilot.

He transferred to the Royal Air Force in December 2001, completing frontline tours flying the Harrier and was selected to be a Red Arrows pilot from 2007 to 2009.

Wing Commander Keith said: "The Red Arrows approach the next season having completed a highly-successful 2017 campaign, which included a month-long overseas tour supporting UK interests across the Middle East and displaying to millions of people.



"The focus now is on detailed preparation, with careful planning and training taking place across the Squadron – both in the air and on the ground – to produce a display that will be part of the RAF100 events and activities.

"In keeping with other units and colleagues across the RAF, we hope the events planned in 2018 will commemorate, celebrate and inspire people during this special anniversary."

Based at RAF Scampton in Lincolnshire, the Red Arrows showcase the excellence of the Royal Air Force and represent the United Kingdom at home and overseas. The 2018 programme will be the team's 54th season and it is anticipated that millions of people will see the Red Arrows carry out a trademark combination of precision flying and dynamic loops, rolls and close-passes.

However, before the pilots can officially wear the team's famous red flying suits, they will have to complete winter training.

Pilots fly three-times-a-day, five-days-a-week with each sortie filmed and scrutinised in detail.

An assessment is then carried out by senior Royal Air Force officers in the spring and, if successful, public display authority is granted and the pilots can change from green coveralls worn during training to their red suits.

Similarly, the Red Arrows' ground staff can switch to their royal blue coveralls.

The 2018 team will comprise the following pilots:

- **Officer Commanding, Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team: Wing Commander Andrew Keith**
- **Red 1 and Team Leader: Squadron Leader Martin Pert**
- **Red 2: Flight Lieutenant Jon Bond**
- **Red 3: Flight Lieutenant David Stark**
- **Red 4: Flight Lieutenant Chris Lyndon-Smith**

- Red 5: Flight Lieutenant Dan Lowes
- Red 6 and Synchro Leader: Flight Lieutenant Si Taylor
- Red 7 and Synchro Two: Flight Lieutenant Toby Keeley
- Red 8 and Executive Officer: Flight Lieutenant Matt Masters
- Red 9: Flight Lieutenant Mike Bowden
- Red 10 and Supervisor: Squadron Leader Adam Collins

For more information about the team, follow @rafredarrows on Twitter, see the latest images posted on Instagram by following rafredarrows, like RAF Red Arrows on Facebook or visit www.raf.mod.uk/reds

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UK return for Red Arrows after 11-country overseas tour

AFTER

8,000 miles, jets from the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team have returned home from an overseas tour promoting the best of British.

The

Red Arrows' distinctive Hawk aircraft arrived at the team's base of RAF Scampton, Lincolnshire, earlier today (Saturday).



Eleven

countries were visited in five weeks, with the world-renowned display team helping to showcase UK excellence in engineering, innovation, creativity and education to millions of people.

The

landing at RAF Scampton also marked a close to the Red Arrows' 2017 campaign –

its 53rd season – during which 70 displays were flown at home and overseas.

Wing

Commander Andrew Keith, Officer Commanding, Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team, said: "The tour was a great demonstration of a key role of the Red Arrows – that of national ambassadors, powerfully supporting and promoting UK interests.



"We

were privileged to fly to a range of countries across Europe and the Middle

East with hundreds of thousands of people either seeing these performances live or learning more about the team and the UK through the resulting media coverage.

“Everywhere the team flew we were very well-received and the tour highlighted the strong, important and often longstanding ties the UK and our Armed Forces have with counterparts overseas.”

The tour was staged in support of the GREAT Britain campaign – the Government’s most ambitious international marketing campaign, showcasing the very best of what our whole nation has to offer in order to encourage the world to visit, study and do business with the UK.



The deployment began just a few days after the Red Arrows’ last UK airshow of the summer season and began with a flypast over the Cannes Yachting Festival – supporting British industry exhibiting at the event.

After France, Athens Flying Week was the destination with the Red Arrows performing displays on back-to-back days. Moving to Jordan, the Squadron was honoured to complete a flypast over eight national landmarks, including Petra.

The first display in Saudi Arabia by the Red Arrows in a decade was then staged in Jeddah, to help mark the Kingdom’s National Day, before a move to Kuwait – only the third time the team has performed there.



Doha’s skyscraper-lined Corniche provided the next venue for a display and also a special mixed formation flypast with a Qatar Airways Airbus A350, celebrating the airline’s 20th anniversary and also highlighting the airliner’s British-made Rolls-Royce engines and wings.

Muscat, Oman, was the sixth show location and then the team performed in Karachi – the first time the Red Arrows had displayed in Pakistan for 20 years, broadcast live on national television.

The last public display of the deployment and the 2017 season was in Bahrain, against a perfect blue sky.



Beginning

the flight home earlier this week, there was a rare chance to fly with the Royal Saudi Air Force Aerobatic Team, the Saudi Hawks. It saw 16 Hawk jets – seven belonging to Saudi Arabia and nine of the Red Arrows – in the sky over Riyadh.

The

aircraft arrived back to RAF Scampton this afternoon following a transit through Europe, refuelling at locations in countries including Cyprus, Greece, Italy and France.

But

the aerial performances were only part of the campaign. A comprehensive programme of ground activity was staged in each of the tour locations, including industry events, school visits and presentations to business leaders.

More than 2,000 students were met by members of the Red Arrows team.



Wing

Commander Keith said: “The flying we are able to do is obviously very spectacular but perhaps the most rewarding aspect of a tour such as this is meeting people at all of the varied events and activities which form the foundation of the deployment and where we can promote the UK face-to-face.

“It’s

very humbling to be able to visit a school or invite young people to see our British-built aircraft and inspire them to consider what can be achieved through teamwork and education.”

In

addition to the Squadron’s fast-jet pilots, many of the Red Arrows’ highly-trained support personnel, including engineers, photographers and administrators, accompanied the tour, as well as specialists drawn from other areas of the Royal Air Force, including logisticians and medical staff.



Much

of the team’s kit and equipment was moved by C-17 Globemaster, one of the Royal Air Force’s capable transport aircraft.

Wing

Commander Keith said: “The tour was a very good example of the RAF’s expeditionary qualities and experience as well as the dedication and excellent

teamwork by everyone involved in the detailed planning and bold delivery of the

deployment, both from home in the UK and overseas.”

Now

back in the UK, preparations are already underway for the Red Arrows’ 54th season in 2018 – the Royal Air Force’s 100th anniversary year.



For

more information about the team, follow @rafredarrows on Twitter, see the latest images posted on Instagram by following @rafredarrows, like RAF Red Arrows on Facebook or visit www.raf.mod.uk/reds

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101 YEARS LATER, PEACE AT LAST FOR WORLD WAR ONE AVIATORS

In a moving ceremony near The Somme in France, the final resting place of two Royal Flying Corps (RFC) aviators has finally been marked exactly 101 years after their deaths, following painstaking research by a retired Royal Canadian Navy Officer.

The graves of

Lieutenant Leonard Cameron Kidd MC and Second Lieutenant Fenton Ellis Stanley Phillips MC were rededicated with full military honours in a service today [Thursday, 12 October 2017] at the Caterpillar Valley Cemetery in France. The graves of Lieutenant Kidd (Pilot) and Second Lieutenant Phillips (Observer) were previously marked as ‘A British Airman of the Great War’.



Lieutenant Kidd

and Second Lieutenant Phillips were killed on 12 October 1916. They were members of 3 Squadron RFC, and had flown out of the RFC Aerodrome at La Houssoye at around 13:50 in a Morane Parasol reconnaissance aircraft. The pair

did not return and were believed to have been shot down by anti-aircraft fire between Gueudecourt and Eaucourt L’Abbaye.

For a century

their whereabouts remained unknown and the pair were commemorated by the

Commonwealth War Graves Commission on the Arras Flying Services Memorial. However, thorough research by Lieutenant Commander Steve St Amant, a retired Royal Canadian Navy Officer, has revealed that the two plots at the Caterpillar Valley Cemetery do indeed belong to Lieutenant Kidd and Second Lieutenant Phillips (see Notes to Editors).

The service, organised by the Ministry of Defence's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC) was attended by personnel from the current 3 (Fighter) Squadron Royal Air Force, based at RAF Coningsby in Lincolnshire. The service was conducted by Rev Fr Flight Lieutenant James Mealy, the RAF Coningsby Station Chaplain and Padre of 3 (Fighter) Squadron.



Also present was Lieutenant Commander St Amant alongside other representatives from the Royal Canadian Navy, the UK Embassy in Paris, Standard Bearers from the Royal British Legion, local dignitaries, and the Head Teacher and pupils from Bromsgrove School in Worcestershire, which was attended by Lieutenant Kidd.

Rev Fr Flight Lieutenant James Mealy said: "It is truly an honour and privilege to be part of this rededication service for Lieutenant Kidd and Second Lieutenant Philips. They are remarkable and brave young officers who gave their everything so we can enjoy our today.

"Also, as the 3 (Fighter) Squadron Padre, it is especially meaningful to me, to finally give these two men the honour and blessing that they deserve and give praise and thanksgiving to God for the sacrifice they gave for us. Their names will continue to live on."

Simon Bergg, Second Lieutenant Phillips' great nephew who attended the ceremony, said: "We are extremely grateful for the opportunity to pay our respects to our great uncle at this Rededication Ceremony. It means a great deal to us that he no longer rests in an unmarked grave.



"We are also very thankful for the time and effort that Steve St Amant invested to unearth the history that has enabled this ceremony to take place.

“Through all of this we have learned so much about our Great Uncle and how he brought pleasure and joy to those around him during his short life, even during times of conflict.”

Tracey Bowers, who works for the JCCC, said: “It is only right and fitting that these two exceptionally brave men now have a named grave. It is humbling that so many people have travelled from so far away to attend today’s ceremony”

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