

RAF soar over Buckingham Palace for HM The Queen's Birthday

On Saturday, 17 June 2017, 29 Royal Air Force Aircraft soared over Buckingham Palace, Central London, in an impressive flypast to mark the annual Queen's Birthday Parade.

15 types of RAF aircraft took part in the Flypast, including two of the RAF's world-class display teams – the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight (BBMF) and the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team – the Red Arrows.

✖ The formation flew over the Palace at 13:00BST, divided into eight elements, in roughly 30 second intervals.

Squadron Leader Jim Furness, Formation Lead and flying in one of the Tornado GR4s, said: "It's an honour to take part in Her Majesty's Birthday Flypast. Extensive preparation has taken place over several weeks and months to make sure that the different aircraft from all over the country deliver a safe and successful flypast over London – made more challenging by it being one of the busiest airspaces in the world."

Air Vice Marshal Gerry Mayhew CBE MA RAF, the Air Officer Commanding No. 1 Group, said: "It is an honour for the Royal Air Force to mark HM The Queen's 91st birthday with a flypast. The magnificent sight of over 25 aircraft flying over Buckingham Palace is another example of the superb efforts being made by the men and women of the Royal Air Force, who should be proud of their achievements both at home and overseas."



The flypast was led by a Chinook and a Puma helicopter, representing the backbone of the UK's tactical troop-lifting capability. Currently deployed in Afghanistan the Puma has recently undergone a fleet upgrade programme, hugely enhancing its capability in supporting the Afghan National Army in Kabul.



Following the helicopters was the unforgettable sound of Merlin engines powering a Supermarine Spitfire and two Hawker Hurricanes from the BBMF. Today these aircraft represent the rich 99 year history of the Royal Air Force and the sacrifices made by a great many of its personnel. This year BBMF are celebrating their 60th anniversary, having been formed in July 1957.

BBMF were followed by a Shadow R1 – an Intelligence, Surveillance, and Target Acquisition Aircraft which was taking part this year for the first time. The Shadow was flanked by two King Air B200s. The King Airs from RAF Cranwell represent training aircraft from across the RAF but are specifically employed in multi-engine Pilot and Rear Crew training.

Next up were four of the RAF's transport aircraft – demonstrating the RAF's

global reach and its ability to project air power around the world. First up, the C-17 Globemaster III, the RAF's hugely capable strategic heavy-lift aircraft. With its cavernous cargo hold it is often found supporting the UK across the globe, flying long distance sometimes at very short notice. Behind it was the BAe 146. This aircraft provides transport to members of the Royal Family, senior Government Ministers, and Ministry of Defence personnel.

The second Air Transport element consisted of the state of the art A400M Atlas, only its second time in the flypast, and the C-130 Hercules. Whilst being able to employ impressive strategic reach, the Atlas is set to take over more of the tactical airlift role from the C-130. Both aircraft are based at the RAF's largest base at Brize Norton, which is celebrating its 80th birthday this year.



Next followed the Sentinel R1 – a long-range battlefield surveillance aircraft. This key capability is providing vital support to operations in the Middle East. Following the Sentinel R1 was four multi-role Typhoons. With control of UK sovereign airspace a vital task these agile, capable multi role fighters secure our skies 24/7. Currently deployed on operations in Romania, Cyprus and the Falkland Islands, Typhoon is the core of the Royal Air Force's Combat Air capability.

The penultimate element consisted of the Voyager and Tornado GR4. The Voyager is the Royal Air Force's largest aircraft and one which has provided a step change in strategic freight and troop carrying capability. It also is capable of air refuelling a variety of aircraft and is currently supporting operations at home and around the world. The Voyager was flanked by two Tornado GR4s from RAF Marham. This superbly capable aircraft continues to perform outstandingly on operations today, over 45 years since it first flew. Tornado GR4 crews tirelessly support our coalition partners in the Middle East.



Finally, the iconic nine-strong Red Arrows, flying in a 'Big Wing' formation in their distinctive red Hawk aircraft, ended the flypast. The Red Arrows' 53rd season is now underway, with the team expected to display more than 60 times across the UK and beyond. Since 1965 – which was the Red Arrows' first season – more than 4,800 displays have been performed in 57 countries, which is equivalent to a quarter of the world.

Editor: Charlie Haines

Images: Sgt Mackie, Cpl Chapman, Cpl Hawke, Cpl Laurence, SAC Egan

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News story: New Gateway will help veterans get support on civvy street

Backed by £2 million from the Ministry of Defence's Covenant Fund, ['Veterans' Gateway'](#) is designed to help former Servicemen and women of all ages and backgrounds navigate their new lives as civilians.

From advice on housing and finance to help with health concerns, the Gateway will bring together the vast range of charities and support on offer, guiding veterans directly to the help they need, when and where they need it.

[Veterans' Gateway](#)

The new 24-hour online chat, phone, and text message service brings the Armed Forces support community together in a single place for the first time – delivered by a Royal British Legion-led consortium with Poppyscotland, Combat Stress, Connect Assist, the Ministry of Defence and SSAFA, the Armed Forces Charity. The service centre, based near Cardiff in South Wales, is manned partly by veterans to help ensure that callers can speak to someone who can understand their experience.

Tobias Ellwood, Minister for Defence People and Veterans said:

The vast majority of our people make a smooth transition from military to civilian life, but the Veterans' Gateway provides extra support in the form of a staffed, 24-hour, one-stop-shop offering guidance on housing and employment, finance, mental and physical health. Our £2 million investment honours the nation's Armed Forces Covenant and draws all facets of support for our Armed Forces community together for the first time.

Charles Byrne, Director General of The Royal British Legion, on behalf of the Veterans' Gateway consortium said:

Every charity only exists to help, but Lord Ashcroft revealed the uncomfortable truth that a proliferation of providers in our sector can cause confusion about where to turn. The consortium's research found that the Armed Forces community – overwhelmingly – supports the Veterans' Gateway, with 83 per cent welcoming the creation of a first point of contact. Veterans' Gateway will make it easier for them to get the support they need, from whoever is best able to provide it. No matter how complex their needs, working together we can do more.

Veterans' Gateway has been established in response to Lord Ashcroft's 2014 [Veterans' Transition Review](#), which called for the process by which veterans are guided to welfare support services to be made easier to navigate. It honours the Armed Forces Covenant – a pledge, enshrined in law, that former and current members of our armed forces, and their families, should suffer no disadvantage because of their service to our nation.

To contact Veterans' Gateway Call: 0808 802 1212 Text: 81212 or visit: <http://www.veteransgateway.org.uk>

News story: Sir Michael Fallon reappointed as Secretary of State for Defence

Commenting on his reappointment, Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

It has always been an honour to serve as Secretary of State for Defence and I am pleased I can continue our vital work. Defeating the evil of Daesh in Syria and Iraq, countering Russian aggression through NATO, working with the United States and other allies and supporting the Police in dealing with terrorist atrocities, our contribution is as important as ever.

Our £178 billion Equipment Plan will deliver the cutting edge equipment our soldiers, sailors and airmen need and I am determined to make the most of our rising Defence budget.

I also want to drive innovation within our supply chains and ensure the UK is a leader in the field of military technology.

With so much to be done, I would like to welcome back to the MOD Mark Lancaster who will take up his new position as Minister Armed Forces, Lord Howe (Minister in the Lords) and Harriett Baldwin (Minister for Defence Procurement). I would also especially like to welcome Tobias Ellwood who joins our highly experienced Ministerial team from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to become Minister (People and Veterans).

News story: Defence Secretary welcomes new Canadian Defence Policy

The Second Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry today (18 June) took over the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace for the first time in history.

The role will involve 85 soldiers from the unit, as well as musicians from the Royal Canadian Artillery band, who are based at Garrison Edmonton, Alberta. The Canadian troops will be instantly recognisable by the distinctive French Grey colour on the collar and cuff – known as regimental facings – of their full dress scarlet tunic.

In another demonstration of the UK and Canada's strong Defence relationship, Sir Michael has given his backing to Canada's new Defence Policy.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

I welcome the new Canadian Defence Policy. Its commitments to remain Engaged in the World, and maintain Canadian contributions to peace and stabilisation, mirror our own.

I am greatly encouraged by the Policy's commitment to an uplift in the Canadian Defence budget and new capabilities. In particular, the commitment to invest \$108 billion in purchasing and upgrading Canadian Forces equipment, including a full complement of 15 new warships and 88 advanced fighter jets, is a welcome development. This is representative of the way that NATO members across the alliance are stepping up to ensure that our collective defence will have the modern capabilities needed in a changing world.

News story: Defence Secretary agrees stronger partnership with Netherlands

Sir Michael Fallon agreed the joint vision statement – a commitment to strengthen co-operation in areas including hybrid and cyber warfare and counter-terrorism – with Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Minister of Defence for the Netherlands.

The agreement will include a pledge to work more closely across defence and security policy, intelligence and joint exercises. It will also see the

exchange of personnel and work towards a UK-Netherlands Amphibious Force.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Today, the UK has stepped up its relationship with the Netherlands – one of our closest and most reliable European allies. We have committed to working more closely to tackle common threats, from cyber security to terrorism, and will be united in our drive for the EU and NATO to work better together.

The UK is stepping forward not back from the global stage and will continue to defend our continent before and after Brexit.

The UK and Netherlands have a long history working together through the UN, NATO, Joint Expeditionary Force and, most recently, in the Counter Daesh Global Coalition. The Dutch have also committed a company of Marines to the UK-led NATO Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (Land) this year.

Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Minister of Defence for the Netherlands said:

I very much value the strong military ties between the UK and the Netherlands. Clearly, our collective security is at stake, and I am convinced that we can only face today's and tomorrow's challenges by joining forces. We need each other more than ever. Military cooperation, either bilateral or within NATO-EU, is crucial in securing and safeguarding peace and stability at home and abroad.

Sir Michael and Dutch Minister of Defence Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert met at Admiralty House after attending the Queen's Birthday Parade.