

Duke of Edinburgh visits RAF Northolt

His Royal

Highness Prince Phillip, The Duke of Edinburgh made an official visit to RAF

Northolt on Friday 17 March.

The Duke

made the visit in his capacity of Honorary Air Commodore for the unit, which is

home to 33 units from across Defence and wider Government.



As part

of the visit programme The Duke received an update on operations on the unit and met 120 personnel from all three Armed Services and Civil Servants.

Corporal Loz Prior, who works on the unit as

a Physical Training Instructor was part of the group that met The Duke, he

said: 'I felt immensely proud to be part

of the occasion. A big part of my role

is to ensure that our people are fit to do their job, and His Royal Highness

was very interested in the various ways we manage to achieve that. It was a

real honour to meet and speak with a

member of the Royal family.'



The Duke

last visited RAF Northolt in March 2015, when he awarded a new standard to 32

(The Royal) Squadron as part of the unit's centenary celebrations.

Editor: Squadron

Leader James Tenniswood

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End of an era for RAF Lossiemouth Tornados

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XV(Reserve) Squadron, the Tornado Operational Conversion Unit, completed its final formal flying on Friday 17 March 2017. The disbandment of the Squadron, after 102 years' of service, on Friday 31 March 2017 will see the end of the Tornado GR4 era at RAF Lossiemouth.



To mark the end of this period in the Station's history, Tornados from XV(Reserve) Squadron carried out a final sortie that included flying by Aberdeen and Leuchars airfields and Tain Air Weapons Range. These sites have all been instrumental in the training of aircrew at RAF Lossiemouth to operate the Tornado. The aircraft returned to RAF Lossiemouth in the early afternoon and carried out a series of flypasts over the Station.

The Tornado Weapons Conversion Unit was based at RAF Honington in Suffolk when it received the XV (Reserve) Squadron title in 1992. It moved to RAF Lossiemouth in November 1993 and then with the closure of the Tri-national Tornado Training Establishment in March 1999 XV (Reserve) Squadron assumed responsibility for the training of all of the RAF's Tornado GR4 pilots and Weapon Systems Operators in both initial training on the aircraft and in post-graduate courses. Over the past 24 years the Squadron has been the life-blood of the front line ensuring the squadrons were provided with combat capable aircrew. The final ab-initio pilot finished his training at the end of January, and the last refresher pilot, returning from a tour instructing at RAF Valley, graduated at the end of February.



Whilst the Tornado Operational Conversion Unit will cease from 31 March, the RAF will continue to utilise the Tornado GR4 until it is finally withdrawn from service in 2019. RAF Marham in Norfolk is the base of the RAF's front line Tornado squadrons from where aircraft and personnel are deployed to support current operations.

Wing Commander Paul Froome is the Officer Commanding of XV(Reserve) Squadron, and took part in the

flypast. He said:

“The
disbandment of XV(Reserve) Squadron is a milestone in the drawdown of the
Tornado fleet, but I can say hand on heart that every member of the
Squadron,
past and present, has delivered an exceptional level of service and
commitment
to the Tornado fleet and the RAF.”



Three
frontline Tornado squadrons have been based at RAF Lossiemouth since the
early
1990s:

12 (Bomber) Squadron was already based at RAF
Lossiemouth with the Buccaneer when it was re-equipped with the Tornado GR1B
in
October 1993 in the Maritime Strike role. The Squadron was disbanded at
RAF Lossiemouth on 31 Mar 2014, however it was resurrected on 12 Jan 2015 at
RAF Marham.

14 Squadron was based at RAF Bruggen with the
Tornado GR1 before returning to the UK and was based at RAF Lossiemouth from
1
Jan 2001. The Squadron was disbanded on 1 Jun 2011. The number
plate was passed to a new ISTAR unit which had been operating as part of
V(Army
Co-operation) Squadron at RAF Waddington.

617 Squadron was equipped with the Tornado GR1
at RAF Marham when it relocated to RAF Lossiemouth in May 1994. It was at
this point that it adopted a Maritime Strike role as well as its overland
strike role. The Squadron was disbanded in March 2014, however it has
since been reformed and is re-equipping with the F-35 Lightning II.

Each of these squadrons deployed personnel and aircraft to Operations
TELIC, HERRICK and ELLAMY where the Tornado GR4 exploited its range and
payload
in the Close Air Support and Interdiction roles.



RAF Lossiemouth will maintain the provision of
Quick Reaction Alert (Interceptor) North, or QRA as it is commonly called,
as
its primary role. The
strategically important position of the Station on the northern Scottish
coastline makes it an ideal location to maintain aircraft and crews on high
alert, in order
to scramble and intercept unidentified aircraft approaching UK airspace. This

is the basis of QRA and is a duty that
has been maintained by the Royal Air Force on a 24/7 basis for decades. The
Station will also see growth in the near
future as a fourth Typhoon squadron is formed here and 9 P8 Poseidon
Maritime
Patrol Aircraft are based here.

Editor: Flt Lt Ian Smith

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MacAskill describes SNP's currency plans as 'not just lamentable, but laughable'

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- MacAskill describes SNP's currency plans as 'not just lamentable, but laughable'

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A former SNP frontbencher has described his party's plans for the currency of a separate Scotland as "not just lamentable, but laughable".

Writing in today's *Herald*, ex justice secretary Kenny MacAskill said that criticism of the nationalists will "turn to scorn" unless they can come up with a proper plan for the finances under independence.

The remarks come as Nicola Sturgeon gears up for the second of a two-day Holyrood debate on whether or not there should be another independence referendum.

But as the First Minister prepares a new break-up bid, she has repeatedly failed to address questions such as which currency an independent Scotland would use and how it would cope with huge debts, deficits and a massive shortfall in North Sea oil revenues.

Mr MacAskill said: *"The fundamental issues that lost the first referendum and undermine the case for a second – the currency and the economy – remain.*

"Failure to address the currency issue is becoming not just lamentable, but laughable. Action needs taken before criticism turns to scorn."

Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary Dean Lockhart said:

"This is a cutting intervention from someone who, not that long ago, was at the heart of the SNP's separation campaign.

"If even Kenny MacAskill feels the nationalists' currency plans are laughable, you can imagine what the voters think.

"The SNP is rushing into this second campaign, and in the process is making all the same mistakes which lost the vote last time.

"The First Minister has recently changed the SNP's position from flirting with adopting the Euro to possibly using the pound, while other senior SNP ministers want to use a new currency altogether.

"With so much SNP confusion over a fundamental issue, how can voters be asked to make an informed decision in an independence referendum?"

To see the original remarks, visit:

http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/15173328.MacAskill__SNP_failure_over_currency_issue_becoming__quot_laughable__quot_/

The astonishing amounts paid by NHS for locum doctors is another example of woeful workforce planning by Conservatives – Justin Madders

Justin Madders MP, Labour's Shadow Health Minister, commenting on new figures which show that hospitals have flouted caps on locum pay, said:

"The astonishing amounts paid by the NHS for locum doctors is yet another example of the woeful workforce planning by the Conservative Government. There isn't just a shortage of permanent medical staff, there's now a shortage of available locums to plug the gaps.

"Patients want to know that taxpayers' money is being spent on

patient care, not padding out the profits of employment agencies. Jeremy Hunt needs to explain what he's going to do to deliver a long term, sustainable workforce plan for the NHS."

The Road Investment Strategy was insufficiently planned, poorly thought out and unrealistically costed – Pat Glass

Pat Glass MP,
Labour's Shadow Transport Minister, responding to the National Audit Office (NAO) report into the Government's Road Investment Strategy, said:

"This report shows that the Government has made a huge error of judgment. The Road Investment Strategy was rushed out by George Osborne and David Cameron as a gimmick for the 2015 election. It was insufficiently planned, poorly thought out and unrealistically costed.

"This has raised expectations with motorists and businesses that Labour warned at the time could not be met and it is clear that the Department for Transport has questions to answer.

"The Government needs to seriously reconsider their plans, so that these crucial infrastructure projects are delivered on time and in budget."