The Royal Air Force and Kōkū Jieitai (the Japan Air Self-Defense Force) have marked the first joint exercise between the two countries with a ceremony attended by Service Chiefs and Government Ministers during the first week of November.

Defense Minister Tomomi Inada joined Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier and his Kōkū Jieitai counterpart, General Yoshiyuki Sugiyama, to congratulate members of both forces on their performance during Exercise Guardian North 16.

Speaking to a parade of over 200 RAF and Kōkū Jieitai personnel, Defense Minister Inada said: ‘The Northern Air Self-Defense Force is fulfilling its responsibilities every single day under harsh conditions to protect Japan’s blue sky, conducting over 160 scrambles in just the first half of this year alone.

‘I have full confidence you have attained great results in this Japan/UK joint exercise with your high morale and skills. There is no other country in Europe in which defence cooperation has progressed more than with the UK for Japan.’

General Sugiyama added: ‘We have not done any bilateral exercises in Japan with other nations except with the US, and ultimately we are so grateful for this opportunity to host one in Japan with the Royal Air Force; which is one of the most committed services to improving the global security environment.’

Responding for the Royal Air Force Sir Stephen offered his thanks and said: ‘Can I say what a huge honour it is to experience such wonderful hospitality from the Japan Air Self-Defense Force, it has allowed us to come such a long way and to exercise so successfully.

‘What I now look forward to doing is developing this relationship even further in the months and years to come. We have much to learn from each other as air forces, we have much to do to explore and develop our capabilities, and I would very much look forward to that opportunity.’

Exercise Guardian North has seen four Typhoons from 2 (AC) Sqn training with the Kōkū Jieitai F-2 and F-15 aircraft from Misawa and Chitose Air Bases, in the north of Japan.
While the pilots of both forces have carried out complex air intercept training sorties, the engineers and support staff have worked closely with their JASDF counterparts to further develop relationships and capabilities.

Exercise Guardian North 16 is so named to represent the role of the JASDF and RAF as guardians of security in the exercise area of Northern Japan. This exercise was agreed at the January 2016 Foreign and Defence Ministers Dialogue.

The Exercise is aimed at enhancing interoperability to deepen the UK and Japan’s partnership in security and defence.

No 2 (Army Cooperation) Squadron was formed at Farnborough in Hampshire on 13 May 1912 as one of the original squadrons of the Royal Flying Corps (RFC). Known as Shiny Two, the Squadron’s mottos are Hereward and Second to None. The Squadron became the fifth front-line Typhoon squadron on 9 January 2015, based at RAF Lossiemouth in Scotland. Furthermore, this squadron contributes to the UK Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) mission which maintains a high state of readiness 24 hours a day year round in defence of UK airspace.

Picture captions

Two Typhoons from No 2 (Army Cooperation) Squadron, Royal Air Force.
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An F2 of the Kōkū Jieitai (Japan Air Self-Defense Force).
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