

Anglo-French air defence exercise

On 15 December the RAF and French Air forces carried out a joint intercept exercise, scrambling both countries' Quick Reaction Alerts (QRA).

Typhoons from RAF Coningsby in Lincolnshire linked up with Armée de l'air Rafale aircraft to intercept a simulated non-NATO military aircraft entering the UK Airspace. The key objective of the scramble was to exercise and practice NATO Long Range Aviation procedures within the UK and French Flight Information Regions (FIR) and develop the tactical co-ordination involved with international cross-FIR border operations.

Describing the activity, Air Officer Commanding Number 11 Group, Air Vice-Marshal Ian Duguid said: *'This enhanced air security training with France is a demonstration of our close co-operation and interoperability with our NATO partners. This week's exercise is a timely demonstration of the ever closer, effective partnership between the RAF and French Air Force who, as NATO allies, continue air policing tasks and operations in Mali and in the Levant. Exercising together this week has demonstrated a new level of enhanced air security training.'*

He added: *'It is not only about our shared fast jet capability; the role of enablers such as the Voyager air-to-air refuelling plays a vital role supporting the protection of our skies. We look forward to repeating these exercises twice each year in order to train with our close allies and exercise the tactical co-ordination involved with international cross border operations.'*

The scenario simulated the tracking of aircraft crossing into the UK FIR and the theoretical scramble of the UK's QRA North based at RAF Lossiemouth, before conducting a fighter-to-fighter handover with aircraft scrambled from RAF Coningsby. French QRA also scrambled to track the aircraft, and a Voyager from RAF Brize Norton supported the exercise with air-to-air refuelling.

This week's activity was the first event arising from the new agreement between the UK and French Air Planning Groups to hold two exercises each year. It also follows the signing last month of the joint Core Vision Statement by the Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Mike Wigston, with his counterpart, General Lavigne to reinforce historical cooperation and pave for the way for future and mutual benefit in the air and space domains.

Picture captions

UK and French Air forces have exercised a joint intercept scrambling both countries Quick Reaction Alerts.

In flight refuelling.

***Images by SAC Megan Woodhouse – RAF Northolt
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