

Fact Sheet 8: Future Force 2020 – Royal Air Force

Re-structuring and re-equipping to be relevant for the 21st Century

The RAF in 2020 will be able to provide:

- air defence of the UK and South Atlantic Overseas Territories;
- a credible and capable combat air presence to contribute to conventional deterrence, coercion and containment;
- an expeditionary combat air contribution for enduring land operations;
- strategic and tactical airlift; and
- other air power capabilities, including ISTAR, helicopters and RAF Regiment ground units.

Fast Jets

We will have a fast jet fleet of Typhoon and Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) aircraft. Approximately one third of these will be at high readiness. The Typhoon and JSF are two of the world's most capable combat aircraft. This combination will provide the flexibility and strike power to deal with a variety of new and existing threats, while also radically improving cost effectiveness and efficiency.



Joint Strike Fighter (left); Typhoon firing an Advanced Short Range Air-to-Air Missile (right)



C-17 strategic transport aircraft (left); A400M (right)

Strategic and Tactical Airlift

A modernised and highly capable strategic and tactical airlift fleet will be delivered through seven C-17 transport aircraft, 22 A400M transport aircraft and 14 Airbus A330 strategic transport and tanker aircraft. These aircraft will be able to deploy, support and recover our forces and their equipment rapidly anywhere in the world. The A-330 will also be able to provide airborne refuelling to maximise the range and endurance of our aircraft.

Support Helicopters



Merlin Support Helicopter in Afghanistan



Chinook Support Helicopter

Our support helicopter capability will provide battlefield mobility from land and sea. It will be based on Chinook heavy-lift and medium-lift Puma and Merlin helicopters. We will buy an additional 12 new Chinooks and significantly upgrade Puma's capability. (Further details on helicopters are in the Army Fact Sheet.)

ISTAR Capabilities

Our strategic surveillance and intelligence platforms will be capable of providing wide area coverage as part of our broader combat ISTAR capability. E-3D Sentry aircraft will provide airborne command, control and surveillance; and Rivet Joint signals intelligence aircraft will provide independent strategic intelligence gathering. We will also maintain a range of remotely piloted air systems.

We will maintain RAF Regiment Force Protection squadrons at high readiness to protect deployed aircraft and personnel in hostile areas and provide Defence's CBRN detection capabilities.



E-3D Sentry - airborne command, control and surveillance aircraft (left);
RAF Regt Lance Corporal on patrol in Afghanistan (right)

Air Weapons



Tornado equipped with
Storm Shadow cruise
missiles

In 2020, the RAF's weapon systems will include:

- the Storm Shadow cruise missile, a state of the art capability to strike ground targets at medium to long range; and
- advanced air-launched weapons to complement the capabilities of Typhoon and JSF.

In order to meet the Future Force 2020 Structures, the Royal Air Force will:

- Reduce by around 5,000 personnel to c.33,000 by 2015;
- retain Tornado but remove Harrier from service in the transition to a future fast jet force of Typhoon and JSF;
- not bring into service the Nimrod MRA4;
- withdraw VC10 and the three variants of TriStar aircraft from 2013 as we transition towards the more capable A330 future strategic transport and tanker aircraft;
- withdraw the C-130 Hercules transport fleet 10 years earlier than planned as we transition to the more capable and larger A400M;
- withdraw the Sentinel surveillance aircraft once it is no longer required to support operations in Afghanistan;
- rationalise the RAF estate.



Tornados will be retained and will
continue to operate in Afghanistan