

Why do we need a Combat Air Strategy?

- The future of the UK's Combat Air sector is not assured. The gap between major Combat Air development programmes and uncertainty about future requirements has limited our capacity to develop next-generation capability.
- The threat we face is evolving and proliferating at pace. The future air environment will be increasingly complex, with significant technological advancements over the lifetime of our aircraft.
- Information advantage will be critical, as will the ability to exploit and defeat emerging technologies. This requires us to do things differently.
- Our future force will be based around upgraded Typhoon and F-35 for the coming decades. We will invest in these platforms to ensure they remain world-beating. We will also leverage the best of their capabilities into the systems that follow; reducing cost and risk in those programmes.

The Combat Air Strategy:

- Defines a clear way ahead to preserve our national advantage and maintain choice in how this is delivered. We will continue to invest in upgrading Typhoon, improving its systems to achieve a 'beyond-4th generation' capability.
- Will enable the UK to reap the economic, international and strategic benefits of a major role in a future Combat Air acquisition programme.
- Highlights the criticality of cutting-edge UK technology and Intellectual Property, including how this is generated, sustained and exploited.
- Reinforces the importance of effective international partnering in delivering next generation capability, building on mutual strengths and working towards future interoperability.
- Initiates the acquisition programme to deliver the capabilities required when Typhoon leaves Royal Air Force service; delivering initial operating capability by 2035.

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Ministry
of Defence

Combat Air Strategy:

An ambitious vision for the future



Combat Air refers to aircraft (manned or unmanned) whose prime function is to conduct air-to-air and air-to-surface combat operations in a hostile and contested environment; with the ability to concurrently conduct surveillance, reconnaissance, electronic warfare, and command and control tasks.

The Importance of Combat Air

- Combat Air allows us to gain and maintain control of the air both at home and across the globe to support joint operations and to retain the ability to challenge adversaries who threaten us or our partners and allies.
- Our **operational advantage** ensures that the UK can deliver control of the air and attack functions successfully and our **freedom of action** means we can do so at a time and a place of our choosing.
- The Royal Air Force is engaged today in 15 missions, on four continents, in 22 countries and our combat aircraft are deployed 24/7 securing UK airspace and UK interests around the globe.

Value of the UK Combat Air Sector

- The UK is a global leader in Combat Air, with cutting-edge military capability underpinned by world-class industrial, technical and scientific know-how.
- The UK Combat Air sector has an annual turnover of over £6 billion a year and has contributed over 80% of total defence exports from the UK over the last 10 years.
- The UK Combat Air sector directly supports over 18,000 highly skilled jobs across the UK with many more in the wider supply chain.
- Maintaining access to a dynamic and innovative industrial base will determine our ability to choose how we deliver our future requirements, including maintenance and upgrade of current systems.
- A world-class industrial base enables significant economic and international benefit to the UK.

The UK's strategic approach to Combat Air will maximise the overall national value the UK derives from the sector; balancing military capability, international influence, economic and prosperity benefits.

