

RAFALO UPDATE – NOVEMBER 2016

This is the latest edition of the RAFALO Update, which includes information on changes to the Service. If you have anything you wish me to cover, please advise in the usual way via Adrian.morris941@mod.uk

SENIOR APPOINTMENTS LIST

GENERAL

Air Commodore S J Shell OBE to be promoted Acting Air Vice-Marshal and to be Chief of Staff Operations at Headquarters Air Command with effect from 1 December 2016 in succession to Air Vice-Marshal P A Atherton OBE who is leaving the Service.

Air Commodore C J Luck MBE to be promoted Air Vice-Marshal and to be Commandant Joint Services Command & Staff College at the Defence Academy, Shrivenham in August 2017 in succession to Major General J R Free CBE.

Acting Air Commodore J M Dixon AFC was promoted Air Commodore on 12 September 2016 and is appointed Chief of Staff Headquarters Air Command with effect from 16 December 2016 in succession to Air Commodore J B Portlock who is leaving the Service.

Group Captain J J Attridge OBE ADC to be promoted Air Commodore and to be Joint Force Air Component Commander, Headquarters Air Command in April 2017 in succession to Air Commodore D J E Cooper CBE whose next appointment is yet to be announced.

Group Captain D G Bradshaw to be promoted Air Commodore and to be Lightning Force Commander, Royal Air Force Marham in April 2017 in succession to Air Commodore H Smyth OBE DFC whose next appointment is yet to be announced.

Group Captain A B Read to be promoted Air Commodore and to be Head Defence Equipment & Support Airworthiness Team, Abbey Wood in December 2016 in succession to Mr S Horrocks.

Group Captain R A Woods OBE to be Officer Commanding Royal Air Force High Wycombe in March 2017 in succession to Group Captain P T G Lester.

Group Captain N A Tucker-Lowe DSO to be Officer Commanding Royal Air Force Valley in December 2016 in succession to Group Captain B R Braid.

EQUIPMENT AND MANPOWER

New Director Helicopters Air Vice-Marshal Graham Russell has taken over as Director Helicopters. AVM Russell's previous role was as Air Officer A4 in Air Command, where he was responsible for operational engineering and logistics, and, as the A4 Force Commander, commanded the RAF's high-readiness deployable Air Combat Service Support Units.

ASRAAM for F35B A contract worth around £184 million has been awarded by the MOD to ensure the future of the F-35B Lightning II's air-to-air missile capability, securing around 400 UK jobs in the process. The deal will see MBDA manufacture an updated version of the ASRAAM heat-seeking air-to-air weapon, which will be integrated into the F-35 for use beyond 2022, when the current variant goes out of service. ASRAAM is currently being used in operations over Iraq and Syria in the fight against Daesh as part of the RAF Typhoon and Tornado jet fleet, with the updated version of the missile expected to enter service on Typhoon aircraft from 2018. This is the second contract awarded to MBDA by the MOD in recent months, following the announcement that SPEAR 3, a brand new missile for the F-35 Lightning II, will be developed over the coming years and is expected to enter service in the mid-2020s.

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) A third Zephyr-S Unmanned Aerial Vehicle, capable of flying for a record-breaking 45 days at a time, has been ordered by DE&S, on behalf of the Ministry of Defence (MOD), as part of a £13 million deal. The additional cutting-edge, ultra lightweight UAV joins two others previously bought by the MOD in February. Airbus Defence and Space (ADS) will be developing Zephyr-S, which is referred to as a High Altitude Pseudo-Satellite (HAPS), because it performs more like a satellite than a conventional UAV. Running exclusively on solar power, it still has the capability to reach twice the altitude of commercial aircraft at 70,000 feet and above weather systems that can inhibit airborne devices.

Air Defence Radar The first of three Air Defence radars that are tolerant of wind turbines has achieved Full Operating Capability at RRH Trimmingham in Norfolk. Without effective mitigation, wind turbines situated in radar line of sight are proven to cause interference, obscuring aircraft movements. This could reduce the ability of Air Defence (AD) radars to detect potential threats entering UK airspace; and it could make air traffic movements more difficult to manage, increasing safety risks. Under these arrangements, wind farm developers have funded, free of charge to the MOD, the introduction of wind farm tolerant Lockheed Martin TPS-77 Air Defence radars at Remote Radar Heads (RRH) Trimmingham, Staxton Wold and Brizlee Wood.

Voyager Conversion A RAF Voyager has been converted into an aircraft fit for transporting Government ministers and members of the Royal Family in just seven months. The revamp of the aircraft was announced as part of the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) with the aim of providing a better value for money way of transporting Ministers rather than the current use of charter aircraft. As well as transporting VIPs, the Voyager can also continue to perform air-to-air refuelling in support of RAF and allied aircraft.

A400M Atlas Landing trials for the A400M Atlas have been successfully completed as the military transport aircraft progresses towards full operational capability. The two week trial, which took place at a former RAF base in Suffolk, saw the aircraft operating from a prepared dirt surface which had been artificially softened in order to fully test the airframe. The trial demonstrated that the aircraft could land on softer surfaces and at a heavier weight than the C130J; in fact despite being nearly twice as heavy, it has three times as many wheels so it lessens the impact on surfaces even when carrying greater payload and fuel. This will significantly increase the RAF's strategic and tactical capabilities in that the RAF can now carry loads to austere, remote locations direct from the UK rather than having to tranship the cargo half way.

Meteor Missile Firing Success Two recent Meteor missile firings have been conducted successfully providing crucial flight test data for the ongoing Typhoon Phase 2 Enhancement (P2E) development programme. The firings, in August, were executed on a UK range by test pilots from Leonardo-Finmeccanica with an Italian based Typhoon development aircraft. This was fully supported by the UK, including the Fast Air Support Team (FAST), Air Dominance and Suppression (ADS) PT, BAE Systems and QinetiQ. Director Combat Air, AVM Keith Bethell, said, "The Meteor integration project is a key element of the broader Project Centurion through which key capabilities enhancements will be delivered onto Typhoon to enable the platform to take over the roles currently delivered by the Tornado GR4 and enhance the roles currently performed by Typhoon." Meteor is a Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile (BVRAAM), developed by MBDA, which is due to be operational with Typhoon Force with an In Service Date (ISD) of June 2018.

BriteCloud DE&S has placed a £2.5 million order for UK-designed and built miniature decoys which will help to protect combat jets from missiles. The cutting-edge BriteCloud system, designed and manufactured in Bedfordshire and Scotland by Leonardo-Finmeccanica, will undergo flight trials on RAF Tornado aircraft later this year. BriteCloud, which is similar in size and appearance to a beverage can, can be fired from an aircraft's flare dispenser without the need for modification to the aircraft. Once deployed, it uses powerful radar emissions to disrupt systems within radar-guided air-to-air and surface-to-air missiles. This new £2.5 million batch order will allow the RAF to explore how BriteCloud could best be deployed operationally. If successful, the system could be available for Tornado aircraft operations by mid-2017.

Royal Auxiliary Air Force (RAuxAF) Uniform Members of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force (RAuxAF), more commonly known as the RAF Reserves, will no longer wear identifying Auxiliary insignia on Parade and Mess Dress. The identifying insignia was removed from RAuxAF working dress over a decade ago. The removal of the insignia is a clear recognition by the RAF's senior leadership of the value that reservists bring to the Whole Force. Group Captain Gavin Hellard, Inspector of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force said: "This is tangible recognition of the value reserve service brings, and is a clear message to the reserve component of how much their service means to the Royal Air Force, it's about reservists being part of the Whole Force" Air Marshal Reynolds said: "The removal of the RAuxAF insignia recognizes that Reserves are a fully integrated component of one cohesive, effective force. Traditionally the insignia identified members of the Reserve from Regulars. Reserves today operate seamlessly alongside Regulars and are recognized not as a separate force but as members of the Whole Force."

As ever, if there is anything you would like information on, please e-mail me or send your correspondence via the Area Director or BSO.

Yours, In friendship

Ady Morris