

First RAF Poseidon Lands in U.K.



The RAF's new submarine-hunting Poseidon Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) touches down for the first time in the U.K. on Feb. 4 at Kinloss Barracks. Royal Air Force

LONDON – The RAF's new submarine-hunting Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft (MPA) has touched down for the first time in the United Kingdom, the U.K. Ministry of Defence said in a release.

The aircraft is the first of a new program, including the purchase of nine state-of-the-art Poseidon jets, which will improve the U.K.'s ability to track hostile targets below and above the waves.

Poseidon aircraft will protect the U.K.'s continuous at-sea nuclear deterrent and be central to NATO missions across the North Atlantic, co-operating closely with the U.S. and Norwegian Poseidon fleets.

The U.K.'s purchase of the Poseidon is in response to increased threats such as Russian submarine activity in the Atlantic Ocean returning to Cold War levels, while China is also investing heavily in new Arctic facilities, infrastructure and ice-capable ships.

"Our Poseidon fleet will soon join an integrated U.K. force of fighter jets, ships, submarines, helicopters and highly-trained Royal Marines, ready to operate in Arctic conditions," Defence Minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan said. "The U.K. will not stand by if peace in the Arctic region is threatened.

"RAF Lossiemouth's strategic northerly location makes it one of the most important air stations in the U.K., already home

to half of the U.K.'s Typhoon Force, and now sitting at the heart of our anti-submarine operations," Trevelyan said.

The Poseidon is designed to carry out extended surveillance missions at high and low altitudes. The aircraft is equipped with cutting-edge sensors which use high-resolution area mapping to find both submarines and surface vessels.

Each aircraft carries sonobuoys which are dropped from the aircraft into the sea to search for enemy submarines, surveying the battlespace under the sea and relaying data back to the aircraft.

The Poseidon will also be armed with Harpoon anti-surface ship missiles and Mk54 torpedoes capable of attacking both surface and sub-surface targets.

"The Poseidon MRA1 is a game-changing maritime patrol aircraft," said Air Chief Marshal Mike Wigston, chief of the Air Staff. "I am delighted and proud to see the 'Pride of Moray' and her crews returning to maritime patrol flying from Scotland, working alongside the Royal Navy to secure our seas and protect our nation."

"The arrival of the first Poseidon marks a significant upgrade in the U.K.'s ability to conduct anti-submarine operations," said First Sea Lord Adm. Tony Radakin. "This will give the U.K. the ability to conduct long range patrols and integrate seamlessly with our NATO allies to provide a world-leading capability."

All nine U.K. Poseidons will be delivered to the RAF by the end of 2021 and achieve full operational capability from RAF Lossiemouth in 2024. The aircraft will be flown initially by 120 Squadron, the leading anti-submarine warfare squadron in World War II, with 201 Squadron joining the program in due course.

Poseidon will temporarily operate from Kinloss until October

2020 while runway and taxiway resurfacing work is completed at Lossiemouth. Routine Typhoon training also will temporarily relocate from Lossiemouth to Kinloss in June and July while the intersection of the runways there is resurfaced.

“Seeing the first RAF Poseidon MRA Mk1 landing in the U.K. is an incredibly proud moment for all of the team at DE&S,” said Michelle Sanders, DE&S P-8A delivery team leader. “Close, collaborative working with colleagues in Air Capability, the U.S. Navy and industry has helped us deliver this very capable aircraft.”

Moray’s RAF Lossiemouth is one of the most important air stations in the U.K. as it’s already home to four RAF Typhoon squadrons – half of the RAF Typhoon Force – and will become the center of operations for the U.K. Poseidon fleet.

The Ministry of Defence is upgrading RAF Lossiemouth’s infrastructure, including a new strategic facility for the Poseidon fleet, upgraded runways and operating surfaces, a new air traffic control tower, upgraded facilities for IX (Bomber) Squadron, which moved to Scotland in 2019, new personnel accommodation, upgraded drainage and electrical supplies.

When these developments are complete there will be 550 additional military personnel based at RAF Lossiemouth, bringing the total number of military personnel employed there to 2,532.