

UK and Allies Flex Airpower Near Russian Border in Major NATO Drill

July 9, 2025

— Categories: Defence & Security



The Royal Air Force has joined US, Finnish, and French forces in a major NATO exercise near Russia's border, signalling a renewed commitment to collective defence and interoperability. The drill, *Atlantic Trident 25*, marks Finland's deepening role within NATO and reinforces Western resolve amid mounting regional threats.

British Typhoon jets have taken part in a large-scale NATO air exercise in Finland alongside American F-35s, Finnish Hornets, and French Rafales, as allied nations ramp up defence integration on Europe's eastern flank. The exercise, Atlantic Trident 25, was hosted across multiple Finnish air bases from 16 to 27 June and brought together more than 40 aircraft and over 1,000 personnel. It was the first time the operation has been held in Finland, which joined NATO in April 2023.

The manoeuvres focused on high-intensity air combat in contested environments, simulating real-world conflict scenarios involving rapid deployment, cross-border air policing, and support operations under pressure. Participants also engaged in hot-pit refuelling, runway repair drills, and joint aircraft servicing, demonstrating NATO's evolving capability under its Agile Combat Employment doctrine. The training aims to ensure air forces can respond quickly and flexibly in the event of a crisis or attack.

General Jason T. Hinds of United States Air Forces in Europe, Air Forces Africa (USAFE-AFAFRICA) described the exercise as a visible sign of readiness. "If deterrence fails," he said, "the four nations represented here today are ready to win decisively." His remarks underscore a growing concern in defence circles that traditional deterrence alone is no longer sufficient in the face of increasing threats from Moscow.

For Finland, hosting Atlantic Trident signals its rapid integration into NATO's northern command structure. With a 1,300-kilometre land border with Russia, Finland brings significant geographic and strategic value to the alliance. The exercise also involved NATO's RQ-4D Phoenix surveillance drone, expanding intelligence and reconnaissance capabilities across the Arctic and Baltic regions.

While the Labour government has remained largely silent on the UK's long-term defence posture, this exercise highlights the importance of forward presence and meaningful alliances, an approach consistently backed by previous Conservative administrations. It is a reminder that Britain's role in European security does not rely on rhetorical gestures, but on credible deployments and operational capability.

Personnel from the Royal Air Force and the US Air Force praised the seamless coordination achieved during the drill. RAF officials described the event as "a powerful display of allied unity, readiness and resolve". With tensions in Eastern Europe showing no sign of easing, Atlantic Trident 25 sends a clear message: NATO is prepared to act swiftly and decisively in defence of its members.