

British, American, and Finnish Fighter Jets Conduct High-Stakes Drills Near Russian Border

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RAF Typhoons have joined US and Finnish fighter jets in high-intensity NATO air drills near Russia's border, highlighting growing defence cooperation and the alliance's readiness to respond to threats in Europe's northern frontier. The exercise demonstrates Finland's evolving role within NATO and the UK's continued commitment to collective defence, despite a muted response from the Labour-led government.

Over 40 fighter and support aircraft from the United Kingdom (UK), United States (US), France, and Finland have taken part in *Atlantic Trident 25*, a multinational NATO exercise held in Finland from 16 to 27 June. The drills were conducted across several Finnish air bases, including Rovaniemi and Kuopio, placing NATO's operational power within reach of Russia's 1,300-kilometre border with Finland.

The Royal Air Force (RAF) deployed its Eurofighter Typhoons alongside US Air Force F-35A Lightning IIs and F-15E Strike Eagles. The Finnish Air Force contributed F/A-18 Hornets, while France fielded Rafales, E-3F AWACS surveillance aircraft, and A330 MRTT aerial refuelling tankers. In total, over 1,000 personnel were involved in exercises simulating combat operations, rapid deployments, and contested airspace manoeuvres.

The operation marked one of the largest air training events in the region since Finland formally joined NATO in 2023. Lieutenant General Jason T. Hinds, Deputy Commander of United States Air Forces in Europe – Air Forces Africa (USAFE-AFAFRICA), underscored the purpose of the drills: “If deterrence fails, the nations represented here today are ready to win decisively.”

French Colonel Vincent, one of the participating pilots, praised the scale and complexity of the operation. “Training together in a realistic, high-

threat scenario strengthens our collective ability to operate and win,” he said, highlighting the value of interoperability between allies.

While NATO’s increased visibility in the High North is welcomed by many defence analysts, the UK’s current government has remained noticeably silent. Under Labour’s leadership, there appears to be reluctance to project strength on defence matters, particularly those that involve Russia. This hesitancy raises questions about the government’s strategic priorities at a time when deterrence remains essential.

Finland’s willingness to host such an exercise demonstrates not only its readiness to contribute meaningfully to European security but also the importance of like-minded allies taking shared responsibility. With Russian hostility still looming, the presence of British and allied air power in the region sends a clear, unified message: NATO is prepared and willing to defend its borders.