

RAF Responds to Increased Russian Air Activity Near NATO Airspace

July 31, 2025

— Categories: Defence & Security



RAF Typhoon jets were scrambled 20 times this year to monitor Russian aircraft flying close to NATO airspace, according to the Ministry of Defence. The missions were part of the UK's regular contribution to NATO's air policing duties, aimed at maintaining security and stability across allied airspace.

In June alone, RAF aircraft were launched on six consecutive days from a base in Poland. The Russian aircraft involved included reconnaissance planes, maritime patrol aircraft, and fighter escorts. None of the Russian aircraft entered UK airspace, but their flight paths near NATO-controlled zones prompted routine interception procedures.

These missions were carried out under Operation Chessman, which supports NATO's wider air defence effort in Eastern Europe. British pilots worked alongside Polish, German, and Swedish forces to identify and shadow the aircraft in international airspace.

An RAF pilot involved in one of the operations said the teams are on constant standby: "We're trained to respond quickly and professionally. Once we're airborne, we identify the aircraft and monitor its activity. It's standard procedure."

Intercepts like these are not uncommon. Russian military aircraft often fly without filing flight plans or using transponders, which can pose a risk to civilian aviation. NATO jet scrambles are intended to ensure air safety and verify the identity and intent of the aircraft involved.

While the RAF has conducted similar operations for years, officials note a consistent level of activity amid ongoing regional tensions. Defence officials confirmed that all actions were carried out calmly and professionally, and that no confrontations occurred during the intercepts.

The UK's involvement forms part of its standing commitments to NATO, with RAF personnel continuing to play a central role in supporting alliance operations. These air patrols are viewed as essential for maintaining awareness and control over shared airspace.

As regional military activity continues, RAF aircraft will remain on alert, ready to support NATO operations as required. The Ministry of Defence said the UK will continue to uphold its responsibilities to NATO and contribute to joint air policing across allied territories.