

RAF News Brief 2019/2

Organisation

Operational Service Medal

In 2017, Her Majesty The Queen agreed the introduction of a new Operational Service Medal (OSM) for Op SHADER. In February 2019, Her Majesty The Queen graciously approved an extension of the medal without clasp for personnel assessed as making a significant and direct operational contribution, but outside the joint operational area for Op SHADER.

Under new rules, personnel from all three services serving from outside the traditional area of operations, such as operators of RAF Reaper Remotely Piloted Air System (RPAS) aircraft, can now receive the Op SHADER medal without clasp.

The award of the medal reflects the changing nature of modern conflict and recognises the vital contribution that personnel working from outside the operational area of Iraq and Syria have made to the campaign. This will be the first time that RPAS crews have received formal medallic recognition.

Ground crew serving at RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus, where UK airstrikes over Iraq and Syria are launched from are also eligible, as well as Army and Navy personnel providing logistic and communications support.

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier, said:

“I am delighted to see this wider recognition of the RAF’s vital contribution to Op SHADER. Under the previous criteria, only about 14% of RAF personnel who had supported Op SHADER were entitled to receive the OSM. Under the new criteria, that proportion rises to over two-thirds. I extend my personal thanks and congratulations to all those who will now receive the OSM for their outstanding Op SHADER contribution.”

Update on Defence Estate Optimisation Programme

The MOD published an update to the Defence Estate Optimisation Programme in March 2019, setting new information for 33 military sites across the UK. The update included details of revised closure dates for several RAF units.

A 25-year strategy was published in 2016 to optimise the defence estate to meet future military requirements. Following detailed assessment work the outline plan has now been updated, providing clarity and certainty for personnel and communities for the next five years.

The announcement was accompanied by the confirmation that £1.5B will be invested over the next five years to ensure that the estate meets both military objectives and the high standards required to house and support service personnel and their families. This is part of the £4B committed in 2016 in the Better Defence Estates Programme to improve and upgrade the defence estate.

Within this update the Defence Secretary has confirmed that a number of bases will be retained, including RM Chivenor, Norton Manor Camp, Condor Airfield, Rock Barracks and RAF Molesworth.

Other sites with an Air interest that are directly affected by the update include:

Site	Previous Disposal Date	New Disposal Date
RAF Colerne Airfield	2018	2025
RAF Barnham	2020	2022
RAF Henlow	2020	2023
RAF Halton	2022	2025
RAF Molesworth	2024	Retain
HMS Sultan	2026	Not Before 2029

230 Squadron presented with new consecrated standard

In February 2019, personnel from 230 Squadron, based at RAF Benson, were formally presented with their new consecrated standard during a special parade in the Puma Force hangar.

More than 70 personnel from the Squadron paraded the current standard into the hangar where the Royal Air Force Chaplain-in-Chief, Air Vice-Marshal John Ellis, formally consecrated a new standard. His Royal Highness Prince Michael of Kent, RAF Benson's Honorary Air Marshal, formally presented the standard to the Squadron during the ceremony. The old standard has now been laid to rest.

230 Squadron reached their centenary in August 2018 and were honoured to receive their new standard during their centenary year. The standard is made of fine silk and displays the Squadron badge as well as being emblazoned with the Battle Honours awarded since their formation in 1918.

In his speech during the ceremony, Prince Michael of Kent recognised the "distinguished history" of the Squadron, including the ongoing commitment to operations in Afghanistan. His words were echoed by the Station Commander, Group Captain Adam Wardrope, who said:

"As someone who has commanded a squadron in the past, I know that the Squadron standard is something that instils a real sense of pride. From its history as something that soldiers followed into battle to its current place as a ceremonial centre piece, the standard has a fine tradition, much like that of 230 Squadron."



Prince Michael of Kent and RAF Benson Station Commander, Group Captain Adam Wardrope at consecration of new Standard for 230 Squadron.

Army takes over command of CBRN role from RAF

The United Kingdom's Counter-Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (C-CBRN) specialist capability and Defence Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Centre (DCBRNC) changed command on 1 Apr 19 from the RAF to the Army.

The DCBRNC is a world-leading facility responsible for all C-CBRN training and education within Defence. The transfer was marked by a change of command ceremony attended by Air Vice-Marshal DJE Cooper, Air Officer Commanding No 2 Group and Major-General T Hyams, Director Land

Warfare. The transfer also involved a change of Commandant at the DCBRNC, from a RAF Regiment Wing Commander to a Royal Engineer Lieutenant Colonel.

The transfer of the C-CBRN specialist capability involved the disbandment of Headquarters 20 (CBRN) Wing RAF Regiment, which will be replaced by a new capability vested in 28 Engineer Regiment (C-CBRN). Arrangements during the transfer will see 27 Squadron RAF Regiment, as part of 28 Engineer Regiment (C-CBRN), provide continuity and output delivery until the Army fully replaces them.

The decision to transfer command was one of many made during the last Strategic Defence and Security Review and has provided Defence with an opportunity to refine its capabilities.

At the ceremony, Air Vice-Marshal DJE Cooper said:

"The RAF Regiment have performed magnificently as the custodians of the specialist C-CBRN capability for the United Kingdom. As we hand this capability over to the Army, I know that they will be equally professional in championing C-CBRN within Defence. I wish them every success for the future and would like to thank the RAF Regiment for their sterling work."

The RAF Force Protection Force Commander, Air Commodore RFJ Clifford, said:

"The RAF Regiment have been at the vanguard of C-CBRN defence for this country and the Royal Air Force since 1998. I am immensely proud of the achievements of 20 (CBRN) Wing RAF Regiment and DCBRNC, especially after an extremely demanding year in support of recovery operations in Salisbury, where they were both key to operational success. They have acted in the finest traditions of the RAF Regiment, performing their duties with quiet professionalism in support of this country."

Defence C-CBRN capability have been working in Salisbury & Amesbury since the nerve agent attack earlier this year. They have been in support of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and other agencies in the decontamination and remediation of the city and town.



Wing Commander Paul Rait hands over command of the Defence CBRN Centre to Lieutenant Colonel Mark Normile.

Operations

Atlas delivers vital UK aid relief to Mozambique

An RAF A400M Atlas aircraft delivered 20 tonnes of lifesaving UK aid supplies to those affected by the devastating cyclone Idai that struck Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi in March 2019.

The Atlas and a crew of 10 RAF personnel delivered vital equipment including water filters, solar lanterns, blankets and shelter kits from the Department for International Development (DFID) for survivors of the cyclone in Mozambique. The Government of Mozambique declared a national emergency in the aftermath of the cyclone and the UK aid on board the aircraft provided some essential support for the 37,500 people in need of urgent shelter.

RAF Air Mobility Force Commander, Air Commodore Dom Stamp, said:

“Once more the RAF, with our new Atlas A400M aircraft, has proven our ability to deploy globally, to bring vital aid relief quickly and effectively to those who urgently need it. We are proud to support our international partners in times of crisis and stand ready to do so in the future.”

Additional flights from Department for International Development and a UK aid flight delivered further support.



RAF Personnel unloading UK Aid from Atlas A400M at Maputo, Mozambique's capital

RAF Benson receive Firmin Sword of Peace

At a ceremony in January 2019, Air Marshal Mike Wigston presented the Firmin Sword of Peace to RAF Benson. The award was collected on behalf of the Station by the Station Commander, Group Captain Adam Wardrope.

In September 2017, the Joint Helicopter Force 3 Headquarters and the Puma Force deployed from RAF Benson to support relief efforts in the Caribbean after the area was devastated by a series of hurricanes. Given five days to prepare aircraft and personnel to deploy, the team were ready in just 18 hours, showing just how quickly the force can mobilise when needed. Engineers rapidly rebuilt the aircraft in extreme weather conditions and the Puma began delivering essential aid just hours after landing. As well as delivering emergency aid to disparate and desperate communities, the team also helped the local authorities to re-open civilian airports by fixing generators, clearing debris, repairing roofs and reconnecting terminals, all while building warm relationships with the local communities during incredibly difficult times.

The Firmin Sword of Peace is an award given to a unit where their activities go above and beyond their normal role, which also improves relationships with communities both at home and abroad. Previous winners of the award include RAF Marham in 2016 and the RAF Police in 2015. The award has been presented annually since 1966.



Air Marshal Wigston, AMP presenting the Firmin Sword of Peace to Station Commander RAF Benson, Group Captain Adam Wardrope.

Equipment

Tornado Draw Down

The final farewell to the iconic Tornado aircraft and personnel that have served on her Squadrons took place on 14 March 2019 at RAF Marham with the disbandment parade of the last two remaining Tornado Squadrons, Numbers IX(B) and 31 Squadron.

Guests gathered in the hangar to see the two flights, one from each Squadron, march on accompanied by the Band of the RAF College Cranwell. The parade was led on by Parade Commander Wing Commander Kevin Gatland, Chief of Staff of the Tornado GR Force Headquarters with Wing Commander Heeps, Officer Commanding IX(B) Squadron, and Wing Commander Bressani, Officer Commanding 31 Squadron, leading their respective Squadrons.

The Chief of the Air Staff was the reviewing officer for the parade and during his inspection he presented Operation SHADER medals, without clasp, to 12 personnel.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier said:

"Today is a time to rightly recognise the truly exceptional achievements of the people who have been the Tornado Force. We reflect on the courage, skill, commitment and sadly sometimes sacrifice of those who have been at the heart of the Tornado story, from its inception through to the present day. All have played their part to the full in the success story that is Tornado. Which is why I'm especially delighted to have been able to present today some of the first Op SHADER operational service medals to those who have worked so hard on the ground to deliver Tornado's success on its most recent operation – Fitting recognition that the RAF's operational achievement is always a team effort."

After the parade, guests moved outside to see a flypast by a single Tornado GR4 aircraft. This was the final scheduled flight of an RAF Tornado.

IX(B) Squadron will transfer to a Typhoon Squadron on 1 Apr 19 and be based at RAF Lossiemouth in Scotland. 31 Squadron will reform as a Protector Squadron in 2024 and will be based at RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire.



Disbandment Parade of the last two remaining Tornado Squadrons, No IX(B) and 31 Sqn.

Wedgetail to be RAF's new early warning radar aircraft

In March, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson signed a circa £2Bn deal to purchase five E-7 Wedgetail aircraft to replace the current E-3D Sentry fleet and ensure the continued delivery of the UK's Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) capability.

The new aircraft will be able to track multiple airborne and maritime targets at the same time, using the information it gathers to provide situational awareness and direct other assets such as fighter jets and warships. The E-7 Wedgetail is a proven aircraft that is currently in service with the Royal Australian Air Force and has been used on operations in the battle against Daesh in Iraq and Syria.

As part of the plan for a managed transition to E-7, it has been decided to reduce the existing E-3D fleet from six to four aircraft by removing the two long-term unserviceable assets from the active fleet. Doing this now will enable the Sentry Force to focus resources on providing better availability from the remaining four aircraft, to better assure the future Sentry Fleet output, including commitments to the NATO Airborne Early Warning and Control Force and the provision of NATO Assurance Measures missions.

Speaking following the announcement, Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier, said:

"Today's announcement about the procurement of five E-7 'Wedgetail' Airborne Early Warning and Control aircraft is excellent news for both the RAF and wider Defence. This world-class capability, already proven with our Royal Australian Air Force partners, will significantly enhance our ability to deliver decisive airborne command and control and builds on the reputation of our E-3D Sentry Force.

Along with Defence's investment in other cutting-edge aircraft, E-7 will form a core element of the Next Generation Air Force, able to overcome both current and future complex threats."

The E-7 is based on a standard Boeing 737 airliner modified to carry a sophisticated Northrop Grumman active electronically-scanned radar. This can cover four million square kilometres over a 10-hour period.

F35 Lightning

Speaking at RAF Marham in January, the Defence Secretary announced the UK now has nine F-35 Lightning aircraft ready to be deployed on operations around the world. The Lightning Force will form the backbone of the UK's combat air fleet alongside the RAF's Typhoons, which the Defence Secretary also announced have now been fitted with a complex weapons suite to increase capability.

Under 'Project Centurion', Typhoon now has Storm Shadow, Meteor and Brimstone at its disposal. It means the jets have boosted capabilities to intercept airborne threats and to strike ground-based targets, seamlessly taking over from the Tornado's attack role.

New facilities at RAF Marham, including resurfaced runways and new landing pads to accommodate the Lightning's ability to land vertically, are a key part of the £550M being invested.

The year ahead will see the F-35 Lightning pilots and ground crew continue learning how to operate and maintain the aircraft in the new centre, which features state-of-the-art simulators, classrooms, and physical aircraft mock-ups. The facility provides a real-life training environment replicating the challenges that both pilots and crew will face in supporting and operating the F-35 Lightning. Pilots from 617 Squadron, who are already based at RAF Marham, will practice flying the next generation aircraft from four full mission simulators.

The Defence Secretary made the announcement in front of four aircraft, which represent the past and future of British fighter jets. They included the Tornado, the Typhoon and the Lightning as well as the Tempest concept fighter model. The model, which represents an example of what the UK's future capability might look like, was unveiled last Summer at Farnborough International Air Show, when the Government launched the nation's Combat Air Strategy to ensure the UK remains a world-leader in the sector for years to come. The aim is for a next-generation capability to have initial operational capability by 2035.

The RAF has already trialled its Typhoon and F-35 Forces' interoperability. In a series of operational trials, the evidence clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of both platforms when operating alongside one another. With its larger payload and increased agility and range, the Typhoon will operate in concert with the stealthy F-35 and its next-generation sensors, making the RAF one of the few air forces with the ability to exploit the synergy of 4th and 5th generation combat aircraft.



Secretary of State for Defence Gavin Williamson speaking with 617 Squadron Wing Commander John Butcher (left) and RAF Marham Station Commander Group Captain Ian Townsend (centre-right) at RAF Marham's new F-35 Lightning aircraft hangar.

UKMFTS

In March, BBC Radio's File on Four programme broadcast a documentary about the UK's Military Flying Training System (MFTS). MFTS was introduced to modernise Defence's flying training system and is delivered in partnership with our Training Service Partner (TSP), Ascent. Following the Strategic Defence and Security Review in 2015 (SDSR 15), the MFTS programme had to be significantly amended to accommodate an increased demand for aircrew to meet future UK Defence needs. The BBC's programme focussed on issues including the number of holding pilots awaiting training and whether the subcontracting process in relation to flying training has been managed effectively. The programme was critical of these and other aspects of MFTS.

Speaking about the documentary, Air Marshal Mike Wigston said:

"MFTS is the biggest transformation of UK military aircrew training in a generation. It will ensure the continued provision and modernisation of every element of flying training - enabling us to deliver a world-class Next Generation Air Force. Change on such a scale, with the introduction of state-of-the art training equipment and five new aircraft types, inevitably requires time to bed-in effectively.

The transition from the legacy system to MFTS has presented us with challenges, including delays in pilots progressing through the flying training pipeline as quickly as we might hope. This issue is receiving the closest attention at all levels, including the Air Force Board Executive and we have introduced a range of measures to address the challenges including seeking alternative training routes to keep people moving through the training system.

Planned holds have always been a feature of flying training, providing a pool of people to ensure courses are filled to capacity wherever possible. They also provide the individual holding with opportunities to undertake fulfilling roles that increase their skills and their

knowledge of the Service while contributing to Service output today. We will continue to manage the progress of all training aircrew through MFTS, maximising the throughput to the front-line."

Poseidon P8

With the delivery of the first Poseidon MRA Mk1 Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA), commonly known as the P-8A Poseidon due in September, personnel from Number 120 Squadron and Poseidon Line Squadron began training at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida in January.

The initial cadre of 38 personnel, drawn from RAF Lossiemouth, are a mix of aircrew and engineers and will be trained on the US Navy training squadron, Patrol Squadron 30 (VP-30). RAF personnel will be trained in the USA over the next three years before the RAF transitions to train all their P-8A Poseidon personnel in the UK at RAF Lossiemouth. Each training course is tailored to the role and trade of the trainee and takes approximately 6-months to complete.

Wing Commander James Hanson, Officer Commanding CXX (120) Squadron said:

"It is really exciting to be among the first cohort of RAF aircrew and engineers to begin conversion to Poseidon, the people we have are among the most experienced in the RAF. This is the best maritime patrol aircraft available; a potent deterrent to our adversaries and a dependable asset for the United Kingdom and our allies. The commencement of our training marks the start of a new chapter for the RAF and a vital enhancement to our military capabilities in the maritime environment."

Air Commodore Iain Gale, Senior Responsible Owner for the P-8A Programme, said:

"This first cadre of RAF aircrew and engineers undertaking training on the P-8A Poseidon mark the resurgence of the RAF's long-range maritime patrol capability. The P-8A Poseidon will enhance the UK's maritime patrol capability with advanced, state-of-the-art, Anti-Submarine Warfare and Anti-Surface Warfare sensors.

The first Poseidon aircraft will enter RAF service in October 2019, initially at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, and will arrive in Scotland in Spring 2020, bringing future opportunities for hi-tech employment to Scotland. The first aircraft's components are being manufactured now and the first aircraft will begin construction in the next few weeks. This is an exciting time for RAF Lossiemouth, Morayshire and the personnel who will be part of this force."

Several UK aircrew have been stationed at NAS Jacksonville under the RAF Seedcorn programme. Started in 2012, this has helped re-grow the UK's Maritime Patrol Aircraft capability, sending experienced maritime operators around the world, including 12 instructors to VP-30. These RAF instructors have helped VP-30 introduce the P-8A to the US Navy and its allies. The RAF members of VP-30 are looking forward to using this experience to train the first generation of the new RAF Poseidon Force.

Personnel

ARAL 9.18 – 11.18

Air Vice-Marshal I Duguid OBE to be Air Officer Commanding No 11 Group with effect from 1 November 2018. This is a new appointment.

Group Captain M R Baulkwill to be promoted Air Commodore and to be Head Capability Strategy in the Ministry of Defence with effect from 26 November 2018 in succession to Commodore H D Beard Royal Navy.

Group Captain D S Arthurton OBE to be promoted Acting Air Commodore and to be Combined Air & Space Operations Centre Director, Al Udeid, Qatar with effect from 18 December 2018.

Group Captain S D Harvey to be promoted Air Commodore and to be Air Officer A6 and A6 Force Commander, Headquarters Air Command in January 2019 in succession to Air Commodore J P Wariner whose next appointment is yet to be announced.

Group Captain S Harris MBE to be Officer Commanding Royal Air Force High Wycombe in March 2019 in succession to Group Captain R A Woods OBE.

Wing Commander N M Worrall to be promoted Group Captain and to be Officer Commanding Royal Air Force Northolt in July 2019 in succession to Group Captain M H G Carver ADC.

Group Captain J L Lincoln MBE to be Officer Commanding Royal Air Force Wittering in June 2019 in succession to Group Captain A C Keeling OBE.

Group Captain J A Beck OBE to be Officer Commanding Royal Air Force Marham in August 2019 in succession to Group Captain I J Townsend ADC.

Air Commodore M Byford QHDS to be Head of Royal Air Force Medical Services with effect from 8 February 2019 in succession to Air Commodore S C Kilbey QHP whose next appointment is yet to be announced.

Air Commodore A M Sansom to be Commandant Defence College of Technical Training in May 2019 in succession to Brigadier R N H Bennett MVO.

Air Commodore S M Miller to be Air Officer Force Protection, Force Protection Force Commander and Commandant General Royal Air Force Regiment in May 2019 in succession to Air Commodore R F J Clifford OBE whose next appointment is yet to be announced.

Group Captain M R Wilson to be promoted Air Commodore and to be Air Officer A6 and A6 Force Commander in January 2019 in succession to Air Commodore J P Wariner who is retiring from the Service.

Group Captain S R Horne to be promoted Air Commodore and to be Head Air Staff in the Ministry of Defence in January 2019 in succession to Air Commodore R P Barrow OBE whose next appointment is yet to be announced.

Group Captain R A Woods OBE to be promoted Air Commodore and to be Chief of Staff to Chief of Materiel (Air) in Defence Equipment & Support in May 2019 in succession to Air Commodore A M Sansom.

Group Captain N J Knight OBE to be Officer Commanding Royal Air Force Odiham in September 2019 in succession to Group Captain L Turner.

Air Commodore S D Ellard to be promoted Air Vice-Marshal and to be Air Officer Commanding No 38 Group in December 2018 in succession to Air Vice-Marshal S C Gray CB OBE.

Air Commodore R C Maddison OBE to be Deputy Commander NATO Air Command Afghanistan, Headquarters RESOLUTE SUPPORT in April 2019 in succession to Air Commodore D R Andrew OBE whose next appointment is yet to be announced.

Acting Air Commodore P K O'Donnell OBE to be promoted Air Commodore and to be Defence Attaché Riyadh in January 2019 in succession to Brigadier D J C Russell-Parsons OBE.

Group Captain P D Kennett CBE to be promoted Air Commodore and to be Director Qatar Typhoon Programme in the Ministry of Defence in December 2018. This is a new post.

Group Captain I Laing to be promoted Air Commodore and to be Head (Military) Euro-Atlantic Security in the Ministry of Defence in December 2018 in succession to Brigadier D J Eastman MBE.

ARAL 1.19 – 3.19

Air Marshal M Wigston CBE to be promoted Air Chief Marshal and to be Chief of the Air Staff and Aide de Camp to Her Majesty The Queen in July 2019 in succession to Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier KCB CBE DFC ADC who is retiring from the Service.

Air Vice-Marshal G Tunnicliffe to be Deputy Commandant Royal College of Defence Studies with effect from 26 April 2019 in succession to Rear Admiral J M L Kingwell CBE.

Air Commodore A K Gillespie CBE to be promoted Air Vice-Marshal and to be Air Officer Commanding No 2 Group in September 2019 in succession to Air Vice-Marshal D J E Cooper CBE whose next appointment is yet to be announced.

Group Captain P J Warwick CBE to be promoted Acting Air Commodore and to undertake Defence Attaché training with effect from 4 March 2019.

Air Vice-Marshal S C Gray CB OBE to be promoted Air Marshal and to be Director General Defence Safety Authority in the Ministry of Defence with effect from 29 March 2019 in succession to Lieutenant General R F P Felton CBE.

Air Vice-Marshal G M D Mayhew CBE to be promoted Air Marshal and to be Deputy Commander Operations, Headquarters Air Command and Air Member for Operations with effect from 3 May 2019 in succession to Air Marshal S D Atha CB DSO who is retiring from the Service.

Air Vice-Marshal A M Turner CB CBE to be promoted Air Marshal and to be Deputy Commander Capability, Headquarters Air Command and Air Member for Personnel and Capability with effect from 23 May 2019 in succession to Air Marshal M Wigston CBE whose appointment as Chief of the Air Staff has previously been announced.

Air Commodore D G Bradshaw to be Assistant Chief of Staff Capability Delivery Combat Air, Headquarters Air Command in April 2019 in succession to Air Commodore L S Taylor OBE whose next appointment is yet to be announced.

Air Commodore R P Barrow CBE to be Assistant Chief of Staff Capability Delivery C2ISR, Headquarters Air Command in May 2019 in succession to Air Commodore I D Gale MBE whose next appointment is yet to be announced.

Air Commodore R J Dennis OBE to be Deputy Chief of Staff Support, Headquarters Allied Air Command, Ramstein with effect from 16 September 2019.

Acting Air Commodore D S Arthurton OBE was promoted Air Commodore on 11 February 2019 and is appointed Lightning Force Commander, Royal Air Force Marham in July 2019 in succession to Air Commodore D G Bradshaw.

Group Captain D P Manning to be promoted Air Commodore and to be Assistant Commandant (Air & Space) at the Joint Services Command & Staff College Shrivenham in June 2019 in succession to Air Commodore S M Miller whose appointment as Air Officer Force Protection, Force Protection Force Commander and Commandant General Royal Air Force Regiment has previously been announced.

Group Captain S A Marshall to be promoted Air Commodore and to be Commandant Royal Air Force College Cranwell in November 2019 in succession to Air Commodore P J M Squires OBE ADC whose next appointment is yet to be announced.

Group Captain J P Nixon to be Commandant No 3 Flying Training School, Royal Air Force Cranwell in December 2019 in succession to Group Captain E P Moriarty.

Air Commodore I D Gale MBE to be promoted Air Vice-Marshal and to be Assistant Chief of Air Staff in the Ministry of Defence with effect from 17 April 2019 in succession to Air Vice-Marshal G M D Mayhew CBE whose appointment as Deputy Commander Operations and Air Member for Operations has previously been announced.

Group Captain M W Smith OBE to be Commander Joint Intelligence Training Group and Joint Forces Command Chicksands in May 2019 in succession to Group Captain S S Stirrat.

Air Vice Marshal Sue Gray appointed Director General of the Defence Safety Authority

It was announced in February 2019 that Air Vice-Marshal Sue Gray had been appointed Director General of the Defence Safety Authority, assuming the post in March.

With her promotion to Air Marshal, AVM Gray becomes the RAF's first female 3* officer and the most senior female military officer in the British Armed Forces.

As Director General of the Defence Safety Authority, AVM Gray will lead the way in overseeing the independent organisation to fulfil the roles of regulator, accident investigation and Defence Authority for safety.

Air Marshal Gray joined the Royal Air Force in August 1985 and has worked in a variety of roles within the RAF including: engineering on VC10 Transport aircraft, an extensive period with the Joint Helicopter Force during which time she deployed on both Gulf Wars, tours within the Defence Equipment & Support (DE&S) organisation, leading the Combat Clothing Project Team and more recently leading the department delivering engineering and logistics support for fighter, training and Remotely Piloted aircraft for all the Armed Services.

In June 2016, she was appointed Air Officer Commanding Number 38 Group with responsibility for circa 3,000 personnel, across multiple disciplines (including Engineering, Logistics, Aviation Medicine & Catering). Air Marshal Gray takes up her new appointment in March.

Air Marshal Sue Gray said:

"I am incredibly proud to be the most senior female military officer in the British Armed Forces. Throughout my career I have been fortunate to have a job that was more of a way of life, working with likeminded people in an exciting and rewarding environment. As an Engineer Officer in the Royal Air Force I am part of a team, who succeed together, I have been privileged to lead highly successful teams, military and civil service, through some challenging situations on operations and back at home."

"As the RAF's Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths champion, I have a lot of contact with the younger generation – who never fail to impress me and fill me with confidence for the future."

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier, said:

"I offer my most sincere personal congratulations to Air Marshal Gray on her promotion and I wish her every success in her important new role leading the Defence Safety Authority. Her promotion is proper recognition of her outstanding contribution to the RAF and Defence, as an engineer, as a leader and as a superb role model."

RAF wins Apprentice Employer of the Year Award

The country's best apprenticeship providers, employers and champions have been honoured at the second Annual Apprenticeship Awards 2019 in Birmingham, organised by FE Week and the Association of Employment and Learning Providers.

After assessing 350 entries, judges named the Royal Air Force as the Apprentice Employer of the Year.

Speaking after the award, Air Vice-Marshal Warren 'Bunny' James, AOC 22 Gp and Head of RAF Training, said:

"The Royal Air Force is honoured to be recognised as the Apprentice Employer of the Year 2019 at the FE Week and Association of Employment and Learning Providers, Annual Apprenticeship Conference Awards in Birmingham. With 24 Apprenticeship trades, almost 3000 on programme and greater than 97% completion rates, the RAF successfully supports social mobility, continuous professional development, delivers nationally recognised occupational accreditation and is very proud of the endeavours of its people."

Being one of the largest employer-providers, the RAF has 2,900 apprenticeships spanning 24 different trades, from police officer to air traffic controller or dog handler. The RAF is rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted. In 2016, the RAF achieved Top 100 Apprenticeship Employer status and also won the Macro Employer category of the 2017 National Apprenticeship Awards.



Group Captain Elizabeth Nicholl, Commandant RAF Central Training School and Chief Technician Jonathon Deeks of the RAF Apprenticeships Management Team, pictured with Mark Dawe, Chief Executive of the AELP and Shane Mann, Managing Director of LSEct, publisher of FE Week accepting the Apprentice Employer of the Year Award.