

Icelandic Airspace Protection 2.0

From 5 March 2012 on, the German Air Force ensures the protection of the Icelandic airspace for the second time. The mission is executed by assets from Fighter Wing 71 based at Wittmund in northern Germany and lasts until 2 April.

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Link to the German story:

http://www.luftwaffe.de/portal/a/luftwaffe/lut/p/c4/NYy7CglxEEW_ZT_ATBZxWewM24hdQDR2YzbEwObBMJrGizcpvAdOc-DCAxoJP8Ejh5xwgzsYG47PKrYKt15XJ2xOjrvZJQ7NnpAziZKJt17eRK2IsIKR46LkJP8bv7PW6no57KflrHQ_LIQ-IpiUdxbyOGJca6nYfgBVteNNA!!/



The Federal Republic of Germany has ensured NATO's missions of Baltic Air Policing for the fifth time and the protection of the Icelandic airspace for the second time. In only seven years, Germany has provided a major contribution to the protection of NATO airspace. These deployments are a clear signal that Germany will live up to its obligations with Alliance solidarity and joint burden sharing.



Alliance burden is shared burden

Not all NATO member States have at their disposal adequate national assets to ensure the integrity of their portions of NATO airspace. When in April 2004, seven new member States joined NATO, the NATO Integrated Air Defence System (NATINADS) was expanded to include the respective airspace of these nations. As the new NATO members Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania did not have organic air defence forces, other NATO member States have

deployed their assets to ensure security of the airspace portions since April 2004. The Baltic airspace has been covered by various member States on a rotational basis under an interim solution. This solution will run until 2014, until the Baltic States have established their own capabilities for airspace surveillance and air policing. Germany has repeatedly conducted the NATO Baltic Air Policing Mission for durations of three to four months.



Iceland –an exceptional case

Like the Baltic States, Iceland very much appreciates NATO's support for the protection of its airspace both as a visible political signal of security and Alliance solidarity and a possible military response to potential airspace violations. Iceland is one of NATO's founding members, however, it does not have armed forces of its own. Consequently, the small country undertook to provide medical assistance in an Article-5 situation and has maintained a small unit manned by Icelandic police and coast guard staff which can be deployed in support of peacekeeping operations. The United States ensured the security of the Icelandic airspace with their F-15C Eagle fighters deployed to the Keflavik Air Base until 2006 based on a bilateral defence agreement.



Protection or Air Policing

After the US withdrew their fighters in 2006, Iceland made intensive efforts to receive protection by other NATO member States, in particular neighbouring Allies. For the airspace protection, Iceland neither expects a permanently deployed fighter force nor a permanent readiness posture on the ground, but simply temporary deployments of fighter aircraft to demonstrate the presence and readiness to respond from other NATO members.

In practice, since 2008 air forces from NATO member States have taken on the surveillance slots; within these periods actual fighter deployments at Iceland occurred for several weeks only.



A matter of give and take

France was the first nation on May 2008 to ensure the protection of the Icelandic airspace with four of its Mirage 2000 aircraft for a period of eight weeks. Subsequently, Allies like the United States, Norway or Denmark repeatedly deployed their assets to Iceland for several weeks each. The NATO aircraft are stationed at the former US base in the seaport of Keflavik in the southwest, where simultaneously the civilian air traffic to and from the Capital Reykjavik – some 45 kms away – is handled. Iceland makes available the required infrastructure, communications, transport and accommodation to each NATO contingent free of cost.



The current deployment is the second time that Germany contributes to the protection of the Icelandic airspace. From May to August 2010 Germany was assigned a slot for the first time and the German Air Force deployed six Phantom F-4F for almost four weeks from 1 through 25 June.

In addition to technical and logistic staff for the maintenance and repair of the Phantom fighters, the German Air Force has to bring in meteorologists and SATCOM technicians as well as medics, command post staff and fire fighters. Though Iceland operates its own radar systems and a control centre for airspace surveillance, the country does not have any trained personnel to control fighter aircraft. The Luftwaffe therefore also has to deploy fighter controllers for the tactical control of the aircraft missions.



Alliance Solidarity Takes Priority

The integrated air defence as a NATO core peacetime task and the visible expression of Alliance solidarity are of key politico-military relevance. Consequently, Germany continues to attach great importance to assuming the tasks required to ensure the integrity of the airspace both at home in Germany and in the NATO member States. Against this background – and since neither Iceland nor Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania will have organic capabilities that allow them to establish Quick Reaction Alert formation – further interceptor deployments by the German and other Allied air forces maybe possible both within NATO's Baltic Air Policing programme and for the protection of the Icelandic airspace.

These efforts ensure the security needs of the Baltic States and Iceland and demonstrate a visible and effective contribution to the stability of the Alliance at its eastern and northern periphery. Given its high aircraft availability rate and constant readiness posture, The German Air Force is a guarantor for accomplishing the protective mission effectively and seamlessly.