

Ground based air defence systems will be deployed at six sites in and around London for the duration of the 2012 Olympic Games. HMS Ocean will be anchored in the River Thames and Typhoon jets will be on Quick reaction Alert at RAF Northolt. The plan - especially GBAD deployment, is described more fully below and was updated on 14th July

The air security plan includes the deployment of Rapier and High Velocity Missiles, primarily to protect the Olympic Park. In early May, as part of a military exercise, unarmed equipment was put in place at the six proposed sites for a period of nine days. This saw the air security plan tested extensively and confirmed the utility and integration of the various elements.

The deployment of ground based air defence systems - including Rapier and High Velocity Missile systems - will be in place at the six locations for the duration of the Games by mid-July, along with other Defence equipment including Royal Navy helicopter carrier HMS Ocean, which will be moored in the River Thames, Royal Air Force Typhoon jets, which will be temporarily stationed at RAF Northolt, and Puma helicopters, at a Territorial Army centre in Ilford.

Defence Secretary Philip Hammond MP said:

"Whilst there is no reported threat to the London Olympics, the public expects that we put in place a range of measures aimed at ensuring the safety and security of this once-in-a-generation event. Ground-based air defence systems will form just one part of a comprehensive, multi-layered air security plan which, I believe, will provide both reassurance and a powerful deterrent."

"We have undertaken a wide programme of engagement with the communities affected, involving relevant local authorities, landowners, MPs, Council Leaders, and community meetings. These have shown that, while people understandably have questions and concerns which we have sought to answer, broadly speaking communities are supportive of our work."

"A small number of activists object to the deployment of these defensive measures and a legal challenge to the Government's decision to deploy GBAD has been initiated. The MOD will defend these proceedings vigorously and is confident of defeating them."

Home Secretary Theresa May MP said:

"Our focus is to deliver an Olympic and Paralympic Games that London, the UK and the world can enjoy. The Games should be a peaceful celebration of sporting achievement and cultural celebration."

"But this is the biggest sporting event in the world, and with that comes the huge responsibility to deliver it safely and securely. We are working to a robust safety and security strategy and we will leave nothing to chance."

"The police and emergency services have substantial experience of major events and will bring this to bear with support from the military. Our approach is intelligence-led and risk-based, and flexible to respond to changes between now and the Games."

Collectively, the systems include a range of air defence capabilities, including radar and detection equipment as well as weapons, which will provide a powerful deterrent and protection against the threat of an attack from the air. Similar systems have been deployed at all recent Olympic Games.

Some 100 sites were considered as part of early planning but this was narrowed down to the six final sites which were deemed to offer the best possible protection to the Olympic Park and surrounding area against any air threat. The sites, and the specific systems to be deployed at them, are:

- * Lexington Building, Fairfield Road, Bow, Tower Hamlets - High Velocity Missile
- * Fred Wigg Tower, Montague Road Estate, Waltham Forest - High Velocity Missile
- * Blackheath Common, Blackheath (Lewisham/Greenwich) - Rapier
- * William Girling Reservoir, Lea Valley Reservoir Chain, Enfield - Rapier
- * Oxleas Meadow, Shooters Hill,

Greenwich/Woolwich - Rapier
Barn Hill, Netherhouse Farm, Epping Forest - Rapier.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP) told Parliament

In December 2011, I informed the House about the military contribution that was being planned in support of the police-led safety and security operation being put in place for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. I can now confirm that, following further planning and exercising, the Government has agreed to the deployment of Ground Based Air Defence (GBAD) systems as part of this contribution.

The deployment will consist of four Rapier and two High Velocity Missile (HVM) systems which will form part of an integrated and multi-layered air security plan that includes Typhoon aircraft (at RAF Northolt) and helicopters (at Ilford TA Centre and from HMS OCEAN) as well as a network of Air Observers and radars. This plan provides the most effective capabilities to deliver a safe and secure airspace during the Games.

Both the Rapier and HVM systems were deployed to six carefully selected sites for the live military exercise, Ex OLYMPIC GUARDIAN, which took place between 2-10 May. The exercise allowed us to test the integration of the equipment with the other elements of the air security plan and confirmed the effectiveness of the GBAD systems, including the associated detection capabilities that are themselves important in compiling the best situational awareness of the airspace over London.

The Government recognised at the outset that the deployment of military equipment and personnel across London could be unsettling. The deployment of military assets, including GBAD, is a temporary measure to provide security over the period of the Games. Since December, the MOD, with the Metropolitan Police, has been engaging local communities, landowners, relevant Council Leaders and Members of Parliament to allay concerns, provide reassurance about these deployments and, as far as possible, take measures to minimise the local impact. The MOD remains committed to this engagement and is pleased that the majority of the public recognise and support our important contribution to keeping the Games, London and the UK as secure as we can. A small number of activists object to the deployment of these defensive measures and a legal challenge to the Government's decision to deploy GBAD has been initiated. The MOD will defend these proceedings vigorously and is confident of defeating them.

The coming weeks will also see the return of HMS OCEAN to the Thames, Typhoon aircraft to RAF Northolt and helicopters to Ilford TA Centre. The mobilisation of volunteer reservists in support of the Olympics will also begin in earnest. The Defence contribution to the wider Police-led safety and security operation is on a similar scale to that of other recent Olympic Games.

It is a balanced and proportionate measure which will deter would-be aggressors and reassure domestic and international audiences that we are ready to play our role in ensuring a safe, secure and enjoyable 2012 Olympics.