

Royal Air Force **Strategy**

Always there for our nation



Chief of the Air Staff's Foreword

The Context

The Strategy

Delivery of the Strategy

Royal Air Force Strategic Direction

Chief of the Air Staff's Foreword

Our enduring
purpose is global air
and space power to
protect the nation.

We must Succeed
Today, Innovate for
Tomorrow, and Value
our People.

This is our Strategy



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Chief of the Air Staff's Foreword



Air Chief Marshal
Sir Mike Wigston
KCB CBE ADC

These are challenging and exciting times. We operate in an era of strategic competition and confrontation, with nations actively destabilising the international order that we rely on for our security, stability and prosperity.

In 2021, the United Kingdom Government published the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. It was a significant statement of the United Kingdom's place in a fast-evolving world order, and the role of our Armed Forces in that. This strategy describes how the Royal Air Force will implement the Integrated Review through three strategic objectives: **Succeed Today; Innovate for Tomorrow; and Value our People.**

Succeed Today. The Integrated Review is clear that what the Royal Air Force does on behalf of the United Kingdom is as important as it has ever been in our history. Alongside the Royal Navy, Army and Strategic Command, the Royal Air Force plays a central role in the security and prosperity of the United Kingdom and our allies. This is our enduring purpose: **global air and space power to protect our nation.**

Innovate for Tomorrow. The Royal Air Force must be ready to operate in the complex and increasingly challenging future operating environment, shaped by the pervasiveness of information and the rate of technological change.

The technological threats from our potential adversaries are increasingly more sophisticated, with new combat aircraft, hypersonic and stealth technology, anti-satellite weapons, cyber, and potent long-range missiles becoming more capable and proliferating to proxy states too. Space is now a contested operational domain.

To meet the challenges of the future, the Royal Air Force must be ready to understand, decide and then act faster, with even greater precision, lethality, and in more places around the world simultaneously than we do today; and we must do it sustainably too, in terms of both resource and environment. We must continue to modernise and transform everything we do, building the Next Generation Royal Air Force through Astra, to harness the full potential of our people, our platforms and our networks; **tomorrow is today's business.**

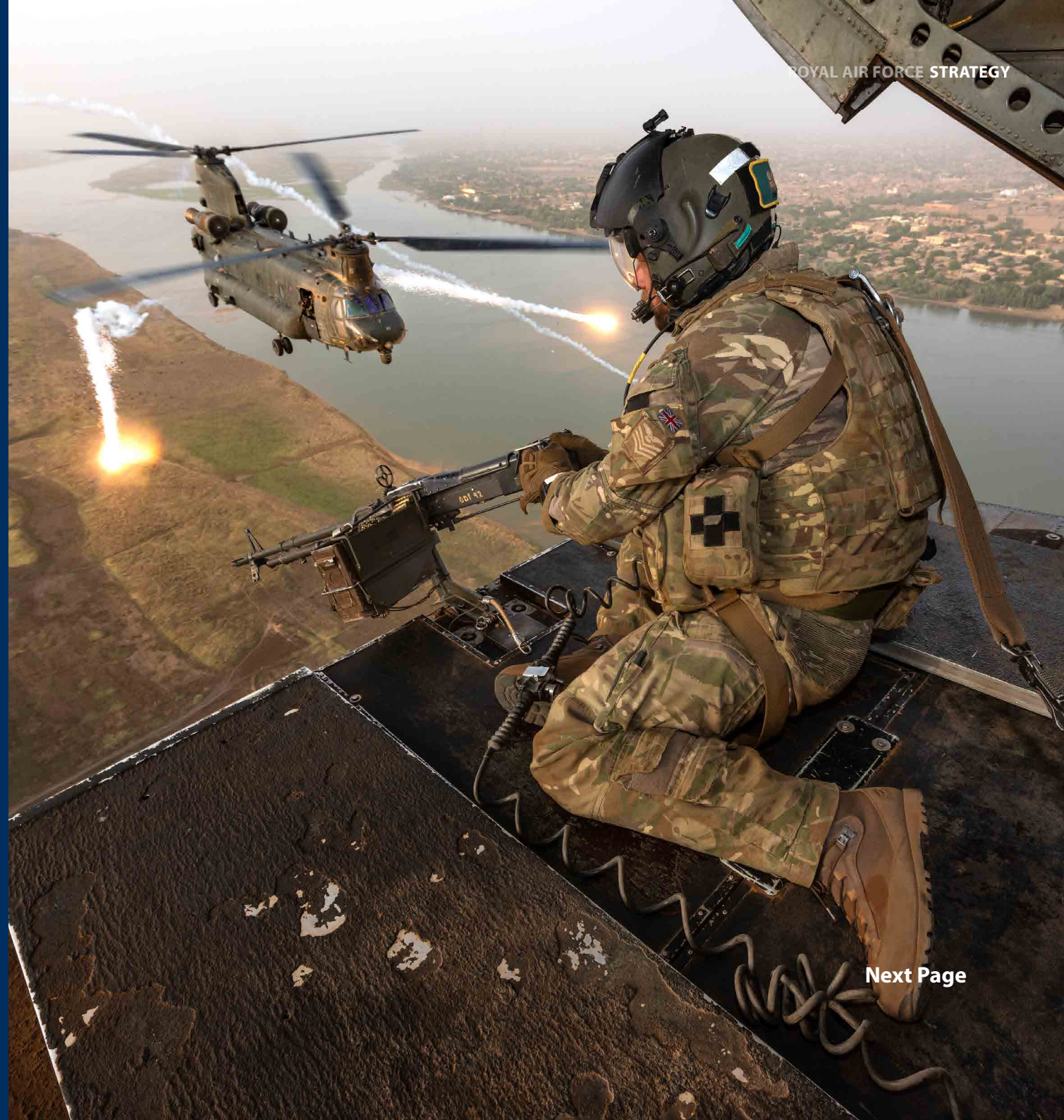
Value our People. The Royal Air Force is rightly proud of its reputation for excellence and our history of defending the United Kingdom and our allies. While our aircraft, platforms and systems are fundamental to that reputation and our future success, it is the enduring quality and talent of our people that gives the Royal Air Force its decisive edge. There can be no higher priority than ensuring we can continue to attract, recruit and sustain the highly skilled and diverse workforce we need from across every part of the UK population. Not only is it the right thing to do at a personal level, our future success as an Air Force depends on it. **Our focus on our people must be absolute.**

This strategy should inspire, inform and cohere everything we do as a Service, so that together we will achieve the Royal Air Force vision to be **the most operationally successful, agile and innovative Air Force in the world; always there for our nation.**

The Context

We contribute to the National Strategic Objectives of:

- Sustaining strategic advantage through science and technology
- Shaping the open international order of the future
- Strengthening security and defence at home and overseas
- Building resilience at home and overseas



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The Context

This strategy sets out how the Royal Air Force will deliver on the direction set by the Government in Integrated Review 2021.

In that Review, the Prime Minister stated his vision for the UK in 2030 as a stronger, more secure, prosperous and resilient Union, better equipped for a more competitive age, as a problem-solving and burden-sharing nation with a global perspective. The Review states clearly that we now operate in a more competitive and multipolar world. The boundaries between peace and war; home and away; state and non-state actors; and virtual and real worlds have become ever-more blurred. Defence must modernise and adapt to this more ambiguous operating environment.

The Integrated Review directed Defence to be increasingly present and active around the world and be prepared for more persistent engagement and constant campaigning. We must be confident and assertive; comfortable operating below the threshold of open conflict; but willing and capable to confront threats early across the continuum between operating and warfighting. Now, as much as they have ever been, our relationships with allies and partners in NATO and across the globe are vital to our collective security. We must train, exercise and fight alongside each other to deter and defeat threats in the Euro-Atlantic region and beyond.

The Royal Air Force has always been there to provide the UK Government with strategic choice. Today we offer the capability to rapidly project air and space power, wherever it is required, to protect the UK, its people and its territory.



As we look to the future, the more complex and contested operating environment described in the Integrated Review will present us with significant challenges to our continued success. To remain credible and capable, and ranked amongst the most technologically innovative, productive and lethal air forces in the world, we must modernise continually.

This is a challenge we are well prepared for and have already begun with our Astra journey towards the Next Generation Air Force. We cannot assume our current equipment and processes will remain relevant in the future, and we must radically overhaul every part of our business. We will become an increasingly digitally empowered force, investing in new platforms, whilst retiring legacy equipment with increasingly limited utility in the future operating environment.

Alongside all of this we will continue to evolve how we recruit, retain and manage our workforce. Modernisation of the Royal Air Force's professions reflects a shift towards the more specialist skills, knowledge and experience required to operate and succeed in the contemporary environment. Competition to recruit and retain skilled people is fierce; we must ensure that the Royal Air Force is an organisation that attracts the best from the society we serve. We must be diverse and inclusive and demonstrate our impeccable values and standards in everything we do.



The Strategy

Our Vision:

The most operationally successful, agile and innovative Air Force in the world; always there for our nation.

Our Objectives:

- Succeed Today
- Innovate for Tomorrow
- Value our People

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Succeed Today

Air and space power provides the UK Government with the strategic choice to act globally, at range, at speed and with precision. The Royal Air Force plays a central role in the Government's vision of security, stability, and prosperity of the UK. We are a warfighting organisation, but we make an indispensable contribution to the UK's defence across the entire continuum of conflict, whether delivering decisive effects in our own right, or as a critical cross-domain enabler. We must be prepared and able to act decisively and, if necessary, lethally to confront threats whenever and wherever required, reflecting our enduring purpose: **global air and space power to protect our nation.**

The Integrated Review states that the first duty of the Government is to **protect our people, our homeland and our democracy.** The Royal Air Force's contribution to assuring the security of the UK and its interests is multi-faceted across both the Air and Space domains and includes activities at home and overseas.

Enduring national operations, such as Quick Reaction Alert to defend the UK's airspace are a high-profile demonstration of our military response to direct threats to UK security. But our air and space assets also make an invaluable contribution to the protection of the UK from terrorism, espionage and threats to critical national infrastructure, as well as supporting other Government departments to secure our borders. The Royal Air Force also contributes to the wider security and resilience of the UK through our support to civil authorities and communities. We are at readiness to provide specialist skills and expertise to respond to national events and crises ranging from environmental catastrophes, such as flooding, to terrorist attacks.



Security of the UK also requires us to be persistent and proactive in our overseas engagement to pre-empt and deter threats early and at range. Recent events in Ukraine have reinforced the importance of our membership of global alliances and partnerships such as NATO. These are the foundation of our collective security in a deteriorating global environment which threatens all of us. We will train, exercise, operate and ultimately fight, alongside our allies and partners. Whilst NATO and our home region of the Euro-Atlantic will remain at the heart of our national security, it is vital that we scan the horizon now to counter emerging state and non-state threats at range and support new alliances and engagement opportunities such as in the Indo-Pacific.

The Royal Air Force contributes to the Prime Minister's vision of a stable and prosperous Union. As a highly technical force, our cutting-edge capability programmes drive innovation and investment in science and technology and secure jobs right across the nation in the UK's aerospace and space technology sectors. Working with Government and industry we actively support the levelling-up agenda, air-related export campaigns and build enduring relationships with our export partners across the globe.

Climate change is a growing and significant risk to national and global security and one we must play our part to address. Aligned with the Government's ambition to achieve net zero by 2050, the Royal Air Force is committed to becoming the first net zero air force by 2040. The Astra Sustainability pathway is at the heart of our journey to net zero with ongoing and emerging initiatives to drive down our emissions in the air and on the ground.

All of this is what our nation demands and expects of us. We must **Succeed Today.**



Innovate for Tomorrow

Our purpose is enduring but the world around us is changing. To maintain our operational edge, we must constantly evolve and **Innovate for Tomorrow.**

Our adversaries will develop and exploit new, rapidly evolving and proliferating technologies to challenge us for any operating advantage. Our systems must remain at the cutting edge of technology to operate in an increasingly contested and competitive environment.

We must be integrated across all five domains of air, land, sea, space and cyberspace as well as nationally across Government and engaged internationally with our allies and partners. Together we will be able to collaborate and share resources and information to facilitate rapid decision-making and the timely delivery of effects. Our Air Operating Concept and our Space Operating Concept describe in detail how our aircraft, spacecraft and systems will integrate with each other.

Information underpins that integration. Recent conflicts have demonstrated how the accessibility of technology and pervasiveness of information have transformed the character of conflict. We must fully exploit our capabilities in order to maintain information superiority over our adversaries.



Our journey together, building the Next Generation Royal Air Force, is Astra. It has many pathways, they include the big change programmes in the core Astra Themes of People, Training, Equipment, Infrastructure and Support, as well as Digital, Space and Sustainability. Our multi-million-pound change programmes matter, they are all part of Astra, but we also need our people, their ideas and innovations. To get to where we need to be, we must harness the innovative spirit that is, and always has been, in our Royal Air Force DNA.

We must always be there for our nation, modernising and evolving to meet the challenges of the future. Together we must **Innovate for Tomorrow.**



Value our People

The Royal Air Force is a Whole Force, a blend of regulars, reservists, civil servants, contractors and industry partners. We all have a sense of belonging to the Royal Air Force and our shared responsibility and duty binds us together. Our aviators have a reputation for excellence and professionalism and are in demand across Defence and other Government departments to bring their air- and space-minded skills, knowledge and experience to bear.

The very nature of the air and space environment demands that we must fully understand, harness and exploit the potential of new technology to succeed. The Royal Air Force attracts driven and intelligent people who want to be part of that success. Throughout our history, the character of our people as natural innovators, motivated to understand, harness and exploit the potential of new technologies is evidenced in our achievements. All our people are empowered to be at the heart of Astra and accelerate the changes we need to be fit and ready for the future.

We must ensure that the Royal Air Force continues to be an organisation that attracts the best from the society we serve; to achieve this we must meet, or exceed, the standards expected of a modern employer. For our people to achieve their ambitions and meet their potential we must focus on what matters to them and empower them to succeed in their career. Everyone across the Whole Force must feel their voice can be heard. We will consult widely to understand what matters to our people and recognise that these issues evolve throughout a career and vary between individuals. A military life is both rewarding and challenging, and we will support our people through their journey. We may not always get it right, and sometimes we will have to make difficult choices, but at all times, and levels, people will be at the heart of our thinking.



The Royal Air Force has a distinctive culture that has evolved throughout our history. It underpins our fighting spirit and effectiveness. Our values of Respect, Integrity, Service and Excellence form the core of our culture and are the foundations for the standards of discipline and behaviour we expect. However, culture is complex and can be the cause of biases, behaviours and organisational failings that hold us back. As we adopt new technologies and deal with the many challenges that we face, we must adapt our culture to bring out the very best in all of us. This will enhance our fighting spirit and operational effectiveness, and also our agility and innovation, so that we can successfully deliver our strategy through our people.

We are already an inclusive and diverse organisation, but we can always do more; inclusion is key to teamwork, and diversity enhances the Royal Air Force as a problem-solving organisation. Together, inclusion and diversity enhance our operational effectiveness and strengthen our culture. Unacceptable behaviours at any level within the Royal Air Force have no place in our culture and will not be tolerated; they undermine our fighting spirit and operational effectiveness. We must fearlessly call them out and relentlessly drive them out.

Our people must feel proud, confident, empowered and, most importantly, valued; not just for what they do, but for who they are and what they bring to the Royal Air Force.

This matters and applies beyond the Whole Force, across the wider Royal Air Force community including: those we rely on personally; Service charities; cadet organisations; and our veterans. We **Value our People**.



The Strategy on a Page

The Strategy directs our future and should inform and inspire all those involved in its delivery.

Our Purpose

Global air and space power to protect our nation

Our Vision

The most operationally successful, agile and innovative Air Force in the world; always there for our nation

Our Objectives

Succeed Today

Air and Space power to protect the security, stability and prosperity of the UK, its people and territory

Innovate for Tomorrow

Maintain our operational edge by constantly innovating and evolving for tomorrow

Value our People

Everyone must feel proud, confident, empowered, and valued for what they do and who they are

Our Journey



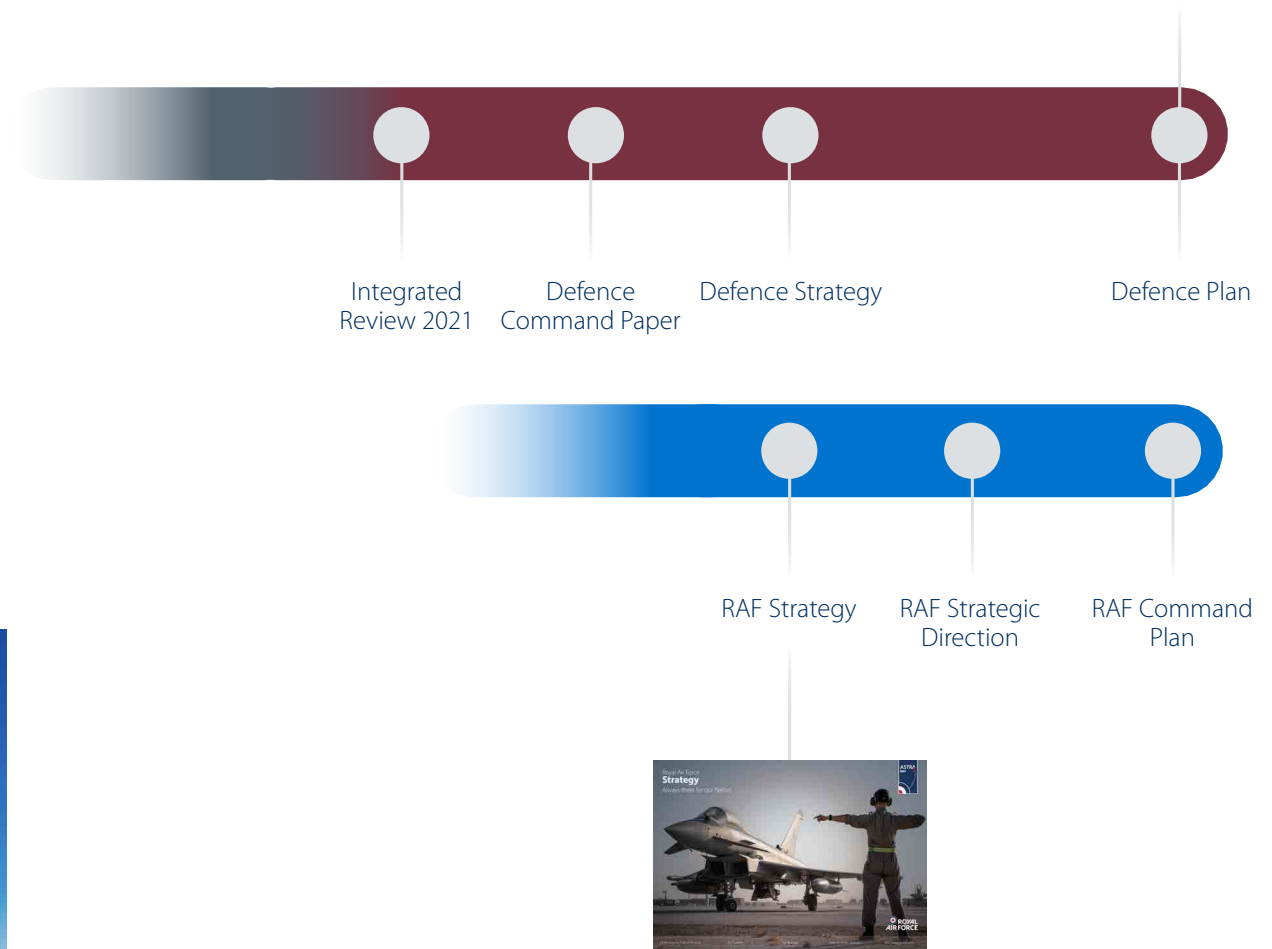
Our journey together
Building the Next Generation Royal Air Force

Hierarchy of Documents

Royal Air Force Strategy takes its direction from and delivers its own direction in line with the hierarchy of Defence strategy documents.

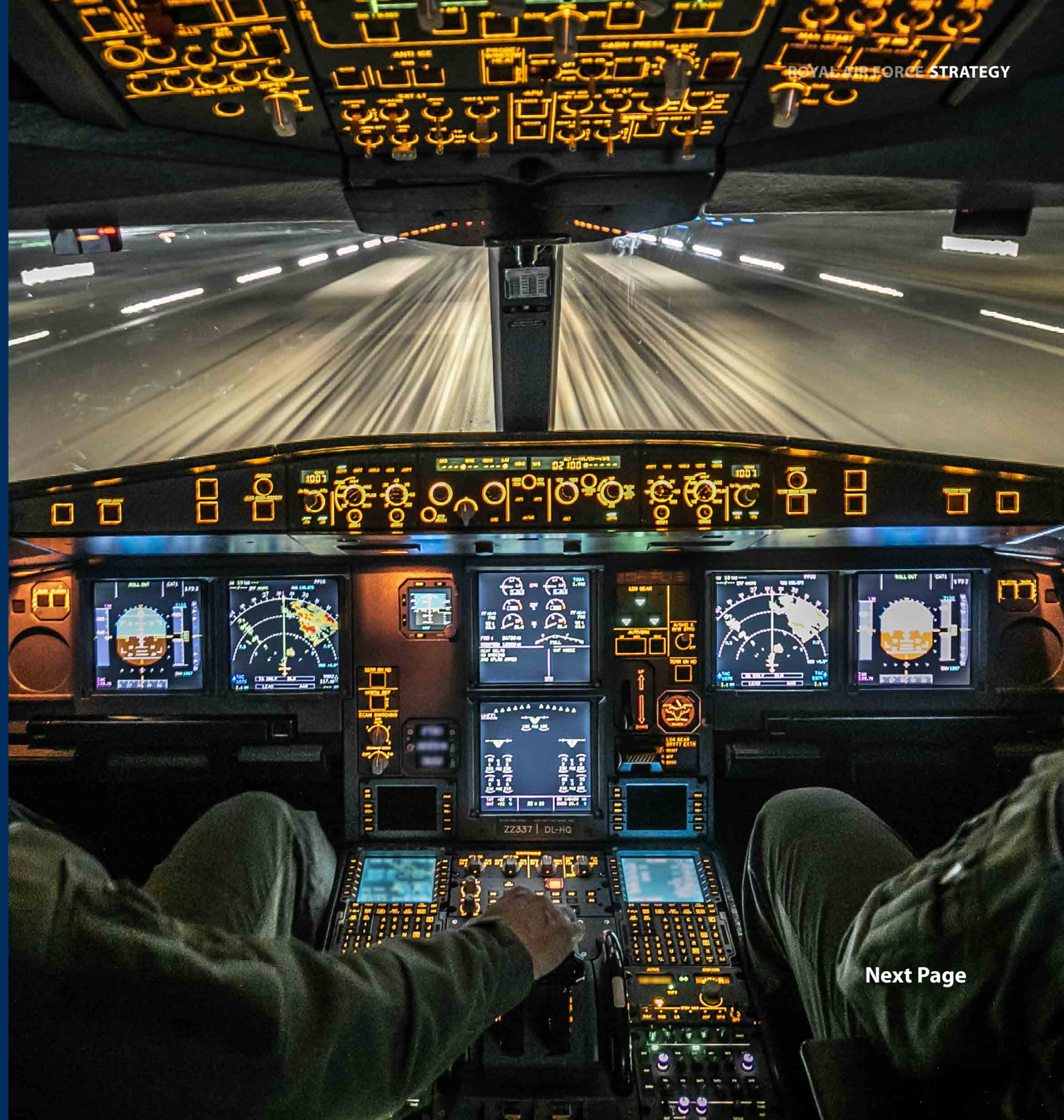
Integrated Review 2021: Global Britain in a Competitive Age is the capstone document by which HM Government sets out its vision for Defence, Development and Foreign Policy out to 2030. The Defence Command Paper: Defence in a Competitive Age, is a Defence-specific response to the Integrated Review. Both of these documents are informed by, but are not subordinate to, the Integrated Operating Concept.

The Royal Air Force takes specific direction from the strategy and tasks outlined in Defence Strategy and the Defence Plan. Within the Royal Air Force hierarchy, Royal Air Force Strategy is our capstone document with its three Strategic Objectives delivered through Royal Air Force Strategic Direction, for activities out to 2045, and the Royal Air Force Command Plan for in-year activities.



Delivery of the Strategy

How we deliver the strategy will be critical to our success, today and tomorrow.



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Delivery of the Strategy

The Strategy will be delivered by the Chief of the Air Staff and members of the Air Force Board through the Royal Air Force Strategic Direction and the in-year Command Plan. As a suite of strategy and delivery documents they provide a clear and detailed vision for the Royal Air Force of today and tomorrow alongside plans for people, digital, equipment, infrastructure, training, sustainability and support, delivered through Astra.



How we will Succeed

Effective delivery of any strategy requires more than ambition and headline goals. There are several themes that will be crucial to success for the Royal Air Force.

Utilising the full talents of our people

The Royal Air Force has a workforce that others envy. Our people are well-educated, well-trained, highly motivated and highly committed. We must harness the full talents of our people through leadership, delegation and empowerment. We must foster an environment that protects and strengthens their mental health and resilience.

Diversity and inclusion

More diverse and inclusive organisations make better decisions and are more innovative. By becoming ever more so we will be better able to face the challenges of the future. We must also ensure that we foster behaviours that meet the high standards our people and wider society expect, whilst making sure that we have the courage to challenge and drive out behaviours that are inappropriate or unacceptable.

Challenging requirements and constraints

Our systems, rules and processes can be helpful in ensuring consistent standards, but sometimes they can stifle innovation and hold us back, particularly in our work to build a workforce fit for the future.

We must be prepared to challenge our own rules, question every aspect of our requirements, try new approaches and make balanced risk judgements.

Interoperability and collaboration

Rapid, joint, fully integrated action with the other Services and our allies is key to success both now and in the future. We must be as interoperable as possible, requiring us to train and exercise together more and to collaborate more on the development of future capability. Many of our people already work in these other organisations; we must exploit the opportunities this gives us.

Identifying and exploiting opportunities

The freedom we have been given to reinvest savings means we must seize and exploit every opportunity and take the tough decisions to create the financial headroom we need to grow. We must also exploit the opportunities offered by our Net Zero commitments to improve sustainability throughout the RAF.

Communicate and recognise progress and success

This strategy can only be delivered by our people and their efforts. We must communicate their progress and recognise their success in order to harness their enthusiasm and build momentum together.

Royal Air Force Strategic Direction

The strategy-to-task
bridge between the
Royal Air Force Strategy
and the Royal Air Force
Command Plan.



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Introducing Royal Air Force Strategic Direction

This document, the Royal Air Force Strategy, is deliberately high-level and aimed at the widest possible audience. The Strategy must flow down through our organisation, finding its way to the things we do each day, so that everything we do is part of succeeding today, innovating for tomorrow and valuing our people.

To provide more detail on the things we must do, we will introduce Royal Air Force Strategic Direction to sit underneath the Royal Air Force Strategy. Its purpose is to define and cohere detailed long-term objectives and activities to bridge between the Strategy Vision and the in-year Command Plan, the document that describes what activities Air will commit time, effort and money to every year.

Together, the Royal Air Force Strategy, Strategic Direction and Command Plan will form a complete suite of strategy documents, to provide a golden thread that ensures we are not only doing things right, but we are doing the right things; that we are bringing this Strategy to life.



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