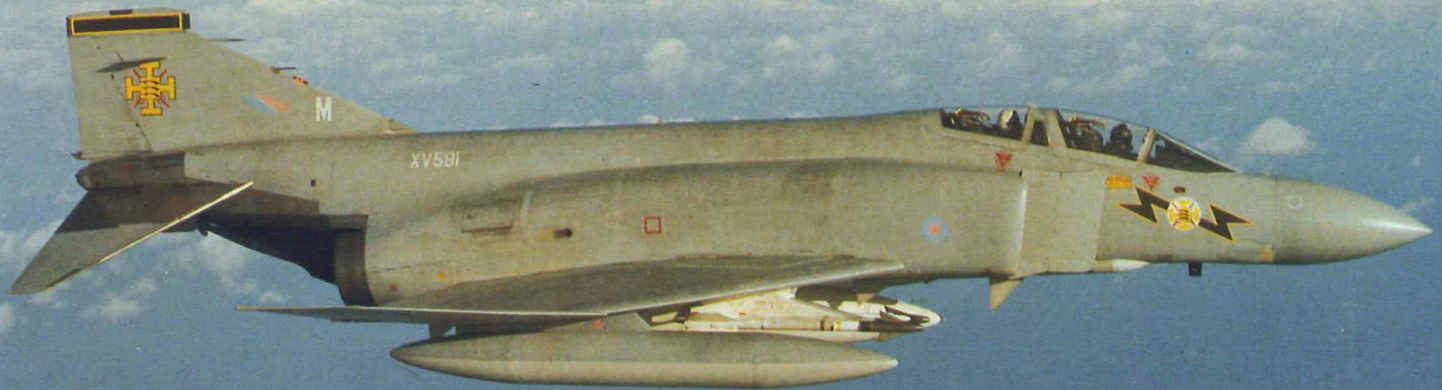


BRITAIN'S ARMED FORCES TODAY:1

RAF STRIKE COMMAND

 **IAN ALLAN**



Paul Jackson



CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Cover:

A Phantom FGR1 of No 111 Squadron based at RAF Leuchars on patrol high over the North Sea. The aircraft is carrying three ferry tanks, four Sidewinder and Sparrow air-to-air missiles and is painted in the latest grey overall low visibility scheme. MoD

Title page:

With reheat full on and mainwheels almost locked home, a Phantom FG1 of No 43 Squadron thunders off the runway at the start of a sortie. No 43's Phantoms were ordered for the Navy, but never saw naval service. P. A. Jackson

Left:

Hawk T1s of No 151 Squadron, a component of No 2 TWU, use letters for individual identification rather than the numbers employed by the other three Strike Command Hawk units. No prizes for guessing where No 151 is based . . . and it's not Ronevihc! BAe

Below:

On short range missions, Jaguar GR1s can dispense with fuel tanks in favour of increased ordnance, this No 6 Squadron aircraft from Coltishall carrying six 1,000lb bombs in addition to the two internal 30mm cannon. Jaguars are assigned to reinforcement roles within NATO. BAe

When Strike Command was established in 1968, it inherited the traditions of two previous Royal Air Force formations whose role in the defence of freedom is acknowledged throughout the world. The successors of Fighter and Bomber Commands formed a firm basis on which to build the RAF's single home-based operational Command, and in later years this force was swelled by maritime, offensive support and transport units.

Today, Strike Command is the operator of all the types of RAF aircraft with which Britain would go to war, its weaponry ranging from machine guns to tactical nuclear weapons. Other aircraft perform the vital but often unsung tasks of transport and communications, whilst SAR helicopters undertake their missions of mercy. Until recently, it seemed that Strike Command would remain largely a European force, but the Falklands war — in which it performed with distinction — has resulted in an extended overseas presence and participation in a front-line situation as demanding as that of its companion, RAF Germany.

But the Command does not exist solely for national purposes. For a decade, Strike Command has had the NATO title of United Kingdom Air Forces to reflect its complete commitment to the Alliance at any time Europe is under threat. Regular air exercises and squadron interchanges reinforce the bond between airmen of different but like-minded nations and serve notice to potential adversaries of the West's determination to be left in peace. Strike Command is neither the largest nor smallest air combat force dedicated to NATO, but its claim to be the best is not easily refuted.





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