

BTF Mission Accomplished: B-52s Come Home

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The Boeing B-52s are coming back home to the USA after spending time abroad training across Europe.

Residents near Royal Air Force (RAF) Fairford heard the sounds of four Boeing [B-52 Stratofortress](#) strategic bombers for [the last time](#), at least for the next few months, as the United States Air Force aircraft took off and returned to Minot Air Force Base (AFB), North Dakota.

It marked the end of the deployment of the Bomber Task Force (BTF) 2025-2 Europe, which saw thirteen individual missions carried out with U.S. allies and partners in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East.

he BTF Lucky 13

The final BTF 2025-2 Europe sortie was carried out last Monday 17th March. Two of the B-52H aircraft conducted “intercept training with Royal Netherlands Air Force F-35 Lightning IIs, Royal Danish Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcons, and Swedish JAS 39 Gripen,” in the aptly named [TOWER CITADEL mission](#) in the Arctic region.

“Training alongside Allies and partners enhances interoperability and ensures seamless coordination and communication ahead of potential real-world scenarios,” said Lt. Col. Kendall Smith, Bomber Task Force chief for U.S. Air Forces in Europe – Air Forces Africa. (UAAFE – AF).

“These missions directly strengthen lethality, readiness, and warfighting capabilities.”

The twelfth mission, TOWER BLOCKHOUSE, [occurred on Friday](#), 14th March. One of the B-52 bombers flew low over the Norwegian capital of Oslo while escorted by a pair of Royal Norwegian Air Force F-35 Lightning IIs.

In total, the bombers integrated with thirteen partner nations, which allowed for an emphasis on interoperability with various allied aircraft.

The BTF Team Operation

Though the four B-52s, which arrived [at RAF Fairford](#) on February 11, 2025, have been in the spotlight, the successful deployment was part of a team effort involving the 69th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron and the 501st Combat Support Wing.

The 501st CSW airmen were responsible for ensuring that every mission element ran smoothly, including maintaining the aircraft and airfield operations.

“Just as our wing name implies, we provide combat support to the Bomber Task Force personnel,” said U.S. Air Force Col. D. Landon Phillips, 501st CSW commander.

“We deliver munitions and ordnance, care and feeding, communication capabilities, logistical support, and anything the aircraft maintainers need to sustain air operations. Our goal is to foster seamless, agile combat support.”

The Air Force [explained](#) that BTF missions require “months of preparation,” including tailored support “to the specific needs of the arriving unit.”

The RAF personnel also played a crucial role, allowing the crews to remain focused on accomplishing their mission.

“The 501st CSW and its personnel have been critical in ensuring the success of our mission here at RAF Fairford,” added U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Joseph Cangealose, 69th EBS commander. “From fire department operations to security forces and airfield management, their support allows us to project airpower across the European theater effectively.”

The Next BTF Mission at RAF Fairford?

Phillips explained that “RAF Fairford is specifically designed to handle bomber operations, and [its] unique location and capabilities are a great asset to the alliance.” That will mean that while the B-52s are coming home, the base will likely see another BTF deployment (or even two) this year.

If and when that occurs, it isn’t known, however.

The U.S. Air Force [BTF missions](#) are still meant to be far from routine and have no planned schedule announced in advance, yet the increased number is making the B-52 and other U.S. bombers a familiar sight in the skies over Europe and the Middle East. The service has carried out unscheduled deployments since 2018 to provide “theater familiarization for aircrew and aircraft integration opportunities with Allies and partners across the globe.”