

Air Force pilots get "Pep'ed"



CONINGSBY, United Kingdom – Air Force Maj. P.K. Carlton took his first solo flight in a Royal Air Force Typhoon aircraft here last May while participating in the Pilot Exchange Program. He is assigned to Royal Air Force Station Coningsby, the RAF's premier fighter station as part of the program. (DoD photo)

Release Date: Jul 11, 2006

by Jennifer McDaniel, USAFE Public Affairs

RAMSTEIN, Germany – US fighter pilots can receive the opportunity fly other countries' combat air planes as part of the Pilot Exchange Program. The exchange program, called PEP, is a chance for allies to improve understanding of each others capabilities, procedures and tactics.

Air Force Maj. P.K. Carlton, took his first solo flight in a Typhoon in May while performing his assigned duties with the United Kingdom's Royal Air Force. He is assigned to Royal Air Force Station Coningsby, the RAF's premier fighter station.

Through the PEP program, the Air Force builds, sustains and expands international relationships that are critical for its Expeditionary Air and Space force. PEP allows the Air Force to exchange personnel in equivalent grades and specialties with foreign nations, enhancing its ability to perform coalition operations with global partners. The goals of the program include promoting mutual understanding and trust; enhancing interoperability through mutual understanding of doctrine, tactics, techniques and procedures; strengthening air force-to-air force ties; and, developing long-term, professional and personal relationships.

Major Carlton - who is an F-16 pilot by training - said both jets fly very similar. "The biggest difference is in the RAF's 'rules to fly by,'" he said. Each country has different aircraft regulations and all pilots participating in the program must be knowledgeable about those variations, which can include differences in approach and takeoff distances.

Countries currently involved in the program with the Air Force include France, Italy,

Spain, Jordan, Denmark, and Norway. All in all, there are currently 66 Air Force exchange positions in 16 countries; however, all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces have similar programs in place.

U.S. Air Force pilots assigned to the PEP program must integrate completely into the host nation's air force. All pilots in the program must be able to fluently speak the native language.