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Britain Pledges to Arm Baltics to Help Fight Off Russia

By The Moscow Times

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Britain will send four Typhoon fighter jets to help NATO with air policing in the Baltic States.

Britain will send four Typhoon fighter jets again this year to help NATO with air policing in the Baltic States, Defense Secretary Michael Fallon said Thursday, promising that up to 1,000 British troops will also join a NATO rapid reaction force.

NATO agreed at a summit in Wales last September to create a "spearhead" rapid reaction force as part of its efforts to reassure allies in Eastern Europe nervous about Russia's intervention in Ukraine.

Defense ministers from the military alliance are due to flesh out the details of this 5,000-strong force during a meeting in Brussels on Thursday.

Britain will lead the rapid reaction force in 2017, the British Ministry of Defense said in a statement, contributing troops to two regional headquarters in Poland and Romania as well as

to units in Poland, Romania and Bulgaria.

Four Royal Air Force Typhoons will operate alongside Norwegian aircraft between May and August to secure airspace over Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, it added. Typhoons were involved in patrols over the Baltic States last year too.

"NATO's credibility in the face of the security challenges we face depends on everyone playing their part to implement the decisions taken at Wales last year," Fallon said in a statement.

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