

# **BRUNTINGHORPE QRA(I) Scramble - Script**

## **Version 02**

### **PRIOR TO 'Q' SHED DOORS OPENING, ALL IS QUIET**

#### **Commentator:**

Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen. Welcome to our re-enactment of a Quick Reaction Alert Scramble by the Lightning Force.

I would like you all to imagine we are now back in the late 1970s, or early 1980s, at a fighter airfield somewhere in the United Kingdom. The Cold War is still cold. It will be another decade before the Berlin Wall falls. We, in the United Kingdom, are maintaining a very close watch on Soviet military activity, particularly in the air.

It is late morning and the UK Air Defence System is at a normal, peacetime readiness state but, nonetheless, highly vigilant.

Numerous pairs of Lightnings and Phantoms maybe airborne conducting peacetime training exercises. We are keeping the Air Defence System highly proficient conducting Practice Interceptions

of all types, low level, high level, sub-sonic and super-sonic. They are supported by Victor Air-to-Air Refueling Tankers, such as the one here at Bruntingthorpe, and Airborne Early Warning Shackletons, the predecessor of the present day E3D AWACs aircraft; all keeping highly proficient in their mutual joint operating procedures. They, too, are an essential part of the Air Defence System.

All this training activity is being coordinated and controlled by Fighter Controllers and their teams in a number of Control and Reporting Centres around the United Kingdom, but remote from the airfields and protected underground. They, too, are practicing command and control to retain a peak level of proficiency. It is essential, for the safety and security of the United Kingdom, that this System is maintained at a high level of effectiveness, both at a unit and individual level. It must be an effective weapon of defence capable of patrolling our airspace and deterring any potential aggressor.

Our Lightnings here at Bruntingthorpe represent the sharp end of this large, complex and coordinated Air Defence System of Control

and Reporting Centres and Airfields. In the air they are supported by Air to Air Tanker and Airborne Early Warning aircraft. It is a large and complex team that needs to be kept at its peak. The maintenance of peace depends on it.

It is the Cold War and, although it is peacetime, being alert and fully ready for any eventuality in the air is of paramount importance. Intrusions into the airspace around the United Kingdom by Soviet Block long range aircraft are not unusual, in fact, fairly frequent. Sitting apart from the numerous aircraft conducting training sorties is the QRA(I) Force, Quick Reaction Alert (Interceptors). It is located on a number of airfields around the United Kingdom. At the sharp end of each element of this force are two fighters at a high state of readiness; fully fueled and fully armed. The pilots, fully kitted up, are nearby their aircraft in a small crew room. They are co-located with their aircraft in the green 'Q' Shed at the side of the airfield. The Command and Control System, based at some distance from the airfield, is ever alert and is monitoring all air traffic in the airspace around the United Kingdom on a 24/7 basis. It is in close contact and exchanging information with the Civilian Air Traffic Control Agencies and its

NATO colleagues, It is part of NATO's readiness posture and the overall NATO Air Defence System.

Without warning, amongst the identified air traffic to the north, two contacts in formation are detected by the Track Production Team on their radar screens at the Control and Reporting Centre. They do not correspond to any known aircraft movements, military or civilian. The Master Controller at the Control and Reporting Centre assesses the situation. He or she has a direct line to the airfield and the 'Q' Shed which houses the two fully ready and fully armed Lightnings. It's the vital Telebrief Line. The Master Controller's voice is heard on loudspeakers around the 'Q' Shed, in the pilot's Crewroom, in the Airfield Operations Centre, in the Airfield Control Tower and in the cockpits of the Lightning fighters. Every member of the Team is kept in the picture by the Master Controller.

The task of the Air Defence System is to intercept, identify and shadow any unauthorised intrusions. The Master Controller needs to know who these intruders are, to monitor their activities and to order the fighters to intervene, should the need arise. He, or she, makes a rapid decision and reacts. The action commences:

(Slight pause, 2-3 seconds)

**Master Controller:**

Buchan Master Controller on Telebrief. We have a contact, strength 2, 80 miles east of Aberdeen heading south, height 8 thousand and climbing, speed 250 knots.

Q1 your mission is to intercept, identify and report. Vector 030, climb to Flight Level 250, call Buchan Control on Fighter Stud 5, Standby Fighter Stud 8:

**SCRAMBLE, SCRAMBLE, SCRAMBLE -  
ACKNOWLEDGE**

**Airfield Operations:**

'Q' acknowledged

**Siren and/or Bell sounds for short period**

**Commentator: (While 'Q' is manning up and starting engines)**

Many actions take place rapidly and simultaneously.

The pilots run to their aircraft and begin cockpit checks. The Ground Crew's last minute tasks ready the aircraft. The Airfield Air Traffic Control in the tower ready themselves and clear the area, both on the ground and in the air around the airfield. The Control and Reporting Centre Controllers man up radar control consoles ready for the fighters. This will take only a minute or two, QRA operations take priority over all the other activities and are well practiced.

The Master Controller will also bring the supporting Victor Tanker Refueling and the Shackleton Airborne Early Warning Aircraft to cockpit readiness. These will be at different airfields.

The Lightnings will take only minutes to be ready.

## **THE LIGHTNING SCRAMBLES, ALL IS VERY NOISEY**

(At this point there is no point in speaking, the Lightning will do that)

## **WHILE THE LIGHTNING IS AT THE FAR END OF THE RUNWAY AND ALL IS QUIET**

At this point the Lightning would be climbing out on the information given and would be checking in on UHF R/T with the Fighter Controller for directions. The Controller would continue directing the fighter until it was close enough to the intruders for the pilot to have picked them up on his Airborne Interception Radar and tracked them sufficiently to take over the interception. The Controller would continue monitoring the interception should the pilot call for more help. As with all air operations, it depends on good teamwork. With great care, the pilot would close to visual range and report his findings to the Controller. The operation would continue with the Lightning shadowing the intruders and reporting their activities to the Controller who, in turn, would keep the Master

Controller informed. If necessitated by the length of time of the intrusion, further QRA interceptors would be scrambled to relieve Q1 and tanker support would be provided. Depending on the circumstances, AEW Shackletons would be scrambled to extend radar coverage and, if necessary, provide control. It was not unusual for “Q” operations to last for 4 – 5 hours and could be much longer. It has been known for up to Q12 to join the operation.

After the intruders had turned north and departed the UK’s area of interest, the ‘Q’ Force would return to base. If intervention had been required the intruders were under no illusions that it would have been swift and effective.

(Possible RTB Chat between pilot and ground – ad lib)

## **AFTER THE LIGHTNING SHUTS DOWN AT THE ‘Q’ SHED OR THE SPECTATOR END OF THE RUNWAY**

### **Commentator:**

In the way in which you have just seen, the Lightnings played a



vital role in maintaining our demonstrable readiness during the Cold War years. They contributed significantly to maintaining World peace until the Iron Curtain was, thankfully, finally dismantled.

To maintain our peace we must never forget that Freedom isn't Free. It must be earned and protected. Following this vital principle, at this very moment, even as we speak, the QRA(I) is ready somewhere in the UK. The threat, the aircraft, the airfields, the ground based radar early warning and command and control facilities may have all changed with the advance of technology, but the principle remains – Freedom isn't Free. The fact that the Lightnings were never used in anger in the United Kingdom Airspace is a tribute to their efforts and success.

Today, we all have an eternal debt of gratitude to all those, units and individuals who manned and operated all parts of our Air Defence System of which, our Lightnings here, were a major player.

May I thank you all on behalf of the team here at Bruntingthorpe  
for your attendance, interest and attention.