Twitter Thread by IDFOC

IDFOC
@_IDFOC

1/16 A thread on air policing, by which we mean the use of interceptor aircraft in peacetime to maintain the integrity of our airspace (as opposed to 'air superiority' or 'intercepting' or some of the other loosely related terms that are used). @IRLDeptDefence @BerryCathal @DFPRB

2/16 So, what does that really mean? It means using military assets to maintain the safety of our airspace from interference or other disruption. The crucial factor, however, is this is a peacetime function. @BerryCathal @GCraughwell @CharlieFlanagan @nealerichmond @lichamber

3/16 Fighter aircraft are used in the interceptor role because, in the same way that peacekeeping is not a job for soldiers but only soldiers can do it, only fighter aircraft have the requisite capabilities... @SorcaClarke_TD @GaryGannonTD @lawlessj @donlav @LauraMcGonigle @yfg

4/16 ...in terms of physical performance and onboard sensors to carry out this duty practically.

Let's see what that might actually mean in practice for Ireland ■
@Fiona_Kildare @davidstantontd @MattShanahanTD @mickthehack @Edward__Burke @KennethMcDonagh @jjsalmo @tchukstr

5/15 Taking the example of Russian (it's usually Russian in this locale) military aircraft flying through the Shannon FIR (or Flight Information Region) off the west coast and all the international air traffic that that automatically involves. @ahernegerald @PeterOHalloran1

6/16 They are not transmitting with their transponders and, as a result, no one else in the area knows exactly where they are. To get to that position, they will have already been tracked towards the area by NATO aircraft from, for example, Norway. @RACO_DF @K_Kourousis

7/16 What are the fighter aircraft doing in this case? It's pretty simple: they are flying close by the 'visitor' with their own transponder on, thereby.... @Aiden_Corkery @catherinegalway @ConorGallaghe_r @DavidBa8976 @dsmooney @CllrPioSmith

8/16 ...informing everyone else in the area, including air traffic control in Shannon of where they are so that safe separation of all the airliners, cargo aircraft, private jets etc. can be maintained. They will also be frequently calling them on...
@SeanFionn @NicReillyDrawda

9/16 ...Guard Frequency – the international emergency channel - giving the position, altitude and heading of the aircraft so that normal air traffic flow management can take place and keep people from being put under time or fuel pressure to make their destination. @ARCOIreland

10/16 This happens on a not irregular basis, indeed most pilots flying over Ireland will have heard it at some point.
@geraldnash @simoncoveney @KeohaneDan @McNamara_Eoin @slandail_nssi @DefenceIreland @LiamCahill2013 @kevpipps @GorseFires @RobGilbey

11/16 Some may present 'air policing' as creating an impenetrable shield over Ireland in some fantastical war against the US, EU, Britain or Russia. Of course that is something unachievable and, therefore, a waste of money to attempt.

12/16 It's nothing like that at all, it's all about providing for the safe use of our airspace by airlines - tourists, business travellers, packages and presents. @paulmcguinness6 @OCallaghanJim @MarkWall1 @malcolmbyrne @chrisrdonoghue @MccrumJacqui

13/16 Is that all that it is? Of course not. Already, when Ireland hosts major international summits etc., an air defence element is part of the security package. At the moment, this is provided by.... @galwaygrrl

14/16 ...short range surface-to-air missiles of the Artillery Regiment of the Army and Air Corps PC-9M trainers which can be armed with either rockets, machine guns or both. @conormlally @CormacJOKeeffe @ShonaMurray_

15/16 These PC-9s are directed by ground based radar to intercept and identify aircraft that are closing in on the location being secured. Sometimes even helicopters have been used, being able to more easily stay with slow moving targets.
@boucherhayes

16/16 'Great' you say – we already have an air policing capability then? Not quite. We'll have a look at what an air policing package actually involves in later threads. (With thanks to @declan275.)