



# F-35 Lightning II Program

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## AUSTRALIAN F-35 LANDS AT NEW HOME

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**LUKE AIR FORCE BASE, Arizona** -- The first Royal Australian Air Force F-35A Lightning II jet arrived at Luke Air Force Base December 18. The jet's arrival marks the first international partner F-35 to arrive for training at Luke.

"Today, we take another tremendous step forward in our transition to the F-35 here at Luke," said Brig. Gen. Scott Pleus, 56th Fighter Wing commander. "Australia is the first of 10 nations that will not only become part of the Luke community, but will share in calling the West Valley a home away from home."

Nine other nations will be training alongside the United States on the new airframe. Other partner-nations that will be joining the U.S. and Australia in the F-35A training program here will be Turkey, Italy, Norway, and the Netherlands, in addition to Foreign Military Sales countries Japan, Korea and Israel.

"Welcoming our first Australian F-35 is a special day for Luke and the community that has been so supportive of us," Pleus said.

"The Royal Australian Air Force is delighted to be the first foreign partner nation with F-35A aircraft arriving at Luke Air Force Base," Air Commodore Gary Martin, air attaché said. "This is an important milestone for Australia and we are looking forward to the commencement of our fifth-generation pilot training here at Luke in 2015."

Luke will be the central training hub for international F-35A training. In the near future, international and U.S. students will be teamed together learning how to effectively employ the fifth-generation strike fighter.

"Luke's mission has been to train the world's greatest fighter pilots," Pleus said. "We will continue on that legacy as we train the world's best F-35A pilots."

The teamwork on the F-35 isn't the first time Luke has worked with international partners on an airframe. Luke's Airmen currently train on base alongside pilots and maintainers from Singapore and Taiwan on the F-16.

Teaming up on the F-35 is another opportunity for Luke Airmen and pilots and maintainers from other nations to learn from one another.

"The collaborative training we'll be doing here on aircraft designed with stealth, maneuverability and integrated avionics will better prepare our combined forces to assume multi-role missions for the future of strike aviation," Pleus said. "From the bed-down of the F-35 and its infrastructure to the execution of training, our partner-nations have been an important piece of Luke's F-35 team. The relationships we're building now will be invaluable when we deploy together around the world protecting our respective countries."

Australia's training will be conducted in conjunction with the 61st Fighter Squadron. The 62nd Fighter Squadron is expected to stand-up in June, to be joined by partner-nations Italy and Norway. Flight operations for the 62nd are scheduled to begin in September of 2015.



*The first Royal Australian Air Force F-35A Lightning II jet arrived at Luke Air Force Base Dec. 18, 2014. The jet's arrival marks the first international partner F-35 to arrive for training at Luke. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Staci Miller)*