



# F-35 Lightning II Program

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## LAKENHEATH SELECTED TO HOST FIRST F-35S IN USAFE

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**RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany (AFNS)** -- Royal Air Force Lakenheath, U.K., was selected as the first U.S. Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) base to host the F-35A Lightning II.

Air Force officials and the secretary of Defense chose RAF Lakenheath based on numerous attributes, including the air space, infrastructure and combined training opportunities the U.K. has to offer.

"The F-35, a true 5th generation fighter, gives teeth to our ability to support collective defense of Europe and its partners," said Gen. Frank Gorenc, the USAFE and Air Forces Africa commander. "It assures allies and partners alike and provides a credible deterrent."



*An F-35A Lightning II test aircraft AA-1 undergoes flight testing over Fort Worth, Texas. Royal Air Force Lakenheath, U.K., was selected as the first U.S. Air Forces in Europe base to host the F-35A. (Courtesy photo/Liz Kaszynski)*

The F-35s will be delivered to two fighter squadrons in multiple phases beginning in 2020. Each of the squadrons will have 24 Lightning IIs assigned; totaling 48 aircraft assigned to RAF Lakenheath once full mission capability is achieved.

"Lakenheath is the perfect base for the perfect weapon system in the perfect country," said Col. Robert Novotny, the 48th Fighter Wing commander. "From the beginning, the United States and the United Kingdom have been side-by-side on F-35 program development. This is about continuing to work together with our allies and partners to ensure a secure future for Europe."

The U.S. is one of nine joint strike fighter partner nations who have agreed to adopt the new platform. This makes European basing crucial to maintaining and improving combat readiness for Air Forces in Europe according to Gorenc.

In addition to basing F-35s at RAF Lakenheath, there are also plans to construct shared maintenance facilities for the aircraft in Italy and Turkey. The F-35 partnership is expected to bring the added benefits of increased allied interoperability and cost sharing.

"When pilots from different nations fly the same platform they talk the same language," Gorenc said. "Interoperability with F-35 partner nations is assured for decades."

As new threats evolve around the world, NATO continuously seeks new technologies that can deter and defeat those threats.

"Air superiority, freedom from attack and freedom to attack, has always been the primary mission of the U.S. Air Force," Gorenc said. "With air superiority everything is possible; without it nothing is possible."

The F-35A joins the F-22 Raptor as the U.S. Air Force's latest 5th generation fighter. It will replace the aging fleet of F-16 Fighting Falcons and A-10 Thunderbolt IIs, which have served as the U.S. Air Force's multi-role and attack fighter aircraft for more than 20 years.