



F-35 Lightning II Program

Public Affairs Release – 2015 12 16

NORWEGIAN F-35 FLIES UNDER NORWEGIAN COMMAND FOR THE FIRST TIME

LUKE AIR FORCE BASE, Ariz. (AFNS) -- Maj. Morten Hanche, a Royal Norwegian Air Force F-35 Lightning II student pilot training with the 62nd Fighter Squadron, flew the first Norwegian F-35 sortie here Dec. 14.

Hanche has been training at Luke Air Force Base under the instruction of American pilots for the past several months in order to become Norway's first F-35 pilot and instructor, part of a wider effort to foster international cooperation of global F-35 fleet development, which include the air forces of partner nations Australia and Italy.

"The flight was smooth and it was a good sortie," Hanche said. "We worked a close air support scenario with ground controllers and practiced integration with ground forces. The aircraft was very well-behaved."

This event, which marked the first flight of a Norwegian-bound F-35 at the hands of a Norwegian pilot, was attended and observed by Maj. Gen. Per-Egil Rygg, the Royal Norwegian Air Force chief of staff.

"The way Luke Air Force Base and the 56th Fighter Wing have handled this flight and the overall training of our pilots is extraordinary," Rygg said. "This partnership is very important to Norway, and I'm very proud today to have seen the first time a Norwegian F-35 has been flown by a Norwegian pilot."

The F-35, produced at the Lockheed Martin Corp. facility in Texas, is one of the first two Norwegian F-35s produced; both of which are currently stationed at Luke AFB for development and training.

Lt. Col. Gregory Frana, the 62nd FS commander, flew alongside Hanche and guided him through the sortie. Frana commands the training efforts of the international pilots assigned to the 62nd FS.

"This was a momentous occasion for Norway, for Luke and for the United States Air Force," Frana said. "We've been standing up all of our operations here with our international partnerships in mind, and these relationships will continue to develop as we receive more F-35s from all of our eight partner nations."

Two other Norwegian pilots are now undergoing the initial academic phase of their training here, with more slated to arrive in March. The pilots will eventually join Hanche in flying the F-35. Norwegian maintainers are also at Luke AFB, learning to repair and maintain the F-35s that will one day be on their home flightlines in Norway. Eventually, all of the airmen will return home to help develop the training program for their own air force.



Royal Norwegian Air Force Maj. Morten Hanche, a 62nd Fighter Squadron F-35 Lightning II student pilot, makes a historic takeoff Dec. 14, 2015, at Luke Air Force Base, Ariz. This was the first time a Norwegian F-35 was launched under the helm of a Norwegian pilot.