



F-35 Lightning II Program

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F-35B Lightning II visits new homes for the first time

Friday 1st July 2016 marks an historic day for the UK as the future of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force combat air fleets, the F-35B Lightning II, flew over their prospective 'homes'; HMS Queen Elizabeth, HMS Prince of Wales in Rosyth and RAF Marham in Norfolk.

Defence Secretary Michael Fallon said:

"The F-35Bs are the most advanced fast jets in the world. Whether operating from land or from one of our two new aircraft carriers, they will ensure we have a formidable fighting force."

"They are part of our plan for a stronger and better defence: more ships, more aircraft, more troops available at readiness, better equipment for special forces, more being spent on cyber – to deal with the increased threats to our country."



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The fifth generation F-35B jets are the most advanced aircraft ever built for the UK and will be operated initially by 617 Squadron, Royal Air Force, known as 'The Dambusters' and subsequently by 809 Naval Air Squadron, 'The Immortals'. Combined, they will transform the UK's ability to project UK influence overseas.

The head of the Fleet Air Arm, Rear Admiral Keith Blount OBE, said:

"Today marks a significant milestone in the nation's return to aircraft carrier aviation and carrier strike. Both ships have been designed from the keel up to operate with the F-35B and the RAF and Royal Navy are working ever closer to see fixed-wing aircraft once more operating from Royal Navy Aircraft Carriers. I feel very proud to be part of it."

The carriers will provide over four-acres of sovereign territory which can be deployed around the world, travelling at upwards of 500 nautical miles a day. Both ships are capable of carrying up to 36 F-35B Lightning II stealth jets.

Following the flypast at the QEC, the aircraft flew on to RAF Marham, Norfolk.

Air Vice-Marshal Gerry Mayhew, Air Officer Commanding 1 Group, said:

"It was a proud and exciting moment to have the F-35B Lightning II fly overhead RAF Marham for the first time today. Alongside Typhoon, the Lightning II will offer the RAF and Royal Navy a cutting edge front line strike capability and also offer the most powerful and comprehensive integrated sensor package of any fighter aircraft in history. I have no doubt the Lightning II will act as an inspiration for the current and future members of both services."

In front of personnel from the Station and invited local guests, the F-35B completed a flypast, demonstrating what the station can expect when Marham becomes its home base in 2018. The Station has already started to prepare for the aircraft's arrival with work to provide the necessary infrastructure and support facilities.

Three jets arrived in the UK for the first time earlier this week after a nine hour transatlantic crossing. They will take centre stage in a number of Air Shows around this country this Summer, principally the Royal International Air Tattoo at RAF Fairford, Gloucestershire from 8-10 July and the Farnborough International Airshow, 11-17 July.