



F-35 Lightning II Program

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Reservist hits USAF F-35 trans-Atlantic milestone

LUKE AIR FORCE BASE, Ariz. -- A native Arizonan and 944th Fighter Wing Reserve pilot achieved his lifelong goal while also hitting a milestone for the Air Force last month.

Maj. Daniel Daehler, 944th Operations Group Det. 2, F-35 instructor pilot, flew an F-35 Lightning II from Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, to Royal Air Force Fairford, England, making it his first trans-Atlantic flight and the first U.S. Air Force F-35 trans-Atlantic flight.

“Growing up you read about Charles Lindberg crossing the Atlantic and it’s been a cool life goal to do at some point,” said Daehler who transitioned to the F-35 aircraft from the F-16 earlier this year. “I never had the opportunity to make the flight when I flew F-16s, it just never worked out. So getting to make my first trans-Atlantic flight as part of a historic milestone for the Air Force in the F-35 was awesome.”



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The historic flight required seven air-refuelings and just over seven and a half hours to complete. “The F-35 is a pretty remarkable aircraft. It has more capabilities, is better able to face today’s threats, can go into contested areas, and the technology is superior. It’s also a decently comfortable cockpit; more room than the F-16, which helps during a long flight.”

The trip to the United Kingdom was in support of the Royal International Air Tattoo at Fairford in southern England. The group from Luke flew three F-35’s to the air show allowing the crowds to witness an aerial performance and were able to get up close to the aircraft with a static display.

Daehler spent most of his time during the air show talking with spectators and answering questions about the F-35.

“There was a lot of interest from the folks attending the air show, a lot of people just coming up to see the jet for the first time,” said Daehler. “Most of the questions I got were about what it’s like to fly and my opinion of the aircraft.”

“I told them what I tell everyone. It’s like a spaceship, it brings a lot more capability,” explained Daehler. “The technology inside is awesome. It’s just years and years ahead of where we are with the F-16.”

The group also spent time before the airshow talking with individuals who had come out to watch the preshow.

When asked what his favorite thing about the trip was Daehler said, “Just the opportunity to fly the airplane across the Atlantic for this historic event and seeing the views. It’s really remarkable flying up the East coast of the U.S. to Greenland. Greenland was clear both ways, going there and coming back and it’s a surreal life experience seeing Greenland with the mountains jutting out of the water, glaciers, snowcap, and icebergs floating in the water.”

“This trip across the Atlantic is also much more than just attending an airshow,” added Daehler. “It’s an important milestone for the F-35 and its ability to forward-deploy.”

The F-35 is a multi-role, next-generation fighter that combines advanced stealth with speed, agility and a 360-degree view of the battlespace. The F-35 will form the backbone of air combat superiority for decades to come and replace legacy tactical fighter fleets with dominant air-to-air and air-to-ground capabilities to deter and defeat potential adversaries.