



F-35 Lightning II Program

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SACEUR Visits RAF Lakenheath with Arrival of USAF F-35s

Contributed by Dr. Robbin Laird

General Curtis Scaparrotti, Commander of European Command and Supreme Allied Commander Europe, visited Airmen at RAF Lakenheath in conjunction with a deployment of F-35A Lightning II's.

He highlighted the significance of the arrival of F-35s to the modernization of the joint and coalition force operating in defense of the North Atlantic.

What might be missed is that the arrival of the USAF F-35s is not about the U.S. introducing new capabilities and the Allies following some years later with similar capabilities. It is about the concurrent development of coalition capabilities within the European theater and indeed worldwide.

View General Scaparrotti's visit here: <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/520125/general-scaparrotti-visits-raf-lakenheath>

Indeed, in the UK case, the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy are standing up their first F-35 squadron earlier than the U.S. Air Force at Lakenheath. The British are standing up new infrastructure for the F-35 at Marham prior to the U.S. at RAF Lakenheath.

This is about shaping joint 21st century war fighting capabilities at the same time, and can drive fundamental change in the U.S. forces as they interact with and cross-learn from our F-35 Allies as well.

As then Colonel Robert G. Novotny commented when posted as the 48th Wing Commander at RAF Lakenheath and now General Novotny posted to ACC:

"I see there is great potential for two countries to develop in concert, side-by-side, and to set, set the model for joint operations.

"As we get this right, we can bring in the Danes, the Norwegians and Dutch who are close in geography and the Israelis and Italians as well to shape the evolving joint operational culture and approach.

"Before you know it, you've got eight countries flying this airplane seamlessly integrated because of the work that Lakenheath and Marham are doing in the 20 nautical miles radius of the two bases."

Dr. Robbin F. Laird is a long-time analyst of global defense issues. He has worked in the U.S. government and several think tanks, including the Center for Naval Analysis and the Institute for Defense Analysis. He is a Columbia University alumnus, where he taught and worked for several years at the Research Institute of International Change, a think tank founded by Dr. Brzezinski. He is a frequent op-ed contributor to the defense press, and has written several books on international security issues. He is the senior editorial advisor for SLDInfo.com and can be reached at rfl@sldinfo.com.