



F-35 Lightning II Program

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F-35B Stealth Fighters Make First Appearance on Okinawa

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa —Two F-35B Lightning II aircraft landed on Okinawa Monday, the first time the state-of-the-art stealth fighter has visited the strategically important Japanese island.

The jets from Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 121 arrived at Kadena Air Base in central Okinawa to become familiar with the airfield, a Marine Corps statement said. The aircraft flew in from Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni on the Japanese mainland, where they are based.

“The F-35B represents the future of Marine Corps tactical aviation,” the statement said.

The Marine Corps has said the fighters will be operating out of Okinawa’s Marine Corps Air Station Futenma and Kadena on a “transient basis.”

The fighters arrived in Japan in January with much fanfare. A month later, they were training in the skies around Okinawa; however, this is their first visit to an Okinawa airfield, the statement said.

The F-35B Lightning is a short-takeoff, vertical-landing aircraft meant to replace the F/A-18 Hornet, AV-8B Harrier and EA-6B Prowler. Like with most new platforms, the fighter’s development was plagued with issues, and at one point President Donald Trump indicated he might scrap the program altogether.

However, the aircraft has endured and is typically seen as a valuable tool in maintaining the status quo in the Pacific region.

As with the Hornet and Harrier before it, the F-35B will operate in designated military airspace and ranges, the statement said.

A Marine Corps F-35B Lightning II with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 121, Marine Aircraft Group 12, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, conducted a training flight from Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni to Kadena Air Base on Okinawa, Japan, Monday, June 26, 2017. (Photo by CHARLES PLOUFFE/U.S. MARINE CORPS)



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