



F-35 Lightning II Program

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Fitting That 617 Squadron Fly F-35, Says Last British Dambuster

Forces Network



The last surviving British Dambuster says it is "fitting" that his former squadron get to fly the world's most advanced warplane, the F-35.

617 Squadron - also known as the Dambusters - were named after night raids on German dams in 1943 in an effort to disable Hitler's industrial heartland.

It will be the 75 year anniversary of Operation Chastise on Wednesday night and Thursday morning.

Now the last remaining British member of the Dambusters, Squadron Leader George "Johnny" Johnson, hopes the anniversary of the raids will act as a reminder for the younger generations.

He is also said it is "fitting" that his former Squadron will now fly the state-of-the-art F-35 aircraft.

"I am not conversant with the technology of the F-35, but I think it is fitting that 617 should be the squadron to receive it," he explained.

Mr Johnson advised the current members of 617 Squadron to "do your utmost to maintain the performance and prestige of the squadron".



The Dambusters were named after a mission target the destruction of dams in Germany during World War II.

He served as a bomb aimer on the night 617 Squadron used Barnes Wallis's revolutionary bouncing bombs during the daring mission.

His crew was one of five selected to target the Sorpe dam.

The 617 Squadron was officially named the UK's first F-35 Lightning squadron which will be based at RAF Marham in Norfolk.



48 F-35 fighter jets are set to be bought by the UK before 2025.

The aircraft, which can use a short takeoff or a vertical landing approach, has a top speed of 1.6 Mach or 1,200 miles per hour - 1.6 times the speed of sound.

The programme is expected to cost £9.1 billion.

The current officer commanding 617 Squadron, Wing Commander John Butcher, said the previous aircrew of 1943

would be "quite amazed" by the new jets.

Speaking last year, he said the aim of the current and original squadron was to "bring cutting-edge technology into service for a very special mission".