F-35B LIGHTNING II VISITS NEW HOMES FOR THE FIRST TIME

Friday 1st July 2016 was an historic day for the UK as elements of the future 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.

The head of the Fleet Air Arm, Rear-Admiral Keith Blount commented: ‘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 Royal Air Force 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 new aircraft carriers will each be capable of operating up to 36 F-35B Lightning II stealth jets.

Following the flypast at Rosyth, the aircraft flew on to RAF Marham, Norfolk, where before personnel from the air force 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 F-35B Lightning IIs arrived in the UK for the first time earlier in the week after a nine hour transatlantic crossing. They are ready for a number of air shows around the UK this Summer, principally the Royal International Air Tattoo at RAF Fairford, Gloucestershire (8-10 July) and Farnborough International (11-17 July).

The F-35B combines 5th Generation fighter aircraft characteristics – advanced stealth, integrated avionics, sensor fusion and superior logistics support. The F-35’s advanced stealth allows pilots to penetrate areas without being detected by radars that legacy fighters cannot evade. The F-35’s advanced stealth, sensor fusion, exceptional manoeuvrability, unmatched interoperability, and intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance (Combat ISTAR) capabilities will provide the UK with a tactical airpower advantage for decades to come.

Both Queen Elizabeth Class (QEC) carriers are currently being built by the Aircraft Carrier Alliance in Rosyth and are the largest and most powerful class of warships ever built for the Royal Navy.
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