

# First U.K. Service Pilot Flies The Lockheed Martin F-35

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PATUXENT RIVER, Md.

A Royal Air Force officer on Tuesday became the first active-duty service pilot from the United Kingdom to take to the skies in a Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II, also known as the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF).

RAF Squadron Leader Steve Long piloted BF-2, the second short takeoff/vertical landing (STOVL) F-35B, over Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Md., logging the aircraft's 18th mission. Long departed at 9:55 a.m. EST and flew the aircraft to 20,000 feet, before landing 1.3 hours later. Both the RAF and the Royal Navy plan to operate the F-35B.

"Flying the F-35 was exactly like the simulators that I've been flying for over 18 months now, which gives you a lot of confidence in all the modeling and simulation work that has been done in all the other areas of the flight envelope," Long said, adding that it was a "privilege" to fly the F-35. "What this aircraft really gives the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy is a quantum leap in airborne capability because of the sensor suite it carries. An F-35 pilot will have an unprecedented level of situational awareness about what's going on in the airspace around him or her, and also on the battlefield or ocean below. Not only that, but the F-35 will plug into coalition battlefield networks and be able to pass that picture on to all other players in the network."

With the capability to operate from a variety of ships or austere runways, the F-35B can deploy closer to shore or near front lines, shrinking distance and time to the target, increasing sortie rates and greatly reducing the need for support assets. The Lightning II's sensor suite is the most powerful and comprehensive of any fighter in history, and will combine with an unprecedented networking capability to give unparalleled situational awareness.

U.K. Joint Combat Aircraft Project Team Leader, Air Commodore Graham Farnell, has stated that the U.K. has been closely involved in JSF since its inception. "It is therefore an honour to witness an RAF pilot flying BF-2 during this important phase of the F-35B flight test, and further demonstrates the closeness and mutual trust between our respective nations and their armed forces," Farnell said. "Squadron Leader Long has been preparing for this opportunity since his arrival in the U.S. well over a year ago, and this occasion is a testament not only to the work undertaken in the Integrated Test Force, to which the U.K. provides considerable expertise, but also to the wider JSF community in both government and industry.

"We look forward to the JSF flight test program meeting its targets in 2010, with today being one of many such occasions in the next year of JSF. The U.K. is now preparing pilots and maintainers for initial training at Eglin so that we can begin operating our aircraft in 2011 alongside our colleagues from the United States Marine Corps," he said.

Squadron Leader Long is the third active-duty service member to fly the F-35. (The jet also has been flown by U.S. Air Force and U.S. Marine Corps pilots.) Long has more than 2,200 hours of flight time and currently flies the F-18A-D with the U.S. Marines. He joined the RAF in 1995, and his operational experience has included more than 100 sorties over Kosovo and Bosnia, Sierra Leone and Iraq, including three months of embarked time aboard H.M.S. Illustrious, and seven months on the U.S.S. Bonhomme Richard.

The U.K. has invested \$2 billion in the F-35's development - the largest contribution among the program's eight partner nations. The Joint Combat Aircraft (JCA) program announced in December that the United Kingdom received financial approval to purchase its third F-35B operational test aircraft, reinforcing the U.K.'s continued commitment to the JSF program's upcoming Operational Test and Evaluation (OT&E) phase.

The F-35 Lightning II is a 5th generation fighter, combining advanced stealth with fighter speed and agility, fully fused sensor information, network-enabled operations, advanced sustainment, and lower operational and support costs. Lockheed Martin is developing the F-35 with its principal industrial partners, Northrop Grumman and BAE Systems. Two separate, interchangeable F-35 engines are

under development: the Pratt & Whitney F135 and the GE Rolls-Royce Fighter Engine Team F136.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin is a global security company that employs about 140,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture, integration and sustainment of advanced technology systems, products and services. The corporation reported 2008 sales of \$42.7 billion.

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