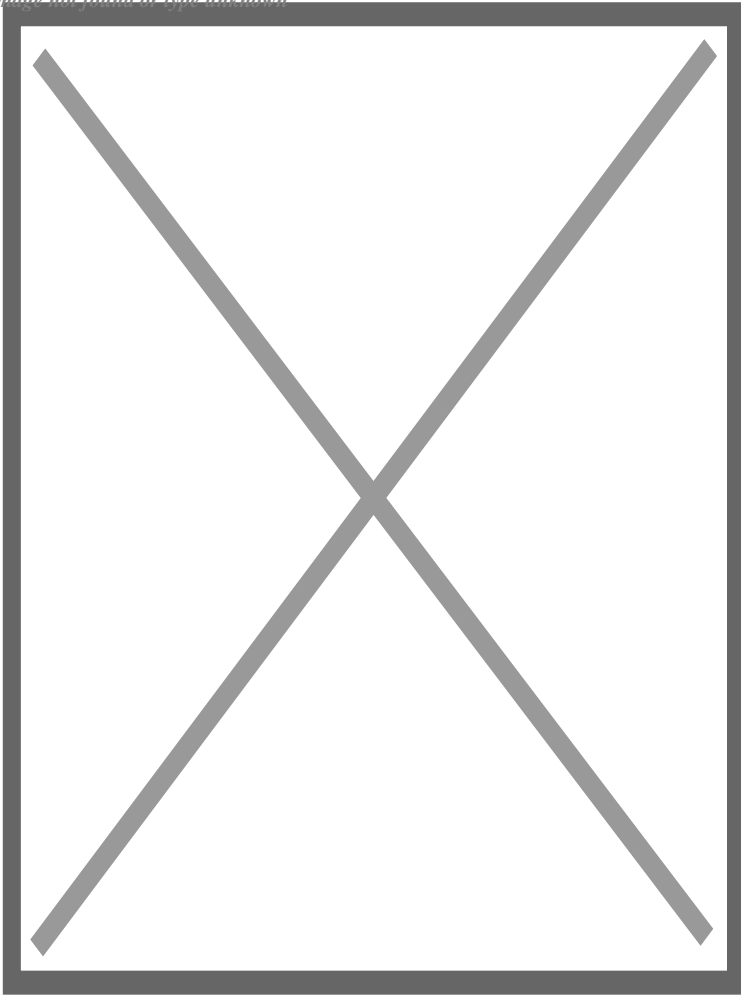


Israel to buy new fleet of F-35 fighter jets financed by U.S. aid

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Israel remains the only country in the Middle East to have the world's most advanced fighter jet in its arsenal. File photo> An F35 fighter jet

Tel Aviv, July 3 (RHC)-- Israel will buy its third fleet of F-35 stealth fighter jets in a deal worth \$3bn that will be financed through U.S. military aid, according to the Israeli military. Israel's Ministry of Defence approved the purchase on Sunday, with the additional 25 aircraft manufactured by Lockheed Martin to bring the number of F-35 jets in Israel's air force to 75.

“This new agreement will ensure the continuation of cooperation between American companies and Israeli defence industries in the production of aircraft parts,” the ministry said in a statement. Israel was the first country outside the United States to acquire the F-35, and remains the only country in the Middle East to have the advanced weapon in its arsenal.

The United Arab Emirates has long sought to buy F-35 jets from the U.S., but the Gulf nation’s ties to China have meant no deal has yet gone through.

The fighter jet is considered the world’s most advanced, capable of gathering intelligence, striking deep into enemy territory and engaging in air duels. It is also known as the Joint Strike Fighter and, in Israel, by its Hebrew name Adir, or Mighty.

Earlier on Sunday, Israeli fighter jets launched an attack on a Syrian air defense battery from which an anti-aircraft missile was launched towards Israel.

Israel has ramped up attacks on Syrian airports and air bases to disrupt Iran’s increasing use of aerial supply lines to deliver arms to allies in Syria and Lebanon, including Lebanon’s Hezbollah.

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