

U.S.-supplied German jets at risk of Trump kill switch



Washington could potentially disable Berlin's F-35 fighters, the report warns U.S.-supplied German jets at risk of Trump 'kill switch' – Bild F-35 fighter jet. © Getty Images/rancho_runner

Berlin, March 10 (RHC)-- German policymakers are growing increasingly concerned over the possibility that the U.S. could remotely disable F-35 fighter jets being delivered to Berlin in the event of a crisis, mirroring its recent decision to freeze intelligence and military support to Ukraine, Bild reported on Saturday.

The German Air Force is set to receive 35 American-made F-35A Lightning II jets starting in 2026 as part of an 8.3 billion (\$9 billion) deal. However, some German policymakers fear that US President Donald Trump, who has been at odds with the EU over a number of issues, could use a 'kill switch' to ground the aircraft if Washington and European capitals diverge in their approach to a potential conflict with Russia,

the article said.

"The 'kill switch' in the F-35 is more than just a rumor," Joachim Schranzhofer, the head of communications at German defense company Hensoldt, told Bild. "But it's much easier to use the mission planning system – then the plane stays on the ground."

Wolfgang Ischinger, the former president of the Munich Security Conference Foundation, questioned the fate of the contract. "If we have to fear that the U.S. could do with future German F-35s what they are currently doing with Ukraine, we could consider terminating the contract," he said, as quoted by the tabloid.

Similar fears about a kill switch on American jets were echoed by experts interviewed by the Financial Times. Defense analyst Richard Aboulafia remarked that while the existence of a kill switch has never been confirmed. "If you postulate the existence of something that can be done with a little bit of software code, it exists."

Others, meanwhile, suggested that a kill switch would essentially be redundant due to the sophistication of modern fighter jets and dependence on the vendor. "Most European militaries depend heavily on the US for communications support, for electronic warfare support, and for ammunition resupply in any serious conflict," Justin Bronk, a senior research fellow at the Royal United Services Institute, told the FT.

The concerns about F-35s surfaced after the US froze military and intelligence support for Kiev following a spat between Trump and Vladimir Zelensky, during which the US president accused the Ukrainian leader of not wanting peace with Russia.

The F-35 program has been described as the most expensive military project in history, with total projected costs exceeding \$1.7 trillion over its lifetime. Since the first F-35 made its maiden flight in 2006, the program has been plagued by cost overruns, delays, and reliability issues. So far, more than 1,100 have been produced, with many supplied to US allies.

[SOURCE: RT and FINANCIAL TIMES]

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