

# *Israeli F-35 Pilots to Begin Training in the United States*

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Washington, June 20 (RHC)-- The U.S. Air Force (USAF) is set to start training the first cadre of Israeli F-35 fighter pilots from next month, despite the stealth aircraft's substandard performance in tests due to software issues.

The four pilots are led by the commander of the Israeli air force's first F-35I squadron and will begin simulator and ground-based training at Luke Air Force Base in Arizona. Three more pilots will join the program shortly thereafter and by the middle of the next year, 12 Israeli pilots will have completed the approximately 100-day training program conducted by the USAF.

The pilots will then head back to the occupied Palestinian lands for actual flight training on Israeli F-35s, the first two of which are slated to be delivered later this year.

Meanwhile, the aircraft's manufacturer, Lockheed Martin, is reportedly working to set up a local logistics center in at Nevatim Air Base in Israel's Negev desert in order to establish the regime's self-sufficiency in F-35 maintenance, overhaul and repair.

Due to Israel's involvement in many regional conflicts in the Middle East, Lockheed Martin and Israeli officials are exploring ways to accommodate the risks of wartime interruption in the aircraft's maintenance.

One way, according to the Israeli air force, is to make use of Lockheed Martin's Autonomic Logistics Information System (ALIS) that allows the jet's operators to maintain the aircraft through its projected 55-year lifespan.

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