

F-35B Jets to Join the Fight Against Daesh from the U.K. Carrier Strike Group



Lt. Col. Andrew D'Ambrogi, the commanding officer of Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 211, Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 21 "The Wake Island Avengers," conducts carrier qualifications in an F-35B Joint Strike Fighter Lightning II aboard the Royal Navy aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth (R08) at sea, May 2, 2021. Alongside the Royal Navy 617 Squadron, VMFA-211 will form part of the largest carrier air group in the world. This deployment highlights the global reach of the U.S. and U.K. armed forces and their interoperability, and enhances the deterrence and defense capabilities of the NATO Alliance. *U.S. MARINE CORPS photo by 1st Lt. Zachary Bodner*

LONDON – U.K. F-35B fighter jets operating from HMS Queen Elizabeth will join Operation Shader in the fight against Daesh, the U.K Ministry of Defense said in a May 4 release.

F-35B Lightning II jets will be the cutting edge of the Carrier Strike Group's (CSG21) formidable power in the air. These are next-generation, multi-role combat aircraft equipped with advanced sensors, mission systems and stealth technology, enabling them to carry out intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance tasks.

This will be the first time U.K. fighter aircraft are embarked on an operational aircraft carrier deployment since 2010 and will be the largest number of F-35Bs ever to sail the seas. The embarked aircraft also include 10 F-35Bs of a U.S. Marine Corps squadron, Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 211.

The renowned 617 Squadron RAF (The Dambusters) will operate the jets to provide tangible and impactful support to counter-Daesh operations in Iraq and Syria. Daesh is another name for the Islamic State, or ISIS.

“The F-35B Lightning jets will pack a potent punch against Daesh and help prevent them from regaining a foothold in Iraq,” said James Heappey MP, minister for the Armed Forces. “This is a prime example of the U.K. armed forces stepping forward with our allies to confront persistent threats around the world. It is global Britain in action.”

CSG21, led by HMS Queen Elizabeth, is the largest concentration of maritime and air power to leave the U.K. in a generation and will set sail next month on its first operational deployment. This is a joint Royal Air Force and Royal Navy deployment which is committed to confronting persistent threats around the world and make a meaningful contribution to global security.

The F-35B Lightning jets, which will operate from HMS Queen Elizabeth throughout the deployment, will make a significant contribution in degrading Daesh.

“This deployment represents the embodiment of the UK’s Joint Expeditionary Capability and utilizing the F-35Bs in the fight against Daesh will further demonstrate our commitment to securing their global defeat,” said Chief of Joint Operations Vice Adm. Sir Ben Key.

March 2021 saw the second anniversary of Daesh’s final and total loss of territory in Syria. However, there remain significant numbers of Daesh terrorists in Iraq and Syria. The United Kingdom remains committed to defeating Daesh and enhancing security in the region, alongside the Iraqi Security Forces and our NATO allies. Operation Shader is the United Kingdom’s contribution to the Global Coalition against Daesh.