Japan Cleared for Possible Sale of F-35B Fighters for Shipboard Deployment



An F-35B Lightning II fighter aircraft with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 265 (Reinforced), 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), takes off from the flight deck of amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6). U.S. MARINE CORPS / Cpl. Isaac Cantrell

ARLINGTON, Va. — The U.S. State Department has approved the possible sale of 105 F-35 Lightning II strike fighters, including 42 F-35B short takeoff/vertical landing versions that Japan could deploy onboard ships to significantly expand its naval aviation capabilities.

Under a potential $23.11 billion deal, Japan would procure 63 F-35A conventional takeoff and landing versions and 42 F-35Bs, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) said in a July 9 release.

The F-35B is operated off of aircraft carriers or amphibious assault ships by the U.S. Marine Corps, U.K. Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, and the Italian Navy. The F-35 is built by Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Co. of Fort Worth, Texas. The aircraft's F135 engine is built by Pratt and Whitney Military Engines of East Hartford, Connecticut.

The F-35As would replace the legacy F-4 Phantom II fighters in the Japan Air Self-Defense Force.

In addition to the 105 aircraft, the planned procurement also would include 110 F135 engines (including five spares) as well as mission systems, logistics support, spare parts, engineering and technical support, and other services