

Marine F-35Bs to Operate from Japanese Aircraft Carrier, Commandant Says



The USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) sails alongside the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force helicopter destroyer JS Izumo (DDH 183) while conducting operations in the South China Sea in 2019. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kaila Peters*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Marine Corps will embark F-35B strike fighters on a Japanese aircraft carrier this fall, the service's commandant said, a next step to match a current F-35B deployment on board a U.K. Royal Navy aircraft carrier.

"We're actually going to fly U.S. Marine Corps F-35s off of a Japanese ship," said Gen. David H. Berger, commandant of the Marine Corps, speaking Sept. 1 during a webinar conducted by the U.S. Naval Institute and the Center for Strategic and International Studies and sponsored By Huntington Ingalls Industries.

The Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force operates the JS Izumo, commissioned a helicopter carrier in 2015 but under conversion to operate F-35Bs, of which Japan has ordered 40 from Lockheed Martin. A sister ship, JS Kaga, was commissioned in 2017 and also is planned for conversion to operate F-35Bs.

The U.S. Marine Corps operates two F-35B squadrons at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan: Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 121 (VMFA-121) and VMFA-242.

Berger pointed to the current deployment of F-35Bs of Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 211 (VMFA-211) together with Royal Air Force F-35Bs on board HMS Queen Elizabeth, which is operating

in the Pacific region, as an example of how the United States and its allies are working together to solve operational details.

For one example he discussed, the British and Americans each have their own Special Compartmented Intelligence Facility, or SCIF, on the Queen Elizabeth to avoid complications of handling classified information.

Berger sees cooperation with such allies as the United Kingdom, Japan, and Australia as key to sharing information to countering the influence of China in the region. Enabling the F-35's of each country to share data over networks is an important part of that cooperation.