Israel approves purchase of F-35

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As reported by Defense Talk [1] (as well as the rest of the mil-blogging community), Israel has agreed to purchase 20 F-35 Joint Strike Fighters in a deal worth an estimated 2.75 billion dollars. At $96 million a piece [2], this would be the most expensive weapons deal ever signed by Israel.

As the Swiss Army Knife of fighter jets, and the bulwark of the free world for the next 40 years (not to sound hyperbolic), the F-35 has seen its share of controversy [3]. Her detractors say we're basing our entire defense strategy on the assumption that traditional state-on-state conflict went the way of the Dodo…asymmetric warfare is the future. The F-22 is the superior aerial supremacy weapon, but President Obama killed the program, capping the *Raptor* at 187 planes. Thus far, we've heard nary a peep from Lockheed Martin—likely because the defense giant is also the prime contractor for the F-35. Otherwise, Lockheed Martin lobbyists would be camping out on capital hill.

The F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter (JSF). Israel has "approved in principle" the purchase of 20 craft.

In Israel's case, they were concerned with being dependant upon the US for spare parts, as well as access to the technology. The F-35 deal will give Israeli industries privileged access, so they can assemble the plane and provide spare parts. As Defense Talk points out, the F-35 will provide Israel with air superiority over enemy anti-aircraft defenses.

According to Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, "The F-35 is the fighter plane of the future which will give the air force better short-range and long-range capabilities which will help state security." The deal "will allow Israel to continue maintaining air superiority in our region," he added.

Naturally, one's thoughts turn towards Iran—could the JSF could play a role in a potential strike? This is unlikely, since the first delivery won't be till 2015.

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