

U.S. to Provide Israel With 20 Joint Strike Fighters

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Tel Aviv: Israel's Defense Minister Ehud Barak on Sunday approved purchase of U. S. fifth-generation F-35 fighters, the ministry's press service said.

The minister's approval came after a series of discussions; it was finally decided to purchase 20 aircraft for \$96 million each. The \$2.7 billion deal will be paid using U. S. military assistance.

The purchase will include spare parts, maintenance, and simulators. Israel plans to receive the warplanes between 2015 and 2017.

"F-35 is a fighter of the future which will allow us to maintain our supremacy in air and our technological superiority in the region," Barak said.

A final approval by Israel's Cabinet is expected at the end of September. Canada, Turkey, Britain, Italy, Norway, Denmark, Australia and the Netherlands Eight helped to develop the plane. They have already signed the needed purchase agreements.

Tel Aviv earlier said that the purchase of F-35 fighters would effectively eliminate the threat from Russian-made S-300 air defense systems because a series of computer simulations had clearly demonstrated that new U.S. stealth fighters outperform the Russian missiles.

The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF), manufactured by Lockheed Martin, is a single-seat, single-engine stealth multirole fighter that can perform close air support, tactical bombing, and air defense missions.

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