F-15I "THUNDERS" Arrive in Israel

Before an estimated crowd of 3,000 people, two new F-15Is arrived at Israel's Hatzerim Air Force Base today.

The F-15Is were escorted to the base by Israeli F-4 Phantoms. The crowd cheered as each F-15I touched down, and again when they rolled up opposite one another on the ramp.

Dignitaries gathered for the ceremony included Israel's Minister of Defense, Yitzhak Mordechai; the U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission, Richard Roth; Israel's Chief of Staff, Amnon Shahak; Israel's Commander of the Air Force, Eitan Ben-Eliahu; and U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of International Affairs, Clinton V. Horn. Also attending representing Boeing was Mike Sears, president of McDonnell Aircraft and Missile Systems, which builds the F-15 here.

"This was a fantastic day for all of us," said Sears. "It was an honor and a privilege to witness the culmination of years of teamwork when the 'Thunders' touched down," he said.

The F-15I, named the "Thunder" in Israel, is considered to be among the most advanced and capable fighters in the world. Like the U.S. Air Force's F-15E, the F-15I combines unbeaten air superiority capabilities with long-range strike capabilities.

The F-15I is the first U.S.-made fighter to include Israeli contractors in its production. The advanced, integrated electronic warfare suite is produced by Elisra, secure radios are made by Elta, and structural subassemblies are manufactured by Israel Aircraft Industries' Lahav Division.

Israel finalized its decision to purchase 25 F-15Is in November 1995.

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