

Air Force announces criteria for basing F-35s

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The U.S. Air Force recently released additional criteria it will use to select its training and operational bases for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.

Luke Air Force remains the top contender for the next generation of aircraft, according to local base supporters.

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA

- Airspace.
- Flight training ranges.
- Weather.
- Support facilities.
- Runways.
- Taxi ramps.
- Environmental concerns.
- Cost factors.

HOW LUKE STACKS UP

Airspace: Barry M. Goldwater training range and Arizona's special-use airspace for military operations is unparalleled.

Flight training ranges: A state-of-the-art training environment at the Barry M. Goldwater Range that can't be replicated anywhere in the country.

Weather: Year-round flying weather.

Support facilities, runways and taxi ramps: Two parallel runways, ramp space, hangar space and a number of auxiliary fields.

Environmental concerns: Potential noise and air-quality issues.

Cost factors: Minor modifications to accommodate F-35s.

Base is the world's largest training facility for F-16 pilots and can easily transition into training F-35 pilots.

HOW CRITERIA WILL BE USED

The Air Force will evaluate more than 200 Air Force sites using the criteria.

Once that is completed, officials will consider other factors, including combatant commander requirements, aircraft retirements and integration with the Air National Guard and Reserve.

FALL 2009 The Air Force will identify two candidate basing lists, one list for operations and one for training, to place 250 to 300 Joint Strike Fighter aircraft, scheduled for delivery through 2017.

Formal environmental impact analysis process begins. Communities around each candidate base will be allowed to participate and provide input.

LATE SPRING 2010 Officials are expected to announce the preferred locations.

EARLY 2011 Announcement of final decisions for both the initial operational bases and the next increment of training bases.

2013 First aircraft expected to arrive at selected base