



F-35B in Pantelleria: the 32° Stormo strengthens operational capability in the Mediterranean

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Just over ten days after the operational deployment of the **F-35B of the 32° Stormo of Amendola** at the Pantelleria Airport Detachment, the activity of the Italian Air Force assumes even greater interest in light of the evolution of the international context and recent dynamics affecting the Mediterranean.

Between April 20 and 24, 2026, two **F-35B** aircraft were deployed on the island as part of an activity planned by the **Comando Squadra Aerea - 1ª Regione Aerea di Milano**. The operation represented an important step in the development of the Armed Force's **expeditionary capability** and in the application of the NATO concept **Agile Combat Employment (ACE)**, aimed at ensuring flexibility and operational continuity through the use of advanced bases and distributed infrastructures.

The most significant element of the activity was the **deployment of the entire logistics and maintenance sector** to support the F-35B system. It was not just a transit or quick refueling activity, but a structured deployment involving specialized personnel, support systems, and maintenance capabilities.

The geographical position of **Pantelleria** continues to make it a strategic reference point in the central Mediterranean. In recent months, attention to this area has increased in relation to maritime security, the protection of trade routes, and the growing international activity in the Mediterranean basin.

In this context, the deployment of the F-35B allowed for the verification of the ability to operate from an advanced base like that of Pantelleria, exploiting the **STOVL (Short Take-Off and Vertical Landing)** characteristics of the fifth-generation aircraft, designed to operate even in infrastructures with limited operational spaces.

The activity is also part of a training and capability development path involving various air forces of the Atlantic Alliance, with particular attention to the mobility of assets and operational continuity in different geographical contexts.

Logistics and integration between assets at the center of the activity

One of the most relevant aspects of the operation concerned the **logistics and organizational component**, a fundamental element to ensure the efficiency of a complex system like the F-35B even far from the main base.

According to what was communicated by the Air Force, the deployment involved **technicians, specialists, maintenance equipment, operational support systems, and personnel dedicated to force protection**, allowing the aircraft to operate in full autonomy on the island.

The contribution of the **Pantelleria Airport Detachment** was fundamental, whose personnel ensured the coordination of the technical and logistical activities necessary to support the deployed aircraft.



C-130J transport aircraft. Source: Air Force.

Pre and post-flight activities, the management of operational infrastructures, and support to crews required careful planning and the involvement of various specialized components.

The **46^a Brigata Aerea di Pisa** also participated in the mission with the **C-130J** transport aircraft, used for the transfer of personnel and materials necessary for the operational deployment.

The activity was also enriched by joint missions with the **Eurofighter of the 37° Stormo of Trapani-Birgi**. This type of integration represents an important training opportunity to develop interoperability and coordination between different operational platforms.

In recent years, joint activities between fourth and fifth-generation assets have gained increasing importance in the context of advanced training of NATO air forces, with the aim of improving cooperation and sharing of operational information.

The role of Pantelleria in the activities of the Air Force

The deployment of the F-35B confirms the role of the **Pantelleria Airport Detachment** as an infrastructure of operational interest for the Italian Air Force.

Thanks to its geographical position, the island represents an important support point for air activities in the **central Mediterranean**, both nationally and in the context of integrated activities with partners and allies.

The recent evolutions of the international context have brought increasing attention to the Mediterranean, an area where interests related to security, regional stability, and the protection of major maritime routes converge.



An Eurofighter of the 37° Stormo during training activities. Source: Air Force.

In this scenario, activities like those carried out by the **32° Stormo** allow for the consolidation of operational procedures, logistical capabilities, and interoperability between different departments of the Armed Force.

The Pantelleria operation also highlighted the level of preparation of the personnel involved, both technically and organizationally, confirming the Air Force's ability to plan and conduct **complex operational activities** in contexts different from permanent bases.

A few days after the end of the activity, the deployment of the F-35B on the island thus represents an important training and operational experience in the framework of the development of the Armed Force's **expeditionary capabilities** and the evolution of air activities in the Mediterranean.

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