# US deploys F-22 Raptors to RAF Lakenheath amid rising Iran tensions



In a significant display of U.S. military readiness amid escalating tensions with Iran, a fleet of F-22 Raptor fighter jets recently arrived at RAF Lakenheath in Suffolk, UK. The aircraft, photographed landing on a Wednesday evening, made a notable return following recent bombings at the Fordo nuclear site in Iran. Enthusiasts had previously spotted the jets earlier that week, as they were seen landing initially at RAF Mildenhall before touching down at Lakenheath. The timing of their movements closely follows a series of missile strikes involving Israel and Iran, underscoring the strategic importance of the UK base in current geopolitical developments.

RAF Lakenheath serves as the home of the US Air Force’s 48th Fighter Wing and supports over 7,000 active-duty personnel, making it a critical hub for projecting American air power in Europe and beyond. This deployment of the F-22s is part of a broader military manoeuvre linked to the U.S.’s recent sustained attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities, including Fordo, Natanz, and Isfahan. While President Donald Trump confirmed that F-22s took part in these missions, it remains unclear whether the specific jets currently stationed at Lakenheath were involved in those direct strikes.

These operations come amidst statements from President Trump about the possibility of direct U.S. military involvement in the escalating conflict with Iran, with a decision expected within weeks. The presence of the F-22s at RAF Lakenheath is interpreted by military analysts as a strategic pre-positioning of advanced air combat assets in response to increasing regional instability. In fact, similar deployments have been noted in recent years as the U.S. bolsters its tactical reach, particularly reflecting its commitment to defend allies such as Israel against threats posed by Iran and its proxies.

The F-22 Raptor itself remains one of the most advanced tactical fighter aircraft in the world. Developed by Lockheed Martin, it boasts stealth capabilities, supercruise flight, and exceptional manoeuvrability, engineered especially for air superiority missions and precision strikes. These attributes give it a critical role in the U.S. Air Force’s contemporary combat strategy, enhancing the ability to operate undetected and dominate aerial engagements across contested airspace.

Previous training and operational deployments at RAF Lakenheath have further cemented the base’s role in reinforcing transatlantic military cooperation. For instance, F-22 Raptors have regularly conducted joint exercises with RAF and NATO forces to refine tactics and interoperability, a key factor in maintaining allied readiness against potential aggression. Notably, earlier in the summer the U.S. Air Force dispatched several F-22s from the UK to the Middle East, specifically to Jordan's Muwaffaq Salti Air Base, reflecting the ongoing shift in strategic focus toward managing threats in that region.

Overall, the recent return of these F-22 Raptors to RAF Lakenheath not only reaffirms the UK's strategic importance as a staging ground for U.S. military operations but also highlights the growing seriousness with which Washington is treating the potential for conflict with Iran. As diplomatic efforts continue amidst a backdrop of military posturing, the deployment signals a readiness to escalate force if necessary while underscoring the complex interplay between defence preparedness and geopolitical negotiations.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25274258.f-22-raptor-jets-land-raf-lakenheath-amid-iran-missions/?ref=rss), [[3]](https://armyrecognition.com/news/army-news/2025/breaking-news-us-deploys-f-22-fighters-to-britain-as-it-considers-military-option-against-iran), [[7]](https://theaviationist.com/2025/06/20/u-s-f-22-raptors-departed-to-me/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25274258.f-22-raptor-jets-land-raf-lakenheath-amid-iran-missions/?ref=rss), [[3]](https://armyrecognition.com/news/army-news/2025/breaking-news-us-deploys-f-22-fighters-to-britain-as-it-considers-military-option-against-iran)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25274258.f-22-raptor-jets-land-raf-lakenheath-amid-iran-missions/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.airandspaceforces.com/f-22s-land-in-middle-eastcountering-iran-and-its-proxies/), [[3]](https://armyrecognition.com/news/army-news/2025/breaking-news-us-deploys-f-22-fighters-to-britain-as-it-considers-military-option-against-iran), [[7]](https://theaviationist.com/2025/06/20/u-s-f-22-raptors-departed-to-me/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lockheed_Martin_F-22_Raptor)
* Paragraph 5 – [[5]](https://www.lakenheath.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/727501/maintaining-air-dominance-f-22s-train-at-raf-lakenheath/), [[7]](https://theaviationist.com/2025/06/20/u-s-f-22-raptors-departed-to-me/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25274258.f-22-raptor-jets-land-raf-lakenheath-amid-iran-missions/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.airandspaceforces.com/f-22s-land-in-middle-eastcountering-iran-and-its-proxies/), [[7]](https://theaviationist.com/2025/06/20/u-s-f-22-raptors-departed-to-me/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25274258.f-22-raptor-jets-land-raf-lakenheath-amid-iran-missions/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.airandspaceforces.com/f-22s-land-in-middle-eastcountering-iran-and-its-proxies/> - In August 2024, the U.S. Air Force deployed F-22 Raptors to the Middle East to address threats from Iran and its proxies. The aircraft, originating from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Alaska, stopped at RAF Lakenheath in the UK before proceeding to the region. This deployment aimed to bolster U.S. military presence and deter potential attacks on Israel and American forces. Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin emphasized the U.S. commitment to defending Israel and maintaining regional security.
3. <https://armyrecognition.com/news/army-news/2025/breaking-news-us-deploys-f-22-fighters-to-britain-as-it-considers-military-option-against-iran> - In June 2025, the U.S. deployed several F-22 Raptors to RAF Lakenheath amid escalating tensions with Iran. The aircraft, from the 1st Fighter Wing at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia, arrived in the UK as a strategic move to pre-position military assets. This deployment signaled a potential shift in U.S. military posture, with President Donald Trump considering direct involvement in the conflict alongside Israel, which had conducted airstrikes on Iranian nuclear facilities.
4. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lockheed_Martin_F-22_Raptor> - The Lockheed Martin F-22 Raptor is a fifth-generation, single-seat, twin-engine, all-weather stealth tactical fighter aircraft developed for the U.S. Air Force. It is renowned for its advanced avionics, supercruise capability, and exceptional maneuverability. The F-22 has been deployed in various operations, including air superiority missions and precision strikes. Its design emphasizes stealth and agility, making it a formidable asset in modern aerial combat scenarios.
5. <https://www.lakenheath.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/727501/maintaining-air-dominance-f-22s-train-at-raf-lakenheath/> - In April 2016, F-22 Raptors from the 95th Fighter Squadron at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida, arrived at RAF Lakenheath to train alongside F-15 Eagles and Royal Air Force aircraft. This deployment aimed to enhance air dominance capabilities and foster interoperability between U.S. and NATO forces. The training focused on refining tactics, techniques, and procedures essential for integrated operations in potential combat zones.
6. <https://theaviationist.com/2024/08/07/f-22-deploying-israel-defense/> - In August 2024, twelve U.S. Air Force F-22A Raptor stealth fighters, tailcoded 'AK' from the 3rd Wing at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, landed at RAF Lakenheath en route to the Middle East. This deployment was in response to growing tensions and aimed to bolster U.S. military presence in the region, particularly concerning potential Iranian threats to Israel. The aircraft were equipped with external fuel tanks for the long intercontinental journey.
7. <https://theaviationist.com/2025/06/20/u-s-f-22-raptors-departed-to-me/> - In June 2025, the first eight of twelve U.S. Air Force F-22 Raptors departed RAF Lakenheath, UK, en route to Muwaffaq Salti Air Base in Jordan. This deployment was part of a broader strategy to enhance the U.S. defensive posture in the Middle East amid rising tensions with Iran. The aircraft were supported by KC-135 and KC-46 tankers during their journey, highlighting the strategic importance of the region.