

## Saudi F-15SA still under test



*F-15SA serial 12-1003 at Boeing Field, Seattle, on February 3. Joe G Walker*

ROYAL SAUDI Air Force (RSAF) F-15SA, USAF serial 12-1003, was flown from the Boeing facility in St Louis, Missouri, to Boeing Field, Seattle, via Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota, on January 30. The Advanced Eagle used the callsign 'Boeing

62 Echo'. Wearing 'F-15SA Mission Systems' titles on the nose, it flew test sorties over the southern part of Washington State on February 2-3. It is one of three F-15SA 'prototypes' (the others being 12-1001 and 12-1002) that were previously engaged in a

long period of flight testing at Palmdale, California. Serial 12-1003 was used mainly for electronic attack and awareness testing.

In related news, the first flight of an RSAF F-15S upgraded locally to F-15SA standard took place at King Khalid International Airport

in Riyadh on January 15. Under the modernisation programme, Alsalam Aerospace Industries is bringing the 68 surviving F-15S aircraft up to the same Advanced Eagle configuration as the new-build F-15SA jets, 72 of which were ordered.

## Second F-35I Adir unit established

THE ISRAELI Air Force (IAF) formally commissioned a second F-35I Adir unit on January 16. The unit, 116 Squadron, joins the previously established 140 Squadron 'Golden Eagle' at Nevatim Air Base in the Negev Desert in the south of the country.

Previously known as 'Defenders of the South', the new squadron has been renamed 'Lions of the South' and, according to local reports, has initially received "several" Adirs transferred from its sister unit within the Adir Division. The first two Adirs for the 'Lions of the South' were previously reported as serials 930 (AS-20) and 932 (AS-21), which departed Lajes in the Azores for the final leg of their delivery to Nevatim on November 20. These brought total deliveries to Israel to 20.

The IAF is expected to receive a total of 50 F-35Is to fully equip these two squadrons by 2024. Another six jets are expected to arrive in Israel this year, including AS-15, which has until now been retained in the US as a trials platform for the country's planned modifications. Israel is also considering whether to purchase an additional 25 Adirs.

## Israeli Nachshon visits Malta

A PAIR of Israeli Air Force (IAF) special-mission Gulfstreams performed touch-and-goes at Malta International Airport, Luqa, on January 7; pictured is G550 Nachshon Eitam serial 537. It was accompanied by serial 679, a Gulfstream GV Nachshon Shavit, that has no markings or serial.

While the IAF's two Nachshon Eitam aircraft are used for airborne early

warning and control, the three Nachshon Shavits are used mainly for signals intelligence (SIGINT). All are operated by 122 Squadron 'The Elephants' at Nevatim Air Base.

These modified Gulfstreams are reportedly used to monitor Turkish military activities in Libya and are also held on high readiness for potential Israeli operations elsewhere in the region.



*Ruben Zammit*

## ELTA Systems 737 at Ben Gurion



*Anthony Hershko*

ELTA SYSTEMS, a subsidiary of Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) and one of Israel's leading defence electronics companies, operates this Boeing 737-4Q8 as an airborne testbed. It was seen at Ben Gurion Airport, the country's main international hub, in January.

On the Israeli civilian register as 4X-AOO, the aircraft is based at Ben Gurion, from where it is used for trials work including systems for signals intelligence,

maritime surveillance, image intelligence using synthetic aperture radar, airborne early warning and anti-missile protection. The 737 can carry one of a variety of elongated nosecones for radar carriage and features a large sensor fairing below the forward fuselage.

In 2012, this aircraft replaced Elta's 737-200A 4X-AOT, which had been acquired by the company in 1979. The current aircraft is c/n 24707, line number 2057.

## Qatari Twin Otter in Kuwait



*Jonathan Verschuuren*

THE FIRST DHC-6-400 Twin Otter 400 for the Qatar Emiri Air Force (QEAF) was noted at the recent Kuwait Aviation Show at Kuwait International Airport from January 15-18.

Viking Air signed a contract with the QEAF in Doha on June 11 last year for the purchase of an unspecified number of Twin Otters for operation by the Joint Special Forces in support

of its skydiving team.

The first of two examples identified to date was noted at Sidney, British Columbia, in October 2018. It wears full civilian-style Qatari colours, large 'QATAR' titles on the rear fuselage, a QEAF roundel beneath the cockpit and carries the serial MAQ (c/n 963, ex C-FVGY, N963VK and C-FVGY). The Twin Otter left Victoria,

British Columbia, for the first leg of its delivery flight, to Calgary, last August 13. A day later it flew from Calgary to Churchill, Manitoba, and then on to Iqaluit, Nunavut, on the 15th. A day later, it arrived at Keflavík, Iceland, then proceeded to Aberdeen in Scotland on the 17th. It departed the following day to Altenrhein, Switzerland, before continuing to the Gulf.