

U.S. F-35 Sustainment Lead Details Israel Fleet Ops Since October | Aviation Week Network

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CHICAGO—A 39-jet fleet of [Israeli Air Force](#) F-35I Adirs have surged to more than five times normal operations since the Oct. 7 attacks by Hamas and have sustained that level with the help of international support, a U.S. Joint Program Office (JPO) official said April 10.

The Israeli fleet of Lockheed Martin-built stealth fighters has achieved a 75% full-mission-capable rate and an 85% mission-capable rate despite a 565% jump in monthly average flight hours over a six-month period, said Maj. Gen. Donald Carpenter, the F-35 JPO's head of logistics and sustainment.

About five of the Israeli F-35I fleet—or 12%—were rated as nonmission capable on the first day of the war, Carpenter said. But Israeli maintainers immediately returned four aircraft to operational service, with 38 jets flying by the end of the day on Oct. 7, Carpenter said.

“Israel was ready because their neighbors are Hamas and Iran,” Carpenter added.

By moving to three shifts for nonstop operations, Israeli maintainers and contractor field service representatives have allowed the [Israeli Air Force](#)

to continue flying F-35Is at a rate of 35-39 jets a day.

As a member of the global F-35 spares pool, Israel's high pace of operations also has been supported by spare parts deliveries from partner nations, Carpenter said.

But the operational surge will have an impact on the Israeli F-35I fleet eventually. The JPO has deferred scheduled modifications for the F-35Is since October, leading to a backlog of required service actions. "A [modification] surge is going to come after the war," he said.

The JPO, meanwhile, is studying F-35I operations during Israel's war for lessons on surge operations for the Indo-Pacific region, but there are key differences. The Israelis are generating 2-4 daily sorties per aircraft for short-duration flights, leading to a spike in wear and tear on brakes and tires, Carpenter said. A surge operation by F-35s in the Indo-Pacific region, however, would likely involve more aircraft flying longer-duration missions of 12-16 hr. each, he said.

But the JPO is analyzing the [Israeli Air Force](#)'s prepared kits of spare parts, he said, looking for examples of unanticipated shortfalls or surpluses.