

First F-35A Destined To 6° Stormo Of The Italian Air Force Has Made Its Maiden Flight



The first F-35A destined to the 6° Stormo during its first flight on Apr. 7, 2022. (Image credit: Alessandro Maggia)

The Lockheed Martin F-35A “6-01” is the first stealth aircraft destined to second Wing of the Italian Air Force that will operate the Lightning II: the 6° Stormo (Wing).

The F-35A MM7366/6-01 (AL-16), the very first to sport the markings of the 6° Stormo, the second Wing of the Aeronautica Militare (Italian Air Force), destined to receive the Lightning II stealth aircraft, made its first flight from the Final Assembly and Check Out (FACO) facility at Cameri, in northwestern Italy, in the afternoon on Apr. 7, 2022.

The Lockheed Martin F-35A Lightning II will gradually replace the Tornado IDS fleet that this year celebrates 40 years of Italian Air Force service. Although the plan has not been made official yet, according to the rumors, initially, the F-35s of the “Diavoli Rossi” (Red Devils) of the 6° Stormo, will operate from Amendola Air Base, in southeastern Europe, home of the 32° Stormo and its child unit,

the 13° Gruppo, the first Italian squadron to operate the Lightning II (both the F-35A and the F-35B variant), the first F-35 unit in Europe to achieve IOC (Initial Operational Capability) in 2018, the first to deploy the jet under NATO command.

Another image of MM7366/6-01 during its maiden flight (Image credit: Oscar Bernardi)

At a later stage, the F-35s will operate from Ghedi Air Base, located near Brescia, in northern Italy, home of the 6° Stormo, and its three squadrons: the 102° Gruppo [that is the Tornado OCU (Operational Conversion Unit)] and the 154° Gruppo, equipped with the Tornado IDS, and 155° Gruppo equipped with the Tornado ECR.

During the historic first flight, the MM7366/6-01, with the characteristic Red Devil emblem of the Stormo on its tail, was escorted by a single seater Eurofighter Typhoon sporting the markings of the 36° Stormo.

This F-2000A flew as chase to the F-35A. (Image credit: Oscar Bernardi)

A Tornado ECR of the 155° Gruppo of the 6° Stormo, another squadron destined to receive the F-35A in the future to carry out the SEAD (Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses)/DEAD (Destruction of Enemy Air Defenses) mission also carried out a low pass at Cameri.

The Tornado ECR on approach to Cameri on Apr. 7, 2022. (Image credit: Oscar Bernardi)

We have recently taken part in a mission aboard a Tornado ECR of the 155° Gruppo that involved also two F-35As of the 32° Stormo and a Tornado IDS of the 154° Gruppo: we will publish a detailed report on the current and future capabilities of the Italian “Wild Weasels” soon.



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