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Second British F-35B Fighter Jet Makes Emergency Landing in Japan

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A British F-35B Lightning fighter jet was forced to make an emergency landing in Japan on 10 August 2025, marking the second incident involving the aircraft in recent weeks. The £88 million fifth-generation stealth jet experienced a technical fault while operating in the Indo-Pacific as part of the UK Carrier Strike Group (UKCSG).

The aircraft, jointly operated by the Royal Navy (RN) and the Royal Air Force (RAF), had been flying from HMS *Prince of Wales* when the fault occurred. It diverted to Kagoshima International Airport at approximately 11:30 a.m. local time, according to Japan's Ministry of

Defence (JMOD – Japanese Ministry of Defence). The Ministry of Defence (MOD – United Kingdom Ministry of Defence) confirmed the jet is undergoing inspections to return it to operational status as soon as possible.

Footage taken later in the day showed the fighter parked on the tarmac with no visible structural damage. Airport officials temporarily closed the runway for around 20 minutes while the aircraft was moved to a safe location for engineering checks.

This follows a previous F-35B incident on 14 June 2025, when another aircraft from the UKCSG was forced to land at Thiruvananthapuram Airport in Kerala, southern India, due to a hydraulic failure. That jet remained grounded for more than a month before engineers resolved the fault.

The F-35 Lightning series, built by Lockheed Martin in the United States, is widely regarded as one of the most advanced multi-role combat aircraft in the world. The F-35B variant is capable of short take-off and vertical landing (STOVL – Short Take-Off and Vertical Landing), allowing it to operate from carriers without the need for catapults or arrestor cables. Despite its cutting-edge technology, the programme has faced ongoing issues. A declassified 2024 report from the US Department of Defense found that overall reliability and availability remained below expectations across the fleet.

The United Kingdom currently operates 37 F-35Bs, with plans to expand the fleet to 47 by the end of 2025. Additionally, the Government announced in June the intention to procure at least 12 F-35A variants, which are capable of carrying nuclear weapons.

This latest incident occurred during Operation Highmast, the UKCSG's current deployment to the Indo-Pacific region. The strike group, which includes HMS *Prince of Wales* and several escort ships, is conducting joint exercises with the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF – Japan Self-Defense Forces) and the United States military. The exercises, aimed at enhancing interoperability and demonstrating Britain's naval reach, are scheduled to continue until 12 August 2025.

A senior defence source, speaking on background, emphasised that such engineering issues, while disruptive, are “not uncommon in high-intensity operations” and that safety protocols ensured a controlled and secure landing.

The MOD has not disclosed a specific timeline for the jet's return to service but confirmed it remains committed to the operational goals of the Indo-Pacific deployment.