

US F-35s seen landing in Puerto Rico amid Venezuela tensions

By Reuters

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[1/5] F-35 fighter jets taxi on the runway at the former Roosevelt Roads military base in Ceiba, Puerto Rico, September 13, 2025. REUTERS/Ricardo Arduengo [Purchase Licensing Rights](#)



Sept 13 (Reuters) - Five U.S. F-35 aircraft were seen landing in Puerto Rico on Saturday after President [Donald Trump](#) last week [ordered 10 of the stealth fighters to join a military buildup in the Caribbean](#) to counter drug cartels amid rising tensions with Venezuela.

The F-35s were seen landing at the former Roosevelt Roads military base in Ceiba, Puerto Rico, by Ricky Arduengo, a contract photographer working for Reuters. U.S. helicopters and Osprey aircraft as well as other U.S. transport aircraft and military personnel have been seen at the base in recent days.

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The latest sightings come after a [surprise visit to Puerto Rico this week by U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth](#) along with the top U.S. general amid escalating tensions with Venezuela.

Asked about the aircraft, a Pentagon duty press officer said: "We have no force posture changes to announce currently."

Sources told Reuters last week that the Trump administration ordered the deployment of 10 F-35 fighter jets to Puerto Rico to conduct operations against drug cartels.

In announcing the plan last week to send more aircraft to the region, Trump said the United States was not talking about regime change in Venezuela.

Last week, the U.S. military [killed 11 people in a strike on a vessel](#) from Venezuela allegedly carrying illegal narcotics in the first known operation since the Trump administration's recent deployment of warships to the southern Caribbean.

Venezuela has said none of the 11 people killed were drug traffickers.

The Venezuelan government announced on Saturday that a U.S. destroyer intercepted, boarded and occupied a Venezuelan tuna fishing vessel for eight hours in the South American country's Special Economic Zone on Friday.

It said the vessel was boarded in an illegal and hostile manner, and that it was crewed by nine "humble" fishermen and was "harmless."

U.S. officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the alleged incident.

F-35s are highly advanced stealth fighters and would be effective in any combat against Venezuela's air force, which includes F-16 aircraft.

Reporting by David Brunnstrom in Washington; Editing by Matthew Lewis

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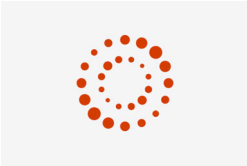
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