

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Department of Defence Annual Report 2015-16 – 17 February 2017

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Defence

Topic: Personnel required for F-35

Question reference number: 22

Member: Mr Craig Kelly MP

Type of question: asked on Friday, 17 February 2017, Hansard page 34

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 14 March 2017

Question:

Mr CRAIG KELLY: Just on that, we have four at the moment. When we have our full complement of F-35s how many trained pilots will we actually need to be able to maintain and use those if need be?

Air Vice-Marshal McDonald: I can get you the numbers on the maintenance personnel that are required as we recapitalise across the air combat fleet and also the number of pilots. It will not dynamically change from the number of pilots we currently have. No 3 Squadron will be the first squadron to take on the F-35, and then we will roll it out amongst the other squadrons as we go. Leigh may have some more detail on that but it will not be a radical change in personnel numbers.

Answer:

The number of pilots and maintenance personnel for F-35 are unlikely to vary significantly from the current pilot and maintenance numbers for Classic Hornet. However, the skillsets required for F-35 maintenance may change as each F-35 squadron becomes operational.

Currently Air Force has approximately 100 pilots (15-20 per squadron) and 500 maintenance personnel. Exact numbers are unable to be tabled in an unclassified response.