



JAPAN TESTS INDIGENOUS STEALTH FIGHTER JET X-2

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Japan is developing an indigenous stealth fighter jet, the X-2, which completed a ground test Wednesday, according to local reports.

The X-2, a tactical fighter aircraft, went through two ground tests, speeding at about 100 kilometers per hour across 500 meters of runway at an airport in Nagoya in Aichi Prefecture, NHK reported.

The fighter jet is scheduled for a flight test in March.

Japan's Defense Ministry began developing the aircraft, equipped with stealth technology to avoid radar detection, about seven years ago. Tokyo invested about \$354 million in a test aircraft and worked in partnership with Mitsubishi Heavy Industries.

Defense Minister Gen Nakatani said after the ground test the aircraft development is "on track" and that he holds great expectations about its deployment and the future of Japan's aviation industry.

Tokyo has been taking steps toward bolstering its defense after a bill was passed in 2015, which would allow its Self-Defense Force to fight overseas.

The changes come at a time when Japan is growing wary of China's maritime activities in the South China Sea, and North Korea continues to conduct tests of its nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.

Nakatani told reporters Wednesday the North Korea threat is real, and said that he "cannot deny the possibility" Pyongyang could engage in more provocations in response to the U.S.-South Korea joint military exercises to be held in March.

Earlier in the week, North Korea had issued a statement from the Korean People's Army Supreme Command, saying even the slightest movement from "enemies of the special operations forces" would provoke a response.

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