

Zero fighter flies over Japan for 1st time since WWII

January 27 2016, by Miki Toda



Mitsubishi's legendary Zero fighter flies during its test flight at an air station in Kanoya, Kagoshima prefecture, southern Japan, Wednesday, Jan. 27, 2016. The restored plane took to the skies over Japan on Wednesday for the first time since World War II. (Hiroko Harima/Kyodo News via AP)

One of Mitsubishi's legendary Zero fighter planes took to the skies over Japan on Wednesday for the first time since World War II.

The restored plane made a brief flight to and from a naval base in

southern Japan. Decorated former U.S. Air Force pilot Skip Holm flew the aircraft.

Zero fighters were considered one of the most capable long-range fighter planes in World War II, rivaling the British Spitfire. Only a few are still in operating condition.

This particular plane was found decaying in Papua New Guinea in the 1970s. It was owned by an American until Japanese businessman Masahiro Ishizuka purchased it and brought it to Japan last September.

"I wanted for the people of Japan and especially young people to know about this Zero airplane, as well as those who are old who remember the past," Ishizuka said. "Each of them should have different thoughts and perspectives on this, but I just want people to know how Japan has developed its technology."

Japanese see the aircraft both as a symbol of their country's technological advance and a reminder of the harrowing history of the war. In the last phase of the fighting, they were used for "kamikaze" attacks.



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Kamikaze pilots took off from the same airfield as Wednesday's flight, Kanoya Naval Air Base on the island of Kyushu.

Under its previous American owner, the plane made an appearance in the Hollywood movie "Pearl Harbor" and at various events in the United

States.



Mitsubishi's legendary Zero fighters is prepared for a test flight at an air station in Kanoya, Kagoshima prefecture, southern Japan, Wednesday, Jan. 27, 2016. The restored plane took to the skies over Japan on Wednesday for the first time since World War II. (Hiroko Harima/Kyodo News via AP)



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