



F-35 Lightning II Program

Public Affairs Release – 2012 07 20

LUKE CONTINUES TO SUPPORT F-35 MISSION AT EGLIN AFB

As part of a plan to prepare the 33rd Fighter Wing for the arrival of the F-35, Luke Air Force Base sent some assets to Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., in January 2011.

Now, a year-and-a-half later, the 56th Maintenance Group continues to support that mission.

"A rotation of four F-16 Fighting Falcons and about 40 maintainers from Luke will continue to provide fighter support aircraft through March 2013," said Capt. Ryan Hudson, 309th Aircraft Maintenance Unit deployed officer-in-charge. "The maintainers are providing safe reliable aircraft which ensures the success of standing up F-35 operations at the integrated training center at Eglin."

One aspect of Luke's mission at Eglin is to support just-in-time training for the initial F-35 cadre, Hudson said.

"Just-in-time training allows pilots to qualify and maintain proficiency in a fighter aircraft before and during their transition to the F-35," he said. "This support is vital for the maturity of the F-35 program. At the same time, it also increases pilot production."

The 56th MXG is providing outstanding support to the Defense Department's first operational F-35 location, according to Lt. Col. Michael Miles, 33rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron commander.

"Sorties generated for Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps aircrews are ensuring proficiency and airworthiness prior to each pilot's first F-35 flight," he said. "Additionally, the F-16s from Luke perform critical flight safety chase aircraft duties locally and for ferry flights from the Lockheed Martin factory in Fort Worth, Texas."

More than 360 Luke Airman have supported this mission so far on 60-to-90 day rotations.

"Team Luke has exceeded all expectations in providing support to the 33rd FW," Miles said. "They have advanced the entire F-35 program."



An F-35 and two Luke F-16s fly a sortie over Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. These F-16s, along with more than 360 Luke maintainers, have been instrumental in advancing the F-35 program, according to Lt. Col. Michael Miles, 33rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron commander. (Courtesy photo)