



# F-35 Lightning II Program

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## 58<sup>TH</sup> MAINTAINERS CREATE NEW F-35 TOOLBOX

**EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla.** -- The 58th Aircraft Maintenance Unit's Support Section put into service a new toolbox specifically used for tire and brake changes in yet another example of the continuous improvements happening with the F-35 Lightning II program at the 33rd Fighter Wing.

According to Master Sgt. Michael Chavez, 58th AMU support section chief, a reduction in accountability of items and equipment was one of the main goals of creating the box. "There are 287 total items to be accounted for in the three boxes required by the tech data," he said. "With our new tire change kit, there are only 52 items. That's an 81 percent reduction in tools and equipment."

Previously, in order to perform a tire change, maintainers were required to check out three different tool kits because the box required by the program did not have the specific tools needed to do the job.

For the maintainers, having all the required tools in one box makes life easier. It allows them to spend about 50 percent less time checking out tools and lessens the chance of a lost tool potentially damaging an aircraft. Also, there is less difficulty transporting the tool cases to the flight line.

"It takes a lot less time now, compared to lugging out three boxes and a huge cart," said Staff Sgt. Derek Wilkins, a 58th AMU crew chief. "Also, there's a lot less risk of losing tools now with one box as opposed to three boxes."

Staff Sgt. Joseph Vera, the 58th AMU support section's composite tool kit program manager, obtained a list of basic requirements and put the box together. By reutilizing tools left over from the 58th AMU's previous incarnation as an F-15 unit, he was able to create a portable, custom tool box while saving the government the cost of buying a completely new kit.

"The tire change box is complete," Chavez said. "It is a 100 percent locally developed box using legacy tools, minus two large sockets at a cost of \$53."

To make the tool box serviceable, the old identification numbers were removed from the tools and new ones added. The tools also had to be shadowed in foam to create specific spots for each item. These two tasks were performed for accountability purposes. Vera and other support section Airmen created the box during a three-day period. After a couple of trial runs and input from maintainers, the box was upgraded to its current configuration.

"The new box now has room to secure the majority of the extra tools required to perform the task, such as a grease gun and torque wrenches," Vera said. "The biggest thing was getting it organized and cutting the foam."

Col. Andrew Toth, the 33rd Fighter Wing commander, praised the outside-the-box thinking used to create the new tool kit.

"It shows the quality of maintainers we have in the 33rd Fighter Wing," he said. "Everyone at every level is dedicated to improving our capabilities and making the F-35 program a success as it continues to move forward."



*TOP: A cart full of more than 280 tools and equipment was previously required to complete brake and tire maintenance on a 33rd Fighter Wing F-35A. The new blue box created by the Airmen of the 58th Aircraft Maintenance Unit's Support Section reduces the amount of tools required by 81 percent. (U.S. Air Force photo/Samuel King Jr.)*

*BOTTOM: Staff Sgt. Nathan Burkhart, a 33rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron crew chief, reaches for a torque wrench from the newly created F-35 tire and brake toolbox at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., April 3. The improved toolbox reduced the amount of tools maintainers must have on hand by 81 percent from 287 to 52 items. The box was created by Airmen from the 58th Aircraft Maintenance Unit's Support Section. (U.S. Air Force photo/Samuel King Jr.)*