



F-35 Lightning II Program

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NAVY'S FIRST F-35C LIGHTNING II SQUADRON SURPASSES 1000 FLIGHT HOURS

By CNAF PAO

The "Grim Reapers" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 101, the Navy's first F-35C Lightning II carrier variant squadron, reached a milestone in November 2014 by surpassing 1,000 mishap-free flight hours in the F-35C.

As the F-35C Fleet Replacement Squadron, VFA-101, homeported at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, trains Navy aircrew and maintenance personnel to fly and repair the aircraft.

"I am incredibly proud of the 'Grim Reapers' for accomplishing this milestone," said Cmdr. Frederick Crecelius, VFA-101's commanding officer. "With each additional flight hour, the men and women of VFA-101 are paving the way for the future of Naval Aviation."



The unit became the Navy's first F-35C squadron after receiving the aircraft June 22, 2013, from Lockheed Martin, and completed the first check flight, Aug. 14.

"The 1,000-hour milestone not only demonstrates the incredible teamwork of VFA-101," said Crecelius. "It also provides an opportunity to reflect on the capabilities of the aircraft and how this fifth-generation fighter will enhance the flexibility, power projection, and strike capabilities of the carrier air wing."

While VFA-101 remains involved in preparations for the F-35C to achieve initial operational capability in 2018, the F-35 Lightning II Integrated Test Force from Air Test and Evaluation Squadron 23 located at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland, completed its first phase of developmental testing for the F-35C aboard an aircraft carrier Nov. 14. During the initial testing phase, the aircraft demonstrated exceptional performance throughout its sea trails aboard aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68).

The F-35C is a fifth-generation fighter, combining advanced stealth with fighter speed and agility, fully fused sensor information, network-enabled operations and advanced sustainment. The F-35C will complement the capabilities of the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet, which currently serves as the Navy's premier strike fighter. By 2025, the Navy's aircraft carrier-based air wings will consist of a mix of the F-35C, F/A-18E/F Super Hornets, EA-18G Growler, E-2D Hawkeye, Unmanned Carrier Launched Airborne Surveillance and Strike air vehicles, MH-60R/S Seahawk helicopters and Carrier Onboard Delivery logistics aircraft.

Since June 1942, "Grim Reapers" has served as the name used to identify three different squadrons - Fighter Squadron (VF) 10, VF-101 and now VFA-101 – flying various aircraft, including the F4F Wildcat, the FG1-D Corsair, the F-4 Phantom, the F-14 Tomcat and currently the F-35C.