



F-35 Lightning II Program

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MARINES RECEIVE FIRST F-35C LIGHTNING II CARRIER VARIANT

33rd Fighter Wing/Public Affairs

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. -- The first F-35C Lightning II, carrier variant, for the U.S. Marine Corps touched-down on the flight line here, Jan. 13, from the Lockheed Martin plant in Fort Worth, Texas, to begin training in support of carrier-based operations.

U.S. Marine Lt. Col. J.T. "Tank" Ryan, Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 501 detachment commander and F-35 pilot, delivered the new F-35C to Strike Fighter Squadron 101, the Navy's only F-35 fleet replacement squadron. This aircraft is the first of five Marine Corps F-35Cs that will be delivered to VFA-101 on Eglin.

Marine F-35 pilots primarily fly F-35Bs - a short take-off vertical landing variant designed to deploy to austere locations and operate aboard amphibious ships.

"This is a big day for the Marine Corps tactical air community and a huge honor to be able to deliver our first F-35C," said Ryan. "It marks the beginning of our training in the carrier variant and puts us that much closer to standing up our first F-35C operational fleet squadron."

The F-35C model brings 25 percent more range and a bigger weapons bay. It also allows the Marine Corps to fly aboard Navy aircraft carriers, which continues an effective and long-standing tactical air integration program between the Navy and Marine Corps.

"In the past, Marines have been trained to fly the Navy's F-18 Hornet to share the load of deployment cycles," said Ryan. "Now, Marine pilots will be flying the F-35C with the Navy's Carrier Air Wings while deployed aboard aircraft carriers."

The first operational Marine Corps F-35C fleet squadron, VMFA-115, is scheduled to stand up at Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort, South Carolina, in 2019.

"It's exciting to be on the ground floor of the F-35C and an enormous honor to be the first F-35C Marine pilot," said Ryan. "I look forward to being a part of VFA-101 and the future of what this aircraft will bring to the fight for our Marines."



U.S. Marine Lt. Col. J.T. "Tank" Ryan, Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 501 detachment commander and F-35 pilot, delivers the first Marine Corps F-35C Lightning II carrier variant to Navy Attack Fighter Squadron 101 on Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., Jan. 13, 2015. Ryan flew the aircraft from the Lockheed Martin plant, Fort Worth, Texas, as the first of five Marine Corps F-35C model aircraft to be delivered to the VFA-101. The F-35C model brings 25 percent more range and a bigger weapons bay. It also allows the Marine Corps to fly aboard Navy aircraft carriers, which continues an effective and long-standing tactical air integration program between the Navy and Marine Corps. (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Marleah Robertson)