



F-35 Lightning II Program

Public Affairs Release – 2016 03 29

MARINE EARNS RECOGNITION FOR ADVANCES IN GROUND SAFETY

A Marine who developed an innovative fall-protection program here has received the Geico Military Service Award. Gunnery Sgt. Kwan Cochrane, the maintenance administration chief with Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 501 here, was selected for the award after his contributions helped Marines avoid hazards while maintaining F-35B Lightning II joint strike fighter aircraft.

“I took over the ground safety at VMFAT-501,” Cochrane said. “Before that we did not have specific protocols due to the nature of our work. Marines always have safety in place but it was not an official program. I built the program up from scratch and it became necessary for us to have a fall-protection system here for working on the jets.”

A system utilizing harnesses and pulleys was already installed but needed an updated design to accommodate the new features of the F-35. “Due to the importance of the F-35 program I had to come up with something that would keep the Marines safe and maintain the readiness of the aircraft,” Cochrane said. “I went out and got the harnesses developed and took the metal out of the design.”

Removing the metal from the harness allows the jet’s stealth technology to operate without interference. With the new system, Marines can work on the F-35 from all angles without the danger of falling.

“My chain of command was impressed with the work I accomplished and brought in higher level personnel to review the system,” Cochrane said. “The design is now slated to be implemented in F-35 hangars all over the Marine Corps.”

Cochrane’s leaders initially nominated him for the award. According to Geico, each unit, base, post, or activity nominates enlisted members it considers worthy. Nominees are judged on their contributions in career or non-career related activities and the extent these activities serve to inspire other military or civilian personnel.

According to the Geico Military Service Awards Program website, the awards program spotlights the valuable and lasting contributions enlisted service members make in three specific areas of endeavor: achievements or contributions in the areas of drug and alcohol abuse prevention; fire safety and fire prevention; or traffic safety and accident prevention.

One enlisted service member from each branch is recognized each year for their special achievements and contributions to the public good of the civilian and military communities. “Being nominated for this award was a humbling experience,” Cochrane said. “We all enlist to serve and make a difference so it is an honor to know that I have. ... I hope that I can keep marching forward in my career and continue making a difference for my Marines.”