



# F-35 Lightning II Program

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## MARINE CORPS WELCOMES FIRST F-35B AIRCRAFT TO YUMA

**MARINE CORPS AIR STATION YUMA, ARIZ** - The Marine Corps welcomed its first operational F-35B aircraft, the Marine Corps variant of the F-35 Lightning II also known as the Joint Strike Fighter, to Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Ariz. Friday, Nov. 16.

The F-35B, one of three variants of the Joint Strike Fighter, is a tactical fixed-wing aircraft that is to be the replacement for aging jets within the Marine Corps. 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing's first F-35 squadron, Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 121, is based at MCAS Yuma and is the first operational F-35 squadron in the Marine Corps and the Department of Defense.

Marine F-35B pilot Maj. Aric Liberman delivered the first F-35B, BF-19, to MCAS Yuma at approximately 1 p.m. MST. This aircraft will be used to conduct a full spectrum of aviation operations in support of combat missions and maritime readiness worldwide.

"The delivery of VMFA-121's first F-35B is a tremendous milestone for our country, the Marine Corps, Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Marine Aircraft Group 13, 3rd Marine Air Wing, the hard working Marines of VMFA-121 and the city of Yuma.

This marks the transition to the next generation of aircraft for the U.S. military and our Marine Corps. The STOVL capability of the F-35B will allow the Marine Corps to provide the expeditionary capability our country expects from the Marine Corps while the fifth generation technology will increase our combat power significantly. Being the first operational F-35 squadron in the world is another historic moment in Marine aviation, and the Green Knights are proud to be chosen to lead the way into the future of military aviation. I have no doubt the legendary Green Knight Joe Foss is smiling down on VMFA-121 and the Marine Corps," stated VMFA-121 Commanding Officer LtCol. Jeffrey Scott.

The F-35B, a short takeoff and vertical landing fighter, is slated to replace the Marine Corps' F/A-18 Hornet, AV-8B Harrier and EA-6B Prowler. It will provide multi-role, fifth-generation capabilities in the form of one common tactical fixed-wing aircraft, reducing maintenance costs while ensuring the Marine Corps maintains the tactical aircraft dominance required to deter potential adversaries and protect the nation's interests.

The F-35B supports the Marine Corps' tactical and operational needs for close air support in austere conditions and locations that may be inaccessible to traditional fighters. Thanks to its short takeoff and vertical landing capabilities, the F-35B can operate from expeditionary airfields in remote, non-permissive environments with shorter runways, contributing to the Marine Corps' role as the nation's expeditionary force-in-readiness.



Third Marine Aircraft Wing's first F-35B taxis in Fri., Nov. 16, 2012 at approximately 1 p.m. on the Marine Corps Air Station Yuma flightline. Piloted by F-35 pilot instructor Maj. A. C. Liberman, today's arrival highlights next week's official re-designation of Marine All Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 121, an F/A-18 Hornet Squadron, as the world's first operational F-35 squadron at MCAS Yuma. The F-35B accomplishes the multi-role, fifth-generation capabilities needed across the full spectrum of military operations to deter potential adversaries and protect our nation and its interests. Known as the F-35 Lightning II, the F-35B will eventually replace the Corps' aging legacy tactical fleet of AV-8B Harriers, F/A-18 Hornets and EA-6B Prowlers. (Photo by Lance Cpl. William Waterstreet)