



F-35 Lightning II Program

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F - 35 B C O M P L E T E S S E C O N D A I R B O R N E W E A P O N S S E P A R A T I O N

NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND, PATUXENT RIVER, Md.

– The F-35 Lightning II Integrated Test Force (ITF) accomplished another significant test milestone Dec. 3 when an F-35B successfully released another weapon in flight.

BF-3, a [short take off and vertical landing](#) variant of the F-35, released an inert 500-pound GBU-12 [Paveway II Laser Guided Bomb](#) over water in the Atlantic Test Ranges while traveling at 0.8 Mach, or 485 nautical mph, at an altitude of approximately 5,000 feet.

“Completion of this weapons separation test is a testament to the flexibility of the ITF, where every day we are verifying different portions of the F-35 flight envelope or validating multiple planned capabilities,” said Navy Capt. Erik Etz, director of test for F-35 naval variants. “Today’s release of the GBU-12 builds on our team’s first-ever drop earlier this summer and was the result of extraordinary effort by our team of maintainers, engineers, pilots and others who consistently work long hours to deliver F-35 warfighting capability to the U.S. services and our international partners.”

The release was the second for the F-35B, and the fourth overall for the program. To date, F-35 variants have successfully released the 500-pound GBU-12, [a 1,000-pound GBU-32](#), a 1-ton GBU-31 and an AIM-120 Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missile.

“We’re expanding the envelope for the fleet,” said Lt. Cmdr. Michael Burks, test pilot for the mission. “The GBU-12 is a critical weapon in the F-35’s arsenal and will be vital in our mission to support the troops on the ground.”

An aerial weapons separation event tests the proper and safe release of the weapon from its carriage system and trajectory away from the aircraft. It is the culmination of a significant number of tests, including ground fit checks, ground pit drops, and aerial captive carriage and environment flights to ensure the system is working properly before expanding the test envelope in the air.

Aircraft and land-based test monitoring systems collected data from the successful separation, which is in review at the F-35 integrated test force at Naval Air Station Patuxent River.

ABOUT THE F-35 LIGHTNING II

The [F-35B](#) is the variant of the Lightning II designed for use by the U.S. Marine Corps, as well as F-35 international partners in the United Kingdom and Italy. The F-35B is capable of short takeoffs and vertical landings to enable air power projection from amphibious ships, ski-jump aircraft carriers and expeditionary airfields. The F-35B is undergoing [flight test and evaluation](#) at NAS Patuxent River, Md., prior to fleet delivery.

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F-35B test aircraft BF-3, flown by Lt. Cmdr. Michael Burks, completed the first aerial weapons release of an inert 500-pound GBU-12 on Dec. 3, the first GBU-12 Paveway II Laser Guided Bomb release for any variant of the aircraft. BF-3 dropped the GBU-12 over the Atlantic Test Ranges from an internal weapons bay. The F-35B is the variant of the Lightning II designed for use by the U.S. Marine Corps, as well as F-35 international partners in the United Kingdom and Italy. The F-35B is capable of short takeoffs and vertical landings to enable air power projection from amphibious ships, ski-jump aircraft carriers and expeditionary airfields. The F-35B is undergoing flight test and evaluation at NAS Patuxent River, Md., prior to delivery to the fleet. (Photo courtesy of Lockheed Martin)