



F-35 Lightning II Program

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NELLIS ACCEPTS DELIVERY OF F-35 WITH CEREMONY

by Master Sgt. Kelley J. Stewart
99th Air Base Wing Public Affairs

NELLIS AIR FORCE BASE, Nev. -- In the Thunderbird Hangar filled to capacity, Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Lofgren, U.S. Air Force Warfare Center commander, formally accepted delivery of three F-35A Lightning IIs March 19.

The aircraft will be assigned to the 422nd Test and Evaluation Squadron where they will undergo operational testing.

During the ceremony, the general focused on the importance of the F-35 program to the Air Force and the USAF Warfare Center by tying the aircrafts' arrival to the center's three priorities.



Maj. Gen. Jeffery Lofgren, U.S. Air Force Warfare Center commander, provides remarks during the F-35A Lightning II arrival ceremony March 19, 2013, in the Thunderbird Hangar on Nellis Air Force Base, Nev. The 422nd Test and Evaluation Squadron will design the tactics for the F-35A. The squadron will also determine how to integrate the F-35A with other aircraft in the Air Force inventory. (U.S. Air Force photo by Lawrence Crespo)

The first priority of the warfare center is developing capabilities and leaders who can fight in a contested environment. One of the focus areas for the 422nd TES will be operational testing to develop tactics for the aircraft and pilots.

"What lies ahead for the 422nd TES and the 53rd Test and Evaluation Group is no small task," said Orlando Carvalho, executive vice president Lockheed Martin Aeronautics. "You will forge the F-35 into the fighter of the future and test it to the limits."

Carvalho went on to say the group's and squadron's pilots and maintainers "would take the F-35's performance to new heights and define the very tactics the F-35 will one day use to defend freedom around the world."

Lofgren expects to see the same dramatic new tactics development with the F-35A as was seen with the F-22.

"The aircraft has so much more capability than our current aircraft," he said. "It will be exciting to see our experts develop innovative new ways to use the F-35 that have not been thought of yet."

The second priority of the warfare center is integrating the capabilities of air, space and cyberspace to achieve greater warfighting effect in the battlespace.

"Integration of the F-35's incredible sensors, and its ability to operate anywhere in the battlespace, will make the whole of all our forces more survivable and lethal," Lofgren said.

Using the F-35A in tandem with the F-22 Raptor increases this lethality.

According to Gen. Mike Hostage III, Air Combat Command commander, the Air Force needs the fifth generation of capability it's leveraging with the F-35A and F-22.

"No amount of fourth-generation capability is going to be able to survive in the environment that will be presented by our

adversaries in the next decade without a fifth-generation capability to open up the way, to basically beat down the threat," he said. "Having the F-35s at Nellis brings the test and evaluation of the aircraft closer to operational conditions. I can't think of a better place to take the F-35 through the steps needed to reach initial operating capability for our Air Force."

The final warfare center's priority is to use the triad of live flying, virtual or simulator flying, and the constructive or synthetic threats and battlespace to test and develop tactics and conduct advanced training of future leaders using the F-35A.

This final priority is driven by the fact the aircraft's capabilities are so advanced that "we cannot develop our warfighting edge with live flying alone," Lofgren said.

A simulator complex to test and develop tactics and to conduct advanced training is being built at Nellis AFB and will provide F-35A pilots with realistic threat scenarios they could face in real-world combat.

The F-35A will be doing its live-flying training over the Nevada Test and Training Range.

"The F-35, with its advanced electronic warfare and integrated avionics, is able to locate and identify real and fake targets and jam with unmatched precision which will present a challenge for the NTTR to replicate the threat," Lofgren said.

Combining virtual and live training will allow the Air Force to "link and integrate current and future combat systems," the general said.

The F-35A Lightning II blends the capabilities of seven legacy aircraft into one. As a stealth aircraft, it can enter areas without being seen by radar and this capability will also allow the pilot to see other aircraft first. The F-35 can also penetrate deeper into enemy territory allowing it to find and destroy ground targets while evading hostile surface-to-air weapons.

"Not only is it deadly in the air, it is easy to work on and sustain," he said. "Great improvements have been made in sustaining this aircraft so our world-class maintainers can fix and ready the F-35 faster."

Nellis is scheduled to receive 36 F-35A Lightning IIs by 2020.