



F-35 Lightning II Program

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U.S. AIR FORCE ANNOUNCES IOC

WASHINGTON, D.C. (AFNS) -- The Air Force announced today it expects to declare F-35A Lightning II initial operation capability in December 2016. The announcement was included in a joint report detailing service-specific IOC requirements and dates for each of the F-35 variants that was delivered to Congress today.

"The Air Force has spent the last six months looking at our initial capability requirements and the expected availability date. This announcement is exciting news for the Air Force," said Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley. "It highlights to members of Congress, our international partners, and the American public that the program is on track to bring the United States military and our allies this critical capability."

Congress directed the secretary of the Air Force and secretary of the Navy to provide a report that details the IOC dates, requirements and capabilities for each of the F-35 variants by June 1.

The Air Force will achieve IOC when the first operational squadron has 12 or more aircraft and Airmen are trained and equipped to conduct basic close air support, interdiction, and limited suppression and destruction of enemy air defense operations in a contested environment.

"The F-35 is a vital capability that the nation needs to stay ahead of adversary technological gains, and it provides the multi-role capabilities that the anti-access and area denial environment of the future will require," said Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Welsh III. "We're excited that this program is on the road to success, and we're grateful that our international partners remain as committed to this program as we are."

The F-35 is an unprecedented 5th generation fighter combining stealth technology with fighter speed and agility, fully integrated sensors and network enabled operations, and state-of-the-art avionics.

The world's most advanced fighter has achieved a string of milestones recently as it moves toward IOC. A few of these include the beginning of pilot training at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., in January; the delivery of the first operational test aircraft to Edwards AFB, Calif., and Nellis AFB, Nev., in March; the first operational pilot aerial refueling in April; and the completion of high angle of attack testing in May.



Lt. Col. Benjamin Bishop completes preflight checks before his first sortie in an F-35A Lightning II, March 6, 2013, at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. Bishop is among the first pilots to begin the official training that began in January. The Air Force announced May 31, 2013, it expects to declare F-35 Lightning II initial operation capability in December 2016. The announcement was included in a joint report detailing service-specific IOC requirements and dates for each of the F-35 variants that was delivered to Congress. (U.S. Air Force photo/Samuel King Jr.)