



F-35 Lightning II Program

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U.S. MARINE CORPS ANNOUNCES IOC

The Marine Corps declared that it would reach initial operating capability of the F-35B by December 2015 in a joint letter sent to Congress May 31.

The Corps' is currently on schedule to reach IOC in the F-35B in December of 2015. The expeditionary, crisis response force requirements for this milestone include an operational squadron with at least 10 aircraft that are capable of performing the prescribed missions of close air support, offensive and defensive counter air operations, air interdiction, assault support escort, and armed reconnaissance. Additionally, this squadron must be staffed with Marines properly trained and equipped to execute these missions.

The Marine Corps established Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 121, its first operational F-35B squadron, in November 2012 with a ceremony at Marine Corps Air Station Yuma in Arizona. Conventional flight operations for the squadron began in January of 2013 with full short takeoff and vertical landing (STOVL) operations commencing in March 2013. There are currently six F-35B aircraft at VMFA-121 with approximately 190 Marines assigned to the command.

"Our nation expects us to make informed decisions about developing and employing the most effective military capabilities to support our national security strategy," said Lt.Gen. Robert E. Schmidle, the Marine Corps' deputy commandant of aviation. "The F-35 is the best hedge against the ever-evolving and unknown threats posed by potential adversaries."