



F-35 Lightning II Program

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REFUELING THE F-35B LIGHTNING II WITH VMGR-352

By Lance Cpl. Raquel Barraza

Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 352 "Raiders" conducted fixed-wing aerial refueling training with Marine Attack Squadron 211 "Wake Island Avengers" and Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 121 "Green Knights" over eastern California, Aug. 27.

This training teaches pilots and air crew to refuel an aircraft without landing using a KC-130J Super Hercules, thus extending the operational capability of the aircraft during combat missions.

During the exercise, the Raiders refueled three F-35B Lightning II Joint Strike Fighters with VMFA-121 and two AV-8B Harriers with VMA-211.

"We refuel the F-35s almost weekly," said Lt. Col. Dan McMichael, commanding officer of VMGR-352 and a Belmont, Calif., native.

VMFA-121 stood up in November 2012 and VMGR-352 began refueling exercises with them in early June.

"It's great to train with 21st century technology like the F-35s," said McMichael.

This training teaches the crew members of the KC-130 to better understand the aircraft during refueling.

"F-35s are not [usually] refueled from the air, so the more we practice, the better," said Cpl. Ryan Blackshear, a crew master with VMGR-352 and a Dumas, Texas, native. "We have to keep the [KC-130J] straight and level so it can connect to the hose to be fueled properly."

The F-35s and the AV-8Bs also practiced different tactics and break away formations during the training.

The Marines of VMGR-352 plan to keep this new aircraft fueled and combat ready for any mission.



Three F-35B Lightning II Joint Strike Fighters with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 121, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, fly in formation during fixed-wing aerial refueling training over eastern California, Aug. 27. VMFA-121 is the first F-35B squadron in the Marine Corps. (Photo by Lance Cpl. Michael Thorn)