



F-35 Lightning II Program

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AIRMEN PERFORM FIRST WEAPONS LOAD VERIFICATION ON F-35A

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After months of preparation the weapons troop Standardization Load Crew from the 33rd Maintenance Group performed the first munitions load verification on the F-35A Lightning II here Aug. 27.

"Over the next couple of days, our 33d Fighter Wing maintenance professionals, alongside representatives from the F-35 Program Office and Air Combat Command, will validate weapons loading procedures. This involves loading and unloading laser-guided and GPS-guided bombs, and air-to-air missiles into the weapons bays of the aircraft and ensuring the instructions we provide our load crews are accurate and effective - one more step towards F-35 initial war fighting capability," explained Air Force Lt. Col. Ron Huzzard, deputy commander of the 33rd MXG.

The SLC has been practicing this load verification using a series of tabletop exercises for several months. This marked the first hands-on load verification for the crew.

"Watching our weapons troops verify loading procedures was like getting a glimpse into the future. Ultimately, this will be the work that is performed down range when it counts, and we are laying that foundation here at Eglin," said Navy Capt. Lance Massey II, commander of the 33rd MXG. "The stealth capability on the F-35 is beyond incredible, but the weapons capability rounds out the whole purpose of the joint strike fighter."

The procedure was overseen by Chief Master Sgt. Christopher Wilbur, wing weapons manager at the 33rd MXG.

"The Airmen walked through the technical instructions to verify the data is accurate and make adjustments as necessary," Wilbur said about the verification load exercise.

The three-person SLC included Air Force Master Sgt. Karen Griffin, Tech. Sgt. Russell Fontaine and Staff Sgt. Steven Dash. Working as a cohesive team, the trio carefully performed several iterations of loading and unloading four different munitions. Once the procedures are verified SLC members will train the weapon troops.

"Getting this step verified in ALIS (the automated logistics information system) for the F-35A is important, so we can move forward and get our 60-plus maintainers trained and working," Griffin said.



Master Sgt. Karen Griffin, of the 33rd Maintenance Group, informs the jammer drive which way to turn to get the guided-bomb-unit-31 into position to be loaded onto an F-35A Lightning II Aug. 27 at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. This marked the first time Airmen have loaded weapons onto the new joint strike fighter here. Each step and procedure was analyzed to ensure it was correct or needed to be changed. The weapons load procedures perfected by the MXG Airmen will be taught to maintenance students in the future.

(U.S. Air Force photo/Samuel King Jr.)