



# F-35 Lightning II Program

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## F - 35 PERFORMS FIRST EAST COAST PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION

**MARINE CORPS AIR STATION CHERRY POINT, N.C.** -- The F-35B Lightning II made its East Coast performing debut May 16 - 18 during the Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point "Inspiration to Innovation" Air Show.

The F-35B is a joint strike fighter that will replace three of the Marine Corps' existing airframes (Harrier, F/A-18 and Prowler), said Capt. Ross Fearon, the aviation safety officer and F-35B pilot with Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 501, who was helping man the static display of the aircraft out of Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.

The F-35B contains capabilities from three different aircraft all wrapped up into one. The F-35B is capable of vertical take-off and landing of the Harrier, the supersonic capabilities of the F/A-18 and the electronic warfare capabilities of the Prowler.

"We really enjoy showing people the aircraft that will eventually be stationed at their bases because it is important for people to see what their tax dollars are going toward," said Fearon. "This is the newest fighter in the arsenal so it is important that people can come out here and take a look at the jet."

The F-35B has a user-friendly interface capable of taking a lot of stress off of the pilot, according to Fearon.

"The jet is really easy to fly and it is really easy to learn how to fly," he said. "This jet takes a lot of the workload off of the pilot's shoulder because it is a very stable and pilot friendly aircraft."

During the air show, pilots showcased the aircraft by answering questions, having a static display and performing a live demonstration of the aircraft.

"People were really excited to come out and see something they had never seen before," said Maj. James T. Bardo, an F-35B pilot with VMFAT-501, who performed in the show. "They certainly haven't seen it in an air show so it was exciting for me to interact with the public and answer any questions they had."

Just like the public had never seen the F-35B before, the pilots never thought they'd be flying the world's most advanced aircraft, said Fearon.

"I never thought I'd be flying one of these," said Fearon. "I used to fly the Harrier and when the opportunity came up to fly the F-35B, I threw my name in the hat just to see what would happen so I wouldn't regret it later on. It's definitely an honor to have the opportunity to fly the newest jet in the inventory."



An F-35B Lightning II, F/A-18 Hornet, and an AV-8B Harrier fly in formation May 17 during the 2014 Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point Air Show here. For additional photographs, visit [www.facebook.com/MCASCherryPoint](http://www.facebook.com/MCASCherryPoint). (U.S. Marine Corps Photo by Lance Cpl. Ryan Young/Released)