



F-35 Lightning II Program

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"GRIM REAPERS" INTRODUCE NAS OCEANA TO F-35C

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. (NNS) -- The "Grim Reapers" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 101 returned to Naval Air Station Oceana Oct. 28, bringing with them the future of Naval Aviation.

The F-35C Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter completed its first landing at Oceana, providing Sailors a chance to learn more about the platform.

"The pilots and maintainers are the ones who make the mission possible," said Capt. Scott Anderson, Commander Naval Air Forces, Fleet Requirements. "This is their opportunity to see the advanced capabilities of the F-35."

The F-35 is a single seat, multi-role fighter aircraft designed to eventually replace the F/A-18 Hornet and AV-8B Harrier. The aircraft was planned with a common design, but three unique service variants capable of performing ground attack, reconnaissance, and air defense missions.

"The combat capabilities and mission systems onboard are second to none," said Cmdr. John Allison, a VFA-101 pilot with more than 160 flight hours in the F-35. "The in-flight controls and stealth capabilities provide a huge advantage on the battlefield."

Although VFA-101 is the Navy's newest squadron, they already possess a rich heritage. The original Fighter Squadron (VF) 101 was established in 1942 and flew various aircraft including the F-14 Tomcat. When the F-14 was retired in 2005, VF-101 was disestablished. Today, the "Grim Reapers" are ushering in a new era with the F-35.

"This is a way to pay homage to the past," said Allison. "Carrying on the name gives us a great connection to the F-14 and a great connection to Oceana."

The F-35C is the carrier variant of the Lockheed Martin built aircraft. The first aircraft carrier arrested landing is scheduled for next week aboard USS Nimitz (CVN 68) off the California coast. By 2025, the Navy's aircraft carrier-based air wings will consist of a mix of F-35C, F/A-18E/F Super Hornets, EA-18G Growlers electronic attack aircraft, E-2D Hawkeye battle management and control aircraft, Unmanned Carrier Launched Airborne Surveillance and Strike (UCLASS) air vehicles, MH-60R/S helicopters and Carrier Onboard Delivery logistics aircraft.



A U.S. Navy F/A-18F Super Hornet assigned to the Dust Devils of Air Test and Evaluation Squadron (VX) 31 at Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, Calif., conducts an interoperability test event with a Navy F-35C Lightning II joint strike fighter aircraft over the Edwards Air Force Base test range with the Mojave Desert below. The two aircraft engaged in a series of electronic exchanges to ensure that communications and sensor information could be passed effectively between platforms. The F-35C is the Navy's variant of the joint strike fighter, designed to operate at sea on aircraft carriers and is scheduled for initial deployment in 2019. (U.S. Navy photo courtesy of Lockheed Martin by Matt Short/Released)



An F-35C Lightning II aircraft makes an arrested landing during a test flight at Naval Air Station Patuxent River. The F-35C is the carrier variant of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. (U.S. Navy photo courtesy of Lockheed Martin by Dane Wiedmann/Released)