



# F-35 Lightning II Program

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While visitors at the Nellis Open House were able to get an up-close look at various aircraft that make up the last 70 years of aviation history, the U.S. Air Force's newest fifth-generation fighter aircraft may have produced the most 'oohs and awes' throughout the event Nov. 7, 8 and 9.

Thousands of spectators taking in the event's festivities clamored toward the runway to see the F-35A Lightning II, and many more eyes were fixed on the Southern Nevada skyline as the aircraft rocketed by with the F-22 Raptor to mark the official start of the open house's aerial performances.

The inclusion of the Joint Strike Fighter in the open house marked the first public display of the aircraft at Nellis AFB.

"What we're doing right here at Nellis with the F-35 really showcases what this base is designed to do; specifically talking to our ability to develop training syllabuses and more importantly tactics," said Maj. Brad Matherne, 59th Test and Evaluation Squadron F-35 test director. "So we're developing the 'playbook' that will tell F-35 pilots across the military the best way to fly and fight with this airplane."

The F-35A is slated to eventually replace the U.S. Air Force's aging fleet of F-16 Fighting Falcons and A-10 Thunderbolt II's. Lt. Col. Joshua Wood, 59th Test and Evaluation Squadron director of operations, said the F-35's enhanced capability to survive in advanced threat environments sets the aircraft apart from its predecessors.

"The F-35, like other fifth-generation aircraft, is going to be able to go places and do things that other aircraft couldn't do," Wood said. "The F-35 takes a lot of different things a pilot used to have to do, blends it all together with [its advanced integrated avionics], and makes things so much simpler."

Because of the quantum leap in technology present in the F-35, Wood said he believes the F-35 can and will accomplish what the U.S. Air Force needs it to.

"A lot of times what we see in the press is so much scrutiny about the F-35, and I'll tell you from a pilot's stand point, I'm impressed with the way it flies and I think we're going to be able to deliver a product for the tax payer that will really help our nation going forward," Wood said. "I'm proud to be part of the program and I think it will meet the need that we have."



An F-35A Lightning II piloted by Maj. Brad Matherne, 59th Test and Evaluation Squadron F-35 test director, leads an F-22 Raptor in flight during the opening ceremony of the open house at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Nov. 8, 2014. The inclusion of the Joint Strike Fighter in the open house marked the first public display of the aircraft at Nellis AFB.)



Maj. Brad Matherne, 59th Test and Evaluation Squadron F-35 test director, gives a thumbs-up during the Nellis Open House at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., Nov. 8, 2014. Matherne piloted an F-35A Lightning II during the open house, which also marked the first public display of the aircraft at Nellis AFB.