



F-35 Lightning II Program

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U.S. MARINE CORPS BEGINS F-35B OPERATIONAL TRIALS

Courtesy Story

ARLINGTON, Va. -- Six U.S. Marine Corps F-35B Lightning II jet aircraft arrived Monday evening aboard the USS WASP off the coast of the United States' Eastern Seaboard to mark the beginning of the first shipboard phase of the F-35B Operational Test (OT-1).

The at-sea period will continue aboard USS WASP for the next two weeks, with fleet representative aircraft and maintenance personnel from Marine Operational Test and Evaluation Squadron 22, Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 121, Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 501, and Marine Aviation Logistics Squadrons 13 and 31.

OT-1 will assess the integration of the F-35B while operating across a wide array of flight and deck operations. Specific OT-1 objectives include demonstrating and assessing day and night flight operations in varying aircraft configurations; digital interoperability of aircraft and ship systems; F-35B landing signal officer's launch and recovery software; day and night weapons loading; and all aspects of maintenance, logistics, and sustainment support of the F-35B while deployed at sea. Additionally, the U.S. Navy-Marine Corps team is working closely with Naval Sea Systems Command to assess specific modifications made to USS WASP to support future deployments.

"The F-35 Lightning II is the most versatile, agile and technologically-advanced aircraft in the skies today, enabling our Corps to be the nation's force in readiness, regardless of the threat, and regardless of the location of the battle," said Lt. Gen. Jon Davis, the Deputy Commandant for Marine Corps Aviation. "As we modernize our fixed-wing aviation assets for the future, the continued development and fielding of the short take-off and vertical landing, the F-35B remains the centerpiece of this effort."

Data collected and lessons learned during OT-1 will lay the groundwork for F-35B deployments aboard U.S. Navy amphibious carriers following the Marine Corps' F-35B initial operating capability declaration planned for this coming July.



A sailor aboard the USS Wasp (LHD-1) signals to the pilot of an F-35B Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter to land as it arrives for the first phase of operational testing, May 18, 2015. The short take-off, vertical landing capabilities of the F-35B are crucial to the mission of the Marine Corps and necessary for operation aboard a Navy amphibious ship. The aircraft are stationed with Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 501, Marine Aircraft Group 31, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing, Beaufort, South Carolina and Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 121, Marine Aircraft Group 13, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, Yuma, Arizona. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Remington Hall/Released)