



F-35 Lightning II Program

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MARINES ON TARGET WITH F-35 LIVE-WEAPONS RELEASE

Marine Corps Air Station Miramar / 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing Story by Cpl. Alissa Schuning

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION MIRAMAR, Calif. - Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 121, also known as the "Green Knights," conducted the first F-35B operational ordnance expenditures June 22 to 26.

Pilots employed the ordnance in Restricted Area 2507 in southeastern California. A total of 14 pilots used six F-35Bs to employ both inert and high-explosive munitions. In total, 18 Guided Bomb Unit (GBU) 12s, and 12 GBU-32s were employed during the training.

According to Chief Warrant Officer 2 Matthew Beard, ordnance officer with VMFA-121, the munitions employed by the pilots were the same as those dropped by legacy Marine Corps fixed-wing aircraft, but the dimensions, installation and technology that targets and employs them were different.

"The training was hugely successful," said Beard. "We showed that we could employ the weapons that were supposed to be employed, and that we have sound weapon employment systems at this point."

In accordance with the guidelines set by U.S. Marine Corps Deputy Commandant for Aviation Lt. Gen. Jon Davis, fleet F-35Bs need to demonstrate the ability to employ ordnance for the squadron to declare Initial Operating Capability (IOC).

"The ordnance employment was one of the last pieces the squadron needed for the IOC declaration," said Maj. Brendan Walsh, operations officer and a pilot with VMFA-121. "This training validated the simulated procedures pilots have been training for, and gave us confidence in the jet's ability to perform with real weaponry."

The squadron, based out of Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Arizona, will continue to employ ordnance in the future as it will become part of their normal training cycle, according to Walsh.

"This is an exciting time to be flying this aircraft," said Walsh. "We look forward to continuing to train and exercise its capabilities for combat."