



# F-35 Lightning II Program

Public Affairs Release – 2015 08 19

---

## **F-35 ITF REACHES HISTORIC SORTIE MILESTONE AT 'LIGHTNING' SPEED**

---

The Joint Strike Fighter Integrated Test Force, which oversees all three test variants of the F-35 Lightning II, has proved its resolve to test and equip the U.S. Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps with their latest fifth-generation fighter. This is evidenced by achieving a historical milestone involving a new monthly flying record.

During the month of July, the JSF ITF flew 76 sorties, making it a first for the ITF.

"This is significant because it is 22 above the average and the highest sortie count in a single month ever recorded in ITF history," said Capt. Robert Leidel, 412th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, F-35 Aircraft Maintenance Unit officer in charge.

According to Leidel, there are a total of nine F-35s assigned to the JSF ITF and all sorties these aircraft fly are counted into the monthly tally.

"Each sortie, or hour safely flown, represents test points being completed in order to bring the JSF closer to the warfighter," Leidel said. "Obviously, the more sorties we safely fly, the faster we can field the F-35. This was not a deliberate effort to increase the hours. At the ITF, we are trying to safely and efficiently fly as many test points as we can, as quickly as we can. As the program matures and we get better, the increase to the flying hours is a result of this policy."

Leidel noted that these sorties can cover a range of tests from avionics and radar to testing how aggressively the aircraft can maneuver.

"The nature of test is that we are attempting to safely fly as many of the F-35 test points, as swiftly as we can, while covering everything the F-35 can do during each test mission. If things go well and we fly more, we move on to other points and get ahead of schedule."

To reach this significant achievement, Leidel mentioned that multiple factors and people were what ultimately led up to this point.

"There is a massive amount of coordination that is involved. There are multiple different, military services, contractors and on- and off-base organizations that must be coordinated with in order to put up a single F-35," added Leidel. "Every F-35 sortie that flies represents a wing-wide effort to coordinate."

The planned date for Air Force Initial Operational Capability of its F-35As is August 2016.