



# F-35 Lightning II Pax River Integrated Test Force

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## Briggs Honored with the Department of the Navy's 2015 Test & Evaluation (T&E) Lead Tester Award

WASHINGTON (NNS) — The Department of the Navy (DoN) honored Thomas Briggs, F-35 Lightning II Pax River Integrated Test Force (ITF) air vehicle engineering department head, with its 2015 Test & Evaluation (T&E) Lead Tester Award during the fourth annual DoN T&E Awards ceremony held in the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes on April 20.

Rear Adm. Mat Winter, DoN T&E Executive and the Chief of Naval Research at the [Office of Naval Research](#), and Carroll "Rick" Quade, Deputy DoN T&E Executive, were the presiding officials for the awards ceremony.

Quade's opening remarks set the stage for the prestigious award ceremony that featured nine awards across seven categories.

"Those of you receiving awards represent the best of the best. You've survived a very competitive process – in fact, I'm amazed at the breadth and depth of technical expertise demonstrated by your achievements. Your work in support of the warfighter serves as a great reminder of the technical competency we have in the T&E community," said Quade. "From the 14,000-strong T&E community, you represent a fraction of a percent; you are a very prestigious group indeed. Thank you for all you've done for our warfighters and for the Department of the Navy."

As Briggs stepped up to receive the Lead Tester award, his achievements were publicly recognized.

"You distinguished yourself with exceptional test planning and execution while leading a team of over 250 Flight Test Engineers for the F-35 Program. Your leadership during a record-breaking year of milestone achievements for the F-35 program equipped the U.S. Marine Corps with the operational envelope required to declare F-35B Initial Operational Capability (IOC) in July 2015, and delivered the necessary data to support the U.S. Navy's authorization of the first fleet F-35C carrier qualification event scheduled for later this year. Your exceptional efforts, selfless dedication, incredible depth of technical knowledge, and meticulous attention to detail resulted in the safe and efficient completion of pivotal test milestones for the F-35 Program. Your efforts will positively impact the safety and effectiveness of the F-35B and F-35C fleet aircraft for decades to come."

During Winter's closing remarks, he underscored the contributions of the individuals and organizations that equip warfighters with technological advancements in operational capabilities.



Rear Adm. Mat Winter, DoN Test & Evaluation (T&E) executive and the Chief of Naval Research at the Office of Naval Research, and Carroll "Rick" Quade, Deputy DoN T&E Executive, presented Thomas Briggs, F-35 Lightning II Pax River Integrated Test Force (ITF) air vehicle engineering department head, with the 2015 DoN T&E Lead Tester Award during the fourth annual DoN T&E Awards ceremony held in the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes on April 20.



The F-35 Lightning II Program Executive Officer, Lt. Gen. Christopher Bogdan, congratulates Briggs and his wife, Wendy, on the prestigious award that recognized Briggs' leadership on the F-35 Naval Variants developmental test team at the Pax River Integrated Test Force (ITF).

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“There’s been a lot of great work these past 365 days,” said Winter. “There are programs and capabilities that do their due diligence and take years not months. They compare the expected to the actual. They challenge how to do T&E better, they challenge assumptions, and they deliver innovative capabilities to the warfighter. The curve is not linear, but exponential and we need to methodically and proactively engage our workforce to strategically develop those skillsets.”

“This year’s awardees were top notch, but you have a responsibility to remain humble, represent your 14,000 T&E teammates well, and cultivate workforce development,” he added. “It takes all of you for us to be successful. Remember, you represent those who are on point doing the hard work.”

Following the ceremony, the F-35 Lightning II Program Executive Officer, Lt. General Christopher Bogdan, praised Briggs for his leadership and achievements in support of the F-35 Naval Variants.

“Keep doing what you’re doing, Tom” said Bogdan. “Your work is vitally important for the Navy, Marine Corps, and U.K. Your team is fantastic and they’ve proven that time and again. Together you’re maturing the program at a rapid pace — first by enabling the Marine Corps IOC of the F-35B on time and on target, and second by taking the F-35C to the carrier and completing all of the required test objectives earlier than anticipated. Congratulations for this honor, its well deserved!”

As congratulations poured in from the [F-35 Lightning II Joint Program Office \(JPO\)](#), [Naval Air Systems Command \(NAVAIR\)](#), [Naval Air Warfare Center \(NAWCAD\)](#), and colleagues at the Pax River ITF, Briggs highlighted his appreciation for the team he has led since 2000.

“Since the award was announced in March, it’s been very humbling to receive well wishes from the team,” said Briggs. “I think it’s a particular honor to receive this award as it reflects on the performance and accomplishments of the F-35 ITF. I work with a great group of professionals — they care tremendously about what they do and how they do it. It’s a fantastic place to work, and it shows in everything we do.

“We’ve worked shoulder-to-shoulder through a lot of challenges since the first flight of BF-01 in 2008 and a lot of successes including the validation of the tailhook redesign during our two test phases at sea, our ski jump testing for the U.K., and the Marine Corps IOC of the F-35B. I’ve said it before and I still believe it wholeheartedly — what makes me proud is how the team works, how the team adapts and overcomes. It’s neat to watch both variants do what they do, but it’s more memorable to watch the team make it happen. Watching them working together and supporting each other to put that pilot in a high-risk test, but do it smartly and with the proper mitigation to ensure we do it safely and successfully. That is the special nature of the work we do together,” Briggs concluded.

Briggs, a member of the NAVAIR 5.1.6 W Air Vehicle T&E competency, began his tenure with the F-35 Lightning II program as an X-35C Carrier Variant and X-35B Short Takeoff and Vertical Landing (STOVL) engineer on the X-35 Concept Demonstrator Joint Test Force supporting X-35 flight test in Palmdale, and at Edwards Air Force Base (AFB), both in California. He went on to establish the F-35 Lightning II Air Vehicle (AV) Engineering Department, which features a highly diverse cadre of engineers across all flight science disciplines and mission systems for the two types of F-35 Naval Variants undergoing developmental test aboard Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland.

Since the first flight of aircraft BF-01 in 2008, Briggs has been involved with every flight test of the Patuxent River ITF F-35 fleet, including test detachments ashore at Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD) - Lakehurst located at Joint Base McGuire - Dix - Lakehurst in New Jersey and at Edwards AFB as well as test detachments afloat, first serving as the Chief Test Engineer for the initial sea trials of the F-35B aboard USS Wasp (LHD 1) in 2011 and the first and second phases of F-35C developmental testing aboard USS Nimitz (CVN 68) in 2014 and USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69) in 2015. He is currently preparing for the third and final phases of F-35B and F-35C developmental testing scheduled for late 2016.

During this year’s DoN T&E awards ceremony, NAVAIR team members received a record four awards, while personnel from Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) received three, and two members of the Marine Corps Operational Test and Evaluation Activity (MCOTEA) received two.

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