



F-35 Lightning II Program

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DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE VISITS FIGHTERTOWN

Deputy Secretary of Defense Bob Work meets with Lt Col. Gregory Summa in Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 501's hangar aboard Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort April 14. Work visited the air station with U.K. Minister of State for Defence Procurement Philip Dunne to observe the F-35B Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter program firsthand and hear from pilots and maintainers about the aircraft's progression. Summa is the commanding officer of VMFAT-501.

Deputy Secretary of Defense Bob Work visited and toured installations aboard Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort April 14. Work visited the air station to observe the F-35B Lightning II program firsthand and hear from pilots and maintainers from Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 501 about the aircraft's progression.

The F-35 is a 5th Generation fighter, combining advanced stealth capabilities with fighter aircraft speed and agility, fully-fused sensor information, network-enabled operations and advanced logistics and sustainment. The aircraft represents the future of fighter jet technology. The Marine Corps, the Navy, and the Air Force are slated to adopt the F-35 as their primary fighter attack jet.

The Marines are the only branch to utilize the F-35B, the short takeoff and vertical landing capable landing variant. The F-35B's maneuverability makes it ideal for landing helicopter deck operations and forward deployment.

The mission of VMFAT-501 is to train F-35B pilots. It is currently the only training facility for training Marines on the F-35B variant.

Work was accompanied by Philip Dunne, the United Kingdom's Minister of State for Defence Procurement. VMFAT-501 works with international students and pilots from the United Kingdom's Royal Air Force every day to create a fully integrated training environment.

"I would like to thank MCAS Beaufort and the community for hosting Minister Dunne and me," said Work. "This visit showcases the importance and strength of the U.S.-U.K. partnership."

As Minister of State for Defence Procurement, Dunne is responsible for the procurement and support of equipment, and science and technology domains for the British military. In 2018, the U.K. plans for their F-35 team to achieve initial operating capability in a land-based role and aboard the future HMS Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier in 2020. VMFAT-501 is essential for them to achieve this goal.

The interoperability of the squadron was a key component to the visit. United Kingdom personnel are training on the same equipment as their Marine counterparts so they were both qualified to take questions regarding its operation.

The squadron is slated to have 20 jets by the end of the year. The British operators have been in Beaufort since 2014. The international team is fully integrated in the Marine unit, working together to gain proficiency with the brand new jet. "The F-35 aircraft is a strategic investment for the next 50 years," said Work. "The Department of Defense is absolutely confident the aircraft will be a war-winner."

With the expanded capabilities of the U.K. and the continued diligence of the Marines, both nations are able to figure out the most sufficient, safe, and proficient ways to operate the F-35B.

The Deputy Secretary of Defense's wife, Cassandra Work, also accompanied him on his visit to the air station. She visited MCAS Beaufort medical facilities as well as the child development center. Mrs. Work, a former Army nurse, often takes time during their various operational trips, to visit local establishments that are used by other spouses or dependents related to the Department of Defense. This is to help answer questions and concerns spouses and dependents may have.



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