



F-35 Lightning II Program

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F-35As land again at Mountain Home for deployment test

MOUNTAIN HOME AIR FORCE BASE, Idaho -- Seven F-35As from Hill Air Force Base, Utah arrived here June 3, 2016. They will be training here through June 17.

This marks the second time the 5th generation aircraft have arrived at Mountain Home AFB as part of its process of declaring Initial Operational Capability, or whether or not the Air Force deems the F-35A combat-capable. Mountain Home AFB will act as a simulated deployed location for Hill's operational F-35As. The training will push the aircraft and approximately 160 personnel from the active duty 388th Fighter Wing and Reserve 419th Fighter Wing to their limits to guarantee the fighter jets perform as anticipated.



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This two-week deployment test marks the first out-of-state training mission for Hill's operational F-35As.

"Mountain Home is an ideal location for our first off-base exercise because it allows us to fully test the deployment capability of the unit and the aircraft while remaining close enough to Hill for home station support if needed," said Lt. Col. Curtis Pitts, 419th Operations Group, Detachment 1 commander.

"We're going to do our best to stress our entire system while at Mountain Home," said Maj. Luke Harris, deployment project officer and F-35A pilot with the 34th Fighter Squadron. "Our biggest focus areas are the number of sorties we can generate, the number of sorties that may be lost, loading and employing our weapons, and finding any unique issues with the F-35A."

In addition to its advanced stealth capability, the F-35A is designed to gather, fuse, and distribute more information than any fighter in history.

While here, the personnel from Hill will be rigorously testing three key F-35A mission sets: suppression and destruction of enemy air defense, air interdiction missions, and basic close air support to include alert launches, Harris said.

Currently, all indications point to IOC being declared for the aircraft at Hill later this year.

"The Mountain Home deployment marks another significant milestone in validating the F-35A's capabilities as we pursue IOC," said Lt. Col. George Watkins, 34th FS commander.