



F-35 Lightning II Program

Public Affairs Release – 2016 08 02

Air Force declares the F-35A 'combat ready'

JOINT BASE LANGLEY-EUSTIS, Va. -- The F-35A Lightning II fifth generation fighter aircraft was declared 'combat ready' today by Gen. Hawk Carlisle, the commander of Air Combat Command.

Carlisle lauded the aircraft's performance, noting that the aircraft had met all key criteria for reaching initial operational capability.

Airmen trained, manned and equipped to conduct basic close air support, interdiction, and limited suppression/destruction of enemy air defenses in a contested environment with an operational squadron of 12-24 aircraft, the ability to deploy and conduct operational missions using program of record weapons and missions systems and having all necessary logistics and operational elements in place.

"I am proud to announce this powerful new weapons system has achieved initial combat capability," Carlisle said. "The F-35A will be the most dominant aircraft in our inventory, because it can go where our legacy aircraft cannot and provide the capabilities our commanders need on the modern battlefield."

The F-35A is the latest addition to ACC's fleet of deployable and fifth generation aircraft. It provides air superiority, interdiction, suppression of enemy air defenses and close air support as well as great command and control functions through fused sensors, and will provide pilots with unprecedented situational awareness of the battlespace that will be more extensive than any single-seat platform in existence.

"Bringing the F-35A to initial combat readiness is a testament to our phenomenal Airmen and the outstanding support of the Joint Program Office and our enterprise partners. This important milestone for our fighter force ensures the United States, along with our allies and international partners, remains prepared to deter, deny, and defeat the full spectrum of growing threats around the globe," added Deborah Lee James, Secretary of the Air Force.

Gen. David Goldfein, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, said that dynamic new capability will benefit the joint warfighter.

"The combat ready F-35A is the latest fifth generation fighter aircraft in the Air Force's inventory and provides our nation air dominance in any environment. The F-35A brings an unprecedented combination of lethality, survivability, and adaptability to joint and combined operations, and is ready to deploy and strike well-defended targets anywhere on Earth," Goldfein said. "Today's declaration of IOC is an important milestone on the road to achieving full warfighting capability for the F-35A."

The 34th Fighter Squadron of the 388th Fighter Wing, based at Hill Air Force Base, Utah, is the service's first operational F-35A squadron, having met all the established criteria for Initial Operational Capability including a successful June deployment to Mountain Home AFB, Idaho and a series of eight-aircraft sorties held in mid-July. 34th FS Airmen will fly and maintain the F-35A alongside Air Force Reservists from Hill's 419th Fighter Wing.



The F-35A Lightning II fifth generation fighter aircraft was declared 'combat ready' today by Gen. Hawk Carlisle ...

"Our Airmen have worked tirelessly to make sure our aircraft are combat ready: meeting challenges head-on and completing all the required milestones," said Col. David Lyons, 388th Fighter Wing commander. "We're very proud that the Air Force has declared us combat ready and we're prepared to take this aircraft wherever it's needed in support of our national defense."

Those sentiments were echoed by Col. David Smith, 419 FW commander. "It's an honor to fly and maintain the F-35 with our active duty counterparts here at Hill," Smith said. "Our units were the first to fly combat-ready F-16s nearly 40 years ago and we're very proud to have made history once again in bringing the Air Force's newest fighter jet to IOC."