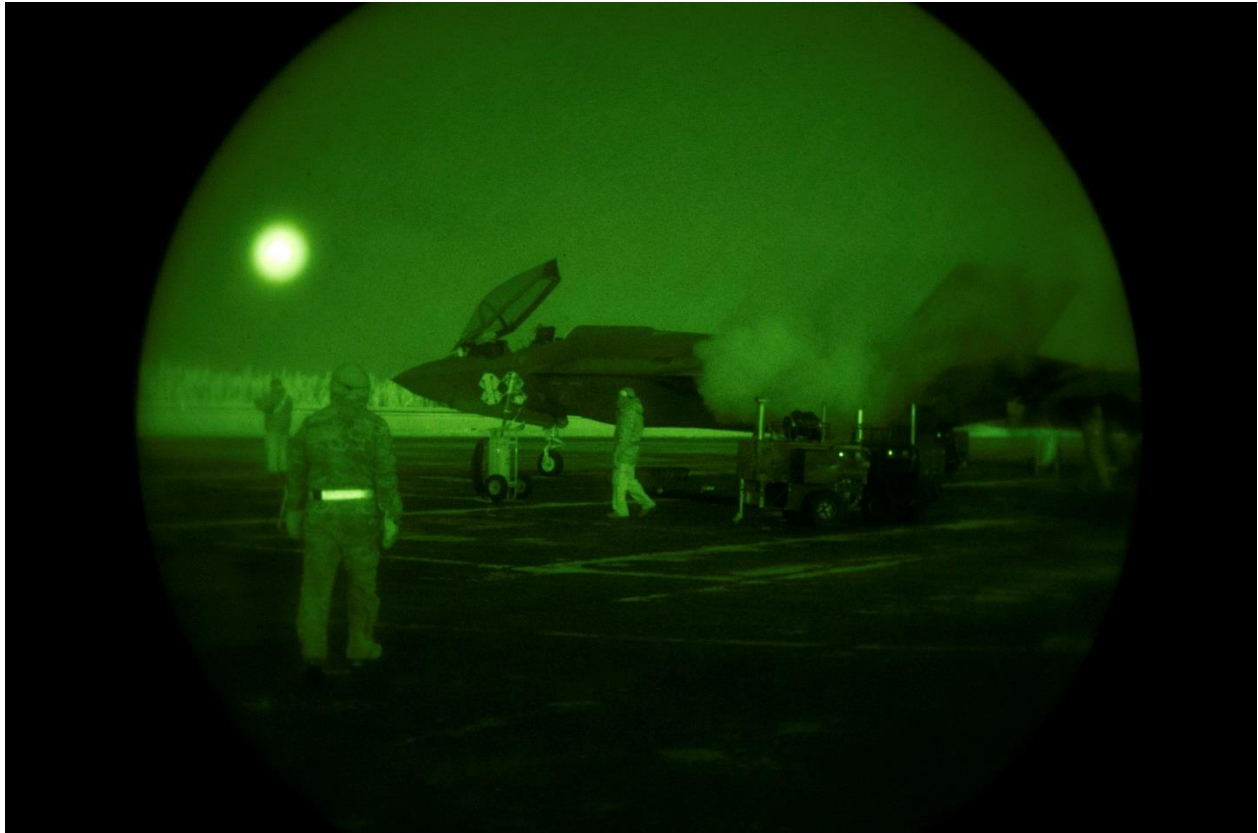




F-35 Lightning II Program Press Release 2018 02 16



A U.S. Air Force F-35A Lightning II multi-role fighter aircraft is prepared for flight Jan. 31, 2018, at Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska. The Joint Strike Fighter Operational Test Team aircraft were brought to Alaska to test their ability to operate in temperatures exceeding -30 degrees Fahrenheit. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Eric M. Fisher)

Battlefield Airmen Integrate with F-35

EIELSON AIR FORCE BASE, Alaska - During the F-35 Lightning II's pre-Initial Operational Test and Evaluation, Airmen from the 3rd Air Support Operations Squadron had the opportunity to work with all three variants of the Joint Strike Fighter.

Tactical Air Control Party Airmen coordinate air support with joint and international platforms, making this a unique opportunity to work with three different versions of the fifth-generation aircraft.

"We were able to execute close-air-support training scenarios and validate TACP cold-weather training," said Staff Sgt. Gary Russell, Detachment 1, 3rd ASOS battalion air liaison officer. "We were also able to build the 3rd ASOS's familiarization with all F-35 variants."

Unlike other aircraft used for CAS, the F-35 utilizes speed and stealth technology to become a more lethal threat on the battlefield.

"It's a little more difficult to control than some other aircraft," said Russell. "It flies higher and faster than most aircraft we deal with, but it also gives us the advantage of not having to worry about as many surface-to-air threats. Because of that, we are able to focus more on the ground commander's priorities."

Alaska's weather makes some tasks harder to accomplish than others; but as part of United States Special Operation Forces, weather can't keep an objective from being obtained.



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A U.S. Air Force F-35A Lightning II sits on the flight line during pre-Initial Operational Testing and evaluation on Jan. 23, 2018, at Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska. All three variants of the F-35 were brought to Eielson to test their ability to operate in an extreme cold-weather environment. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Isaac Johnson)

"Weather was our biggest challenge," said Russell. "At minus 30 degrees, batteries drain rapidly and keeping them warm is difficult."



missions to flow smoothly."

The roads to get to the different ranges located in Alaska are usually unpaved and difficult to drive on, and with a couple feet of snow added it makes getting out there extremely difficult.

"Air Force Technical Applications Center, Detachment 460, was able to provide us with a Sno-Cat," said Russell. "Tech. Sgt. Cyrus Freeman from Det. 460 transported TACP personnel in the Sno-Cat for 15 hours a day all week. This was a significant battlefield enabler and a game-changer in allowing the

The F-35 Lightning II is a multi-service and multi-nation fifth generation fighter aircraft, making it an integral part of future operations for the Department of Defense as well as its allies.

"In today's military as TACP, we are regularly exposed to a joint battlefield," said Russell. "So any exposure to platforms from varying nations and services is of benefit to us."

With the addition of F-35 Fighter Squadrons in the near future, along with the TACP Airmen of the 3rd ASOS, Eielson will be the force enabling the United States military's dominance in the air and on the ground.