
F-35 Initial Operational Capability

June 2013

The estimated cost of this report or study for the Department of Defense is approximately \$3,200 for the 2013 Fiscal Year. This includes \$3,200 in DoD labor.
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Introduction

This report is being provided to the Congressional Defense Committees as directed in Public Law 112-239, Section 155, of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013.

“SEC. 155. REQUIREMENT TO SET F-35 AIRCRAFT INITIAL OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY DATES.

(a) F-35A.—Not later than June 1, 2013, the Secretary of the Air Force shall—

(1) establish the initial operational capability date for the F-35A aircraft;

and

(2) submit to the congressional defense committees a report on the details of such initial operational capability.

(b) F-35B AND F-35C.—Not later than June 1, 2013, the Secretary of the Navy shall—

(1) establish the initial operational capability dates for the F-35B and F-35C aircraft; and

(2) submit to the congressional defense committees a report on the details of such initial operational capabilities for both variants.”

Executive Summary

Air Force F-35A initial operational capability (IOC) shall be declared when the first operational squadron is equipped with 12-24 aircraft, and Airmen are trained, manned, and equipped to conduct basic Close Air Support (CAS), Interdiction, and limited Suppression and Destruction of Enemy Air Defense (SEAD/DEAD) operations in a contested environment. Based on the current F-35 Joint Program Office (JPO) schedule, the F-35A will reach the IOC milestone between August 2016 (Objective) and December 2016 (Threshold). Should capability delivery experience changes or delays, this estimate will be revised appropriately.

Marine Corps F-35B IOC shall be declared when the first operational squadron is equipped with 10-16 aircraft, and US Marines are trained, manned, and equipped to conduct CAS, Offensive and Defensive Counter Air, Air Interdiction, Assault Support Escort, and Armed Reconnaissance in concert with Marine Air Ground Task Force resources and capabilities. Based on the current F-35 JPO schedule, the F-35B will reach the IOC milestone between July 2015 (Objective) and December 2015 (Threshold). Should capability delivery experience changes or delays, this estimate will be revised appropriately.

Navy F-35C IOC shall be declared when the first operational squadron is equipped with 10 aircraft, and Navy personnel are trained, manned and equipped to conduct assigned missions. Based on the current F-35 JPO schedule, the F-35C will reach the IOC milestone between August 2018 (Objective) and February 2019 (Threshold). Should capability delivery experience changes or delays, this estimate will be revised appropriately.

Report

United States Air Force F-35A IOC Date and Capabilities:

Air Force F-35A IOC shall be declared when Airmen are trained, manned and equipped to conduct basic CAS, Interdiction, and limited SEAD/DEAD operations in a contested environment. The F-35A shall have the ability to conduct operational missions utilizing system development and demonstration (SDD) program of record weapons and mission systems. The warfighter shall be supported with verified tactics detailing core mission fundamentals. The first Air Force F-35A operational squadron shall have 12-24 primary aircraft and shall be capable of deploying and performing its assigned mission(s). In-place logistics elements shall include personnel, support equipment, spares, munitions, verified technical manuals, and training programs. In-place operational elements shall include pilots, operations support personnel, verified technical manuals, mission qualification training programs, and training devices.

Air Force IOC is capability-based and will be declared when the above conditions are met. If the F-35 Integrated Master Schedule (IMS) Version 7 executes according to plan, Air Force F-35A IOC criteria could be met between August 2016 (Objective) and December 2016 (Threshold). Should capability delivery experience additional changes, this estimate will be revised appropriately.

The criteria stated above will provide sufficient initial combat capability for the threat postulated in 2016. However, in order to meet the full spectrum of Joint warfighter requirements in future years, the Air Force will require the enhanced lethality and survivability inherent in Blocks 3F and beyond.

United States Marine Corps F-35B IOC Date and Capabilities:

Marine Corps F-35B IOC shall be declared when the first operational squadron is trained, manned, and equipped to conduct CAS, Offensive and Defensive Counter Air, Air Interdiction, Assault Support Escort, and Armed Reconnaissance in concert with Marine Air Ground Task Force resources and capabilities. The F-35B shall have the ability to conduct operational missions utilizing SDD program of record weapons and mission systems. The aircraft will be in a Block 2B configuration with the requisite SDD performance envelope and weapon clearances. The first Marine Corps F-35B operational squadron shall have 10-16 primary aircraft and shall be capable of deploying and performing its assigned mission(s). Support and sustainment elements shall include spares, support equipment, tools, technical publications, training programs and devices, and Autonomic Logistic Information System V2.

Marine Corps IOC is capability based and will be declared when the above conditions are met. If the F-35 IMS Version 7 executes according to plan, Marine Corps F-35B IOC criteria could be met between July 2015 (Objective) and December 2015 (Threshold). Should capability delivery experience additional changes, this estimate will be revised appropriately.

The criteria stated above will provide sufficient initial combat capability for the threat postulated in 2015. However, in order to meet the full spectrum of Joint warfighter requirements in future years, the Marine Corps will require enhanced lethality and survivability inherent in Blocks 3F and beyond.

United States Navy F-35C IOC Date and Capabilities:

Navy F-35C IOC shall be declared when the first operational squadron is manned, trained, and equipped to conduct assigned missions. The F-35C shall have the ability to conduct operational missions utilizing SDD program of record weapons and mission systems. The aircraft will be in a Block 3F configuration with the requisite SDD performance envelope and weapon clearances. The first Navy F-35C operational squadron shall have 10 primary aircraft and shall be capable of performing its assigned mission(s). Support and sustainment elements shall include spares, support equipment, tools, technical publications, training programs and devices, Autonomic Logistic Information System V2, and completion of ship qualifications and certifications to meet Commander, Naval Air System Command (NAVAIRSYSCOM) requirements to deploy aboard aircraft carriers.

Navy IOC is capability based and will be declared when the above conditions are met. If the F-35 IMS Version 7 executes according to plan, Navy F-35C IOC criteria could be met between August 2018 (Objective) and February 2019 (Threshold). Should capability delivery experience additional changes, this estimate will be revised appropriately.

The criteria stated above will provide sufficient initial combat capability for the threat postulated in 2018. However, in order to meet the full spectrum of Joint warfighter requirements in future years, the Navy will require enhanced lethality and survivability inherent in Blocks 3F and beyond.

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