



Shattering Silos: The F-35A and F-35B are Breaking Down Barriers

The F-35A and F-35B continue to participate in Red Flag 17-3 at Nellis AFB this week. The jets are working closely together on advanced mission sets and learning how best to operate together. Through this exercise, pilots are realizing that collaborating with the services is much easier than previous generation fighters.



“With the A to B variant similarities, I can walk into mission planning, know what the B variant has to offer and they know what I have to offer, so we can collectively build our tactics,” said Lt. Col. Matthew Vickers, 58th Fighter Squadron F-35A pilot. “Even though we may be executing different roles, if I need their help, they can swing immediately without having to explain any aircraft or capability differences.”

In previous strike packages with different 4th generation fighters, communications barriers existed between the services and often times caused limitations. With the F-35A and F-35B, those issues are minimized, if not eliminated from the scenario.

“We’ve executed a myriad of different roles including suppression of enemy defenses, attack operations and defensive counter air. So we are testing the capabilities of the aircraft in several different mission sets,” Vickers said.

This is another great example of the original design and intent of the F-35 commonality between the services. I can’t wait to hear how the team did throughout the entire Red Flag 17-3 exercise.

F-35B Loads Up for Ski Jump Testing

Last week, I hosted an F-35 All Hands Webcast from the Edwards ITF and we talked about how we can finish SDD strong. At Pax River, the team is doing just that as they began another round of ski jump testing for the F-35B. For this second phase of F-35B ski jump testing, the intention is to expand acceptable wind envelopes and maximum gross weight capability, including carriage of external stores. This will provide the fleet with the capability to carry heavy store configurations in a wider range of weather conditions while operating on board the Queen Elizabeth Class Carriers, which will begin initial trials with the F-35B next year. So far, the jet has handled the heavier loads well and the plan is to progress through the rest of the testing including symmetric and asymmetric loadouts while carrying external GBU-12s, Paveway IV bombs, AIM-9X and AIM-132 missiles.



Great work to the entire test team on expanding the envelope of this very important capability for countries like the U.K. who utilize the ski jump for daily shipboard operations.

All In, All the Time

I recently heard a great story about one of our production operations team members and I wanted to share his story with you. Here is what All In looks like to me; Dennis Zaskoda is a structures mechanic on the F-35 Wing production team. Dennis has touched every single one of the rather significant repairs of the leading-edge spars since BF-55. He has been sent all over the Fort Worth plant and has travelled to both of our FACOs, in Italy and Japan. Dennis collaborated with his manufacturing engineering counterparts to determine the best path forward to ensure the jet is protected throughout each repair. I have heard this repair being the equivalent of aircraft surgery, and Dennis has done it with skill and maintained a positive attitude through the long hours.

This is exactly the kind of effort and attention we need from every F-35 team member if we are going to fulfill our promise to deliver 293 aircraft within the next three years. Thank you to Dennis for being All In every day to ensure we are building the very best F-35s for our customers.

Martin Baker, the Best Seat in the House



Recently I had the privilege of spending some time with the F-35 Martin-Baker team. Martin-Baker is the world's most experienced manufacturer of aircraft ejection seats and related survival equipment. The corporation is the primary contractor building the F-35's US16E ejection seat.

While at their site in the U.K., I toured their state of the art facility and spoke with James and Andrew Martin about their plans to ensure they are ready for the increase in production occurring in the next few years. In a huge win for the team, the ejection seat recently completed full qualification. As you can see from this picture, looks like I would be on the taller end of the spectrum for F-35 pilots. Thanks to everyone at Martin Baker for making me feel welcomed and showing me a behind the scenes look at the most advanced ejection seat being utilized today!

