F-35B Visits U.S. CENTCOM

An F-35B arrived at U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) on MacDill Air Force Base, Florida earlier this month for a two-day visit to inform CENTCOM senior leadership on the capabilities of the F-35B before it enters the CENTCOM area of responsibility.

The F-35B, now operating aboard the USS Wasp, will make its first combat deployment aboard the USS Essex later this year as part of the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU). In this role, the F-35B will increase air dominance capabilities and meet the demands of the complex CENTCOM environment.

“For all the versions of the F-35, we combine a very robust sensor package and probably the best group of sensors that’s being flown on any aircraft in the world right now in terms of how varied they are in their capabilities,” said Lt Col. Chad Vaughn, an F-35B pilot stationed at Yuma, Ariz. “This version of the F-35B, specifically because of its short take off and vertical landing capabilities, opens up a lot of basing options, specifically expeditionary basing operations that we haven’t had in the past.”

Thanks to our entire team supporting the U.S. Marine Corps as they make history with the F-35B, and the aircraft plays an increasingly critical role in global security. Read more about the milestone on the Marine Corps’ website, here.

Virginia Tech Hokies Take Flight

In the small town of Blacksburg, Va., lies a sea of maroon and orange at Virginia Tech (VT) University, home of the Hokies. With an excellent engineering department, the school sends many of its graduates to Lockheed Martin, including Jeff Babione the former head of the F-35 program for Lockheed Martin. And in a remarkable story, the Marine Corps announced this week that three F-35B pilots, all who graduated from VT, are operating aboard the USS Wasp today.

“The fact that three of us end up being pilots in the Marine Corps, who end up flying the F-35, who end up in the same squadron in Japan - the chances are pretty wild,” said Capt. Evan Slusser.

Maj. John Stuart, Capt. Evan Slusser and Capt. Andrew Thornberg fly the F-35B out of Iwakuni, Japan, with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 121. Flying with the 31st MEU aboard the USS Wasp (LHD-1) during Spring Patrol 2018, all three participated in this year’s historic first operational deployment of the F-35B with a MEU.

We thank Virginia Tech for all of the outstanding graduates they help develop and especially Maj Stuart, Capt Slusser and Capt Thornberg for the critical role they are playing with F-35B operations aboard the USS Wasp.
Team Luke Reaching New Heights

Team Luke set a new record this month as they generated more than 830 sorties, surpassing the previous monthly high by over 100 sorties.

The accomplishment is the result of incredible preparedness and teamwork to complete daily flight activities at a record pace.

Also at Luke Air Force Base recently, the 62nd Aircraft Maintenance Unit (AMU), representing the F-35, demonstrated their excellence in the 2018 First Quarter Load Crew Competition.

Judges were on hand to start timers for crews to load weapons onto a fighter aircraft correctly, safely and efficiently. The goal of the competition was to load two GBU-12s in under 30 minutes and the 62nd AMU team beat five other teams to win the competition.

By winning the contest, F-35 maintainers again displayed how the F-35 and team is ready for operations around the world. Thanks to Team Luke for the continued great work supporting the F-35 day in and day out.

International Apprenticeship Announcement

This week, Ana Wugofski, Lockheed Martin vice president of international business development, participated in an event in Copenhagen with the Confederation of Danish Industry, the Danish Union of Metalworkers and Multicut A/S as we prepare for three Danish industrial technician apprentices to visit our plant in Fort Worth in the coming weeks.

The three apprentices are part of a unique eight-week program providing a new, innovative opportunity for them to shadow and observe the expertise of our F-35 manufacturing team in an effort to prepare them for entering the next generation workforce in Denmark. This apprenticeship program demonstrates the F-35’s impact across our industry, and further underscores the unique partnership that Lockheed Martin has with Denmark, and Danish Industry. We look forward to welcoming the three apprentices to Fort Worth in May.