



F-35 Lightning II Program

Public Affairs Release – 2013 02 05

FIRST F-35A FOUR SHIP FLIES OVER EGLIN

by Maj. Karen Roganov

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. -- Increasing capability is becoming routine for the F-35 Lightning II team.

The 58th Aircraft Maintenance Unit produced a four-turn-four for the 58th Fighter Squadron flying Jan 31.

"The pilots flew four F-35As in the morning and the maintainers performed routine maintenance for airworthiness after landing. Then the crew chiefs 'turned' them around so the four jets could be flown in the afternoon," said Col. Andrew Toth, the commander of the 33d Fighter Wing and one of the aviators in the formation.

That was the first F-35 four-turn-four at the wing. Following up the successful flights, the team did the same Feb. 1 with a four-turn-two. During the Jan. 31 training flights, the pilots were using their advanced radar systems to track F-16 "adversaries" over the Gulf of Mexico.

Additionally, the maintainers had spare F-35As ready to go in the event of any issues in flight proving their ability to prepare the Air Force's newest fighter jet for basic pilot training.

While turning jets and flying multiple aircraft in formation is standard operations at an established flying training unit, for the 33d Fighter Wing, it was another step forward to self-sufficiency. Subsequently, it boosted morale.

"It was good to pull that off last week knowing recent weather can cancel flights," said Senior Master Sgt. Eric Wheeler, the production superintendent with 58th AMU. "I can't control the weather...everything else I control. The jets took off without any issues, the pilots flew their scheduled times. They all landed safely and the aircraft downloaded correctly."

Unique to the JSF, the downloaded data is inputted into the autonomic logistics information system that tracks the health of the jet in a computer based diagnostics and logistics system.

Contracted logistic support by Lockheed Martin is steadily giving way to 58th AMU crew chiefs as the Airmen become more proficient in maintaining the F-35A. LM will continue to support other variants and international partners.

