

First Air Force T-38 Talon Arrives at Fleet Readiness Center Southeast for Overhaul and Repair



An Air Force T-38 Talon arrives at Fleet Readiness Center Southeast (FRCSE). This is FRCSE's first T-38, which will undergo overhaul and repair as part of the Talon Repair, Inspection, and Maintenance program (TRIM). The TRIM program is an Air Force repair initiative that involves inspecting and replacing key structural components across the entire T-38 fleet, with the goal of extending the operational life of the aircraft by five to 10 years. (U.S. Navy photo by Toiete Jackson)

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JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The first Air Force T-38

Talon aircraft arrived at Fleet Readiness Center Southeast (FRCSE) Nov. 24 for overhaul and repair as part of the Talon Repair, Inspection and Maintenance program (TRIM).

The TRIM program is an Air Force repair initiative that involves inspecting and replacing key structural components across the entire T-38 fleet, with the goal of extending the operational life of the aircraft by five to 10 years.

Currently, the Air Force performs the bulk of T-38 TRIM repairs at its aviation depot facility at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, Texas. In August 2024, Air Force representatives from the T-38 Program Office reached out to FRCSE to see if it could take a portion of the workload.

“When the Air Force asked us if we could support working on their T-38s, our team took a hard look at it and agreed we could assist,” said Capt. Mike Windom, FRCSE commanding officer. “Taking on this workload is another testament to our workforce’s commitment to doing whatever it takes to support our nation’s warfighters.”

The T-38 Talon is a twin-engine, high-altitude, supersonic jet trainer used in a variety of roles. The Air Force uses the T-38 to prepare pilots to fly front-line fighter and bomber aircraft.

“The Air Force has approximately of 270 aircraft they need to perform the TRIM package on by 2030, with the goal being 50 inductions per year,” said Paul Skinner, an FRCSE business management specialist. “FRCSE is going to take on a portion of those aircraft inductions to help them reach that goal.”

Since August 2024, more than 160 process engineers, logisticians, components and manufacturing experts, production leaders and support personnel from FRCSE have been working together and with Air Force representatives to ensure the command had the necessary support equipment, technical data, software and qualifications to ensure the command was prepared

to work on the new airframe. Additionally, FRCSE personnel made several visits to both Air Force and NASA T-38 repair sites to see maintenance and repair operations firsthand.

“During the visit to El Paso to visit the NASA facility, their sheet metal mechanics were especially helpful,” said Troy James, an FRCSE sheet metal mechanic. “They took the time to walk me through several areas of the aircraft, explain component layouts and share practical knowledge of their day-to-day work.”

The bulk of the TRIM work at FRCSE will be performed by seasoned artisans who already have a wide range of experience working on a very similar aircraft, the F-5 Tiger II. While the two aircraft are not the same, they possess enough similarities that some of the tools and support equipment can be used on both airframes, which gives the F-5 artisans a leg up in starting their work on T-38.

“We discovered that while the F-5 and T-38 share similarities, they can also differ significantly, which requires us to be cautious to avoid confusion,” said Steve Clayton, FRCSE’s F-5/T-38 ground check supervisor.

In October, Naval Air Systems Command, Maryland, designated FRCSE as a secondary Depot Source of Repair for the T-38, which authorized the command to perform the requested repair work.

“There’s been a lot of work put into getting to this point,” said Skinner. “We submitted over 180 pieces of support equipment to our manufacturing and plant services departments for them to make from scratch to ensure our artisans have the right equipment. This included things such as wiring harnesses, fixtures, and installation and removal tools.”

The FRCSE T-38 capability establishment team has been working over the past 15 months to ensure the command was ready to receive its first T-38, and the arrival of the

first aircraft felt like the culmination of the team's efforts.

FRCSE expects to induct a second aircraft later this year with the production line ultimately growing to six inductions per year.

About Fleet Readiness Center Southeast

Fleet Readiness Center Southeast (FRCSE) is Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia's largest maintenance, repair, overhaul and technical services provider, employing approximately 5,000 civilian, military and contract workers. The organization serves as an integral part of the greater U.S. Navy, Naval Air Systems Command, and Commander, Fleet Readiness Centers by maintaining the combat airpower for America's military forces.