

First USMC F-35C squadron Declares Full Operational Capability



U.S. Marines with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 314 and Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 352, Marine Aircraft Group 11, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, conduct a new expeditionary landing demonstration with M-31 arresting gear Interim Flight Clearance (IFC), on Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., Dec. 3rd, 2020. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Cpl. Leilani Cervantes*

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION MIRAMAR, Calif. – As the Marine Corps continues to make changes to meet the demands of the rapidly evolving future operating environment, Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 314 has reached a new milestone in Marine Corps history as they declare their full operational capability (FOC) for the F-35C Lightning II, according to 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW) spokesman 1st Lt. Charles Allen in a July 1 release.

“VMFA-314 is the first F-35C squadron in the Marine Corps to declare FOC. They are now full up round and bring the incredible 5th generation capability to 3rd MAW. They will deploy as part of a Carrier Strike Group next year.” said Maj. Gen. Christopher Mahoney, 3rd MAW commanding general. “FOC for the Black Knights is yet another step forward in achieving Force Design objectives. The Black Knights are ready- 3rd MAW is ready.”

FOC is significant in its confirmation that VMFA-314 is fully prepared and equipped successfully deploy aboard U.S. Navy aircraft carriers, marking the first FOC declaration for Marine Corps. This inaugural event is met after VMFA-314 received their first F-35C on January 21, 2020, when their

first jet arrived at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Miramar from Naval Air Station Lemoore.

“Many hours were spent maintaining aircraft, launching and recovering aircraft in Miramar, at other military facilities, and aboard the ship to conduct the training required to meet these goals,” said Major Derek Heinz, VMFA-314 operations officer. “The Marines of VMFA-314 have gained confidence in fighting this aircraft and feel confident we can do so in combat if called upon.”

VMFA-314 is currently continuing its preparations toward future deployments by conducting tailored ship’s training availability (TSTA), marking the first F-35C squadron to conduct TSTA in the Marine Corps. This training will consist of communication rehearsals, medical drills, flight operations, and shipboard drills conducted while underway, ensuring the squadron is prepared to deploy in support of maritime campaigns.