

Marine Corps Updates F-35 Procurement, Transition Plan



Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 314 launch and recover F-35C as they work to renew their carrier qualifications onboard the USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) (U.S. Marine Corps photo by 1stLt. Charles Allen)

By Richard R. Burgess, Senior Editor

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Marine Corps has adjusted its procurement and transition plan for its F-35 Lightning II strike fighter fleet. While the overall program of record remains at 420 F-35s, the balance between the numbers of short takeoff and vertical landing F-35B and the carrier launch capable F-35C has changed, with the number of F-35Cs increasing and the number of F-35Bs decreasing.

According to the 2025 Marine Corps Aviation Plan released Feb. 3, the Corps plans to procure a total 280 F-35Bs and 140 F-35Cs, as compared with the earlier program of record of 353

F-35Bs and 67 F-35Cs. These numbers will allow the Corps to support 12 F-35B fighter-attack (VMFA) squadrons and eight F-35C VMFA squadrons.

Before, the Corps had planned to support only four F-35C squadrons, VMFAs 314, 311, 251, and 115. With the change in the procurement profile, four other F/A-18 Hornet squadrons also will make the transition to the F-35C: VMFAs 232 and 323 and reserve VMFAs 112 and 134.

Currently, all but two operational F-35 squadrons are allowed to be equipped with 10 aircraft, with the other two, both based at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, being allowed 12 aircraft each. Under the new plan, all operational F-35 squadrons will be equipped with 12 aircraft each beginning in 2030.

The Marine Corps F-35C squadrons will continue to support the TACAIR Integration Plan, in which they deploy as units of Navy carrier airwings.