

Navy Declares IOC for Joint Precision Approach and Landing System



An F-35C Lightning II from Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 147 lands on the flight deck of the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70). Carl Vinson is currently underway in the Pacific Ocean conducting routine operations in the U.S 3rd Fleet. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Aaron T. Smith*

PATUXENT RIVER, Md. – The U.S. Navy declared initial operational capability for the Joint Precision Approach and Landing System (JPALS) on May 4, signaling the system is ready to provide precision approach and landing capabilities to tactical carrier aircraft at sea in support of naval aviation operations worldwide, the Naval Air Systems Command said in a May 18 release.

JPALS is a global positioning system-based system that integrates with shipboard air traffic control and landing system architectures to guide fixed-wing tactical carrier aircraft with pinpoint approach and landings on nuclear aircraft carriers (CVN) and amphibious assault ships (LHA/LHD) in all weather and sea surface conditions.

“JPALS has reached a historic milestone, which supports our requirement to deliver, operate and maintain a Navy with a focus on our core roles of sea control and power projection,” said Cmdr. Jeff “Doogie” Dugard, director of the Naval Airspace and Air Traffic Control Standards and Evaluation Agency. Dugard worked closely with the Naval Air Traffic Management Systems Program Office (PMA)-213 to ensure all requirements were met to demonstrate that JPALS will safely and effectively support U.S. Navy and Marine Corps aviation at sea.

The initial operational capability (IOC) was declared by Rear Adm. Gregory Harris, director, Air Warfare Division, N98, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, following the successful installation, integration and flight certification of the first JPALS production unit aboard USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) in December 2020. After the flight certification, the JPALS team continued working with the Navy's operational test community to demonstrate that the F-35C could effectively conduct at-sea precision approaches to the flight deck, and that adequate manning, training and sustainment infrastructure were in place to support and sustain JPALS operations while globally deployed.

The JPALS IOC declaration is the culmination of many years of system development and testing activities that began in 2008. The JPALS team has successfully provided a critical combat capability to the U.S. Naval Fleet, delivering the IOC capability nearly a year ahead of the planned threshold while overcoming many challenges including delivering, installing, testing and certifying systems during a persistent global pandemic.

"The achievement of JPALS IOC is a positive reflection on the hard work, innovation and resilience from a dedicated team of government and industry professionals who have developed and fielded this critical capability to the Warfighters," said Capt. Kevin Watkins, PMA-213 program manager.

JPALS has been supporting F-35B deployments on LH-class amphibious assault ships with an early operational capability since 2016, and will now provide the all-weather, precision navigation, approach and landing capability for all F-35C deployments on CVNs as well. JPALS will also support future operations with the Navy's unmanned MQ-25A Stingray aboard CVNs.