

# U.S. Marine Corps Activates Second F-35C Squadron



[Release from 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing](#)

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MARINE CORPS AIR STATION MIRAMAR, Calif. – Third Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW) reactivated Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 311, an F-35C Lightning II squadron, at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Miramar, California, April 14, 2023. VMFA-311 is the U.S. Marine Corps' second F-35C squadron. The F-35C is a land and/or carrier-based platform boasting long-range flight and high weapons payload capabilities. Formerly VMA-311, the Tomcats have made their mark on Marine Corps aviation for decades, and now will continue their legacy.

Notable Tomcats veterans include Ted Williams and John Glenn. Ted Williams left a Major League Baseball career for service in World War II and Korea, and later was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. John Glenn was a distinguished fighter pilot in World War II and Korea, who later became an astronaut and public servant.

Third MAW Commanding General Maj. Gen. Bradford J. Gering is also a Tomcat. "Having twice served in VMA-311, the Tomcats hold a special place in my heart," Gering said. "We are extremely excited to add another F-35C squadron to 3rd MAW.

The range and operational flexibility that VMFA-311 will bring to I Marine Expeditionary Force is impressive and adds to our warfighting capacity in every domain.”

The Marine Corps is undergoing a key transition to the F-35 to maintain its advantage in future conflicts, thereby deactivating VMA-311 on Oct. 15, 2020. The reactivation of VMFA-311 marks the transition for the squadron to the F-35C Lightning II, which brings its unique capabilities to 3rd MAW as a long-range compliment to their existing aviation assets.

“The F-35C brings a long-range fighter/attack platform with the most advanced stealth and sensor capabilities in the Marine Corps,” said Lt. Col. Michael P. Fisher, the commanding officer of VMFA-311. “The Harrier was a great weapon that served the Marine Corps well and has been replaced with a more advanced and capable platform. The F-35 was designed for the near-term and future fight.”

The reactivation supports the 2022 Marine Corps Aviation Plan, which outlines ongoing modernization efforts across Marine aviation. The plan prioritizes readiness, reinforces the importance of flying from the sea, and refocuses on manpower, support to logistics and modern capabilities.

“We are taking an aggressive approach to build capabilities that will move, sustain, and support the individual Marine while making the force more lethal, effective, and survivable,” said then-Deputy Commandant for Aviation Lt. Gen. Mark R. Wise in the 2022 plan.

The Tomcats, a notable squadron of “firsts” for Marine Corps aviation, originally commissioned in 1942 as Marine Attack Squadron (VMA) 311 as a at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina, where it first deployed in support of the World War II island hopping campaign.

The squadron led the way for Marine Corps aviation in many groundbreaking events: it was the first Marine squadron to use fighter aircraft for dive bombing missions, flew the first Marine combat mission with jets in 1950 during the Korean War, was the first Marine squadron to employ the AV-8B Harrier in combat during Operation Desert Shield, the first to fly combat missions in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom, and participated in the first combat sortie of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003.

“This reactivation is not about the aircraft, it’s about the people,” said Col. Shannon M. Brown, commander of Marine Aircraft Group 11. “Looking at what this squadron did over the years is impressive considering its 13 Navy Unit Commendations. The Tomcats are all about fighting and winning and now this legacy is entrusted to Lt. Col. Fisher.”

“We will never forget where we came from,” Fisher said in his remarks. “Let’s make history.”

Imagery from the ceremony will be available at: [www.dvidshub.net/unit/3MAW](http://www.dvidshub.net/unit/3MAW).