

U.S. Navy Recovers F-35C from South China Sea



An F-35C Lightning II that crashed in the South China Sea earlier this year has been recovered. *U.S. NAVY*

YOKOSUKA, Japan – U.S. 7th Fleet’s Task Force 75 and Naval Sea Systems Command on March 2 successfully retrieved the F-35C Lightning II aircraft which crashed earlier this year in the South China Sea, 7th Fleet Public Affairs said March 3.

The F-35C Lightning II, assigned to Carrier Air Wing 2, crashed while USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) was conducting routine flight operations in the South China Sea on Jan. 24.

The wreckage was recovered from a depth of approximately 12,400 feet by a team from CTF 75 and the NAVSEA’s Supervisor of Salvage and Diving embarked on the diving support construction vessel Picasso.

“The task force’s expertise in rapid, scalable command, control, and communications, agile logistics, organic security, and explosive ordnance disposal was the most flexible choice for the fleet commander to respond in a timely manner,” said CTF 75 Commodore Capt. Gareth Healy.

“Ultimately, this deliberate approach resulted in the correct capabilities conducting recovery operations within 37 days of the incident. Given the unique challenges of this problem and the unique technical capabilities that NAVSEA delivered, this was an aggressive and achievable timeline.”

The aircraft was recovered using a CURV-21 remotely operated vehicle, which attached specialized rigging and lift lines to the aircraft. The ship’s crane lifting hook was then lowered to the seafloor and connected to the rigging, and then lifted the aircraft to the surface and hoisted it onboard Picasso.

The aircraft will be delivered to a nearby military installation to aid in the ongoing investigation and evaluated for potential transport to the United States.