

F-35 Lightning II Poised to Make AirVenture Debut

April 16, 2015 - A Lockheed Martin F-35 "Lightning II," the fifth-generation fighter that will be used by multiple U.S. service branches, will make its initial appearance at the EAA AirVenture Oshkosh fly-in this summer. It also marks the first civilian U.S. air show appearance by this unique jet.

The F-35 is designed as a versatile, high-performance multirole fighter that combines stealth, sensor fusion, and unprecedented situational awareness. The aircraft can handle a variety of missions with advanced integrated avionics and aerodynamic performance. Along with replacing U.S. Air Force fighters such as the F-16 and A-10, the F-35 is also projected as a successor to the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps F/A-18s, the Marines AV-8B Harriers, and the Harrier GR.7s and Sea Harriers flown by United Kingdom military forces.

"EAA AirVenture attendees have often seen the latest military aircraft make appearances at Oshkosh over the past 30 years, a list that has included such cutting-edge aircraft as the F-117 Stealth fighter and the F-22 Raptor," said Rick Larsen, EAA's vice president of communities and member services, who coordinates EAA AirVenture features and attractions. "The addition of the F-35 as a highlight further fortifies AirVenture as an unmatched event to see a group of aircraft in one place that you can see nowhere else in the world."

The airplane, an F-35A model, is based with the U.S. Air Force's 33rd Fighter Wing at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. It is scheduled to arrive midway through EAA AirVenture week and remain on display throughout the remainder of the fly-in. Exact arrival and departure times will be announced as they are finalized. The F-35 joins the list of current military aircraft scheduled for EAA AirVenture 2015 that already includes the B-52 Stratofortress and F-22 Raptor.

The F-35 program began as the Joint Strike Fighter program in 1997, an initiative designed to replace the aging fighter aircraft fleet in the U.S. military. Along with cutting-edge technology, the airplane was conceived as a resource for multiple military branches, which would reduce logistics expense for multiple aircraft types. In 2001, Lockheed Martin was selected as the winning concept designer and it teamed with Northrup Grumman and BAE Systems to develop the prototype aircraft.

The "Lightning II" nickname was given to the F-35 in honor of the legendary P-38 fighter of the World War II era. The first F-35 made its initial flight in 2006, with the first production model flying in 2011. Deliveries of the aircraft began later that year.

