



MEDIA ADVISORY

VERMONT NATIONAL GUARD

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F-35 UPDATE – ARRIVAL ON SCHEDULE

SOUTH BURLINGTON, Vt. – The Vermont Air National Guard (VTANG) continues preparations for the arrival of the first two F-35A Lightning II fighter aircraft, scheduled for September. The exact dates have not yet been determined and will be announced closer to arrival. The 158th Fighter Wing will be the first Air National Guard unit in the country to receive the F-35s. Extensive training, renovations to facilities and installation of new equipment have been underway for several years and continues as the arrival date draws near.

“I am extremely proud of the men and women of the Fighter Wing. They have worked incredibly hard to train and prepare for the arrival of the F-35s and we are ready,” said Colonel David Smith, commander of the 158th Fighter Wing. “This is an exciting and important new chapter for the Vermont Air National Guard and the state of Vermont. I am grateful for the support our families and communities have provided through this mission transition to the F-35.”

Nearly 50 Airmen from Vermont have been training on the F-35 Lightning II for the past three years. Volunteers across the Operations, Maintenance, and Mission Support teams integrated into active duty USAF F-35 units around the country to familiarize on the aircraft. Nearly 30 of those Airmen will return to the VTANG prior to the new jet’s arrival, and will form the bedrock of our experienced personnel. Additionally, nearly 200 maintenance professionals will take part in F-35 transition training, taught by highly experienced F-35 instructors from the active duty USAF, over the course of 90-days beginning in mid-September.

Nine Green Mountain Boy pilots are already qualified or in upgrade training on the F-35, with another six slated for training by year’s end. The fighter pilots who have returned to Vermont, are training regularly in the new F-35 simulator facility.

“As we enter the final stretch prior to receiving our first two F-35s, excitement and pride abounds. Make no mistake, the Green Mountain Boys will be ready on day one when those first wheels touch down at BTV!” said Lt. Col. Nathan Graber, 158th Fighter Wing Plans and Conversion Officer.

Facilities renovations continue apace with the completion of other critical projects expected by the end of August. The cost of construction is approximately \$117M on all contracted projects, set for completion in summer of 2020.

A major milestone was the induction of F-35 maintenance support equipment to the 158th Fighter Wing in July. This intensive two-week process includes installing and testing over 900 individual parts and equipment positioned to support future F-35 flying operations. The apron and taxiways are once again open for use, the operations squadron building and simulator projects are complete, and the main maintenance hangar will be operational by the time the first aircraft arrives in September.

The first flight of an F-35 bearing Vermont tail markings took place on July 31st in Fort Worth, Texas.

More information will be shared as we get close to the actual arrival date and an official arrival ceremony is scheduled for October.

For more information, please contact 2nd Lt. Chelsea Clark, 158th Fighter Wing Public Affairs, (802) 660-5379, (802) 598-4902, or at usaf.vt.158-fw.mbx.public-affairs@mail.mil.

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