

Articles taken from Flight International magazine

First F-35 completes flight test program

The first F-35, known as AA-1, conducted its 91st and final flight on December 17th - three years and two days after it first took to the skies. Test pilot Jeff Knowles flew the aircraft from Edwards Air Force Base, California, to Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, California, where it will undergo live-fire testing. During its flight test program, AA-1 was flown by six pilots, including US Air Force and Marine Corps pilots. The aircraft was the first F-35 to break the sound barrier, flying at Mach 1.1 with a full internal weapons load of more than 5,000 pounds.

Second F-35 STOVL variant prepares to depart for test site

F-35 BF-2, the second short take off/vertical landing (STOVL) test aircraft, conducted its 14th and 15th flights on December 17th and 18th in final preparation for its ferry flight to Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland. BF-2 will join the first STOVL flight test aircraft, BF-1, which flew to Patuxent River on November 15th. Patuxent River is the primary flight test site for all F-35 STOVL and carrier variant aircraft.

Secretary of the Navy visits F-35 plant

US Navy Secretary Ray Mabus toured the Lockheed Martin Fort Worth, Texas, facility on December 18th for a look at the Navy's and Marine Corps' first stealth fighter and to get an update on the F-35 program. Secretary Mabus saw three F-35C carrier variants in final assembly among the more than 30 F-35s currently in production at the Fort Worth site.