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F-35 activation task force holds first meeting at Cherry Point

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION CHERRY POINT, N.C. (March 19, 2021) — Thursday, the F-35 Site Activation Task Force (SATAF) concluded its first semi-annual meeting in preparation for the station to become a home base for six Joint Strike Fighter (JSF), or F-35 Lightning II, squadrons.

The three-day session allowed key players and stakeholders from the air station, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW), Marine Aircraft Group (MAG) 14, Lockheed Martin, Pratt and Whitney, Headquarters Marine Corps and the JSF Joint Program Office to assemble and identify site-specific activation requirements that would allow the F-35 to become operational at the air station.

MCAS Cherry Point will base the F-35 following other Marine Corps air stations in South Carolina, California, Arizona and Japan.

“MCAS Cherry Point benefits from lessons learned from other stations that have already made the transition,” said Maj. Clifford Sutcliffe, SATAF officer-in-charge.

The three-day conference consisted of cross-leveling briefings from significant organizations involved. Key working groups were designed to address specific programmatic timelines to include; manpower, security, logistics, environmental, civil engineering, and communications requirements. The meeting also included a guided tour of each related construction site, allowing for assessment of progress and insight on needed infrastructure to base and maintain the F-35.

While expressing remarks of appreciation to the conference’s attendees, MCAS Cherry Point, Commanding Officer Col. Mikel Huber said, “this is an exciting time not just for Cherry Point, but for the Marine Corps writ large,” reiterating that “this is the team that is going to see this project to completion, and the process will require much collaboration and energy to realize this new capability aboard this air station.”

The meeting marked a milestone in the development and planning efforts to field the F-35 throughout 2nd MAW. The first squadron to transition to the F-35B is Marine Attack Squadron (VMA) 542 which currently employs the AV-8B Harrier. The squadron is part of MAG-14 which is stationed here at Cherry Point.

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