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MARINE CORPS AIR STATION YUMA

Press Release

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The USMC F-35Bs Adds a New Capability to Their Toolbox

Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, AZ

The F-35's U.S. Operational Test Team (UOTT) based out of Nellis AFB, NV, completed operational testing on a new Interim Full Motion Video (IFMV) capability on August 11, 2020 at Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, AZ. This is the first time a Joint Terminal Air Controller (JTAC) or Forward Air Controller (FAC) has been able to receive video downlink from an F-35B's Electro Optical Targeting Sensor (EOTS) to supplement their situational awareness in direct support of ground force missions on the battlefield. iFMV acts as an interim solution to the existing gap between USMC aircraft currently able employ this capability when using both LITENING and ATFLIR targeting pods.

Pilots from Marine Test and Evaluation Squadron 1 (VMX-1) flew 2 F-35Bs specially equipped with this capability alongside USMC AV-8 Harriers and F/A-18 Hornets, USN F/A-18 Super Hornets, and USAF C-130s in support of FACs from Marine Air Weapons Training Squadron 1 (MAWTS-1) and the fleet. Using the Yuma Live-Fire Range Complex, the F-35B pilots employed 10,000 lbs of precision-guided high explosive ordnance and 1,100 25mm rounds against targets identified by JTAC/FACs to test the new system's capabilities.

The UOTT also tested the IFMV system in a simulated Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel (TRAP) mission using E/A-18G Growlers, UH-1Y Venom and AH-1Z Cobra helicopters, and a MV-22 Osprey. This resulted in the successful retrieval of UOTT airmen from the Yuma desert acting as isolated personnel.

"This test was the perfect embodiment of the joint test concept," said IFMV test project officer Capt Corey Combs, USAF. "We had the opportunity to bring Air Force and Marine Corps personnel together in Yuma for more than a month, working side-by-side to create an effective test team where everyone had the opportunity to learn about the other service and the best practices of executing operational test."

Not only was this the first test of IFMV, it was also the first stand-alone operational test for the fledgling UOTT, a Joint unit created in mid-December 2019 comprised of USAF, USN, and USMC personnel based primarily out of Nellis Air Force Base, NV. According to LtCol Dave

“Penguin” Merritt, USMC, the UOTT’s Deputy Director, “This was an important milestone for our Nellis test arm – it was the first deployment for the unit. In-depth planning and seamless coordination across service boundaries were key to the successful execution of this test event.” Previously plagued by schedule and funding challenges, the system showed significant promise and the UOTT is nearing completion of the much anticipated final report. The USMC plans to install the system for upcoming Marine Expeditionary Unit deployments in support of combat operations. The IFMV is an interim solution designed to provide early video streaming capability to USMC F-35B aircraft. A fully integrated Full Motion Video (FMV) solution is targeted for fielding across the F-35 enterprise in 2024.