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F-35C and EMALS demonstrate start of naval aviation's next century

JOINT BASE MCGUIRE-DIX-LAKEHURST, Lakehurst, N.J. – The Navy demonstrated early integration of the future of naval aviation Nov. 18 when it launched F-35C test aircraft CF-3 with its new electromagnetic aircraft launch system (EMALS).

Testing the F-35C on EMALS provided an early opportunity to evaluate technical risks and began the process to integrate the carrier variant Joint Strike Fighter with the future carrier fleet aircraft launching system.

“The test flight went well,” said Navy test pilot Lt. Christopher Tabert. “It felt very similar to the steam test launches we did this summer [in the F-35C]. It was quite an honor for me to play a small part in our launch today.”

This summer, the F-35C test team completed more than 50 steam catapult launches to perform an initial structural survey and collected steam ingestion data. The steam ingestion data produced robust results, allowing a reduction in the number of test launches by four.

Along with the steam launch data, the EMALS launch testing also provided information for the United Kingdom's Ministry of Defence as the UK proceeds with including EMALS in the Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carrier.

In the past 12 months, the EMALS team launched a T-45 Goshawk, an E-2D Advanced Hawkeye, a C-2A Greyhound and several F/A-18 aircraft with and without stores.

Both EMALS and the F-35C are currently in test and evaluation, and represent technological leaps from the Navy's current fleet. EMALS is set to install on the future USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78).

"What a great way to punctuate this year's Centennial of Naval Aviation events," said Ms. Kathy Donnelly, senior executive for aircraft launch, recovery and support equipment engineering at Lakehurst. "Our team is paving the way for the next hundred years today."

The closing ceremony of the Navy's Centennial of Naval Aviation events is scheduled for Dec. 1 <<http://www.navalaviation100.org/details/34-centennial-closing-gala>> in Washington, D.C.

For a video of the launch, please visit: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSZr58hH_cI

The F-35C carrier variant of the Joint Strike Fighter is distinct from the F-35A and F-35B variants with its larger wing surfaces and reinforced landing gear to withstand catapult launches and deck landing impacts associated with the demanding aircraft carrier environment. Initial carrier trials for the F-35C are scheduled for 2013. The F-35C is undergoing test and evaluation at NAS Patuxent River and Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst before delivery to the fleet.

EMALS is a complete carrier-based launch system designed for the future USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) and all future CVN 78-class aircraft carriers. EMALS has six subsystems and will expand the operational capability of the Navy's future carriers by permitting higher sortie rates and reduced costs compared to legacy systems. CVN 78 is more than 30 percent complete, with some production EMALS components already delivered to the shipyard to maintain a 2015 delivery schedule.

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