

Japan-Based Marine Squadron Re-Designated in Prep for F-35B Transition



U.S. Marines with Marine All Weather Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA(AW)) 242 stand in formation at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, Oct. 16, 2020. U.S. Marine Corps / Lance Cpl. Tyler Harmon

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Marine Corps has redesignated a squadron forward -deployed in Japan in preparation for its transition to the F-35B Lightning II strike fighter. The transition will result in the second F-35B squadron forward-deployed to Marine Aircraft Group 12 – a unit of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW) – based at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni.

Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 242 (VMFA(AW))-242 was re-designated Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 242 (VMFA-242) on Oct. 16, the 1st MAW said in an Oct. 23 release.

VMFA-242 has been operating the F/A-18C/D Hornet from Iwakuni, and upon transition will be the second F-35B squadron based there. VMFA-121, the Corps' first operational F-35B squadron, had been stationed at Iwakuni since January 2017. VMFA-121 has been deploying F-35Bs on board the amphibious assault ship USS America, which is home-ported in Sasebo, Japan.

“The increased capability of F-35B, along with our other fifth-generation capabilities in III MEF [Marine Expeditionary Force] enable us to support Fleet Marines, Joint and Allied partners on a moment's notice,” said Brig. Gen. Chris McPhillips, the commanding general of 1st Marine Aircraft Wing headquartered in Okinawa, Japan. “F-35B gives us the ability to dominate air and sea space and persist wherever we are without rival. It is an expeditionary platform that literally

holds doors open for the Fleet Marine and Joint Force. F-35B basing in Japan is not by accident, it has occurred here more rapidly than in other parts of the world, which is a testament to our commitment to Japan and the region.”