

Navy Deactivates First F-35C Replacement Squadron, Merges With Second



Three F-35C Lightning II aircraft complete a flight over Eglin Air Force Base on Feb. 1. Ceremonies and a flyaway May 23 at Eglin marked the deactivation of the U.S. Navy's first fleet replacement squadron and its merging with the second FRS. (U.S. Navy/Chief Mass Communication Specialist Shannon E. Renfroe

ARLINGTON, Va. – Ceremonies and a flyaway May 23 at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, marked the deactivation of the Navy's first F-35C fleet replacement squadron and its consolidation with the second F-35C FRS as the service moves to conduct all F-35C flight training at one base.

Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 101, the "Grim Reapers," officially will be deactivated on July 1, but the deactivation ceremonies were held May 23. The squadron flew out its last F-35Cs on that date to Naval Air Station Lemoore, California, the home of VFA-125, the FRS that is training future F-35C pilots and conducting transition training of VFA squadrons to the F-35C.

Reactivated in 2012 at Eglin AFB, VFA-101 has been training instructor and test pilots to fly the F-35C Lightning II strike fighter. The Navy decided to reactivate VFA-125 at NAS Lemoore to become an F-35C FRS.

VF-125 conducted the transition of the first fleet F-35C

squadron, VFA-147,
which took the F-35C to Initial Operational Capability in
February. VFA-147 is
scheduled to deploy on board USS Carl Vinson in 2021.

Although it is not of the lineage of World War II's Fighter
Squadron 10 (VF-10), VFA-101 adopted the Grim Reaper
traditions of the famous
squadron. VF-10 flew the F4F Wildcat and later F6F-3 Hellcat
off USS Enterprise
(CV-6) in the Pacific during WWII. The squadron later deployed
twice into
combat on board USS Intrepid (CV-11) in 1945, first with
F4U-1D and later F4U-4
Corsair fighters. VF-10 was deactivated in 1945.

<https://youtu.be/5NLS4VHtfcY>

VF-101 was activated in 1952 at NAS Cecil Field, Florida, and
took
on the nickname and traditions of VF-10 "Grim Reapers." VF-101
flew F4U-4 Corsairs
in the Korean War and went on to operate the F2H Banshee, F4D
Skyray, F3H
Demon, F-4 Phantom II and the F-14 Tomcat. VF-101 was
deactivated in September
2005.

The squadron was reactivated in May 2012 as the F-35C FRS.
According to a May 23 release from the Joint Strike Fighter
Wing, VFA-101 trained
more than 75 Navy and Marine Corps F-35C pilots, accepted more
than 30
aircraft, trained more than 1,200 F-35C maintainers and flew
nearly 11,000
flight hours.

"The contributions that VFA-101 has made to the F-35C
community

will not diminish as this program grows," VFA-101's commanding officer, Cmdr.

Adan Covarrubias, said in the release. "The original cadre of maintainers and

pilots have left a legacy that is evidenced in all aspects of this community. Their

influence will continue long after the squadron's doors are closed."