Strike Fighter Squadron 147 Declared Safe for Flight Operations

PACIFIC OCEAN –The “Argonauts” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 147 completed their carrier qualifications Dec. 12 aboard USS Carl Vinson, the final required component for Commander, Joint Strike Fighter Wing, to issue the squadron its safe-for-flight-operations certification. This marks a major milestone for the U.S. Navy toward declaring initial operating capability next year.

The safe-for-flight operations certification is the final step for VFA-147’s transition from the F/A-18E Super Hornet to the F-35C Lightning II. This process ensures a squadron is manned with qualified personnel to implement maintenance and safety programs in support of fleet operations. All transitioning squadrons are required to complete this certification prior to independently conducting flight operations.

When introducing a new aircraft to the fleet, the appropriate fleet replacement squadron (FRS) is assigned oversight responsibility for the transitioning unit. The VFA-125 “Rough Raiders” were reactivated in January 2017 to fulfill the appropriate FRS role for the Lightning II. Since completing its combat deployment last winter, VFA-147 has been working with the Rough Raiders to accomplish the safe-for-flight-operations certification. The Argonauts will be able to operate independently from the Rough Raiders, having received safe-for-flight-operations certification.

“Since we returned from deployment last December, our team has been driving toward fully bringing this platform online for the Navy,” said VFA-147 Commanding Officer Cmdr. Patrick Corrigan. “As the Argonauts close out 2018 and the final

stages of our safe-for-flight certification, we continue to exhibit the relentless drive required to meet transition goals and milestones. With this certification, we are announcing that we have the right skills, training and people to take this mission and execute it, to its fullest potential."

The safe-for-flight-operations certification encompasses areas such as equipment, personnel and programs. Not least among them is the requirement for the squadron to be in the physical custody of at least 30 percent of the assigned aircraft. Other requirements include the installation and operation of management information systems such as Autonomic Logistics Information System and its accompanying support networks. There is also a requirement for operational F-35C squadrons to maintain robust, on-track maintenance programs, as well as complete various inspections ranging from weapons to safety. Aircrew complete a transition flight syllabus and maintain certain proficiencies in accordance with Naval Air Training and Operating Procedures and Standardization.

"The Argonauts' safe-for-flight operations certification was earned through the herculean effort of squadron Sailors and is an acknowledgement that they have developed the skills to safely maintain and operate the F-35C Lightning II," said Joint Strike Fighter Wing Commander Capt. Max McCoy. "We eagerly look forward to declaring IOC and integrating the F-35C into the carrier strike group. This aircraft is a key component to maintaining the U.S. Navy's dominance anywhere in the world."

"VFA-147 continues to accomplish significant milestones, advancing this program closer to its ultimate goal of integrating the F-35C into the fleet," said McCoy. "The exceptional performance of the squadron throughout the entire transition process is a testament to the hard-working Sailors who make the U.S. Navy F-35C program a reality. We will succeed because the professionals in this program will not let it fail. It is evident in all that they do. It is who we are

as a team.”

Commander, Joint Strike Fighter Wing, headquartered at Naval Air Station Lemoore, California, ensures that each F-35C squadron is fully combat-ready to conduct carrier-based, all-weather, attack, fighter and support missions for Commander, Naval Air Forces. With its stealth technology, advanced sensors, weapons capacity and range, the F-35C will be the first fifth-generation aircraft operated from an aircraft carrier. The Navy F-35C program is scheduled to declare initial operating capability by the end of February.