

U.S. Marine Squadron Conducts First Combat Strikes Using F-35Cs Against Houthi Targets in Yemen



U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (Nov. 11, 2024) An F-35C Lightning II, attached to Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 314, prepares to launch from the flight deck of the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72). (This photo has been altered for security purposes by blurring out names on aircraft) (Official U.S. Navy Photo)

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U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY – U.S. Marine Corps F-35C Lightning II aircraft, assigned to Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 314, conducted the first F-35C combat air strikes for the platform, Nov. 9-10.

VMFA 314, assigned to Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 9 aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72), conducted multiple strikes on Houthi weapons storage

facilities within Houthi-controlled territories in Yemen. The facilities housed conventional weapons, including anti-ship missiles. The Iranian-backed Houthis used these weapons to target U.S. and international military and civilian vessels navigating international waters in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

“The F-35C demonstrated its warfighting advantage by transiting contested airspace and striking targets in the heart of Houthi territory over multiple days,” said U.S. Marine Lt. Col. Jeffrey “Wiki” Davis, commanding officer of VMFA 314. “My Marines are honored to be first to fight with the F-35C.”

The F-35C is a fifth-generation, long-range stealth fighter jet used by the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force, and is a multi-role aircraft able to perform a variety of missions, including air-to-air combat, air-to-ground strikes, reconnaissance and electronic warfare.

“The offensive and defensive capabilities of the F-35C absolutely enhance our air wing’s striking arm,” said U.S. Navy Capt. Gerald “Dutch” Tritz, commander, CVW 9. “The now battle-tested Air Wing of the Future has proven itself a game changer across all carrier air wing missions.”

Other variants of the aircraft include the F-35A and the F-35B. The F-35B first saw combat in 2018 when units assigned to the Essex Amphibious Ready Group conducted airstrikes against the Taliban in Afghanistan and ISIS in Syria. Air Force F-35A’s first combat mission was completed the year after against ISIS targets in Iraq.

The “Black Knights” of VMFA 314, based out of Miramar, Calif., transitioned from the F-18 to the F-35C in 2020, making them the first fleet squadron in both the Navy and Marine Corps to operate the 5th Generation fighter aircraft. VMFA 314 was also the first operational Marine squadron to fly the F-4 Phantom

and F-18 Hornet.

VMFA 314, part of 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, is the only deployed F-35C squadron in the Marine Corps.