AirScoop



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From the 104FW Commander

To the Men and Women of the 104th Fighter Wing,

This special edition of the AirScoop captures a defining moment in the history of the 104th Fighter Wing, the arrival of the F-35A Lightning II and the beginning of a new era at Barnes Air National Guard Base.

The journey to this moment has been years in the making. Transitioning to a fifth-generation fighter is an enormous undertaking, requiring extensive planning, infrastructure improvements, training, coordination and an unwavering commitment to the mission. The successful arrival and beddown of the F-35 is a direct reflection of the professionalism, precision and dedication demonstrated by the men and women of the 104th Fighter Wing.

Every group, squadron, office and Airman has played a role in making this transition possible. From our maintainers, pilots and operations teams to our mission support, medical, logistics, security, communications and administrative professionals, this accomplishment belongs to the entire Wing. Our partners at the local, state and national levels, as well as Lockheed Martin and the surrounding community, have also been instrumental in helping us reach this historic milestone.

The arrival of the F-35 is more than the introduction of a new aircraft. It represents the continued evolution of the 104th Fighter Wing and reinforces our responsibility to remain ready to answer our nation's call. This transition ensures the Wing remains positioned to provide combat-ready Airmen and decisive airpower well into the future.

While there is much to celebrate, our work is far from complete. We will continue building our F-35 capability, training our Airmen and strengthening the partnerships that make our mission possible. The same dedication that brought us to this moment will carry us through the next chapter of our history.

As you look through this special edition, I encourage you to reflect on everything our team has accomplished and, most importantly, the people who made it possible. You should take great pride in what we have achieved together.

Thank you for your continued dedication, professionalism and commitment to the 104th Fighter Wing. It is an honor to serve alongside you as we begin this historic new chapter.

Sincerely,
Colonel Michael "Shot" Glass
Commander, 104th Fighter Wing

104th Fighter Wing Marks Historic Transition to Fifth-Generation Fighter

Story by Airman 1st Class Ellen Ozkaptan

BARNES AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, Mass. – The 104th Fighter Wing marked a historic milestone on September 13, 2026, as it officially welcomed the F-35A Lightning II to Barnes Air National Guard Base with a ceremony.

The arrival of the F-35A marks a transformational leap in capability, positioning the 104th Fighter Wing at the forefront of national defense for generations to come. The event brought together distinguished visitors, international dignitaries, service members, alumni, and community partners. Representatives from the Kenyan and Paraguayan militaries attended as part of the state partnership program, underscoring the global significance of the transition. Among the distinguished visitors in attendance, Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey, spoke during the ceremony about what receiving the F-35A means for Barnes Air National Guard Base, as well as the commonwealth of Massachusetts.

"For generations, men and women at the 104th Fighter Wing have answered the call, protected the skies, served our state, and defended our country," said Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healey. "The arrival of the F-35A represents a new chapter for this great military installation here. And it's also an affirmation of the extraordinary professionalism and readiness of this wing that has existed decade after decade after decade."

The F-35A is the U.S. Air Force's latest fifth-generation fighter. It will replace the U.S. Air Force's aging fleet of F-16 Fighting Falcons and A-10 Thunderbolt II's, which have been the primary fighter aircraft for more than 20 years, and bring with it an enhanced capability to survive in the advanced threat environment in which it was designed to operate.

The wing received the official record of decision in December 2024, finalizing the replacement of the F-15 Eagle with the F-35A. U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. David "Moon" Halasi-Kun, former 104th Fighter Wing Commander, emphasized the amount of effort it would take the wing to complete the conversion and the advanced capabilities the fifth-generation fighter would bring.





"The F-35A brings with it incredible capabilities that will be able to support combatant commanders around the world, as well as continued defense of the United States from our 24-hour alert site," said Halasi-Kun. "I know that our Barnestormers will be up to the challenge as we start to begin our conversion."

U.S. Air Force Col. Michael 'Shot' Glass, the 104th Fighter Wing Commander, assumed command of the wing in December 2025, tasked with leading the unit into this new era.

"I am honored to officially welcome the most advanced and capable fighter aircraft in the world to the 104th Fighter Wing in the F-35A," said Glass. "Welcoming in these fifth-generation aircraft provides our wing with increased and unmatched capabilities to safeguard both our country and the great city of Westfield as we execute our new 104th Fighter Wing mission and vision."

U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Gary W. Keefe, the Adjutant General of the Massachusetts National Guard and former member of the wing, presided over the ceremony.

"The acquisition of the F-35A Lightning II is a strategic investment that positions the 104th Fighter Wing at the forefront of our nation's defense for the remainder of the century," said Keefe. "We are securing our role as a cornerstone of national security for the next fifty years and beyond. "

The F-35A's advanced capabilities include stealth technology that allow it to operate undetected in contested environments, sensor fusion that provides pilots with unparalleled situational awareness, and precision strike systems that enable accurate engagement of targets across multiple domains. These features ensure the aircraft can dominate in air-to-air combat, conduct effective ground strikes, and support joint operations with other branches of the military.

"The combat proven F-35A is the most lethal, survivable and connected fighter aircraft in the world, giving pilots an advantage against any adversary and enabling them to execute their mission and come home safe," said Chauncey McIntosh, Vice President and General Manager of the F-35A Lightning II Program. "The aircraft's arrival at Barnes Air National Guard Base allows the 104th Fighter Wing to add to its storied history."

The official arrival of the F-35A symbolizes the culmination of years of effort and ushers in a new era of world-class mission

readiness. Preparation for the transition included building the infrastructure to support the F-35A through constructing sunshades, divesting special F-35A equipment, and training Airmen to prepare for the conversion.

Now that Airmen are trained, the Barnestormers stand ready to employ the F-35 and complete the historic transition from the F-15 Eagle to fifth-generation airpower.

"It was an honor to be a part of the final three-ship of Eagles to leave Barnes back in October of 2025," said U.S. Air Force Capt. Kyle 'Nuke' Eckert, an F-35A pilot at the 104th Fighter Wing. "To now be one of the first F-35A pilots at Barnes Air National Guard Base is an amazing full circle moment."

"[Barnestormers] are our most critical asset," said U.S. Air Force Gen. Steven Nordhaus, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau. "And with this F-35A, I know [Barnestormers] will be trained, they will be ready, and they will be capable. And when you get the call, 'America needs you,' I know that [Barnestormers] will be always ready and always there."

The ceremony concluded inside the main hangar, where the newly arrived F-35 stood as a powerful symbol of the wing's new mission era.

"Today, a new chapter begins with the 104th Fighter Wing," said Healey. "As the governor and the commander in chief of the Massachusetts National Guard, I cannot be more proud."

Glass closed by recognizing the community's role in the transition.

"I extend our deepest gratitude to the distinguished visitors whose leadership and partnerships played a monumental role in bringing these advanced capabilities to our wing," said Glass. "We also thank the citizens of Westfield for their continued, unrelenting support to make this historic day a reality. Together, we have ushered in a new era of combat capability and critical deterrence, and are ready to execute our mission with unmatched precision, dedication, and determination."

The arrival of the F-35A Lightning II at Barnes Air National Guard Base represents years of planning and preparation, the beginning of a new mission era, and the assurance that the 104th Fighter Wing will continue to deliver world-class capability for generations to come.

The wing's mission endures: Forge combat-ready Airmen prepared to defend our Nation and employ lethal F-35A airpower.



HEADLINES & HIGHLIGHTS



2023, F-35 Decision Approved



Congressman Neal Visits 104FW



MassDevelopment Visits 104FW

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Major Milestone Reached with 104FW & Lockheed Martin



Second F-35 Milestone Reached



104FW Marks New F-35 Era in Fort Worth

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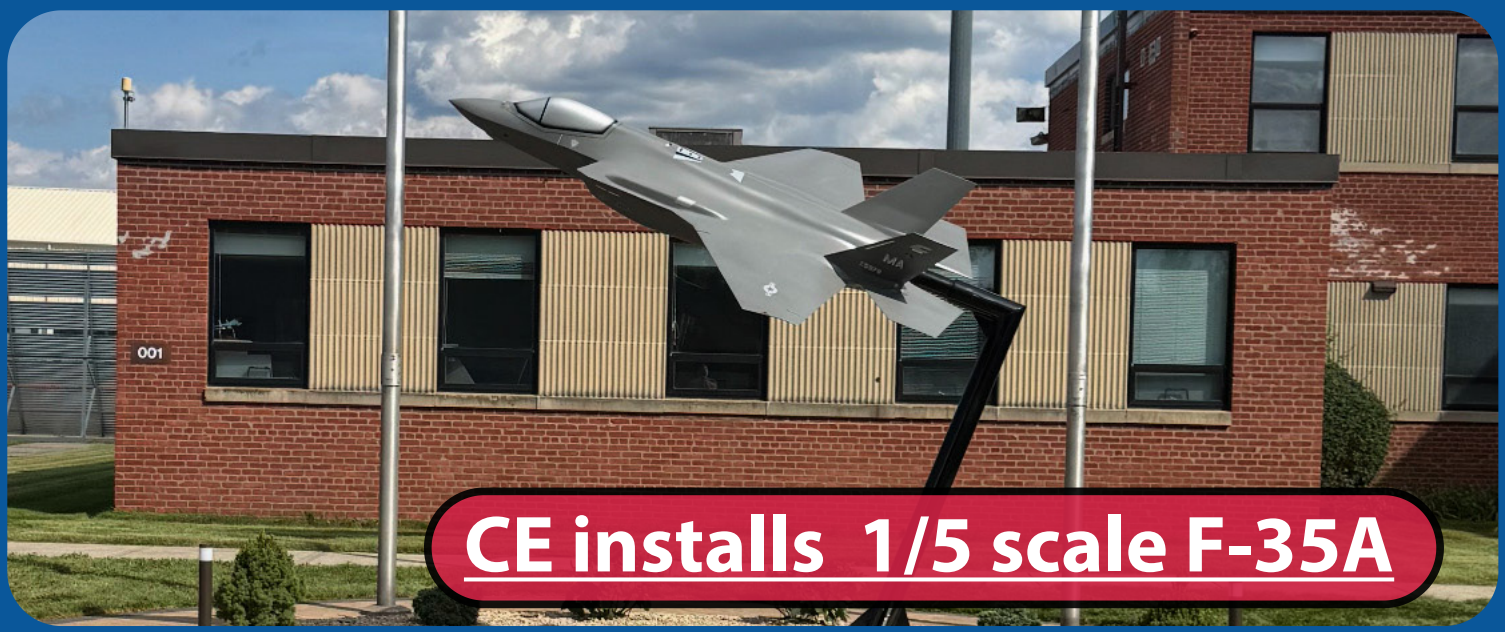
Teamwork with F-35 units



Tour Program with F-35



CE installs 1/5 scale F-35A

HEADLINES & HIGHLIGHTS



Welcome to F-35 Ceremony



Nordhaus Welcome F-35A to 104FW



New Era, New Squadron

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