Joint testing clears F-35B/C for night refueling

By Kenji Thuloweit
412th Test Wing Public Affairs

The F-35 Lightning II program recently completed testing on an improved lighting assembly with the KC-135 that will enable the Navy and Marine Corps F-35 variants to refuel behind the tanker at night. Flight testing of the redesigned light, which attaches to a refueling probe, was led by the Patuxent River Naval Air Station test team and supported by the team at Edwards Air Force Base.

The test evolution demonstrated teamwork across three services and two test units located on opposite coasts, all focused on quickly evaluating this lighting fix under specific nighttime conditions to ensure that F-35 operators can expand their night refueling operations to include all configurations of the KC-135.

The purpose of the probe light on Navy and Marine aircraft is to illuminate the refueling receptacle, or “basket,” to ensure that the F-35 pilot can see adequately and make contact to begin refueling. However, the existing lighting design made it difficult for the KC-135 boom operator to see the silhouette of the F-35. Under the Air Force requirement, the boom operator monitors refueling operations and helps the F-35 pilot maintain safe separation from the refueling boom. One of the redesign’s objectives is to ensure better visibility for the KC-135 boom operator.

“The current probe light was too bright, blinding the KC-135 aerial refueling boom operators,” said Michael McGee, 418th Flight Test Squadron (FLTS), aerial refueling project manager at Edwards AFB. “The new light was designed to be less bright, but still bright enough for the F-35 pilot to see clearly.”

For this test, an F-35B from Air Test and Evaluation Squadron (VX) 23, Naval Air Station Patuxent River, undergoes ground testing of an improved probe light assembly in a hangar at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif.

Free fun, festivities planned for National Night Out

By Donna Cipolloni
NAS Patuxent River Public Affairs

Tuesday, Aug. 6
5:30-8:30 p.m.
Outdoor swimming pool

National Night Out (NNO) is an annual community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and enhances the relationships between neighbors and law enforcement, all while promoting a true sense of community camaraderie.

This year’s NNO event will take place nationwide Aug. 6 and many law enforcement organizations at the local, state and military installation level will be participating. The NAS Patuxent River Police Department is no exception, and they’re inviting the Pax community to come out – rain or shine – to mingle with their neighbors and law enforcement officers, and just have some good old-fashioned fun.

Supported by Morale, Welfare and Recreation, the police department is taking the lead on NNO, with additional partners such as Mission BBQ, the Commissary and Lincoln Military Housing participating.

The event, held from 5:30-8:30 p.m., will encompass the swimming pool as well as the adjacent Youth Center play area.

“The [department] is working hard to get things in place and we’ll be blocking off roadsways to provide adequate parking,” explained Pax River Police Chief John Romer. “There’ll be a lot of free fun and festivities so the kids can have a good time.”

In addition to swimming, attendees will find free food and drinks, two bounce houses, face-painting, a dunk tank, and music and entertainment. Also on hand will be McGruff the Crime Dog, K-9 demonstrations, police vehicles, a fire truck pump to hose down the kids, and the emergency command vehicle.

“We’re going to let the kids talk on walkie-talkies back to the command vehicle,” Romer added. “Everyone from the police department will be doing one thing or another, including manning all the tents. We want to give back to the community, show them what we can do for them, and promote safer neighborhoods.”

The best way to build a safer community is to know your neighbors and your surroundings. To date, 38 million neighbors in 16,000 communities across the country have participated in the last 36 years of National Night Out. In Maryland alone, 133 cities have planned activities for this year’s NNO.

“It has proven to be an effective, inexpensive and enjoyable program to promote neighborhood spirit and police/community partnerships in the fight for a safer nation,” Romer noted. “And we wanted our community to be part of the nation’s largest annual crime and drug prevention event. All who have base access are welcome and encouraged to attend. It’s going to be a good thing.”