

## Pilot at Eglin selected for F-35 cadre

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2/10/2009 - **EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla.** -- Maj. Lee Kloos was elated when he heard he was selected for the initial cadre of F-35 Lightning II instructors.

A Weapons School graduate and fighter pilot with nearly 2,000 flying hours, Major Kloos, a lieutenant colonel select, will be the 58th Fighter Squadron director of operations once the 33rd Fighter Wing transitions from the Air Combat Command to the Air Education and Training Command Oct. 1.

"Purely from a pilot standpoint, getting a chance to fly this new technology is certainly exciting," said the F-16 pilot.

But the "icing on the cake" is that he gets to stay right here at Eglin, where he's worked with the Joint Strike Fighter Site Activation Task Force program.

"I've worked with the program here a year and a half, so I've put a lot of work into setting up the wing and the bed down," said the major. "So, to actually get a chance to stay on and see that through execution is exciting."

He's proud to be a part of the JSF, which he knows is important to the future of the Air Force and its air power for several decades to come. But he's also eager to get in the cockpit of the fifth generation fighter jet.

"It is a new generation aircraft for a reason - the systems, the capabilities of the jet are completely different," said Major Kloos. "That's what makes this whole program very interesting from a pilot perspective - to be into something that's completely new and next generation."

His experience with the multi-role fighter is limited to flying the simulator at Lockheed Martin and by his studies. He expects the biggest challenge is going to be the cadre's training.

"Learning the aircraft is going to be interesting," he said. "There's only a few F-35s flying right now, primarily at the Lockheed Martin plant."

He said two of the cadre pilots will get qualification training, and once they figure out a check out system, those two pilots will teach the rest of the cadre. It will be a profound responsibility because, "there's no one to fall back on; no history or guidance to fall back on. We are going to write the books for everyone."

Major Kloos has fielded new technology before as an operational test pilot with the 85th Test and Evaluation Squadron here from 2002 to 2005, so "writing the books" on new technology won't be anything new for him.

But he has high expectations for the F-35.

"The F-16 has limitations with threats that should be alleviated in this platform," said the Minnesota native who grew up in Arizona. "This will be much more lethal and will make the pilot's job easier. And it will be more survivable."

Three more cadre members are scheduled to join the major here this summer. The rest should be in place by



EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, FLA. - Maj. Lee Kloos, the Air Force representative with the Joint Strike Fighter Site Activation Task Force program, has been named one of the 10 initial cadre of J-35 flight instructors. The lieutenant colonel-select will be the 58th Fighter Squadron director of operations when the 33rd Fighter Wing transitions from the Air Combat Command to the Air Education and Training Command in October.

the scheduled Oct. 1 change of command to the Air Education Training Command.

He said being chosen to train pilots on the F-35 is a great privilege, especially since Air Force aviation is making steps toward the unmanned aerial systems.

"This is a unique opportunity and there won't be many more like it," Kloos said.