

# Team Edwards welcomes AFOTEC DET 1

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**EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif.** -- A ceremony to recognize the activation of the Air Force Operational Test and Evaluation Center Detachment 1 was held in Hangar 1810 here Oct. 2.

"Today the men and women of AFOTEC activate a new detachment and assign a new commander," said Capt. Kevin Tanner, ceremony narrator.

Maj. Gen. Stephen Sargeant, AFOTEC commander, presided over the activation ceremony and presented the AFOTEC DET 1 guideon to Col. Gary Cooper, charging him with command.

"What a great day, today for the Department of Defense, the Air Force, the Navy, the Marine Corp and importantly our partner nations and AFOTEC" said General Sargeant. "As we take an important step toward bringing the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter online for the United States military and our coalition partners."

General Sargeant thanked Maj. Gen. David Eichhorn, Air Force Flight Test Center commander for his support and the support of Team Edwards in preparing the buildings and hangars AFOTEC Detachment 1 will occupy.

"This hangar didn't just happen by itself," said General Sargeant. "The buildings we will occupy with close to 600 testers in the future didn't happen by themselves. We had a small advance team out here and General Eichhorn led his team in support of them and for that I thank you very much."

Colonel Cooper has been a part of the F-35 Lightning II project since December 2006, and has been the director of the Joint Strike Fighter Operation Test Team since July 2007. He is also a graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy with a Bachelor of Science in Human Factors Engineering. He also holds a Master of Science degree in International Defense Studies he is also recent graduate from the Air War College.

As commander of AFOTEC Detachment 1, Colonel Cooper will head the detachment responsible for accomplishing F-35 blocks 2 and 3 initial operational testing. As the Combined test director, Colonel Cooper has overall responsibility for AFOTEC Detachment 1 he plans, conducts and reports on realistic, objective and impartial operational test and evaluation of the fifth-generation strike aircraft.

"This is the largest operational test in the history of the Department of Defense," said Colonel Cooper. "This is a monumental task to not only design but to execute within the structure we have. We have a huge background of operational test experience on our team."

Colonel Cooper told his Detachment that he believes this aircraft will define the Air Force legacy. He challenged all of them to make this the best air system possible.

"I look at this as our legacy to our children," he said. "We're going to build over 3,000 of these over the next several years I would like the pilots 20 years from now confident flying this aircraft in a hostile environment and for the maintainers working on the aircraft 20 years from now not needing to work three shifts or weekends trying to fix this airplane. That is my challenge to you to build the best airplane."

Colonel Cooper concluded his assumption of command by expressing his excitement he has about taking on the challenge of developing the world best avionic fighter system.

"This truly is the future of fighter aviation for our nation and our partners I know we're up to the challenge to make this the greatest system ever," he said.