Manufacturing Begins On Lockheed Martin F-35 Airframe

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Workers in Texas and California have begun fabricating the first major airframe components for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.

On Monday, Nov. 10, milling machines at Progressive Inc., in Arlington, Texas, and at H.M. Dunn Co. Inc., in Euless, Texas, began cutting "big-bone" structural components for the supersonic stealth fighter. Simultaneously, Northrop Grumman Corp. , a principal teammate on the F-35 program, started the milling process for other major parts of the F-35 JSF's airframe with its subcontractor Brek Manufacturing in Gardena, Calif.

"Up to now, the F-35 has existed in a world of mathematical formulas and three-dimensional electronic engineering diagrams. Today it starts emerging as a real airplane," said Tom Burbage, Lockheed Martin executive vice president and general manager of the F-35 program. "We're proud that these first big parts are being produced by small- and veteran-owned businesses. They've proven their ability to produce world-class components for the most advanced multirole fighter in history."

Progressive's first part was a major bulkhead for the F-35's wing section. H.M. Dunn kicked off F-35 manufacturing with a forward fuselage radar bulkhead, while Brek milled a center fuselage canopy shelf.

The partnering relationships that led to the initiation of F-35 manufacturing activities exemplify Lockheed Martin's commitment to help its customers meet their defining moments.

Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Co. will assemble the F-35 at its mile-long factory in Fort Worth. Major subassemblies will be completed by Northrop Grumman Integrated Systems in El Segundo and Palmdale, Calif., and by BAE SYSTEMS in Salmesbury, England. The finished subassembly modules will then be shipped to Fort Worth for final assembly.

The first F-35 is scheduled for completion in mid-2005, with first flight planned for late that year.

Veteran-owned Progressive Inc., specializes in profile milling of complex aluminum and titanium parts used in the manufacture of military and commercial aircraft. The company was founded in 1971 with the purchase of equipment from a small two-man shop in Arlington. In 1983, Progressive purchased the assets of a competing company and created a single corporation with 100 employees.

H.M. Dunn Co. Inc., is a privately held engineering and manufacturing company with an advanced machine shop featuring a diverse assortment of three-, four- and five-axis computer numerically control machines specializing in serving the commercial and military aerospace industry. Over the past 29 years, the company has grown from a 4,800-square-foot building to the current 62,000-square-foot facility.

The F-35 is a stealthy, supersonic multirole fighter designed to replace a wide range of aging fighter and strike aircraft. Three variants derived from a common design will ensure F-35 meets the performance needs of the U.S. Air Force, Marine Corps, Navy and allied defense forces worldwide, while staying within strict affordability targets.

The F-35 will offer capability that is superior to all current-generation fighter aircraft. It will enable unprecedented levels of interoperability and international cooperation. Among the aircraft that the F-35 will replace are the AV-8B Harrier, A-10, F-16, F/A-18 and the United Kingdom's Harrier GR.7 and Sea Harrier.

Nine nations are partnering in the F-35's System Development and Demonstration phase: The United States, United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands, Turkey, Canada, Denmark, Norway and Australia. Additionally, Israel has agreed to join the program as a Security Cooperation Participant.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Co., a business area of Lockheed Martin, is a leader in the design, development, systems integration, production and support of advanced military aircraft and related technologies. Its customers include the military services of the United States and allied countries throughout the world. Products include the F-16, F/A-22, F-35 JSF, F-117, T-50, C-5, C-27J, C-130, C-130J, P-3, S-3 and U-2.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin Corp. employs about 125,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture and integration of advanced technology systems, products and services. The corporation reported 2002 sales of $26.6 billion.

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