Lockheed Martin Starts F-35 Forward-Fuselage Assembly

Workers at Lockheed Martin's mile-long factory in Fort Worth have begun assembling the forward fuselage for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, a next-generation, supersonic stealth aircraft designed to replace current-generation fighters that are nearing the end of their service lives.

Shortly after 8 a.m. on Monday, July 12, workers loaded an F-35 structural bulkhead into an assembly tool, marking the official start of forward-fuselage production for the aircraft. Assembly of the F-35's wings will begin at the plant in a few weeks.

"Today, we are witnessing the dawn of an extensive re-equipping of U.S. and allied tactical air forces. This is an important moment in the security of our country and that of our allies. It is a very big step," said Tom Burbage, Lockheed Martin executive vice president and F-35 JSF program general manager. "We're in this for the long haul. The F-35 assembly that began in this plant this morning will still be going strong a generation from now."

"The F-35 springs from a long line of distinguished aircraft that have been produced in this factory," said Dain M. Hancock, president of Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company.

Lockheed Martin and its principal industrial partners Northrop Grumman and BAE SYSTEMS are employing an array of advanced and highly accurate manufacturing machines to help the F-35 achieve its goals of affordability, quality and assembly speed. Assembly of the center fuselage began in May at Northrop Grumman's facility in Palmdale, Calif. BAE SYSTEMS will begin assembling the aft-fuselage and tails later this year in Samlesbury, England. Those subassemblies will be shipped to Fort Worth, where they will be mated with the wings and forward fuselage for final assembly. The F-35's first flight is planned for 2006.

The F-35 will set new standards for assembly precision and pace. New milling machines are accurate to within 50 microns -- about one-third the width of a human hair -- to ensure that the F-35's outer shape is exact and meets its low observability (stealth) requirements. During full-rate production, assembly time for an F-35 is expected to be less than half that of current-generation fighters.

Three F-35 variants -- a conventional takeoff and landing (CTOL), a short- takeoff/vertical-landing (STOVL) and a carrier variant (CV) -- each derived from a common design will ensure that the F-35 meets the performance needs of the U.S. Air Force, Marine Corps, Navy, the U.K. Royal Air Force and Royal Navy, and allied defense forces worldwide, while staying within strict affordability targets.

Among the aircraft the F-35 will replace are the AV-8B Harrier, A-10, F-16, F/A-18 Hornet and the United Kingdom's Harrier GR.7 and Sea Harrier.

Lockheed Martin is developing the F-35 in conjunction with Northrop Grumman and BAE SYSTEMS. Companies worldwide are participating in the F-35's development.

Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Co., a business area of Lockheed Martin, is a leader in the design, research and 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, C-5, C-130, C-130J, P-3, S-3 and U-2. The company produces major components for the F-2 fighter, and is a co-developer of the C-27J tactical transport and T-50 advanced jet trainer.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin employs about 130,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture and integration of advanced technology systems, products and services. The corporation reported 2003 sales of $31.8 billion.

High and low resolution photo to accompany this news release will be available

by 2:00 p.m. central on Web site:
http://www.lmaeronautics.com/

For additional information, visit our Web sites:

http://www.lmaeronautics.com/

http://www.lockheedmartin.com/

SOURCE: Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company

Web site: http://www.lmaeronautics.com/
http://www.lockheedmartin.com/

Company News On-Call: http://www.prnewswire.com/comp/117281.html

---

https://news.lockheedmartin.com/2004-07-12-Lockheed-Martin-Starts-F-35-Forward-Fuselage-Assembly