

F-35 Wing Assembly Begins At Lockheed Martin

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Assembly of the wing for the first F-35 Joint Strike Fighter started today at Lockheed Martin in Fort Worth, less than two months after the plant initiated the aircraft's forward-fuselage assembly.

"With wing assembly under way, and with aft-fuselage assembly expected to begin this week, all of the F-35's four major subassemblies will be in production," said Bob Elrod, Lockheed Martin executive vice president and F-35 JSF program general manager. "The F-35's advanced, modular assembly process is designed to increase production speed dramatically while improving quality and reducing costs."

BAE SYSTEMS will begin production of the aircraft's aft-fuselage in Samlesbury, England, this week. Northrop Grumman's Palmdale, Calif., facility started center-fuselage assembly in May. The first F-35, a conventional- takeoff-and-landing model, is scheduled to be completed in 2005, with first flight scheduled for 2006.

The first phase of wing assembly started Monday when workers loaded an aluminum bulkhead and a front spar onto an assembly fixture. Nine more spars will be added to complete the wing skeleton. Once the skeleton is complete, the upper and lower carbon-fiber composite skins will be attached. It will then be mated to the other F-35 subassemblies beginning in the spring of 2005. Progressive, Inc., of Arlington, Texas, produced the wing bulkheads. The front spar was made by Thayer of St. Louis.

When the 35-foot wing's structural assembly is complete, technicians will add internal systems such as pumps, sensors and electrical components.

The F-35 is a next-generation, supersonic, multi-role stealth aircraft designed to replace 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 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.

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.

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. Two propulsion teams, led by Pratt & Whitney and General Electric, are developing separate interchangeable engines for the F-35.

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.

An F-35 electronic media kit is available at: http://www.lmaeronautics.com/products/combat_air/x-35/mediaKit.html

For additional information, visit our Web sites:

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