F-35 Achieves Flawless Second Flight, Demonstrates Performance Capabilities

The Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II achieved another successful test flight today from the company's Fort Worth, Texas, facility.

(Photo: http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20070108/DAM045)

"The maturity of this highly integrated aircraft for its second flight is dazzling -- when it's time to fly it is always ready and takes minimal time to get out of the chocks," said Jon Beesley, F-35 Chief Test Pilot. "The flight underscores that the Lightning II flies just as our engineers predicted. This was the first time that we have retracted the landing gear and the aircraft handling qualities were outstanding. I continue to be impressed by this marvelous airplane's performance and handling characteristics."

Approximately 10 minutes into the flight, Beesley retracted the landing gear and climbed from 15,000 to 20,000 feet to evaluate handling qualities and engine operation in the cruise mode at Mach 0.6 (~ 450 m.p.h.) and Mach 0.7 (~ 530 m.p.h.). The handling tests included rolls, turns, angle-of-attack changes and engine throttle changes. The flight lasted 62 minutes and was executed exactly as planned. It followed the aircraft's successful first flight on Dec. 15, when the F-35 demonstrated unprecedented engine performance and handling qualities.

"With this successful flight and its broad array of test points, F-35 flight test has really begun," said Dan Crowley, Lockheed Martin executive vice president and F-35 program general manager. "The ease of starting and flying this aircraft is a reflection of the quality of the team who designed and built it."

The F-35 is a supersonic, multi-role, 5TH Generation stealth fighter designed to replace a wide range of existing aircraft, including AV-8B Harriers, A-10s, F-16s, F/A-18 Hornets and United Kingdom Harrier GR.7s and Sea Harriers.

Lockheed Martin is developing the Lightning II with its principal industrial partners, Northrop Grumman and BAE Systems. Two separate, interchangeable F-35 engines are under development: the Pratt & Whitney F135 and the GE Rolls-Royce Fighter Engine Team F136.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin employs about 140,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture, integration and sustainment of advanced technology systems, products and services. The corporation reported 2005 sales of $37.2 billion.

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