Lockheed Martin F-35 Program Achieves Critical Milestone

STOVL Variant Completes Successful 'Power On'

Electrical power was applied to the Lockheed MartinF-35B Lightning II for the first time Thursday night, initiating a series of ground tests that will lead to the inaugural flight of the short-takeoff/vertical landing (STOVL) stealth fighter next spring.

"The successful 'power-on' demonstrates that the integration of this unique aircraft is progressing to plan. It signals that production of our first F-35B Lightning II is on track for first flight next year, a key step toward realizing the aviation future of the U.S. Marines, the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy," said Dan Crowley, Lockheed Martin executive vice president and F-35 program general manager. The aircraft is scheduled to roll out of the factory in December.

The F-35 will be the most electronically advanced aircraft ever built, with capabilities unavailable in current multi-role fighters. The F-35B's power-on is an incremental process of testing the aircraft's circuits, electronic components and wiring.

"This event is one of the major milestones in the life of the STOVL aircraft and we have eagerly anticipated it for some time," said Maj. Gen. C.R. Davis, F-35 program executive officer. "The F-35 has the most complex electrical system of any fighter to date. We had great success with the first jet we flew, but that jet taught us some very important lessons about its electrical system and those lessons have been incorporated into the jet we powered up today. So congrats to the team and on to first flight."

The aircraft incorporates parts and systems from all nine F-35 participant countries (United States, United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands, Turkey, Canada, Australia, Denmark and Norway), including the wiring harnesses, produced by Stork Fokker-Elmo of the Netherlands. The wiring harnesses are crucial to the F-35's electrical system, routing and apportioning electrical current throughout the aircraft.

The U.S. Marine Corps and Navy together are planning to operate 680 F-35Bs and F-35Cs, and the United Kingdom plans to place 138 F-35Bs into service with the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy. The F-35B will be the world's first stealth fighter with supersonic and STOVL capability. The first F-35B fleet will go operational in 2012 with the Marines.

The first F-35, a conventional takeoff and landing version, began its flight test program on Dec. 15, 2006.

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 F-35 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 2006 sales of $39.6 billion.

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