

Lockheed Martin F-35 Charts Progress As Services Anticipate 5th Generation Capabilities

With two of its three variants now in flight test, the 17 remaining pre-production aircraft in assembly, the first two production aircraft in fabrication, another 12 production jets fully funded and early funding approved for an additional 18 airplanes, the Lockheed Martin F-35 program is taking off -- both literally and figuratively.

"The successful inaugural flight of the first F-35B -- our short takeoff/vertical landing variant -- provided an exclamation point to what has been an extraordinary year so far for the program," said Tom Burbage, Lockheed Martin executive vice president and general manager of F-35 Program Integration. "While the flight of the F-35B was certainly the most visible sign of the program's success, much more is going on, including the expansion of our production line, outstanding progress in software development, the outfitting of our avionics test bed for full-up F-35 mission systems flights beginning later this year, extremely strong government support for the program and the continued strengthening of our international partnerships."

As the F-35's production rate rises steadily to a peak of one aircraft per working day by 2016, allied military services are beginning to integrate the Lightning II's potent 5th generation capabilities into their strategic planning. Among the F-35's distinguishing capabilities is its ability to interoperate with an unprecedented array of assets in the air, at sea and on the ground.

"Communication among disparate equipment and different military services has hampered coalition operations for many years, but the F-35 is specifically designed to resolve those issues, gathering and sharing information in real time with different aircraft, troops on the ground and ships at sea," Burbage said. "For example, information the F-35 receives from its sensors or an off-board source can be passed to troops immediately, enabling them to carry out their mission more quickly, more effectively and helping ensure their safety. No other aircraft to date has come close to having the Lightning II's level of interoperability."

The F-35 Lightning II is a supersonic, multi-role, 5th generation stealth fighter. The three F-35 variants are derived from a common design and use the same sustainment infrastructure worldwide to replace at least 13 types of aircraft for 11 nations initially, making the Lightning II the most cost-effective fighter program in history.

Lockheed Martin is developing the F-35 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 2007 sales of \$41.9 billion.

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