Lockheed Martin F-35 Production, Testing And International Participation Shift Into High Gear In 2009

In a single calendar year, the Lockheed MartinF-35 Lighting II program will complete all remaining System Development and Demonstration aircraft, deliver the first production-model F-35s to the armed services and initiate full-scale flight test operations at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., and Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Md.

"Two-thousand nine is shaping up to be a year of firsts for the F-35 program, with the first flight of our F-35C carrier variant, the first vertical landing of our F-35B short takeoff/vertical landing variant, the first stand-ups of our test sites as Edwards and Pax River, the first training aircraft delivered to the U.S. Air Force and the first F-35 orders from our international partners," said Dan Crowley, Lockheed Martin executive vice president and F-35 program general manager, speaking at the Air Force Association's 2009 Air Warfare Symposium in Orlando, Fla. "Already, we have delivered eight of 19 SDD jets, and we are moving aircraft off the assembly line at a rate of about one per month, a pace that continues to accelerate."

Additionally, the program will continue to validate the F-35's highly evolved mission systems software and hardware by adding to the more than 1,100 hours of flight testing and 115,000 hours of laboratory testing already completed. The initiation of flight testing for the first mission-systems-equipped F-35 will reinforce technical risk reduction efforts for the most powerful and comprehensive avionics system ever packaged into a fighter.

"As we mature the F-35, we continue to see evidence of ever-strengthening customer support - in the U.S. Air Force's request for stepped-up production, in the U.S. Navy's call for reinstatement of three early-production F-35Cs, and in Norway's and the Netherlands' endorsement of the F-35 as their future fighter," Crowley said. "We will see more of the same in 2009, as we prove out the Lightning II's capabilities, and as our international partners begin ordering their first airplanes."

The F-35, a supersonic, 5th generation stealth aircraft, is the world's most advanced multi-role fighter. Three F-35 variants derived from a common design, developed together and using the same sustainment infrastructure worldwide, will 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 is a global security company that employs about 146,000 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 2008 sales of $42.7 billion.

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Into-High-Gear-in-2009