

STOVL Jet Is Fifth Lockheed Martin F-35 To Enter Flight Testing

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FORT WORTH, Texas

A Lockheed Martin F-35B Lightning II short takeoff/vertical landing (STOVL) stealth fighter today became the fifth F-35 to begin flight operations.

The jet, known as BF-3, departed the runway near Lockheed Martin's Fort Worth plant at 4:02 p.m. CST for its first flight. During the one-hour sortie, F-35 Chief Test Pilot Jon Beesley tested the aircraft's handling qualities, engine functionality, landing gear operation and basic subsystem performance.

BF-3 joins two other F-35Bs and one F-35A conventional takeoff and landing (CTOL) aircraft currently undergoing active flight test. The first CTOL F-35, AA-1, is now preparing for live-fire testing. The F-35 program continues to accelerate the time from flight line arrival to first flight.

BF-3 was built and instrumented to conduct flight sciences test work and will be used primarily to evaluate vehicle systems and expand the aircraft's aerodynamic and structural-loads envelope. It will deploy later this year to Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Md., where it will carry and release most of the weapons the F-35B will employ in combat.

BF-3 and all other Lightning II aircraft will be supported by the F-35 Autonomic Logistics Information System and monitored by the F-35 Autonomic Logistics Global Sustainment Operations Center in Fort Worth. F-35 sustainment is based upon the principles of Performance-Based Logistics, involving extensive partnering agreements between government and industry. The F-35 team has developed an advanced sustainment system capability with designed-in sustainability that will reduce overall life-cycle costs and ensure mission readiness.

The F-35 Lightning II is a 5th generation fighter, combining advanced stealth with fighter speed and agility, fully fused sensor information, network-enabled operations, advanced sustainment, and lower operational and support costs. 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 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 2009 sales of \$45.2 billion.

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