Lockheed Martin F-35 Ground-Test Article Completes Testing Five Months Ahead Of Schedule

The Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II program successfully completed F-35A conventional takeoff and landing (CTOL) full-scale static testing - with zero structural failures - five months ahead of schedule and in less than half the time of legacy programs.

The test program was conducted on AG-1, an F-35A dedicated to validating the strength of the jet's airframe.

During testing, the strength and stability of the aircraft structure were verified to 150 percent of design limits or 13.5 G's (force of gravity), with 174 critical load conditions, or pressures, applied to the airframe to evaluate its structural integrity. Testing was conducted predominantly at BAE Systems' Structural & Dynamic Test Laboratory in Brough, England. The U.K. tests began in August 2009 and were accomplished in 295 days - a rate that exceeded the record-setting pace previously established by the F-35B short takeoff/vertical landing static test program.

Mick Ord, BAE Systems managing director for the F-35 program, said, "This was a major milestone, and the test results demonstrate that the F-35 has a fantastic airframe. As a principal subcontractor to Lockheed Martin, one of the capabilities BAE Systems brings to the F-35 programme is our structural test expertise. The structural and dynamic test facility at Brough is a centre of excellence in the U.K. Our team has performed admirably to complete the test schedule on AG-1 ahead of program."

The F-35 Lightning II 5th generation fighter combines advanced stealth with supersonic speed and high agility, fully fused sensor information, network-enabled operations and lower operational and support costs. Lockheed Martin is developing the F-35 with principal industrial partners Northrop Grumman and BAE Systems.

The F-35 program has about 900 suppliers in 43 states, and directly and indirectly employs more than 130,000 people. Thousands more are employed in the F-35 partner countries, which have invested more than $4 billion in the project. Those countries are the United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands, Turkey, Canada, Australia, Denmark and Norway.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin is a global security company that employs about 136,000 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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