



Moving Line Could Save \$300 Million for Lockheed Martin F-35

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FORT WORTH, Texas, Feb. 4 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- The first-ever continuous moving assembly line for a combat fighter jet is under consideration by the Lockheed Martin (NYSE: LMT) F-35 Joint Strike Fighter team. Adopting such an approach could increase production efficiency, reduce floor space and avoid an estimated \$300 million in expenses over the life of the program.

"Affordability is the cornerstone on which the JSF program is built, and we're beginning to see how a continuous moving assembly line could help us meet our commitment to keep costs low," said Tom Burbage, Lockheed Martin executive vice president and F-35 JSF program general manager. "We are in the process of weighing the up-front investments against the long-term returns. So far, we like what we see."

In late January, members of the F-35 production team from Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and BAE SYSTEMS gathered on the Lockheed Martin factory floor in Fort Worth to begin laying out a preliminary plan for a continuous moving line. Using a full-scale F-35 model, the team simulated processes for installing aircraft systems as the jet crept along an imaginary track.

"The last time this plant saw a moving assembly line, it was pumping out B-24s at tremendous rates during World War II," Burbage said. "Since then, the moving-line concept has been greatly refined, and is now used in the assembly of some large, commercial airliners. The F-35 program is all about innovation, so if ours were the first fighter jet to be built on a continuous moving line, it would simply be following an established path of product advancement."

Current-generation fighters are constructed on a "pulsed" or "bay-build" assembly line. Proponents of continuous moving lines say they not only improve efficiency, but force assembly problems to the surface, where they can be identified quickly and fixed permanently. The greater efficiency plays into the F-35's planned high rate of production -- up to one aircraft per day and at least 2,593 planes total.

The F-35 program continues on schedule for Critical Design Review of the conventional-takeoff-and-landing variant, as well as the systems common to all variants, in April.

The F-35 is a stealthy, supersonic multirole fighter designed to replace a wide range of aging fighter and strike aircraft. Three variants derived from a common design will ensure F-35 meets the performance needs of the U.S. Air Force, Marine Corps, Navy and allied defense forces worldwide, while staying within strict affordability targets.

Lockheed Martin is developing the F-35 in conjunction with its principal industrial partners, Northrop Grumman and BAE SYSTEMS. Companies worldwide are participating in the F-35's development. Among the aircraft the F-35 will replace are the AV-8B Harrier, A-10, F-16, F/A-18 and United Kingdom's Harrier GR.7 and Sea Harrier.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Co., a business area of Lockheed Martin, is a leader in the design, research and development, systems integration, production and support of advanced military aircraft and related technologies. Its customers include the military services of the United States and allied countries throughout the world. Products include the F-16, F/A-22, F-35 JSF, F-117, C-5, C-130, C-130J, P-3, S-3 and U-2. The company produces major components for the F-2 fighter, and is a co-developer of the C-27J tactical transport and T-50 advanced jet trainer.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin Corp. employs about 130,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture and integration of advanced technology systems, products and services. The corporation reported 2003 sales of \$31.8 billion.

High and low resolution photos will be available after 4 p.m. central time today at: <http://www.lmaeronautics.com>

For additional information on Lockheed Martin products, visit:
<http://www.lockheedmartin.com>

SOURCE Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company

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