

Articles taken from Flight International magazine.

1st June: Israel conducts study on size of F-35 fleet

The Israeli air force is preparing a long-term forecast on its fleet requirements, as part of the decision process leading to its planned procurement of the Lockheed Martin F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. In its forecast, the service will attempt to assess its needs for manned combat aircraft 30 years from now. The work is intended to determine whether it has a need for more than the 22-25 F-35s being eyed for purchase.

1st June: Israeli industry reveals JSF weapons work

Israeli defence companies are developing new weapon systems that will be carried by the Lockheed Martin F-35 Joint Strike Fighters operated by the nation's air force. Rafael confirms that it is developing smaller versions of its Python-5 short-range and Derby beyond visual-range air-air missiles, to enable the munitions to be carried in the stealth fighter's weapon bays.

3rd June: US Department of Defense raises F-35 cost estimate to \$382 billion

The US Department of Defense has raised the cost estimate for the 35-year F-35 Joint Strike Fighter programme to more than \$382 billion, but offered Lockheed Martin a vote of confidence by recertificating its acquisition strategy for the pivotal stealth fighter to Congress.

8th June: First flight for F-35C keeps Lockheed on track

Lockheed Martin's long-delayed F-35 flight-test programme faces a new level of pressure to perform this year, but so far the company is keeping on track. First flight of an F-35C test aircraft, featuring a 22% longer wing to land on aircraft carriers, ended successfully in Fort Worth, Texas on 6 June. With its 13.1m (42.9ft) wingspan, the carrier variant landed at 135kt (250km/h), compared with 150kt for the F-35's other two versions.

The milestone event came much later than originally planned. The aircraft - named CF-1 - ceremoniously "rolled out" nearly 11 months ago. But the US government approved a new schedule earlier this year, and CF-1's airborne debut is another sign that the flight-test programme is roughly adhering to a reduced series of goals.

15th June: Lockheed marks 1st supersonic flight by STOVL F-35B

Four months after completing the first vertical landing, the Lockheed Martin F-35B flight test fleet also has surpassed the sound barrier.

A 10 June test flight flown by US Marine Corps Lt Col Matt Kelly powered the BF-2 short take-off and vertical landing (STOVL) variant to Mach 1.07 at 30,000ft (9,150m).

The flight test demonstrates a key upgrade for the F-35B's two customers – the USMC and the UK Royal Air Force/Royal Navy. Their Boeing AV-8B and BAE Systems Harrier GR7/9s can land vertically, but lack supersonic speed.

22nd June 2010: Israel reports 'some progress' in JSF talks

Fresh talks between US and Israeli teams about the planned sale of Lockheed Martin's F-35 Joint Strike Fighter to the Israeli air force have resulted in some progress being made.

A senior Israeli air force source says that "there is a growing understanding" on the US side with regard to some of Israel's essential demands.

The source points to the possible integration of an Israeli-made electronic warfare pod into the F-35's EW suite. The USA has, however, refused an Israeli demand to allow it to equip its F-35s with an all-domestic EW system.