

Articles taken from Flight International magazine.

Monthly audits show F-35 production plagued by parts shortages

US government auditors monitoring the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter programme have warned that Lockheed Martin expects delays of aircraft deliveries will continue for at least another year.

The Defense Contracts Management Agency (DCMA) also has expressed fears Lockheed Martin will never fully recover, citing parts shortage trends indicating the F-35 assembly line in Fort Worth, Texas, "will not be able to achieve or sustain [full] rate production".

BAE starts work on UK's first Joint Strike Fighter

BAE Systems has begun manufacturing the aft fuselage for the UK's first Lockheed Martin F-35B Joint Strike Fighter, as a flight-test example of the type has moved closer to performing its first vertical landing.

Placed into a jig at BAE's Samlesbury site in Lancashire earlier this month, the structural frame for the F-35 will be completed in the third quarter of this year, the company says.

US Navy three-star nominated for top F-35 post

The US Navy's top aircraft buyer has been nominated to assume control of the Lockheed Martin F-35 Joint Strike Fighter programme as it begins to face a new level of public scrutiny.

Vice Adm David Venlet, commander of the Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR), must be confirmed by the Senate before he can take the position.

F-35B completes first hover test

Lockheed Martin has registered two more key test points for the F-35B short take-off and vertical landing version of the Joint Strike Fighter.

Test pilot Graham Tomlinson first decelerated the BF-1 test aircraft to a hover about 150ft (50m) above the runway at NAS Patuxent River, Maryland on 17 March. Then, on a separate flight later the same day, the aircraft was rotated on take-off in less than 300m and a speed of 100kt (185km/h).

F-35 test aircraft achieves first vertical landing

On March 19 Lockheed Martin achieved the first vertical landing in the F-35B flight test series, providing a timely boost for manufacturer as the programme faces a Congressional review over

cost overruns.

F-35 cost estimate grows up to nearly 90%

The US Department of Defense confirmed the cost estimate for F-35 Joint Strike Fighter procurement has leaped between 57% and 89% since contract award eight years ago.

The new estimate raises the average cost of the latest Lockheed Martin stealth fighter from \$59 million to between \$93 million and \$112 million, the DOD says. If adjusted for inflation over the programme's 30-year production plan, the average cost per aircraft grows to \$114 million to \$135 million.

The average cost is based on the DOD's plan to buy 2,443 operational F-35s through 2035.

Australian firm gets subcontract work on JSF

Lockheed Martin and US-based firm Marvin Engineering have signed a memorandum of understanding with Australian company Ferra Engineering to make parts for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.