
STATUS REPORT JOINT STRIKE FIGHTER

STATUS REPORT JSF, STILL MANY PROBLEMS TO OVERCOME

It was a crucial year for the JSF as the once promising program is now being observed with mixed feelings by the various partners. It's not just this very article that speaks about it, internationally seen there are almost too many reports. The specter of the soaring costs always occurs in ambitious projects and next to that we are also in a time of crisis. In other words, is it still affordable? Furthermore, everyone wonders if he can do what is promised and what the question: 'When will it ever be standing operational in the hangar?' Another aspect always is to ask the public to realize that the JSF is needed so support about the project will maintain.

RECENT DELIVERIES

Much depends on the delivery time and Lockheed-Martin Claimed for 2012 to double it's productivity as Compared to 2011 with 13 pieces to 30 pieces. These 30 pieces were 11 Conventional Take Off and Landing (CTOL) F-35A, 18 Short Takeoff / Vertical Landing (STOVL) F-35B and 1 Carrier Variant (CV) F-35C. Besides the one F-35C variant it were all production aircraft that are supplied to squadrons. The first two F-35B's were shipped to Great Britain and the USMC received it's first three F-35B so tactical operational training at Marine Corps Air Station Yuma Arizona could be commenced. As far as this it all seems to go in the right direction according to the factory.

PRODUCTION RUNS BEHIND

However, it was recently reported That A Turkish decision to purchase the aircraft has been postponed. This seems strange, Because Turkey is a large country with a large airforce where many aircraft are to Be Replaced, and the Turkish own arms industry is flourishing. In 2009 they wanted another 10 aircraft per year from the sixth series production (LRIP6), which was gradually reduced and now delayed. As reason for the delay the Defense Industry Executive Committee mentioned the rising cost and performance. Insiders suggest however, that Turkey waits until the United States show a more obvious course to sail.

It is generally expected that this year a correction will take place on the numbers to purchase. In case the numbers will firmly increase that will implicate that the price per aircraft will rise and that will also concern the foreign participating countries. Not only Turkey is hesitating, Italy last year also decided to reduce it's order for over the half with 40 aircraft. Australia considers to buy another series of Boeing Super Hornets at the expense of the purchase of the F-35. In december 2012 Canada decided to start viewing the total project once again and invited some five manufacturers to compete for an order in a totally new competition. All participating countries have delayed or reduced their orders compared to the original commitments. The reasons are mostly the disappointing test results.

MANY DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS

In particular the development of software is dramatically behind schedule and it looks like becoming the big bottleneck. The testing process of the complete project is only 35% complete and testing of the finished software as much as 23%. Even the very limited Block 1A software is only 66% complete. At this rate, the testing of the F-35 will at least take six years. Furthermore a number of promised performances definitely will not get it as we read all around like (acceleration, maneuverability, range), and this is actually the intention of the design itself. There is an overcapacity of stealth in the design, but this is at the expense of flying qualities. Current generation four fighter-jets will often prove to be superior.

However the stealth qualities will also remain more and more a topic of discussion. Counter stealth radars are in a developing phase (low band radar) and it is not clear how the balance will be in a decade time for example. What is already clear are the rising costs of the JSF with a doubling of the purchase price, an increase in operating costs, and delivery time increases almost 10 years (meanwhile for the USA from the estimated 2010 up to 2019 now). Due to the long time of delivery the first series F-35 will need costly major modifications by the time they will be delivered. Furthermore, there are reports of problems such as noise nuisance, weakness in construction due to weight reduction, functional helmet sight and refueling problems. Time will tell how the project goes, but in any case the U.S. Congress passes an important mark.

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