



F-35 Lightning II Program

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J P O S T A T E M E N T O N P A R A C H U T E P A C K I N G I R R E G U L A R I T Y

On 26 January, the F-35 Joint Program Office temporarily suspended high speed ground and flight operations at Edwards AFB, Calif., Eglin AFB, Fla. and Lockheed Martin's F-35 production facility in Fort Worth, Texas after discovering improperly packed parachutes in affected production and test aircraft.

The temporary suspension affects more than 15 aircraft that have received newer ejection seats. It does not apply to the 8 F-35 test aircraft at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Md., which have an earlier version of the ejection seat with the properly packed parachutes.

The Martin Baker Aircraft Corporation supplies the aircraft ejection seats and the apparent cause was due to improperly drafted packing procedures in the -21 and -23 ejection seats. The parachutes packed in the head boxes of these seats were reversed 180 degrees from design during installation. The Joint Program Office is working with Lockheed Martin and its subcontractors, Martin Baker and BAE Systems to expeditiously repack the parachutes. It is estimated to take about 10 days until the first set of repacked parachutes will be available.

Six F-35A jets at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., are affected. The six F-35A and the three F-35B aircraft at Eglin AFB, Fla., are affected, however, the aircraft there are currently only performing ground testing and this can continue. The parachutes on those jets will be repacked correctly prior to the first flight at Eglin. Aircraft in production at Fort Worth are also affected but their parachutes will be repacked prior to the first acceptance flights.

Periodic updates concerning this situation will be released as warranted.