



# F-35 Lightning II Program

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## AFFORDABILITY REMAINS PRIORITY FOR JOINT STRIKE FIGHTER PROGRAM

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By Jim Garamone -- American Forces Press Service

**WASHINGTON, April 25, 2013** – Affordability remains the priority for the F-35 Lightning II joint strike fighter, the Pentagon's program executive officer for the Defense Department's most expensive procurement told Congress yesterday.

Air Force Lt. Gen. Christopher C. Bogdan told the Senate Armed Services Committee's airland subcommittee that the program has made progress, but he acknowledged it is enormously complicated and has a ways to go. Sequestration complicates the acquisition as well, the general said.

"We must use all our energy finishing development within the time and money we have, we must continue to drive the cost of producing F-35s down, and we must start today to attack the long-term life cycle costs of the F-35 weapon system," Bogdan said in prepared testimony.

The F-35 comes in three variants and is being used by the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps. In addition, it will form the backbone of allied nations' airpower for decades to come, the general said. He called it a "dominant, multirole, fifth-generation aircraft."

The fiscal year 2014 budget request includes \$8.4 billion for continued system development, testing and procurement of 29 F-35 aircraft.

Twenty-nine F-35s are deployed in operational and training squadrons at three locations. The program is shifting from development to production and long-term sustainment.

F-35s flew 1,984 sorties for a total of 3,118 hours in 2012. Officials tested launching weapons from two of the variants last year and stood up the first operational F-35B Marine Corps squadron in Yuma Marine Corps Air Station, Ariz.

Sequestration has the potential either to stretch the development program out or reduce the capabilities warfighters can get, he said. Sequestration cuts funds for the program meaning development will be stretched out, causing the program to cost more in the long run. This will have impacts on international partners, he said.

"The increases may result in reduction of their aircraft quantities, which would, in turn, increase unit costs even more and cause them to relook their commitment to the program," Bogdan said.

Furloughs of civilian workers "will have immediate negative consequences," he added. It would cause a reduction in testing and could reduce productivity by a third, he explained.

Bogdan stressed that the basic aircraft design is sound.

"While there is still risk to the program, I have confidence in the resilience of the plan to absorb expected further learning and discovery, and stay on track, so long as it remains properly resourced," he said.