



F-35 Lightning II Program

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Citing changes to one of the Defense Department's most ambitious acquisition programs, F-35 Lightning II development is making steady progress, the F-35 Joint Program Executive Officer said here Sept. 17.

Air Force Lt. Gen. Christopher C. Bogdan told military and industry experts at the Air Force Association's 2013 Air & Space Conference and Technology Exposition that the program has changed for the better over recent years.

"A number of years ago there was not a great balance of risk between industry and the government," Bogdan said, noting that a year later, the progress, though accelerating, will still take time.

Among the improvements, Bogdan reported increases in flight testing, including plus-ups in testing locations and qualified personnel resulting in increased production.

"This program is slow because it is vast," he said. "Progress takes a lot of time, but time is something we don't have a whole lot of."

The general said he was confident the U.S. Air Force will have what it needs by 2016 to declare initial operating capability.

"I'm also confident that ... our Italian partners and our Israeli friends will get delivery of their airplanes."

Other changes include the establishment of a "cost war room," an industry-financed office, which Bogdan said integrates industry and government experts in manufacturing, supply-chain and cost-analysis to monitor and control costs.

Also essential to driving down costs, Bogdan said, is increased buy-in and support from partner nations.

The general cited an example that the Netherlands recently announced their commitment to purchase the fifth-generation fighter as replacement for their aging fleet of F-16s.

"When we buy more aircraft, the price per airplane comes down," Bogdan explained. "From a warfighting perspective, the ability for us to be side by side with our allies, flying the same aircraft with ... similar capabilities in an (area of responsibility), is a very powerful signal to the rest of the world that we are one team."



Lt. Gen. Christopher C. Bogdan leads a discussion about the requirements of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program at the Air Force Association's 2013 Air & Space Technology Exposition Sept. 17, 2013, in Washington, D.C. Bogdan is the program executive officer for the F-35 Lightning II Joint Program Office in Arlington, Va. (U.S. Air Force photo/Andy Morataya)