



# F-35 Lightning II Program

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## OFFICIALS TAP MAINTAINER IDEAS TO REDUCE F-35 COSTS

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**WASHINGTON** – The Pentagon will continue to seek aircraft maintainer suggestions and industry partner investments to reduce operating and sustainment costs by 10 to 20 percent as F-35 Lightning II joint strike fighter improvements develop, the undersecretary of defense for acquisition, technology and logistics said yesterday in a conference call with reporters.

Frank Kendall and Air Force Lt. Gen. Christopher C. Bogdan, F-35 Lightning II program executive officer, said they'll cull maintainer input to reduce downtime and look to industry to improve reliability and retain air dominance over competing nations.



Frank Kendall, undersecretary of defense for acquisition, talks with Air Force Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Goodwin, an F-35 crew chief with the 33rd Aircraft Maintenance Unit at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., June 10, 2014. Input from maintainers is helping to reduce costs for the F-35 Lightning II joint strike fighter program.  
*U.S. Air Force photo by 1st Lt. Hope R. Cronin*

The cost reductions, Kendall said, will be ongoing and will draw from a number of sources, to build on the F-35's capabilities.

"I don't think that's an unrealistic target, ... but I think doing everything we can to get as close to that as possible is absolutely the right course for us," he said.

Kendall explained the F-35 is designed for upgrades, including electronic warfare and processing capabilities. "We're starting to do some follow-on development, and we need to thinking now about the requirements for the next block of software," the undersecretary said.

Bogdan lauded aircraft maintainers, who offer myriad suggestions for ways to reduce overall costs. "The maintainers are a critical source of really good practical ways of doing business," he said, "and we've got to integrate that into the program."

He explained that maintainers have suggested ways to streamline even simple procedures such as having to check the oil on every flight. For example, maintainers indicated that manually correcting warning systems and updating maintenance records could reduce time on the ground and yield efficiencies.

"We have now been able to, through engineering analysis and working with the engine manufacturers, take that requirement to only every 10 hours," the general said.

Bogdan also noted that the Air Force's average F-35 downtime between flights was 4.5 hours last year and three hours this year, with even shorter down time projected for next year.

As Pentagon officials continue to compare DOD progress with that of the Chinese J-20 and J-31 stealth aircraft and their other capabilities, Kendall reported that he commissioned the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency for its air dominance initiative a year ago. The program, he said, helps the Pentagon assess whether or not to take a "system of systems" approach in aircraft improvements and better analyze how those systems network together.

“We need to start thinking now about the requirements for the next blocks of software ... after the things that are currently in Block 4,” Kendall said. “This is a game that never ends. You have to stay ahead, and there are competitors out there you have to worry about.”