



# F-35 Lightning II Program

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 11, 2014 – The F-35 Lightning II joint strike fighter program office announced today the European locations for heavy engine and heavy air frame maintenance, repair, overhaul and upgrade facilities.

"In the European region, F-35 initial air frame MROU capability will be provided by Italy by 2018," Air Force Lt. Gen. Christopher C. Bogdan told reporters.

Bogdan is the Program Executive Officer for the F-35 Lightning II Joint Program Office in Arlington, Virginia.

Italy has invested \$1 billion into a purpose-built final assembly and check-out facility for the F-35, he said.

"As Italy builds up their production capability at the FACO, there's an opportunity later on to add more production capacity to that FACO if other partners and the U.S. want to build their planes there," the general said. If the facility does shift toward production, Bogdan explained, the United Kingdom would be assigned to provide additional air frame depot capability.

Engine heavy maintenance will initially be provided by Turkey by 2018, he said, "with Norway and the Netherlands providing additional capability two to three years after Turkey's initial capability."

Test cells for engine heavy maintenance are "very expensive -- in the tens of millions of dollars," the general said, and no single partner or their industry was willing to invest in more than one test cell in their nation.

"That's a big risk for industry and that partner long-term to get the return on that investment," Bogdan said. Based on projections by the program office, at least three test cells were needed in order to build a sustainable program in Europe, he said.

### **Global Sustainment Posture**

The announcement is the next step in establishing a global sustainment posture for the aircraft, the general said, noting that he expects to announce the Pacific region locations next week. Regional assignments for components, systems repair, warehousing, support equipment and other global supply chain functions will begin next year, Bogdan added, eventually totaling hundreds of billions of dollars in potential work.

"There is much work still to be had on the F-35 global sustainment posture," he said, "and we will go through a similar process over the next few years of assigning that capability to those areas and those partners that provide us the best value for doing that kind of work."

Partner nations and countries participating in the foreign military sales program for the F-35 who also wish to be assigned MROU work are responsible for making the investments in their own infrastructure, the general said.

"Over time, the workload that gets sent to that partner nation is the way in which their industry can recoup that investment cost," Bogdan said.

### **Site Selection Process**

The final site determinations were made after the F-35 program office solicited and evaluated proposals from nations interested in being assigned heavy engine or heavy airframe work, he said.

A site survey team visited each nation that responded, the general said, and the evaluations and site visits were used to compile a list of recommended locations for review by the Defense Department.

DoD's final decision took into consideration a number of factors in addition to the recommendations by the program office, Bogdan said, including geography, operational necessity and the expected distribution of aircraft.

### **Multiple Sites Guarantee Flexibility**

Each nation that sets up a regional capability is guaranteed to always receive a workload that is equivalent to the number of aircraft it purchases, the general said. But as basing decisions change over time, he added, the additional regionally assigned workloads may shift based on who can provide the best value given past performance.

"We will probably look at this on a two- to three-year basis," he said, adding that cost is not the only consideration in determining best value.

"When you look at a best value type of arrangement, you're looking at quality of the work, you're looking at delivery schedule and are they meeting [it], and you're looking at cost," Bogdan said.

The site decisions will have no effect on where the F-35 is based, the general said.

"Those decisions are made at the DoD level for reasons other than this," he said. "The reason why we're standing up capability in all three regions is to provide the partners and the U.S. the freedom of maneuver and the freedom of action to base the plane anywhere they want globally and still have access to the kinds of support we need to keep the F-35 fleet going."