



F-35 Lightning II Program

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WASHINGTON, April 15, 2015 – Despite its numerous setbacks, the F-35 Lightning II joint strike fighter program is on the right track to meet aircraft delivery deadlines, the program's executive officer told a House Armed Services Committee panel yesterday.

Air Force Lt. Gen. Christopher C. Bogdan updated members of the committee's tactical air and land forces subcommittee on the F-35 program as part of the president's fiscal year 2016 budget request.

Slow, Steady Progress

"Our overall assessment is we're making slow but steady progress on all fronts, and each day, the program is improving," Bogdan said. "This is not to say that we don't have some risks, challenges and difficulties, but I'm confident we'll be able to overcome these problems and deliver on our commitments."

That progress covers development, flight training, production, maintenance and the standup of the global sustainment enterprise, he said.

Bogdan also said the program is nearing completion of its flight testing to field initial warfighting capabilities, even though certain software issues and other issues have created delays.

Setbacks, Accomplishments in 2014

"The last year also presented [some] failures," Bogdan said, citing an engine failure at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, and the discovery of cracks in the F-35's B-model bulkhead during durability testing. "We're working hard to bring this schedule delay back in on time and we don't believe it will impact [delivery to the services]," he added.

Bogdan cited the F-35's accomplishments in the last year.

Initial sea trials aboard the USS Nimitz for the F-35C model produced "excellent" performance results, Bogdan said, and production of the F-35 went according to plan.

Delivered as Promised

"We planned on delivering 36 [aircraft in 2014], and delivered 36 to our warfighters," Bogdan said. "We have now delivered a total of 130 aircraft to our operational test and training sites."

The production line is running about two months behind, the general acknowledged, but he added that the process is catching up and said the delay does not pose any long-term schedule or delivery risks to the program.

"We intend to continue leading the program with integrity, discipline, transparency and accountability," Bogdan told panel members. "We will hold ourselves and our program team accountable for the outcomes of this program."