Boeing Completes Final Design Review For X-32 Joint Strike Fighter

The Boeing Company Joint Strike Fighter Program has reached a significant milestone by completing a Final Design Review of its X-32 concept demonstration aircraft with the U.S. Defense Department's JSF Joint Program Office.

"We met all design requirements and closure criteria for the X-32," said Frank Statkus, Boeing vice president and JSF program manager. "We are clearly continuing down a path of strong performance."

Details of the airframe, propulsion, subsystems and support systems, and flight testing plans are now being finalized.

Boeing is building two X-32s, each of which will fly in 2000 as part of a Joint Program Office demonstration focused on critical design characteristics. The X-32A will demonstrate how the Boeing JSF meets the U.S. Air Force's need for an aircraft that operates from conventional airfields, and the U.S. Navy's need for one that operates from aircraft carriers. The X-32B will demonstrate the unique short-takeoff and vertical-landing capabilities required by the U.S. Marine Corps and U.K. Royal Navy.

Manufacturing and assembly of both models at sites in Seattle, St. Louis and Palmdale, Calif., are ahead of schedule.

The basic structure for the X-32A's forebody is complete and subsystems installation in St. Louis has begun. Assembly of the X-32B's forebody recently began nearly three months ahead of schedule.

"Lean design and manufacturing approaches using 3-D solid-model design and assembly simulation tools have let us perform beyond even our own high expectations," Statkus said.

For example, virtual reality was used to design and verify structural designs and manufacturing processes in record time without having to produce expensive prototype hardware.

In Palmdale, Calif., "shared" tooling first used for assembly of the X-32A mid-fuselage recently was repositioned for X-32B mid-fuselage assembly nearly four months ahead of schedule. Also, Boeing recently delivered its first single-unit composite wing skin to its Palmdale site, where wing assembly and final assembly will take place.

While work on its concept demonstrators proceeds, Boeing continues to refine its design for its Preferred Weapon System Concept -- the operational Joint Strike Fighter.

Boeing recently announced the founding members of its JSF Industry Team: the U.K.'s Flight Refuelling Ltd., Marconi Electronic Systems, Messier-Dowty Ltd. and Rolls-Royce plc, as well as U.S.-based Raytheon Systems Co. and Pratt & Whitney.

Boeing is competing to build the operational JSF under a four-year joint U.S. Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps and U.K. Royal Navy-sponsored concept demonstration contract. The government is scheduled to select a winner in 2001.

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