Boeing JSF X-32A Completes Low- and Medium-Speed Taxi Tests

The Boeing X-32A Joint Strike Fighter concept demonstrator yesterday drew another step closer to first flight with the successful completion of initial low- and medium-speed taxi tests. The taxi tests verified function and integration of aircraft systems, including steering, braking, engine controls and flight-control surfaces when the airplane is in motion.

"The engine and all on-board systems performed just as we had expected, based on the static tests we completed in April," said Boeing X-32 flight test manager Ad Thompson. "The aircraft performed so well at 30 knots, that we were able to move directly to the medium-speed taxi test at 55 knots."

Test engineers stayed in constant contact with the pilot while keeping close watch on the aircraft's instrumentation from their control room.

"Acceleration, steering and braking were all smooth as the aircraft went through its paces," Thompson said. "While these taxi tests are clearly important milestones toward first flight, our focus is not on any one single flight, but on successfully completing the entire flight-test program," Thompson added. "We will fly when we're ready to move forward to execute the full flight-test program."

The aircraft and all its systems must be certified flight-ready prior to the high-speed taxi test. Data from the test will be used by the government to verify that the aircraft is ready to proceed to high-speed taxi tests.

Boeing, the world's largest producer of fighter aircraft, is competing to build the JSF under a four-year U.S. Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps concept demonstration contract, while also defining the design for the operational JSF.

A winner is scheduled to be selected in 2001.

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