Boeing JSF Showing Significant Producibility Improvements, Stonecipher Says

Boeing has made unprecedented advances during assembly of its X-32 Joint Strike Fighter concept demonstration aircraft that are the direct result of the company's "design anywhere, build anywhere" philosophy, according to Boeing President and Chief Operating Officer Harry Stonecipher.

"There are about 80 percent fewer defects in the X-32 than in the equivalent build of the YF-22," Stonecipher said, "and overall the X-32 is costing 75 percent less than our YF-22 and F-22 experience." His comments were part of a recent speech to a technology conference sponsored by Air Force Material Command.

The cost savings Boeing is verifying in this phase of the JSF competition result from the design and assembly processes to be used later in the program. By demonstrating these processes now, rather than relying on conventional methods of fabricating a concept aircraft, Boeing is able to offer a high cost-confidence factor to the government.

Following its merger with McDonnell Douglas and the acquisition of Rockwell North American, Boeing quickly established a highly integrated relationship among its JSF sites. The common processes and open communication instilled up front were critical to making the multi-site approach a success.

Stonecipher noted that the decision to demonstrate design anywhere, build anywhere has allowed the Boeing JSF One Team of suppliers to utilize its best and brightest people -- no matter where they work -- leveraging their combined design and manufacturing skills to ensure the Boeing JSF demonstrates its operational and cost requirements. Advanced concepts demonstrated during the current JSF phase include CATIA 3D solid modeling and simulation, a common design database for all team engineers, virtual reality, laser-guided and simplified tooling and integrated computer-aided measurement systems.

"Our use of these technologies has allowed us to do all kinds of things differently in building this next-generation concept demonstrator," Stonecipher said. "We assembled the first X-32, which will fly later this summer, in just over 52 weeks with 58 people. And in just six hours we attached its unique, one-piece composite wing to the fuselage."

Boeing is already expanding JSF technologies and processes to other programs such as Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles and the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet, and will continue to leverage them on military, space and commercial programs, such as 777 derivatives. Additionally, they will be improved beyond JSF before they are rolled back into the next phase of the program -- engineering and manufacturing development.

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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