

F-35 PROGRAM MEETS 2015 DELIVERY GOAL OF 45 AIRCRAFT

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The F-35 program achieved its 2015 delivery target of 45 aircraft, the F-35 Joint Program Office has announced.

Forty-four of the jets were delivered from prime contractor Lockheed Martin's Fort Worth facility, while one jet was delivered from the Cameri production line in Italy. The delivery of 45 F-35s – the milestone aircraft was a US Air Force F-35A, AF-84 – represents a 25 per cent increase on the 36 jets handed over in 2014.

“Meeting aircraft production goals is a critical stepping stone in demonstrating the program is ready for the expected significant production ramp up,” Lt Gen Chris Bogdan, F-35 program executive officer, said in a statement.

“It took thousands of people around the world to achieve this milestone and they should all be proud of what they accomplished.”

The 45 F-35 deliveries for 2015 comprised:

- 26 F-35As for the US Air Force
- 2 F-35As for the Royal Norwegian Air Force (Norway's first two F-35s)

- 1 F-35A for Italy's Aeronautica Militare (the first delivery from the Italian final assembly line)
- 8 F-35Bs for the US Marine Corps; and
- 8 F-35Cs for the US Navy/US Marine Corps

"Delivering the most F-35s in program history is a clear demonstration of our growing maturity and stability," Lorraine Martin, Lockheed Martin's outgoing F-35 program general manager, said in a statement.

To date 154 production F-35s have been delivered to six nations – including Australia's first two jets – since 2011. They have flown more than 45,000 hours and 16,000 sorties, Lockheed Martin says.

The production milestone tops a significant year for the program in which the F-35 was also declared combat-capable after the US Marine Corps declared Initial Operating Capability (IOC) with the F-35B on July 31.

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