JOBY DELIVERS FIRST EVTOL AIRCRAFT TO EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE AHEAD OF SCHEDULE

News / Manufacturer

Joby Aviation has delivered its first aircraft to Edwards Air Force Base approximately six months ahead of the expected 2024 delivery date. On-base operations with Joby aircraft will be used to demonstrate a range of logistics missions, including cargo and passenger transportation, and will be operated by both Joby and U.S. Air Force personnel. In partnership with the U.S. Air Force, NASA will also use the aircraft for research focused on how these aircraft could fit into the national airspace, benefiting the entire air taxi industry.

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Joby aircraft, which has already begun flying at Edwards AFB, is the first electric air taxi to be stationed on a U.S. military base and is believed to be the first delivery of an electric air taxi in the U.S., as part of Joby's $131 million AFWERX Agility Prime contract with the U.S. Air Force. Joby's current and previously completed work with the Department of Defense represents a total potential contract value of $163 million, the largest in the industry. The Agility Prime contract includes the provisioning of up to nine aircraft to the U.S. Air Force and other federal agencies, reinforcing the U.S. government's continued leadership in developing and adopting eVTOL technology, and ushering in a new era of electric aviation. A second aircraft is planned to be delivered to Edwards in early 2024.

The aircraft, which was the first built on Joby Pilot Production Line in Marina, CA, will be stationed at Edwards Air Force Base for at least the next year, with charging and ground support equipment provided on-base by Joby in a facility purpose-built by the Air Force for joint flight test operations. The U.S. Air Force and Joby will conduct joint flight testing and operations to demonstrate the aircraft's capabilities in realistic mission settings. On-base operations will also include the training of Air Force pilots and aircraft maintenance crews, which will provide the DOD with valuable insight into the performance of eVTOL aircraft and will give Joby on-the-ground operational and training experience as the company prepares for the launch of commercial passenger service in 2025.

JoeBen Bevirt, Founder and CEO of Joby, commented: "We're proud to join the ranks of revolutionary aircraft that first demonstrated their capabilities at Edwards Air Force Base, including the first American jet fighter, the first supersonic aircraft, and many others that have pushed the boundaries of aviation technology. The longstanding support of the DOD and NASA has been critical to the rapid development of electric aviation and eVTOL aircraft, and demonstrates how successful public-private partnerships can bring new technology to life at speed. Their work will have profound implications for continued American leadership in both commercial and defense aerospace technology."

Joby's partnership with the DOD dates back to its 2016 engagement with the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU), which granted the company early funding as well as access to test ranges and expertise that have aided its aircraft development program.

Col Elliott Leigh, AFWERX director and Chief Commercialization Officer for the Department of the Air Force, said: "Agility Prime' stated objective in 2020 was to work towards an operational capability for transformative vertical lift in the DoD by 2023. The arrival of Joby's aircraft at Edwards AFB is an important step towards achieving this objective."

"The delivery of this first eVTOL aircraft is the start of a new chapter in Edwards' rich aerospace history," notes Maj Phillip Woodhull, director, Emerging Technologies Integrated Test Force. "This partners private industry with the 412th Test Wing's world-renowned test management execution. We are excited to agilely test, experiment with, and evaluate this new technology for potential future national defense applications."

In partnership with the U.S. Air Force's AFWERX program, NASA will also be supporting this testing at Edwards Air Force Base with NASA's pilots, researchers, and equipment as part of their commitment to advancing the Advanced Air Mobility industry as a whole, for the benefit of all. NASA's Armstrong Flight Research Center is located on Edwards Air Force Base, and has a long history of supporting important technological milestones in aviation and space – supersonic and hypersonic flight, digital fly-by-wire control systems, and the space shuttles.

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“NASA’s participation in the Joby and AFWERX project will provide our researchers with hands-on experience with a representative eVTOL vehicle, concentrated on how these types of aircraft could fit into the national airspace for everyday use, that will inform NASA’s effort in supporting the entire eVTOL industry,” said NASA research pilot Wayne Ringelberg. “The research will include a focus on handling qualities evaluation tools, autonomy, and airspace integration, which is all needed research to push the industry forward.”

Over the past year, the U.S. Air Force and Marines have made multiple visits to Joby’s manufacturing and flight test facilities in Marina, CA. Four U.S. Air Force pilots completed full remotely-piloted transition flights of the Joby aircraft in April, and two groups of Marines visited in May to conduct mission analysis regarding potential logistics and medical applications of the aircraft. With a range of up to 100 miles plus energy reserves and a top speed of 200 mph, the Joby aircraft is capable of transporting a pilot and four passengers quickly and quietly with zero operating emissions.

25 SEPTEMBER 2023

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