

News story: From Lancashire to Texas: 10% production milestone achieved for F-35 Lightning II fighter jets

The 318th rear section for an F-35 Lightning II combat jet has rolled off the BAE Systems production line in Samlesbury, Lancashire meaning that 10% of the global requirement has now been produced.

The aft fuselage is the back part of the state-of-the-art aircraft's main body and with more than 3,000 aircraft currently on order it is estimated that 25,000 jobs will be sustained across the UK by more than 500 companies in the supply chain when at peak production.

The rear section has now transferred from BAE Systems' advanced manufacturing suite to Lockheed Martin's Final Assembly and Check Out line in Fort Worth, Texas to be connected with other major assemblies to become one of three aircraft variants. The 318th aft fuselage in particular will form part of a UK 'B' model variant of the combat jet.

This variant has the short take-off and vertical landing capability which makes it ideal for Britain's new Queen Elizabeth Class (QEC) aircraft carriers. With HMS Queen Elizabeth set to enter her new home in Portsmouth imminently, the F-35B jets are on track to make their first flight trials from her deck next year.

The F-35 programme is the world's largest single defence programme, and as a key partner, the UK has been working closely with the US from the outset.

Minister for Defence Procurement Harriett Baldwin, said:

This is an important milestone and the latest example of how the F-35 programme is benefitting the UK's defence industry, creating thousands of jobs and helping to keep Britain safer and more secure.

Britain is a leading partner in the development of the F-35, supporting not just the aircraft that will operate from RAF Marham and our two new Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers, but also the thousands of jets that will serve our allies around the world.

Andrea Thompson, F-35 Lightning II Director for BAE Systems Military Air & Information, said:

Reaching the 10% mark of production on the F-35 programme shows how far we have come, but also highlights that there is an enormous

amount of work still to do.

With an order book of more than 3,000 aircraft for the global F-35 fleet, the investments we are making in our advanced manufacturing facilities are key to ensuring we continue to deliver on our commitments.

To add to this, we are also working closely with our supply chain to ensure they are equipped to meet the ramp up in production at the same time as delivering against our existing commitments.

Eric Branyan, vice president of F-35 Supply Chain Management for Lockheed Martin said:

BAE Systems is a valued partner on the F-35 program, and we congratulate them on this significant milestone. The United Kingdom is the F-35 program's only tier one partner and the work of BAE Systems and other in-country suppliers has a significant positive impact on the UK economy. We look forward to many more years of partnering to deliver the most advanced and capable 5th generation fighter jet to our allies around the world.

BAE Systems is responsible for 15% of the work on each aircraft including every aft fuselage as well as other mission critical systems for the F-35 Lightning II programme.

The first operational Lightning II squadrons will be the RAF's 617 Squadron (The Dambusters) and 809 Naval Air Squadron. Combined with the QEC aircraft carriers they will transform the UK's ability to project influence overseas.

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FROM

LANCASHIRE TO TEXAS: 10% PRODUCTION MILESTONE ACHIEVED FOR F-35 LIGHTNING II FIGHTER JETS

British engineers working on combat jets for the UK's new aircraft carriers have reached a key production milestone.

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[Speech: HMS Queen Elizabeth,](#) [Portsmouth: Theresa May’s Speech](#)

It is a great pleasure to be here with you aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth today. Let me start by thanking you all, a great partnership of ship’s company and contractors, for your tremendous work putting this great ship through her paces during her sea trials. I know it’s been a major undertaking.

This is the biggest and most complex warship ever built for the Royal Navy.

So to test her capabilities thoroughly, and to make sure that her 17 million components are working as they should, is a very big job. The fact that she was ready to come in to port ahead of schedule is testament to your hard work.

As the first generation of sailors to form this ship's company, you have a special privilege and responsibility. You are setting the standard for those who come after you. Decades from now, when this ship is carrying our flag around the world, protecting our interests and ensuring our security, you will be able to look back on this time with pride. And the whole country is proud of you. The skill and professionalism of the Royal Navy are world-renowned. Your service is critical to our country's security and success in the world. In doing your vital work, you and your families are often called upon to make enormous sacrifices.

I know that you make them unstintingly and that you always give of your best. Britain truly has the best sailors, marines and officers in the world and I believe that you deserve the very best equipment. That is what we have with HMS Queen Elizabeth. This ship is a symbol of the United Kingdom as a great global, maritime nation.

Clearly, she is a stunning piece of twenty-first century engineering and a true testament to British shipbuilding and design. Six shipyards from across the United Kingdom contributed sections of this vessel. In Glasgow, Devon, Tyneside, Merseyside, Portsmouth and Fife, the skill of British shipbuilders were on display in her construction. Over 10,000 people, including 800 apprenticeships, 700 businesses helped build the mighty ship we see today. We are determined to build on the success of the Queen Elizabeth class carriers with a National Shipbuilding Strategy to open up new opportunities for our great British shipyards in the future.

Britain can be proud of this ship, and what it represents. It sends a clear signal that as Britain forges a new, positive, confident role for ourselves on the world stage in the years ahead, we are determined to remain a fully engaged global power, working closely with our friends and allies around the world.

As a leading member of NATO, the foremost military power in Europe and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, Britain has an enduring responsibility to help sustain the international rules-based order, and to defend the liberal values which underpin it.

To ensure we can do so effectively, we will increase defence spending every year and continue to meet NATO's target to spend 2% of GDP on defence. Our carrier programme is an example of what that spending can deliver. As highly versatile and potent assets, they will be able to meet the widest range of challenges around the world. Whether the task be high intensity war fighting, targeted action to fight terrorism or humanitarian relief to save lives overseas, these ships will transform the UK's ability to project power around the world.

Alongside her supporting task-group, including state-of-the-art aircraft,

helicopters and escorts, HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales will in time give the UK a truly world class carrier strike capability for decades to come. Here in Portsmouth, the home of the Royal Navy and the new home of this great ship, we are surrounded by reminders of the Royal Navy's proud past. It was from this harbour that Nelson embarked aboard HMS Victory before the battle of Trafalgar; from here the allied forces left for the Normandy beaches to defeat fascism on D-day; and from here that the task-force set sail for the South Atlantic to liberate the Falklands.

Many times in our history we have called upon the Royal Navy to defend our island and protect our interests and those of our citizens around the world. The threats we face may have changed, and naval technology advanced beyond all recognition. But in the fifty years of service to come from this vessel, we can be inspired by those traditions to face the new challenges of the twenty-first century with the same determination and resolve which have always been the Royal Navy's hallmarks.

I hope that you can all enjoy some respite before you take the ship out of harbour again for the next phase of her sea trials, and let me once again thank you all for your service to our country.

Press release: HMS Queen Elizabeth makes debut in Portsmouth

Greeted by thousands of people lining the Portsmouth seafront, the 65,000-tonne carrier was met with the warmest of welcomes as she arrived in her home port this morning.

Sailors lined the flight deck of the largest warship ever built for the Royal Navy as she passed Portsmouth's Round Tower. HMS Queen Elizabeth was also greeted with a flypast from the Fleet Air Arm, including Wildcat and Merlin helicopters and Hawk jets.

Secretary of State for Defence Sir Michael Fallon said:

Today we welcome our mighty new warship, HMS Queen Elizabeth to her home for the very first time. She is Britain's statement to the world: a demonstration of British military power and our commitment to a bigger global role.

The thousands of people across the UK who have played a part in building her and her sister ship, HMS Prince of Wales, should be immensely proud as our future flagship enters Portsmouth. She has made good progress in sea trials and will now embark on the next phase of preparations that will see the return of Britain's carrier

strike ability.

When she enters service she will help keep Britain safe at a time of increased threats, able to fill multiple roles from providing air power anywhere at any time to fight future campaigns, supporting allies or delivering humanitarian aid.

The Carrier programme has brought together the best of British industry, with construction taking place across six cities and involving more than 10,000 people. This includes 700 businesses and suppliers, 800 apprentices and nearly 8,000 jobs at shipyards around the UK.

The UK has 11 state-of-the-art F-35 Lightning II jets and 120 UK personnel training in the United States. By the end of this year that will be 14 jets, with trial flights from the carrier's deck on track to begin next year.

Captain Jerry Kyd, the Commanding Officer of HMS Queen Elizabeth, said:

HMS Queen Elizabeth's first entry into her home port of Portsmouth is an historic, proud and exciting occasion, not only for those of us serving in her, but also for the wider Royal Navy, the city of Portsmouth and the entire nation.

The UK's future flagship, as well her sister ship HMS Prince of Wales, will be powerful symbols of Britain's outward facing global character and ambition. The Royal Navy has a very special relationship with Portsmouth dating back half a millennium and both carriers will ensure the Navy's city remains the focal point of our great nation's maritime power for generations to come.

The ship will berth at the newly-named and upgraded Princess Royal Jetty at Her Majesty's Naval Base Portsmouth, which will be home to both of the Royal Navy's new aircraft carriers. The second, HMS Prince of Wales, will be officially named in a ceremony at Rosyth next month.

The berth has been upgraded and strengthened to support the carriers as part of a £100 million raft of infrastructure upgrades which took place ahead of the arrival of the ship.

A total of 3.2 million cubic metres of sediment, equivalent to 1,280 Olympic swimming pools has been removed from the harbour and approach channel, making it wide and deep enough to accommodate the enormous 65,000 tonne ships.

Sir Peter Gershon, Chairman of the Aircraft Carrier Alliance, said:

I am incredibly proud to witness HMS Queen Elizabeth arrive at her home port of Portsmouth Naval Base having successfully completed the first phase of her sea trials programme.

Over 10,000 people have come together to bring HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales to life, from early design to the magnificent ships they are today. It is thanks to their industrious endeavours and pride that we have achieved this historic moment in the programme to bring HMS Queen Elizabeth into service.

We're excited to complete the remainder of her test and commissioning programme before delivering her to the Royal Navy by the end of the year.

Leading Airman Liam Forgeron, 28, from Portchester, is an aircraft handler on board HMS Queen Elizabeth. He said:

Being a local lad, I am extremely proud that Portsmouth will now be the base port for the nation's future flagship.

The historic port has a long and proud association with the Royal Navy and the arrival of HMS Queen Elizabeth will cement this relationship for a further 50 years. As a Royal Navy aircraft handler, serving on board this mighty vessel is a real honour, as I too get to make history in my home town.

Both aircraft carriers are being delivered by the Aircraft Carrier Alliance, a partnership between the Ministry of Defence and industry.

Carrier Key Facts

- Each carrier weighs 65,000 tonnes and is 280 metres in length.
- Top speed is upwards of 25 knots.
- The carriers will have a crew of around 700, increasing to 1,600 when a full complement of F-35B aircraft and four Crowsnest helicopters are embarked.
- The flight deck is 70 metres wide and 280 metres long – enough space for three football pitches
- Each carrier keeps 45 days' worth of food in its stores.
- Each carrier is made up of 17 million parts.
- There are 364,000 metres of pipes inside each of the Ships.

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Notes to Editors

- Imagery is available at Defence Imagery
- For more information contact the MOD News Desk on 0207 218 7907 or Royal Navy communications officer Sam Bannister on 023 9262 5256 or email sam.bannister@royalnavymail.mod.uk.
- For the latest news follow us on Twitter at @DefenceHQ.
- Keep up with news and updates from the Royal Navy and Royal Marines by following @RoyalNavy on Twitter.

A400M draws attention at Mobility Guardian

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A Royal Air Force A400M Atlas is being put through its paces as never before as it takes part in Exercise Mobility Guardian in the United States.

The airlift aircraft has been transporting military vehicles, delivering aid relief and flying aeromedical evacuation sorties in an intensive series of exercise scenarios designed to improve interoperability between the 31 nations taking part.

Wing Commander Ed Horne Officer Commanding LXX Squadron. He said: "We've brought the A400 with us to conduct tactical air land missions. What this means is we're picking up troops and equipment and taking them around the area of responsibility and into places to support the exercise scenario."



"The exercise is a really excellent stepping stone for us as we build more and more tactical capabilities on to the aircraft. Working here with the USAF, and in particular alongside the C-17 crews, is something we just wouldn't be able to replicate in the UK, either for real or in the synthetic environment at RAF Brize Norton."

Personnel from a number of other units are also participating at Joint Base Lewis McChord near Seattle. These include 47 Air Despatch Royal Logistic Corps, No. 2 Squadron RAF Regiment, 1 Tactical Police Squadron and Tactical Medical Wing.

During the exercise the A400 has transported a variety of US Army vehicles including a 19-ton Stryker Commander Vehicle. The aircraft has also flown aeromedical evacuation flights with multi-national aeromed teams.



Wg

Cdr Horne: "The A400 was configured right from the start for aeromed missions, we're clearing more and more aeromedical equipment onto the aircraft. This is the first time we'll have done any aeromed tasking on an exercise although the aircraft has been used for real with stretcher patients in the UK previously."

Flight

Lieutenant Dave Ellis is an A400 pilot. He explained the benefits of the exercise from his perspective: "One of the big advantages is being able to discover just what the A400 is capable of. It also provides a great opportunity to train.

"For

example, prior to the exercise only one of the pilots that we brought with us was night vision qualified but as a result of this exercise we've been able to qualify four more something we can't achieve during UK summertime".



The

distinctive shape of the A400 has stood out on the vast aircraft pans at McChord Airfield. "There's a great deal of interest in the Atlas, particularly from the C-17 and C-130 crews who have been on to the aircraft to look around explained Wg Cdr Horne. "The aircraft they operate are now quite old and of course ours is very new so they're very excited about the different functionality the A400 has."

Editor: Wg Cdr Dylan Eklund

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