

Individual commitment to a group effort – that is what makes a team work,  
a company work, a society work, a civilization work. - Vince Lombardi

# The Bulletin

Worldwide  
Defense Aviation  
Industry News

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## NORTH, CENTRAL, AND SOUTH AMERICA

• **\$11.8 Billion F-35 Order:** The U.S. Department of Defense awarded Lockheed Martin an \$11.8 billion contract for Lot 18 full-rate production of the F-35 Lightning II fighter. Aircraft potentially to be delivered in this lot include 145 jets of various variants. However, with the contract still undefinitized, the cost and potentially even the scope of the full order could change in near future, pending final approval of the 2025 defense budget.

• **Growler's New Jammer in the Works:** The U.S. Navy awarded Raytheon, a subsidiary of RTX, a \$560 million contract to continue development of the Next Generation Jammer Mid-Band (NGJ-MB) system, consisting of two electronically scanned arrays that radiate signals to jam mid-band frequencies. Designed for installation on the Boeing EA-18G Growler, the NGJ-MB will replace the existing ALQ-99 jammer and advance the aircraft's electronic warfare capabilities.

• **HADES Cleared to Proceed:** The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) cleared the Sierra Nevada Corporation (SNC) to begin building a new intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) aircraft under the High Accuracy Detection and Exploitation System (HADES) program. This follows a review initiated after L3Harris protested the U.S. Army's decision to award SNC the contract to develop the aircraft.

• **Argentina's First F-16:** The Argentine Air Force received the first delivery of an ex-Danish General Dynamics F-16B Fighting Falcon fighter jet. In April, Denmark agreed to sell Argentina twenty-four retired jets, breaking the deadlock that has plagued Argentina's defense force for decades. Following the Falklands War in the early 1980s, the country faced difficulties purchasing military aircraft due to sanctions, and the F-16s mark the first fighters it has received since that time.

• **Osprey Grounded Again:** The U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy suspended flights of Bell-Boeing V-22 Ospreys for a period between December 9 and 20, following a mishap that led to an emergency landing on November 20. A problem with the VTOL aircraft's gearbox was found to have caused the incident, and additional restrictions have been placed on flight hours of particular gearboxes.

• **Bell Showcases Folding Rotors:** Bell unveiled plans for a new series of runway-independent aircraft with lift rotor blades that fold away in flight to optimize aerodynamics for increased speed. The company intends to build both manned and unmanned aircraft featuring this design, with wind tunnel tests of one model already completed, and development of a flight demonstrator in progress.

• **Andruil and Archer VTOL Partnership:** Andruil Industries and Archer Aviation announced entering an exclusive partnership to collaborate on an advanced hybrid-propulsion, vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) aircraft to meet program requirements stated by the U.S. Department of Defense. In August 2024, Archer delivered one of its Midnight aircraft to the U.S. Air Force for evaluation.

• **A New Look at the Bomber Fleet:** U.S. Air Force General Thomas Bussiere, the head of Air Force Global Strike Command, has stated that the Air Force's target for fielding 220 bombers after the B-21 enters service needs to be reassessed. This statement is made in the context of growing demand for strategic bombers and a lack of bombers in U.S. allies' and partners' air force fleets.

• **Maritime Patrol Millenium:** The Brazilian Air Force and Embraer signed an agreement to study the use of Embraer's C-390 Millennium midsize transport aircraft in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) missions. Reportedly under discussion is the possibility of developing a maritime patrol aircraft (MPA) based on the C-390. The Millenium recently has gained notable commercial success, with purchase by multiple countries.

## EUROPE & THE MIDDLE EAST

• **Austria Selects the Master:** The Austrian Ministry of Defense announced selection of the Italian-made Leonardo M-346FA Master as the country's next advanced trainer. The jets will fill the gap left by retirement of Saab 105s from the Austrian Air Force. Austria plans to purchase twelve M-346FAs in a deal that may total up to \$1.04 billion (€1 billion).

• **Europe's Last Fishbeds Retire:** The Croatian Air Force is retiring its aged fleet of MiG-21 Fishbed fighters, the last of its kind to fly for European nations. Croatia is in the process of replacing these Cold War-era jets with French-made Dassault Rafales.

• **France to Resurrect Drone Demonstrator:** France's Dassault is planning to restore nEUORn, an unmanned demonstrator aircraft previously used to research autonomous flight technology. The drone, which first flew in 2012, may play a part in Dassault's own new Loyal Wingman program, announced earlier this year.

## ASIA & OCEANIA

• **China's Sixth-Generation Fighter Jets?:** Multiple photos and videos of two different yet-to-be-identified aircraft have emerged from China. Both aircraft appear to be tailless and exhibit stealthy design features, looking strikingly similar to renderings of sixth-generation fighter jets under development in the United States and Europe. The authenticity of the images cannot be confirmed, and the Chinese government has not commented. However, if genuine, these images might depict successful flight tests of sixth-generation combat aircraft prototypes.

• **Korean Helicopters for Iraq:** The government of Iraq signed a \$93.7 million contract with Korea Aerospace Industries (KAI) for two KUH-1 Surion utility helicopters, becoming the first export customer of this rotorcraft. The deal also includes specialized firefighting equipment, as well as pilot and maintenance training.

• **Boeing to Upgrade Japan's F-15s:** The U.S. Air Force awarded Boeing a \$450.5 million contract to fulfill Japan's Super Interceptor Program, an initiative to upgrade the avionics systems of the F-15J fleet of the Japan Self-Defense Air Force. The aircraft are to be outfitted with new radars, sensors, and electronics, with the work scheduled to be completed in 2030.

• **Portugal Goes for Tucanos:** The Portuguese government signed a \$208 million (€200 million) contract with Brazil's Embraer for twelve A-29N Super Tucano light attack aircraft. This specific version of the EMB 314 Tucano incorporates avionics and munitions systems tailored to meet North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) standards.

• **Spain Orders More Eurofighters:** The Spanish government signed a contract with NATO Eurofighter and Tornado Agency (NETMA) for twenty-five new Eurofighter Typhoon multirole fighters. The deliveries, slated for between 2030 and 2035, will expand Spain's Eurofighter fleet to 115 jets.

• **Tempest and F-X Merged:** The United Kingdom's BAE Systems, Italy's Leonardo, and Japan Aircraft Industrial Enhancement announced creation of a new venture to work on the Global Combat Air Program (GCAP), a joint effort to develop a sixth-generation fighter jet. The move signifies the formal merging of BAE's Tempest and Mitsubishi F-X, two separate programs that the United Kingdom and Japan agreed to join in 2022.

• **Japan Chooses Texan II:** The Japan Self-Defense Air Force selected the Beechcraft T-6 Texan II as its new basic trainer aircraft. The T-6 was chosen over the Swiss-made Pilatus PC-7 MKX and Turkey's TAI Hürkus. It is due to replace Japan's fleet of domestically produced Fuji T-7 trainers in the 2030s.

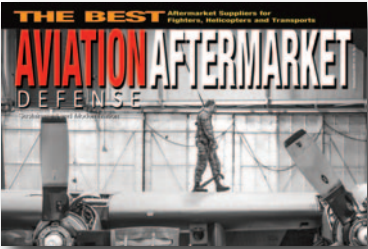
• **Australian Chinooks Named:** The Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) performed an indigenous Australian smoking ceremony, giving names to four of its Boeing CH-47 Chinook helicopters: "Capable," "Chariot," "Cunning," and "Gadaragi." The ceremony recognized the RAAF's history and connection to First Nations peoples and local communities, including the traditional owners of the land hosting the 5th Aviation Regiment and 16th Aviation Brigade Headquarters. It also marked major flight hour milestones for the RAAF Chinook fleet.

Answer to trivia:

C. A pea on the 50-yard line

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