Northrop Grumman Completes Center Fuselage for First F-35 Aircraft to Be Assembled in Japan

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PALMDALE, Calif., Oct. 4, 2015 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Northrop Grumman Corporation (NYSE:NOC) has completed – on budget and on schedule – the center fuselage for the first F-35 Lightning II aircraft to be assembled in Japan's F-35 Final Assembly and Checkout (FACO) facility in Nagoya, Japan. The center fuselage, designated AX-5, will be integrated into an F-35A conventional takeoff and landing variant.

Photos accompanying this release are available at: http://media.globenewswire.com/noc/mediagallery.html?pkgid=36672

Northrop Grumman celebrated the production milestone with a brief ceremony Oct. 2 at its Palmdale Aircraft Integration Center of Excellence, the site of its F-35 Integrated Assembly Line (IAL). Consul General of Japan Hidehisa Horinouchi, based in Los Angeles, attended the ceremony on behalf of the Japanese government along with executives from Northrop Grumman and Lockheed Martin, the F-35 prime contractor.

"Today's event marks another significant step toward helping the Department of Defense produce a fifth-generation, multirole fighter that can meet the common air combat requirements of the U.S. and its allies," said Brian Chappel, vice president and F-35 program manager, Northrop Grumman Aerospace Systems. "Using our Integrated Assembly Line, we're continuing to increase the affordability and quality of the F-35 center fuselage, while steadily increasing our production rate. Our success is helping the F-35 industry team meet the operational need dates of our international customers."

The center fuselage is a core structure of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. As a principal member of the F-35 industry team, Northrop Grumman designed and produces the center fuselage for all three F-35 variants: the F-35A; the F-35B short takeoff vertical landing variant; and the F-35C carrier variant.

The AX-5 center fuselage is one of 42 center fuselages that Northrop Grumman will produce for Japan. It is the 207th center fuselage that the company has produced at its Palmdale site, and the 30th such unit delivered this year.

Mitsubishi Heavy Industries will perform final assembly and checkout of the Japanese F-35As. The process includes mating the center fuselage to the forward fuselage/cockpit and wings produced by Lockheed Martin, and the aft fuselage produced by BAE Systems.

The IAL is a highly automated set of work cells developed to assemble – efficiently, affordably and with high precision – the center fuselage for all three F-35 variants. In 2013, the IAL was designated the "Assembly Plant of the Year" by Assembly Magazine, the first and only time to date that this honor has been bestowed on an aerospace and defense contractor.

Northrop Grumman plays a key role in the development and production of the F-35 weapons system. In addition to producing the jet's center fuselage, the company produces its radar, electro-optical, avionics and communications subsystems. It also develops mission systems and mission-planning software; develops and maintains pilot and maintainer training systems courseware; and manages the team's use, support and maintenance of low-observable technologies.

Northrop Grumman is a leading global security company providing innovative systems, products and solutions in unmanned systems, cyber, C4ISR, and logistics and modernization to government and commercial customers worldwide. Please visit www.northropgrumman.com for more information.



Northrop Grumman quality team at the company's Palmdale Aircraft Integration Center of Excellence performs final inspection of AX-5 center fuselage before its delivery to Japan's F-35 Final Assembly and Check Out facility in Nagoya, Japan



Mechanics from Northrop Grumman's F-35 program team in Palmdale, Calif. check the quality of workmanship that went into producing AX-5, the center fuselage that will become a central part of the first F-35 Joint Strike Fighter assembled by Japan

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