

"There is a difference  
between what industry  
wanted and what the  
government wanted"



With final assembly work for some European JSF buys going to Italy, the U.K.'s focus remains on maintenance work.

Washington is maintaining a cautious approach with Israel, which has expressed interest in procuring the fighter but is not one of the contributing development partners. While Israel is hoping for its own production facility, Wynne opines it is "not in the economic interest" of Israel to set up its own facility to supply simply its own air force. "We are going to need some time before we are comfortable letting anyone do the very intricate or detailed" work, Wynne says.

Already, the massive program has suffered some developmental setbacks. Excessive weight on the Stovl variant contributed to a program delay and sig-

nificant cost overrun. More recently, officials are experiencing overheating problems with the F135 Pratt & Whitney engine for the Stovl variant. A General Electric/Rolls-Royce team has also had some testing problems with its F136 alternate JSF engine, which the Pentagon recently terminated due to budget pressures. Wynne was unfamiliar with the recent F135 testing problems, but said that an alternate engine is desirable to ensure reliability of the fleet in the event of a failure and to encourage industrial competition.

"The Air Force has agreed that the reliability statistics on the last few engines and the maturity curve that they

all follow has mitigated our concern about reliability," Wynne says. "It appears that over the life of the program the competition payback may not overcome the dual-logistics" cost.

Lockheed Martin's experience designing the twin-engine, stealthy F-22 for the Air Force is a valuable resource for the Pentagon to draw on to avoid similar problems in JSF's development, Wynne says. He argues that the Senate must restore \$1.2 billion that they propose to pull from the program.

Senators argue that the cut will allow for needed risk reduction in advance of a ramp-up in procurement. They also added \$400 million to the program to fund either an alternate engine or a second-source supplier for the existing JSF engine.

One Senate aide said as many as 500 F-35s would have been purchased in early production lots prior to the JSF completing initial operational testing and evaluation, opening up the program to the excessive risk.

"WHAT I WANT TO MAKE sure is that we keep that production workforce viable within the Fort Worth (Tex.) complex and throughout the suppliers," Wynne says. "I worry only that I get enough money so that I'm not essentially restarting at some level my supplier work."

As lawmakers prepare a conference to hash out the final Fiscal 2007 budget, the Pentagon is now in the early stages of crafting its Fiscal 2008 spending request. Wynne says "'08 could be the crisping up of the story for the Air Force, the Navy and the Marine Corps" procurement plans for the F-35.

The Air Force is considering a slower buy-rate. "The more near-term thing that would concern us is simply the rate of accession more than the number," Wynne says. USAF is currently budgeted to purchase about 110 aircraft per month and the service is considering a smaller annual buy. The first flight of the CTOL F-35 is scheduled for October, a slight slip from earlier plans for an August demonstration.

As JSF development continues, the Air Force is touting early results from the F-22's involvement in recent combat exercises. The Air Force claims the aircraft achieved an "unprecedented" kill ratio of 108:0 during the joint Northern Edge exercise, which concluded last week in Alaska. Twelve F-22s deployed for the exercise, which used F-15s, F-16s and F/A-18s to simulate Sukhoi Su-27s and Su-30 Flankers as adversaries. ■