PRODUCTION OF FIRST JAPAN-BUILT F-35A COMMENCES

News / Manufacturer

Mitsubishi Heavy Industry has started work on the first Lockheed Martin **F-35A** to be **assembled in Japan**.

The work took place at a Mitsubishi factory in Nagoya, and saw the mating of the aircraft's wings, fuselage, and tail, says Lockheed in a statement.

The aircraft is designated AX-5, and will be the fifth F-35A produced for the Japanese air force. Japan's first four aircraft, designated AX-1-4, will be produced at the main F-35 factory in Fort Worth, Texas. Japan is to receive its first F-35, AX-1, in 2016.

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In 2012 Japan selected the F-35A over the competing Boeing F/A-18 E/F Super Hornet for a 42 aircraft requirement. The deal, conducted under the US government's Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programme, will see 38 F-35As produced at a final assembly and check-out (FACO) facility in Japan.

In 2014 the US selected the Nagoya FACO to be the F-35's main heavy MRO and upgrade facility in North Asia.

Lockheed and Mitsubishi are working to complete installation of tooling and other equipment for the Nagoya F-35 FACO.

The Nagoya FACO will be the second international F-35 production facility. The other is located at Italy's Cameri air base, which delivered its first completed F-35A to the Italian air force earlier this month.

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