Life is a Highway

This past weekend, the F-35 went on a road trip from the Lockheed Martin Fort Worth production facility to the National Institute of Aviation Research (NIAR) at Wichita State University. One of the F-35B ground test articles made the trip covered up on a flatbed trailer after it completed all of the required testing. The trip took three days, taking up two lanes, led by a police escort as it made its way north. While at the NIAR, a team will now disassemble the test article and complete an in-depth inspection of all the major critical parts.

The durability testing simulated two lifetimes of in-flight and ground maneuvering operations. The team at NIAR is home to aviation experts and world-class labs to provide this kind of inspection required after such a rigorous durability testing period. I look forward to hearing the results from the inspections. The F-35A and F-35C will also go through this same kind of disassembly and inspection at NIAR in the future.

Setting Sail

HMS Queen Elizabeth made history for the United Kingdom’s Royal Navy when it pulled into its home port of Portsmouth where it will operate from for the next 50 years. The F-35B brings never before seen supersonic capabilities combined with STOVL capabilities that ensures the UK has an uncompromising strike capability for many years to come. The 918 ft. long UK built aircraft carrier can hold 24 F-35Bs and project air power in the region with a range of 10,000 miles. The one of a kind ship will carry its first F-35Bs next spring as it embarks on initial carrier flight trials. The ship was greeted by thousands of people watching as it pulled in and docked for the very first time. This is an exciting time for the Royal Navy and I look forward to seeing the F-35B launch from the deck next year.
From Lancashire to Texas

In other news, our UK partners at BAE Systems completed the 318th rear section for the F-35 program. This represents 10 percent completion of the global requirement for the program of record. The 318th rear section, produced in Samlesbury, Lancashire now becomes part of a UK F-35B making its way down the Fort Worth production line.

“This is an important milestone and the latest example of how the F-35 program is benefitting the UK’s defence industry, creating thousands of jobs and helping to keep Britain safer and more secure,” said UK’s Minister for Defence Procurement Harriett Baldwin. “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.”

Congratulations to BAE Systems on a great accomplishment and I look forward to a bright future together as we deliver this amazing aircraft to customers all around the world.