

## MONTVILLE

# Local Military Contractors Take Flight

By João-Pierre S. Ruth

FIGHTER JOCKS CAN ONLY DREAM of climbing into the cockpit of the forthcoming F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. But two local companies won contracts this month to design and supply parts for the aircraft, an essential part of the military's plans for maintaining control of the skies.



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**Michael Leahan**

VP & Chief Sales Officer  
Marotta Controls

The work of Marotta Controls in Montville and Curtiss-Wright in Roseland will be incorporated into the production of \$200 billion-worth of the jets, which will cost up to \$55 million per plane. The aircraft, designed by Lockheed Martin, is expected to enter production in 2012 and will be flown by the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps, making it the most broadly used fighter jet in service. The F-35 will replace a host of jets currently in service and become our nation's mainstay for air superiority for decades to come.

"This is the single largest military-aircraft development program going on in the U.S.," says Brian Freeman, vice president of technology and market development for Curtiss-Wright's Charlotte, North Carolina-based Controls division.

Winning a contract for even a small portion of such a massive project is a long-term moneymaker for Marotta Controls, a provider of fluid control systems for the defense industry. "The business on the Joint Strike Fighter will represent about \$55 million for the company over the period of performance." Says Michael Leahan, vice president and chief sales officer for Marotta. Production of the F-35 is expected to last through 2025. The privately held company generates \$40 million in revenue and is profitable, according to Leahan.

Curtiss-Wright was contracted by Lockheed Martin to provide equipment for the F-35's integral bomb hoist that will be used for loading and unloading munitions. The work will be done at the company's Charlotte division.

"The initial development is worth about \$2.2 million for the development and demonstration phase, and depending on the quantity of Joint Strike Fighters that will be manufactured, that could be worth up to \$120 million for Curtiss-Wright," says Freeman.

"Curtiss-Wright, founded in 1929 generated net income of \$17.5 million on revenue of \$271.4 million in its quarter ended September 30. Its shares were worth about \$57.70 last week, in the upper half of its 52-week range of \$48.82 per share to \$67.40 per share.

Being part of innovative aircraft design is in Marotta's blood. The company was founded in 1943 and provided hydraulic control valves for the rocket engine in the Bell X-1, the aircraft that test pilot Chuck Yeager piloted for the first supersonic flight. Some 70% of Marotta's defense business today is with the Navy.

"Every surface and subsurface vessel in the United States Navy has Marotta fluid-control products on the ships," says Leahan.

The contract awarded this month is one of five parts the company will contribute to the new jet. Marotta will design and manufacture the controller for the hydraulic pump system that provides power for opening doors for access to the jet's inner workings and cockpit when it is on the ground for repairs or in cases of engine failure.

Eaton Aerospace in Irvine, California, the manufacturer of the pump, awarded the contract to

Marotta. The controller will regulate the pump's functions.

Other parts Marotta will provide for the aircraft are a valve for the motor for the jet's Gatling gun and – for the short-takeoff, vertical-landing version of the jet that the Marines will use – a gearbox bypass valve to divert oil in the engine system. The leathernecks want their variant of the Joint Strike Fighter to be able to launch and land on short runways, like the venerable Harrier jet. Marotta will also provide the valves for a hydraulic manifold and two controllers for fan motors on the aircraft.

Getting in on the F-35 program means gearing up Marotta's production facility to work on

the parts. "We've invested more than \$2.5 million in the last eight months in machine tools to support some of these programs we have won recently," says Leahan. Marotta has 150 employees at its 115,000 sq.-ft. Montville headquarters and manufacturing facility. Leahan says the company will hire additional engineering staff as the project moves closer to the production stage. The company also has facilities in Dublin, Ireland, and Cheltenham, Britain.

"The complex machining and testing we do here in Montville," Leahan says. The longevity of the Joint Strike Fighter's production and service life will mean the machinists in Montville will be busy in the years ahead.

