



FIRST RAAF P-8A FUSELAGE IN PRODUCTION

News / Manufacturer



Spirit AeroSystems began production of the fuselage for the first **P-8A Poseidon** maritime surveillance aircraft for the **RAAF** last month.

The Kansas-based aerostructures company announced on November 20 that it began production work on the 737 military derivative in October, with the first unit scheduled to be delivered to Boeing early next year.

“Spirit has a unique capability to build military-specific aircraft in the same 737 commercial production line that is producing 42 airplanes a month,” said Duane Hawkins, Spirit senior vice-president of Boeing, defence and regional jet programs.

The P-8A’s 737-800-based fuselage receives military-specific in-line modifications with Spirit AeroSystems before it is sent to the Boeing final assembly facility in Renton, Washington, a process witnessed during a recent visit by RAAF AIRCDRE Adam Brown, director general Aerospace, Maritime, Training, and Surveillance Branch.

The Australian government announced approval of the RAAF’s acquisition of eight P-8As with options on a further four in February 2014. The first Australian aircraft is due to be delivered in early 2017 and all eight are expected in service by 2021.



Then Prime Minister Tony Abbott said at the time that acquiring the four optioned aircraft would be considered as part of the new Defence White Paper, which is now due to be released in 2016.

In other P-8 news, the UK Prime Minister David Cameron has announced nine P-8As will be acquired for the Royal Air Force, replacing the service's anti-submarine warfare capabilities lost with the 2010 cancellation of the Nimrod MRA-4 program.

The P-8 acquisition was a central element of Prime Minister Cameron's 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review, which also committed the UK to acquire 135 F-35 Joint Strike Fighters and to upgrade the Eurofighter Typhoon with an AESA radar.

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