

Airbus, Dassault reach deal on European fighter jet prototype

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A model of the next-generation fighter jet sought by France, Germany and Spain.

Airbus and Dassault Aviation have reached an accord on building a test version of Europe's next-generation fighter jet, after weeks of strained negotiations that put the plane's development in doubt, sources close to

the project said Friday.

The companies are the pillars of a Future Combat Air System (FCAS) meant to prove the Continent's ability to integrate its disparate defense forces and increase its military sovereignty.

A previous French-German plan to build a common fighter failed, leading to the development of the Rafale and Eurofighter jets currently in use.

But progress on the new delta-wing stealth jet has been plagued by fighting over the sharing of the industrial work as well as intellectual property for the cutting-edge technologies.

France, Germany and Spain, the three countries involved in the program, "have received the offer from the companies for the construction of a demonstrator of the future combat jet," a French defense ministry official said.

Talks on hammering out accords on the several contracts outstanding for the ambitious project "are still underway between the companies and the states involved," the official added.

Dassault of France and Airbus, the pan-European planemaker representing the German and Spanish interests, declined to comment.

French lawmakers warned this month that time was running out to move forward on the plane and its associated drones and network technologies, expected to cost 50 to 80 billion euros (\$60-\$95 billion), for it to be operational as expected by 2040.

Dassault is leading the jet development, but Airbus executives have bristled at being treated as a subcontractor instead of a full-fledged

partner, and want a larger role in key elements of the work.

Yet Dassault has insisted on its industry expertise in fighter jets, pointing to its Mirage and Rafale planes, that it does not want to see exploited by a rival.

Airbus, for its part, is spearheading the [development](#) of the drones and the "combat cloud" ultrafast communications network that will use artificial intelligence capabilities.

So far, no other EU nations have signed on to build the new plane.

Several European governments are already clients of American [fighter jets](#), while Britain's Tempest stealth fighter project has garnered backing from Italy and the Netherlands.

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