

Chile Announces Selection Of Lockheed Martin F-16 For Its New Combat Aircraft Program

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After an intense four-year competition, the Government of Chile announced today its decision to purchase 10 to 12 new production Lockheed Martin F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft. Chile will become the 21st country to operate the F-16.

Chile will acquire a Block 50/52 configuration of the F-16C/D aircraft tailored to meet the specific requirements of the Chilean Air Force (FACH). The sale will include the aircraft, mission equipment and a support package provided by Lockheed Martin and many other U.S. contractors. The F-16 aircraft will replace the A-37 Dragonfly in FACH service. The final number of aircraft and the program value will be determined in the coming months.

The F-16 offers the most modern capability at the best value, and its operations and maintenance costs for the life of the aircraft are the lowest among the competitors. In its announcement today, the FACH noted that the F-16 will continue to be the backbone of the U.S. Air Force for many years to come. This assures Chile proven support throughout the life of the program.

"We are pleased the FACH selected the F-16 to modernize its fighter force and look forward to working with them as the newest member of the F-16 family," said Dain M. Hancock, president of Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company. "The F-16 provides Chile the world's most affordable multirole fighter, with the added benefit of interoperability with the U.S. Air Force and many other air forces."

Ron Covais, regional president for Lockheed Martin, added, "We believe Chile and Latin America are important markets for U.S. business growth. The F-16 program can be a foundation to expand long-term relationships between the governments of Chile and the United States, between our air forces, and with Lockheed Martin."

In the competition in Chile, the F-16 was selected over the Boeing F/A-18, Dassault Mirage 2000-5 from France and the SAAB Gripen from Sweden. This selection marks the F-16's 28th win in worldwide competitions and the 5th win without a loss during the last five years.

The Chilean announcement adds to the F-16's reputation as the world's most sought-after fighter. It follows a year in which over 200 F-16s were added to backlog with contracts from Israel, Greece, the United Arab Emirates, Korea, Singapore and the United States. More than 4,000 aircraft have been delivered and production is expected to continue beyond 2010, with major upgrades being incorporated for all F-16 versions.

Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company is a unit of Lockheed Martin Corp. , headquartered in Bethesda, Md. Lockheed Martin is a global enterprise principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture and integration of advanced-technology systems, products and services. The corporation's core businesses are systems integration, space, aeronautics and technology services.

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