Lockheed Martin Supports Technical Handover Of UK's New Air Traffic Control System

The United Kingdom's new air traffic control system, developed by Lockheed Martin Air Traffic Management (LMATM), has moved one significant step closer to operational service with the successful handover of the New En Route Centre (NERC) system to the UK National Air Traffic Services (NATS) controllers on December 19. Located at Swanwick, in Southern England, the NERC air traffic control system will control all en route traffic over England and Wales.

At 12:30 p.m. on December 19, the new centre became a fully functioning part of the NATS air traffic control system when engineers handed the system over to controllers, and connected the system to the NATS operational network for the first time. With this "Technical Handover," the Swanwick Centre will be working 24 hours a day, seven days a week for the next 30 years. During the next 12 months, some 600 controllers and assistants will undertake an operational conversion training program -- one of the largest ever in the history of air traffic control -- while NATS continues to provide a full service from the existing centre at the London Area and Terminal Control Centre at West Drayton, near Heathrow Airport. The Swanwick centre will enter operational service in January 2002, when it will handle up to 6,000 flights a day, employing 360 controllers.

NATS' Chief Executive, Colin Chisholm, said: "Swanwick has passed its biggest and most important test and NATS has reached a crucial milestone. When you consider the many difficulties and challenges we faced only two years ago, Technical Handover is a major achievement by the Swanwick project team and our suppliers.

"When fully up and running in January 2002, Swanwick's extra capacity -- and the skills of our operational team -- will improve safety and reduce delays for our customers. There is more to do before we reach our ultimate goal, but Swanwick is now 'live' and the countdown to 2002 can begin."

Commenting on the milestone, Don Antonucci, president of Lockheed Martin Air Traffic Management, said, "This is a tremendous achievement for our NATS customer, and we are proud that we were able to support them throughout this extremely important period. Technical Handover is a huge milestone for NATS reaching its modernisation goals for UK air traffic management. We will continue to support NATS in its overall two-centre strategy, as it consolidates UK air traffic control at two state-of-the-art centres -- the one at Swanwick, and the other at Prestwick, in Ayrshire, Scotland. We are pleased to be a partner in both endeavors."

Last year, Lockheed Martin was awarded a contract for the development of the UK's New Scottish Centre (NSC) air traffic control system, which will be installed at Prestwick, and will complete the UK two-centre strategy program. NSC will provide air traffic control services, covering all of Scotland and Northern Ireland.

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