

New Lockheed Martin Contract Will Significantly Upgrade Capability Of European F-16s

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Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company was awarded a contract on Jan. 18 for delivery of F-16 modification kits that will significantly upgrade the capability of F-16s used by air forces in several European countries. Total program value, including options, is approximately \$142 million.

The contract is for delivery of 306 modification kits, an option for 39 additional kits, plus spares, support equipment and technical manual changes. These kits will be used to upgrade F-16s previously modified with the F-16A/B Mid-Life Update (MLU), and operated by the air forces of Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway. Portugal is planning to incorporate this modification on its F-16s as well, but under a separate contract at a later date.

"The European Air Forces continue to enjoy the economies of scale and interoperability of our F-16s," said Lt. Gen. Dick L. Berlijn, Commander of the Royal Netherlands Air Force. "MLU combined with this new upgrade will keep our F-16s on the leading edge of fighter capability in the critical areas of cockpit, avionics, sensors and weapons."

Provisions for this new upgrade, called "M3", were included in the original F-16 MLU modification, and the upgrade gets its name from the nomenclature of the software portion of the change. New systems/capabilities include

- Link 16 -- secure, jam-resistant, high-volume, NATO-standard data communications that significantly increase pilot situation awareness
- Joint Helmet-Mounted Cueing System -- new U.S. helmet display for improved situation awareness and employment of high-off-boresight weapons
- Upgraded processors and displays -- lower cost, improved supportability
- U.S. family of new "smart weapons" -- Joint Direct Attack Munition, Joint Stand-Off Weapon, Wind Corrected Munitions Dispenser -- provide all-weather, precision attack from standoff distances.

There are also enhancements to existing systems including the multimode radar, electronic warfare management system and reconnaissance pods.

The MLU program shares a common avionics architecture and has extensive hardware and software commonality with the U.S. Air Force's Common Configuration Implementation Program, a major cockpit and avionics upgrade to about 650 Block 40/50 F-16C/Ds.

"The modularity of the F-16 avionics architecture and common systems are facilitating very cost-effective upgrades to the F-16," said John L. Bean, vice president of F-16 Programs. "These upgrades can also be made available to other F-16 users at very attractive prices since most of the development work has already been accomplished and the economies of scale that will occur in recurring kit procurement."

The new modernization kits will be produced and assembled in the United States. Kit installation will be accomplished in depot facilities in each of the respective European countries.

Development of the M3 upgrade began in 1998. Development testing of the software began Dec. 5, 2001, and will continue through 2003. Long-lead effort on kit production was initiated in September 2000.

M3 kit deliveries will begin in the second quarter of 2002 and will continue through mid-2007. Operational evaluation testing begins in late 2002, and software release to operational units is scheduled for spring 2004.

The F-16, the world's most sought-after fighter, is the choice of 23 countries. More than 4,000 aircraft have been delivered, hundreds more are on order for the United States and six other countries, and production is expected to continue beyond 2010. Major upgrades for all F-16 versions are being incorporated to keep the fleet modern and fully supportable over the aircraft's long service life.

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