Lockheed Martin Predator Enters Low-Rate Initial Production; U.S. Marine Corps Signs $39M Contract

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Lockheed Martin and the U.S. Marine Corps signed a $39 million contract Friday sending the shoulder-fired, short-range Predator anti-armor missile into Low- Rate Initial Production (LRIP).

Predator is a portable, inertially-guided, point-and-shoot system designed to defeat advanced armor targets at ranges from 17 to 600 meters. The complete system weighs less than 22 pounds and uses a fly-over, shoot-down trajectory to attack tanks at their most vulnerable point.

With the signing, Predator became the first fire-and-forget short-range anti-tank missile in the international marketplace to enter production.

"This contract offers a mature baseline and enhances the opportunity for a joint program with the British government to satisfy its Next Generation Lightweight Anti-armour Weapon (NLAW) requirement, thereby establishing joint interoperability," said Ron Woodard, Lockheed Martin program director. Kestrel, the UK version of Predator, which includes a direct-fire option, is being presented to the Ministry of Defence as a solution to the NLAW requirement. Lockheed Martin is teamed with MBDA as Joint Venture partners to develop, manufacture and market the Kestrel system to the worldwide market.

The contract awarded Friday is for setup and facilitization of production line first article testing, qualification of both sub-assemblies and weapons, and delivery of 330 Predator short-range assault weapons. Predator final assembly as well as several subsystems will be manufactured at the Lockheed Martin plant in Troy, Ala.

Mike Woodson, U. S. Marine Corps Project Officer, said that Predator will, "satisfy a long-standing Marine Corps requirement to provide the individual Marine warfighter with a lightweight, simple to operate antitank weapon which is accurate and highly lethal against all main battle tanks and other armored vehicles existing in the world." "Predator can be fired safely from inside an enclosure, which is critical in close combat situations and urban warfare. The missile's inertial guidance system also provides 'fire-and-forget' capability, which protects the Marine by minimizing his exposure to enemy counter-fire. It is truly a world-class weapon which will enable the individual Marine to engage and destroy a main battle tank when the operational situation requires him to do so."

Predator successfully completed flight tests at China Lake Naval Weapon Station, Calif., in September, paving the way for LRIP. The tests verified the implementation of hardware and software changes to improve both reliability and robustness. These tests bring the total number of flights to more than 200 during the weapon development.

Employing more than 8,500 people, Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control is headquartered in Dallas, Texas, with additional base operations in Orlando, Fla., and manufacturing and assembly facilities in Sunnyvale, Calif., Chelmsford, Mass., Camden, Ark., Horizon City and Lufkin, Texas, Ocala, Fla., White Sands Missile Range, N.M., and Troy, Ala. The company is a business unit of Lockheed Martin Systems Integration in Bethesda, Md.

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.

NOTES:
* NLAW (Next Generation Light Anti-Armour Weapon System)
* NLAW is the UK Ministry of Defence requirement, which provides for a precision short-range anti-armour capability with high lethality and no field maintenance.
* Kestrel is MBDA and Lockheed Martin's Joint Venture Company solution for NLAW. Kestrel will also be available for export.
* MBDA is Europe's leading guided weapons group, with an annual turnover of $2 billion and a forward order book of $13 billion. The group, which employs 10,000 people across 12 sites in Europe and the USA, is the result of the merger of the weapons activities of BAE SYSTEMS, EADS and Finmeccanica.

For information on Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control, visit:http://www.missilesandfirecontrol.com/ .

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