

Royal Thai Air Force Activates Third F-16 Squadron

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Thailand's Korat Air Base received the first five of 16 refurbished Lockheed Martin F-16s on Aug. 17 as part of the country's ongoing efforts to modernize its air force. The delivery marks the activation of the third F-16 squadron for the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF).

F-16s are made by Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Co., a business area of Lockheed Martin Corp. .

The U.S. Air Force refurbished and delivered the aircraft. Lockheed Martin provided the upgrade kits for refurbishment and will provide logistics support and maintenance training. Plans call for five more F-16s to be delivered in October and the remaining six early next year.

Air Chief Marshal Thares Punsri, chief of the Air Staff for the RTAF, accepted the aircraft and expressed his appreciation to the U.S. Air Force and F-16 industrial team, led by Lockheed Martin, for the professional execution of the Peace Naresuan IV program.

"This is another significant step in the modernization of our air force with the Fighting Falcons," Thares said.

Paul Jones, Lockheed Martin's program director for Thailand, attended the delivery ceremony and said he is proud the company has an integral role in providing state-of-the-art equipment to the RTAF.

Thailand has received 36 new F-16A/Bs in three previous buys delivered between 1988 and 1996. Thailand, which has been operating the aircraft for 14 years, recently surpassed 55,000 flight hours with an excellent safety record.

The aircraft in the current order came from USAF storage at the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center in Tucson, Ariz. The planes were transferred to Ogden Air Logistics Center for incorporation of the Falcon Up structural upgrade and other modifications. The engines were upgraded to the F100-PW-220E configuration by the Pratt & Whitney San Antonio Engine Center and will match the other RTAF F-16 engines.

This group of aircraft consists of 15 F-16A single-seat models and one F-16B two-seat model. The last six aircraft will support training in the United States until their delivery next year.

Thailand is one of six countries that have acquired more than 150 F-16A/Bs from USAF storage. In 2003, the Italian Air Force will begin receiving the same version selected by Thailand.

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 seven 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.

Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Co., headquartered in Fort Worth, Texas, is a leader in the design, development, systems integration, production and support of advanced military aircraft and related technologies. Its customers include the military services of the United States and allied countries throughout the world. Products include the F-16, F-22, F-35 JSF, F-117, T-50, C-5, C-130, C-130J, S-3, P-3 and U-2.

Lockheed Martin Corp., headquartered in Bethesda, Md., is a global enterprise principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture and integration of advanced technology systems, products and services. Employing about 125,000 people worldwide, Lockheed Martin had 2001 sales of \$24 billion.

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