F-35 JSF Brings Australian Defence Minister, Government Officials To Texas

Australian Minister for Defence Robert Hill today joined the Australian Ambassador to the United States Michael Thawley and the U.S. Ambassador to Australia Tom Schieffer on an orientation visit of the facility where the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter will be assembled.

The officials held discussions with U.S. members of the F-35 JSF team at the Fort Worth headquarters of Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Co., a business area of Lockheed Martin Corp. . Assembly of F-35 prototypes will begin at the Fort Worth plant in late 2003.

The visit comes one day after Hill signed a Ministerial Exchange of Letters with his U.S. counterpart, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, providing for Australia's entry into the Joint Strike Fighter program. Hill and Rumsfeld signed the letters during the annual Australian-United States Ministerial Consultations in Washington, D.C. Australia becomes the eighth and final international partner in the stealth aircraft's development phase. The United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands, Turkey, Canada, Denmark and Norway joined the program previously.

The Oct. 30 visit included tours and briefings describing the unprecedented performance of this fifth-generation international aircraft, as well as its lean manufacturing methods and affordable life-cycle development. Hill also "flew" the F-35 cockpit demonstrator.

Australia's nearly $150 million (U.S.) financial contribution to the F-35's System Development and Demonstration (SDD) phase represents an unprecedented step for Australia, by enabling the country to participate in the development of a new international fighter. It also establishes a new method of cooperation between business and government on a global scale, and allows the Australian Defence Force to access levels of capability and technology that are a generation ahead of those in contemporary aircraft.

Partnership in the program also ensures that Australian industry is able to compete for F-35 JSF work on a best-value basis and expand participation in the global aerospace supply chain. The JSF program provides opportunities to participate not only in the development phase, but also production and support throughout the life of the program.

Plans call for the F-35 to replace Australia's current fleet of F/A-18 and F-111 fighters. The role of Australian industry in the F-35 JSF program is expected to grow following the country's decision to join SDD.

During the plant visit, ambassador Schieffer highlighted the history of cooperative security between the United States and Australia over the last century. He emphasized that the relationship has entered a new era of partnership, with the JSF program cementing that historic bond and enhancing its effectiveness.

Charles T. "Tom" Burbage, executive vice president and general manager of the F-35 JSF program, told members of the Australian delegation that their visit provided an opportunity to "give you a good look at what's almost magical about this airplane." He cited the program's commitment to reach across international borders to ensure that the aircraft is equipped with the most effective systems, and he explained how the F-35's combination of next-generation technologies will provide capabilities far superior to those of current-generation multirole fighters.

Noting that Australia is the last international development partner, Burbage said, "We're really happy to have the Australians on board so we can make this international program a reality," noting that the first anniversary of the SDD contract was Oct. 26, and there are only three years to the aircraft's first flight. He also said that all international contributions to the program's development equaled almost 15 percent of the SDD price tag, a further incentive to make the program successful.

The F-35 JSF is a stealthy, supersonic multirole fighter designed to replace a wide range of aging fighter and strike aircraft. Three variants derived from a common design will ensure JSF meets the security needs of each country while staying within strict affordability targets.

Lockheed Martin is developing the JSF in conjunction with its principal partners, Northrop Grummanand BAE SYSTEMS. Two separate but interchangeable engines are under development by Pratt & Whitney and General Electric. Among the aircraft JSF will replace are the A-10, AV-8B Harrier, F-16, F/A-18, and United Kingdom Harrier GR.7 and Sea Harrier.

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/A-22, F-35 JSF, F-117, T-50, C-5, C-130, C-130J, P-3, S-3 and U-2.

Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Co. 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. Employing about 125,000 people worldwide, Lockheed Martin had 2001 sales of $24 billion.

High- and low-resolution photos, including caption, are available by accessing the link below:
www.lmaeronautics.com/news/programnews/combat_air/x35/jsf_02/jsfpr021030.html

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