Test Pilot School Receives Scale Model Of Milestone Navy X-Plane

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PATUXENT RIVER, Md.

As Patuxent River Naval Air Station awaits the arrival of the F-35C Joint Strike Fighter later in the decade, a replica of the supersonic jet's forerunner has arrived at the historic base.

(Photo: http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20021219/DATH042)

Charles T. "Tom" Burbage, executive vice president and general manager of the Lockheed Martin F-35 JSF program, presented a 1/10th scale model of the JSF X-35C to the leadership of the Navy Test Pilot School at Patuxent River. Burbage is a 1975 graduate of the school.

The large model is a symbol of Patuxent River's recent flight-test history. The X-35C -- virtually identical in appearance to the forthcoming F-35C -- completed its flight test program at Patuxent River in 2001, having logged a total of 73 flights, 58 hours aloft and 252 field carrier landings. The experimental aircraft successfully demonstrated the precise handling qualities, rugged use and high-speed performance that will be required of carrier-based F-35Cs.

"The X-35C represents the first wave of 21st century experimental aircraft that will rely on Pax River's Naval Air Test Center and Navy Test Pilot School graduates for thorough evaluation," Burbage said. "The X-35C scale model will serve as a reminder of this facility's legacy of testing breakthrough aircraft -- and it clearly points the way to a bright future."

Testing of the first pre-production F-35C at Patuxent River is scheduled to begin in 2006. Students currently enrolled in test pilot school will lead the fleet introduction of the F-35C early in the next decade.

Also in attendance at the presentation were retired Vice Adm. Jack Ready of Lockheed Martin, former Naval Air Test Center Commander; F-35 JSF Deputy Program Manager Peter Shaw of Northrop Grumman ; and other industry and government representatives.

The F-35C JSF, the Navy's first stealth aircraft, is a supersonic multi- role strike fighter designed to replace F-14s and earlier model F/A-18s, and to complement the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet. Two additional F-35 variants will serve the needs of the U.S. Air Force and Marine Corps, replacing A-10s, F- 16s, F/A-18s and AV-8B Harriers. The Marine Corps version, which features a short-takeoff/vertical landing capability, also has been chosen by the United Kingdom Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, and is under consideration by the Italian Navy. In addition to the United States and United Kingdom, seven nations have joined in the F-35's development program.

Lockheed Martin is developing the F-35 in conjunction with its principal partners, Northrop Grumman and BAE SYSTEMS. Two separate but interchangeable engines are under development by Pratt & Whitney and General Electric.

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.

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