T-50 Golden Eagle Goes Supersonic

PRNewswire-FirstCall
FORT WORTH, Texas

Lockheed Martin and Korea Aerospace Industries (KAI) announced today that the T-50 Golden Eagle advanced supersonic trainer achieved supersonic flight for the first time on Feb. 19.

"The aircraft accelerated through the Mach (speed of sound) smoothly and quickly," said Major Choong Hwan Lee, Republic of Korea Air Force test pilot for the flight. "I observed no adverse flight or handling characteristics. I was able to hold the target speed of Mach 1.05 with plenty of excess power available, so I have no doubt this aircraft will be able to achieve its maximum design Mach of Mach 1.5."

The milestone flight was accomplished on the No. 1 flight-test aircraft during the 60-minute flight from the air base at Sachon, South Korea. The top speed achieved was Mach 1.05 at an altitude of 40,000 feet. Full afterburner on the General Electric F404-GE-102 engine was used to accelerate to the target speed, then minimum afterburner was used to sustain the speed. Approximately one minute was spent in the supersonic regime.

"Achieving supersonic flight is a major milestone for the T-50 program," said Tae Heup Ha, deputy chief of the T-50 Combined Test Force and flight test director of KAI. "The supersonic capability is a key feature of this advanced trainer. It is also an important feature for a potential light combat derivative aircraft. It is not just the speed that is important, but all the performance and handling characteristics that go into a supersonic aircraft. This is the first time a supersonic aircraft has been designed in Korea, and we are very pleased with the continued success of this program."

The flight-test program is on track with the two flight-test aircraft accumulating a total of 60 flights and 60.5 flight hours. Flight-test plans in the near future include continued envelope expansion (flutter, stability and control, loads, handling qualities) and some testing of subsystems.

The T-50 Golden Eagle is a supersonic advanced jet trainer being developed by KAI for the Republic of Korea Air Force. Lockheed Martin, as principal subcontractor to KAI, is providing technical expertise for the program and is responsible for developing the T-50 avionics system, flight control system and wings. The two companies are cooperatively marketing the T-50 internationally.

The T-50 Full-Scale Development program began in 1997 and will continue through 2005. Initial production authorization is planned for third quarter 2003 with production deliveries to begin in 2005.

The T-50 will have the maneuverability, endurance and advanced systems to prepare future pilots to fly current and next-generation fighters like advanced F-16s, the F/A-22 and the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. These same characteristics give it an excellent capability as a lead-in fighter trainer and potential light-combat aircraft derivative in many air forces.

Korea Aerospace Industries Ltd. is the Republic of Korea's national aerospace company established in 1999 with the consolidation of Samsung Aerospace, Daewoo Heavy Industries and Hyundai Space and Aircraft Co. KAI lines of business include fixed-wing aircraft, helicopter aircraft and satellites. Its major products are the KF-16, KT-1 basic trainer, T-50, SB427 helicopters, UAVs, aerostructures and KOMPSAT satellite program.

Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Co., headquartered in Fort Worth, Texas, is a leader in 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 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 2002 sales of $26.6 billion.

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