Lockheed Martin F-16s Fly With First Production Conformal Fuel Tanks

PRNewswire-FirstCall
FORT WORTH, Texas

The first production F-16 conformal fuel tanks (CFTs) recently were flown for the first time on newly produced Lockheed Martin F-16s.

CFTs are two large external, pod-like fuel reservoirs attached to the left- and right-side of the F-16's upper fuselage. The tanks' lower surfaces conform to the aircraft shape. Together, a shipset holds 450 gallons, or about 3,060 pounds of JP-5/8 fuel.

"The CFTs significantly increase the F-16 mission range and patrol time on station," said John L. Bean, vice president of F-16 programs. "They also provide increased air-to-ground payload potential and greater stores flexibility. The CFTs can be utilized throughout the F-16's full flight envelope and have little or no effect on the F-16's renowned agility, flight performance, handling qualities, existing stores certification, signature and maintainability."

Development testing of the CFTs was completed in October 2002, and the first production shipset was received at Fort Worth in January 2003. All Advanced Block 50/52 and Block 60 F-16 versions are compatible with the new CFTs.

"Development and production of the F-16 CFTs was a major task and involved almost all of the disciplines required for a complete aircraft," said Bean. "We are very pleased with the final product and consider it a tribute to all those in industry and government, here and abroad, who made it happen."

Greece's Hellenic Air Force is the lead customer for the CFTs as well as the Advanced Block 52 F-16 version. The production CFTs were flown on two aircraft recently produced for Greece in the 60-aircraft Peace Xenia III Foreign Military Sales program. One aircraft was a C model (single seat), and the other was a D model (two-seat with weapons system operator station and dorsal avionics compartment).

The F-16, the choice of 24 countries, is the world's most sought-after fighter. 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/A-22, F-35 JSF, F-117, T-50, C-5, C-130J, P-3, S-3 and U-2.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin Corp. 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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A high resolution photo will be available after 6:00 p.m. central time by visiting:http://www.lmaeronautics.com/ .

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