T-50 Supersonic Trainer Performing Well In Development Program

Officials from the Republic of Korea Air Force (ROKAF), Korea Aerospace Industries (KAI) and Lockheed Martin said today that the T-50 Golden Eagle development program is on track and the supersonic trainer is performing well in every aspect.

Lt. Col. Cho Gwang Je, ROKAF T-50 chief test pilot, gave an overview of the T-50 development program, focusing on the flight-test activities. Cho, a seasoned fighter pilot and test pilot, was the first to fly the T-50 on Aug. 20, 2002, and is the high-time T-50 pilot.

"The T-50 is a real joy to fly and handles well throughout the flight envelop tested," Cho said. "It should be a very safe aircraft, and our student pilots should adapt to it very quickly. More importantly, our pilots will be able to transition very quickly to our modern fighters, the KF-16 and the F-15K, because of the skills learned in flying the T-50. Not only will they be familiar with the performance and handling qualities of a fighter-type aircraft, they will also have the experience of operating a modern fighter cockpit and a well-integrated avionics system."

Cho said the T-50 will have several high-technology features, which will enhance pilot training compared to current trainers. One is the full- authority digital flight control system, which features selectable maneuver- performance levels for phased learning and an active side-stick controller that provides feedback to the pilot in the other cockpit. Another is the data-transfer system, which has embedded training functions that, together with audio/video recording, should significantly aid in post-flight debriefings.

ROKAF pilots selected for fighter assignments subsequently will receive tactical training in the T-50 Lead-In Fighter Trainer (LIFT) version, which also has a multimode radar, an internal 20 mm gun and an armament system for delivering a variety of air-to-air and air-to-surface weapons. The T-50 will reduce the number of trainer types and transition times for fighter pilots, plus it will reduce the initial pilot combat qualification burden on operational units. These factors will provide world-class training at reduced total training costs.

"We have taken the aircraft to its operational ceiling of 40,000 feet and flown it supersonic to Mach 1.2 (1.2 times the speed of sound)," Cho said. "We are using a stair-step approach of expanding the flight envelop to the flight-test limits. We are looking forward to start of flight test on our two T-50 LIFT aircraft later this summer."

"We are very pleased with the steady progress of the entire T-50 development program," said Ahn, Taek Soon, KAI's executive vice president for Strategic Business Development and retired ROKAF general officer. "We have experienced no major problems and are tracking on schedule in all respects. We are confident we will have all prerequisites completed soon for a favorable Initial Production Authorization by the Korean government later this year."

Ahn also emphasized the importance of the T-50 program in KAI's national goal of developing a world-class aerospace industry by the end of the decade.

"We highly value our relationships with KAI and the ROKAF that go back more than 20 years," said Ted Samples, Lockheed Martin Aeronautics' vice president for Special Mission and Reconnaissance Aircraft Programs. "This partnership has produced 160 F-16s for the ROKAF, with 20 more now being produced. The T-50 development program is the most successful in my experience in the aeronautics industry, and Lockheed Martin is proud to have a significant role on this highly successful team."

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 late 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.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin employs about 125,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture and integration of advanced technology systems, products and services. The corporation reported 2002 sales of $26.6 billion.

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