Lockheed Martin's Sniper XR Proves Sustainability In Cold Weather Conditions

Lockheed Martin's Sniper XR targeting pod successfully completed cold weather suitability tests, demonstrating that the Sniper pod is fully capable of being operated and maintained in winter conditions.

The testing was conducted over a three-day period at Hancock Field at the 174th Fighter Wing in Syracuse, NY. Temperatures ranged from 10 to 25 degrees F with wind chills reaching as low as 4 degrees F.

In full nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) attire, as well as cold weather attire, two F-16 maintenance technicians removed the Sniper pod from its shipping container and installed the Sniper pod on an F-16 Block 30 aircraft. The technicians then removed and reinstalled the lightweight line replaceable units (LRUs), performed built-in-test (BIT) and reprogrammed the pod software using only common hand tools and standard government support equipment.

"The pod suitability demonstration was successful in that all the LRUs were replaceable at the organizational level (on the flight line) in full NBC and cold weather attire," said James Johnson, from the Lockheed Martin Sniper product support team. "However, the true measure of our success was evident when 10 minutes after the pod was fully reassembled, the pilot was able to power up the aircraft and Sniper XR, give the team a thumbs up and roll down the runway with a boresighted pod with all targeting sensors fully operational. Sniper XR's original two-level maintenance solution has redefined what is possible."

This is especially important in cold weather countries such as Canada, Norway and Poland. In fact, Norway and Poland have already ordered the Precision Attack Navigation and Targeting (PANTERA) pod, the international version of Sniper XR. In December 2003, the Royal Norwegian Air Force (RNoAF) conducted flight tests on two M2 Block 15 F-16 jets flying out of Bodo Air Base in Norway. One of the two aircraft was configured with a PANTERA pod during the series of two-hour flights. PANTERA provided superior tracking performance and reliability in support of critical operational requirements for the RNoAF over rugged mountain terrain and busy shipping lanes in Norway's extreme weather conditions.

The Sniper XR pod was designed as a highly modular system that is partitioned into 39 LRUs. Traditionally, this type of LRU was replaced in base maintenance facilities or back shop as shop replaceable units. Through aggressive and innovative design efforts, these ruggedized LRUs are all flightline replaceable without the use of special tooling or support equipment. The Sniper XR's BIT diagnostics system provides the maintainer the capability to fault isolate to these smaller, lighter LRUs and return them directly to depot level repair.

The U.S. Air Force selected Lockheed Martin in August 2001 to develop and build the Sniper XR pod for its Advanced Targeting Pod program.

Sniper XR incorporates a high-resolution, mid-wave, third generation Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR), a dual-mode laser and a CCD-TV along with a laser spot tracker and a laser marker. An affordable precision targeting system in a single, lightweight pod, Sniper XR is fully compatible with the latest J-series munitions and precision guided weaponry. The targeting pod has been undergoing integration on a variety of aircraft to include the F-15E, the F-16 Block 30/40/50, the A-10 and the F/A-18.

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