First Production KAI T-50 Supersonic Trainer Enters Final Assembly

Korea Aerospace Industries (KAI) began final assembly on the first production T-50 supersonic trainer on Dec. 17 at the company's modern aircraft manufacturing facilities at Sacheon, South Korea.

"We are very excited about meeting this major program milestone right on plan," said N.S. Park, general manager of KAI's Sacheon plant. "The T-50 program continues to be very successful and tracking to schedule. We have finished the ground structural testing, and we are over 60 percent complete with our flight test program. The development program is validating an excellent design, and this has allowed us to proceed with production with no major changes.

"We are ramping up quickly on T-50 production that began with our initial contract with the Republic of Korea Air Force (ROKAF) just one year ago. The second aircraft will enter final assembly next month, and the fifth aircraft will reach this point by next June. The first aircraft is contracted to be delivered at the end of December, 2005; however, we are projecting it to be ready in October."

The T-50 is the first high performance aircraft designed and built by KAI. The company has built 128 F-16s under license from Lockheed Martin, with the last delivered in August of this year. The manufacturing processes learned from that program helped KAI plan an efficient manufacturing plan for the T-50.

"We are also very proud of our quality," said Park. "Even though this is a totally new aircraft and we are still early on the learning curve, we are averaging only 3.1 quality corrections per 1,000 man hours." Park said this quality yield is admirable performance in today's aircraft manufacturing business, with such highly advanced products.

The first step in final assembly is mating the three fuselage sections. KAI developed the Fuselage Automated Splice System, a computer-controlled laser alignment apparatus, to aid in this operation. This system is accurate to within one thousandth of an inch, allows precise and quick mating of the fuselage sections and offers a 70 percent reduction in labor hours required.

After fuselage mate is complete, other components will be installed: line- replaceable units (such as avionics, pumps, engine) and external components (landing gear, wings, vertical and horizontal tails). After the aircraft is assembled, it will be painted, fueled and leak checked. Following that, it will go into field operations, where the final system ground checkouts, acceptance test flights and a comprehensive configuration audit and acceptance inspection are performed on each aircraft.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The T-50 is the only supersonic trainer in development or production. It has the performance, handling qualities, cockpit and advanced systems necessary to train pilots to fly both today's advanced fighters and the next-generation of combat aircraft.

The T-50 Golden Eagle is being developed by KAI for the ROKAF. Lockheed Martin is providing technical expertise for the FSD program and is responsible for developing the T-50 avionics system, flight control system and wings. KAI and Lockheed Martin have an agreement for joint international marketing of the T-50. The program entered the transition-to-production phase with initial contract from the ROKAF awarded to KAI in December 2003. The first production aircraft is expected to be delivered in late 2005.

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., a business area of Lockheed Martin, is a leader in the design, research and 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, C-5, C-130, C-130J, P-3, S-3 and U-2. The company produces major components for the F-2 fighter, and is a co-developer of the C-27J tactical transport and T-50 advanced jet trainer.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin Corp.employs about 130,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture and integration of advanced technology

systems, products and services. The corporation reported 2003 sales of $31.8 billion.

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