South Korean Air Force Chief Flies T-50 Trainer

General Lee Han-ho, Chief of Staff of the Republic of Korea Air Force (ROKAF), flew the T-50 Golden Eagle advanced jet trainer recently.

The T-50 is being developed by Korea Aerospace Industries (KAI) with assistance from Lockheed Martin. The ROKAF is conducting the flight test program from Sacheon Air Base, South Korea, with support from the aircraft contractors.

"It was a thrill to fly the T-50," said General Lee. "It performed and handled much like our F-16 high-performance fighters, and the cockpit and avionics were very similar as well. I found the T-50 to be one of the easiest aircraft to fly that I have ever flown, and it should be a very safe trainer.

"Along with the ground-based training systems we are planning, the ROKAF student pilots should adapt very quickly to the T-50 and smoothly transition to their first fighter assignment. We have employed some of the best engineering talent from Korea and the United States in developing this aircraft, and I am confident the T-50 will become the world's best advanced jet trainer."

General Lee, an experienced fighter pilot and test pilot, was the first general officer to fly in the T-50. Until now, demonstration flights were precluded to ensure that the flight test program remained on schedule. Lee said, "Now that I have flown the T-50 myself, I can enthusiastically invite pilots from other air forces to evaluate this aircraft to satisfy their near- and long-term requirements for an advanced jet trainer and lead-in fighter trainer."

General Lee congratulated KAI and the rest of the T-50 development and production team in building a great aircraft in a superbly managed program that will provide the aircraft, support and ground-based training systems to the ROKAF right on the promised schedule.

Lee said, "We eagerly look forward to receiving the first production T-50s in the ROKAF later this year and beginning operations early next year."

General Lee's flight was flown out of Sacheon Air Base on Jan. 5 and lasted 51 minutes. Maximum speed attained was Mach 1.05, maximum altitude was 40,000 ft., maximum load factor was 5.0gs and maximum angle-of-attack was 77 degrees. The latter was a high angle-of-attack recovery demonstration by the test pilot, Lt. Col. C.H. Lee. General Lee flew from the rear cockpit and performed a variety of maneuvers including steep turns, 360-degree rolls, a loop and one touch-and-go landing.

This was the 759th T-50 flight. The flight test program is progressing rapidly on schedule and is approximately 70 percent complete. Recently, maximum operating speed and load factor tests were successfully completed.

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 2004 sales of $35.5 billion.

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