Chile's Minister Of Defense And Air Force Commander View Country's First F-16 Aircraft At Lockheed Martin

Chile's Minister of National Defense, Mr. Jaime Ravinet, joined other Chilean and U.S. officials today in celebrating completion of the first F-16 produced for the Chilean Air Force, or Fuerza Aerea de Chile (FACH).

"This is an important moment in the history of the national defense of Chile," said Ravinet, during ceremonies at the Lockheed Martin facility here. "The state-of-the-art capabilities of the F-16 will contribute significantly to the modernization of our armed forces. It will also provide interoperability with the F-16s of other nations. This program also benefits our country technically through the industrial cooperation program."

In February 2002, Chile signed an agreement with the U.S. government to purchase 10 F-16s in the Peace Puma foreign military sales program. Chile became the 22nd customer for the F-16 worldwide and the second in South America. Two additional countries have purchased F-16s since the Chilean program, for a total of 24 nations that have ordered the aircraft to date.

Chile was also represented by the Commander in Chief of the FACH, General Osvaldo Sarabia, who watched the unveiling of the new aircraft with the Defense Minister.

"This ceremony is a significant step in the acquisition and incorporation process of the aircraft to our inventory," said Sarabia. "Everything is running as scheduled. We are closer to seeing this magnificent aircraft with our colors in Chile. This aircraft will help to preserve peace in our land."

Lockheed Martin was represented by Ralph Heath, executive vice president of the corporation's Aeronautics business area, and June Shrewsbury, vice president of F-16 programs.

"Today is an historic occasion for many reasons," Heath said. "It is the culmination of a lot of hard work by government and industry teams in Chile and the United States. Most significantly, it is a milestone in the continuing friendship that exists between our countries," he said.

"Lockheed Martin has established strong relationships with the worldwide F-16 team to ensure flawless integration of new capabilities into these aircraft as new technologies emerge," Shrewsbury said. "This process will ensure that the F-16 remains on the leading edge of advanced fighter capabilities for decades to come."

The FACH will receive 10 Advanced Block 50 F-16s powered by the General Electric F110-GE-129 engine. Six aircraft will be single-seat F-16Cs and four will be two-seat F-16Ds.

First flight of the Chilean F-16 is scheduled for early this summer. All 10 aircraft will be delivered to Chile in 2006.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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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