Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Chief Predicts Effects Of 'Third Inflection Point' In Fighter Aircraft Technology

PRNewswire-FirstCall
PARIS

Fifth generation fighters -- namely the F/A-22 and F-35 -- will have a profound impact on how military forces conduct missions and fight wars, predicts Ralph D. Heath, executive vice president of Lockheed Martin Corporation and the company's Aeronautics chief.

Heath refers to this change as the "third inflection point" in fighter aircraft technology. Speaking to news media at the 2005 Paris Air Show, he defined the first inflection point as maneuverable and sustained flight, which first appeared in 1905, and the second as jet-powered fighters, which gained strategic importance during the Korean War.

"History tells us that sea changes are not always intuitively obvious when they occur. The change in technology or capability may be evident, but it's only after the effect is understood that the change seems significant," Heath said.

"The world doesn't yet fully understand the ramifications of bringing together stealth, speed, advanced avionics and maneuverability in these new fighters," he said. "The synergy of combining these capabilities and getting them in the hands of the pilot is going to bring changes greater than anyone has imagined."

Heath noted the degree of lethality and survivability demonstrated last year in U.S. Air Force testing of the F/A-22 Raptor, which U.S. Air Force officials said was "overwhelmingly effective," allowing the F/A-22 to defeat air-to-air and ground-based threats and operate with "impunity."

"The F/A-22 and the F-35 will allow warfighters to do things that were previously considered impossible, and to think things that were previously unthinkable," Heath said.

The F/A-22 program is in its production phase now. The U.S. Air Force's first combat-designated Raptor unit is scheduled to achieve Initial Operational Capability -- certifying its readiness to go to war if needed -- by the end of this year.

The F-35 is being developed as a global fighter with capabilities that complement those of the Raptor. The first F-35 test aircraft is now undergoing final assembly at Lockheed Martin's Fort Worth, Texas, facility and is scheduled to make its first flight in the third quarter of 2006. World air forces will begin receiving F-35s later this decade.

"I'm convinced that in a few more years we'll realize how much air power has been transformed and we'll be amazed," Heath said. "Change is here now."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Lockheed Martin Aeronautics, 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.

For additional information, visit our website: http://www.lockheedmartin.com/

SOURCE: Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company

Web site: http://www.lockheedmartin.com/

Company News On-Call: http://www.prnewswire.com/comp/117281.html

https://news.lockheedmartin.com/2005-06-13-Lockheed-Martin-Aeronautics-Chief-Predicts-Effects-of-Third-Inflection-Point-in-Fighter-Aircraft-Technology