Lockheed Martin To Produce New Wings And Service Life Extension Kits For P-3 And CP-140 Aircraft

Lockheed Martin will open a new outer wing production line at its Marietta, Ga. facility supporting service life extension of the P-3 and CP-140 aircraft around the world.

"Interest in extending the service life of the world's P-3 and CP-140 fleet has increased as a result of the P-3 Structural Life Assessment Program (SLAP)," said Rick Kirkland, head of Lockheed Martin's Maritime Surveillance Enterprise. The SLAP program, a full scale fatigue test, equivalent to two additional lifetimes, benchmarked the P-3 airframe and revealed that the P-3 was accumulating fatigue damage faster than had been previously believed. "With many of the P-3 aircraft in operation now reaching their service life limits sooner than expected, and with no affordable replacement maritime patrol aircraft available, a service life extension is the only way for nations to maintain this vital operational capability," said Kirkland.

"There are numerous international and U.S. P-3 customers that will require P-3 life extension kits to sustain their aircraft," said Kirkland. "The production of the outer wing is a critical part of life extension that will provide an additional 20 years of service life. The kit also includes the center wing lower surface, horizontal stabilizer, wing and horizontal stabilizer leading edges, and filet fairings. The kit incorporates design enhancements and new materials with increased corrosion resistance that will provide P-3 operators an additional 15,000 hours of service life with significantly reduced maintenance costs, reduced down time and increased aircraft availability."

There are over 500 maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft around the world, some 85 percent of which are P-3s. "The growing age of this fleet, and the lack of an affordable replacement, leads to the need for upgrade programs," said Kirkland. "The lowest risk and most cost-effective solution for extending the P-3 service life is a re-wing. This approach enables an operator to maintain a maritime patrol presence at a fraction of the cost of a new aircraft. In addition, the customer can have a high degree of confidence in the cost and schedule because entire assemblies are being replaced with new material."

The outer wing production line in Marietta will have the capacity to produce life extension kits at a high rate for many years. While the location for installing the kits will be a function of customer preference, Lockheed Martin or its authorized P-3 Orion Service Centers can install the life extension kits at a number of locations worldwide.

The P-3 is regarded as the world standard in maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft. This aircraft, with its highly reliable four-engine propulsion system, fail-safe structure and long range/endurance, provides phenomenal mission flexibility. Its primary roles can be grouped into three general categories: antisubmarine and antisurface warfare; overwater or overland reconnaissance; and networkcentric warfare, such as command, control and communications relay. Additionally, the capabilities of the P-3 Orion make it an ideal platform for a number of secondary missions, including drug interdiction, firefighting, airborne early warning and electronic warfare.

Through more than four decades of service and approximately 14 million flying hours, the P-3 has achieved a reputation as the "ultimate airborne sub-hunter." Today, 15 nations and 18 customers rely on the P-3 Orion to patrol the world's oceans.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin employs about 135,000 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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