Lockheed Martin Joint Strike Fighter Officially Named 'Lightning II'

The Lockheed Martin F-35 Joint Strike Fighter was officially named Lightning II, in a ceremony held today in Fort Worth, Texas.

The name echoes those of two formidable fighters from the past: the World War II-era Lockheed P-38 Lightning and the mid-1950s Lightning supersonic jet, built by English Electric.

"The F-35 Lightning II will carry on the legacy of two of the greatest and most capable fighter aircraft of all time," said Ralph D. Heath, president of Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Co. "Just as the P-38 and the British Lightning were at the top of their class during their day, the F-35 will redefine multi- role fighter capability in the 21st century."

Attendees at the event included U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England and U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. T. Michael Moseley, who announced the F-35's new name. Also in attendance were U.S. Senators Kay Bailey Hutchison and John Cornyn of Texas, U.S. Congresswoman Kay Granger of Fort Worth, and representatives from the eight nations that are partnering with the U.S. in the F-35's development: the United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands, Turkey, Canada, Australia, Denmark and Norway.

"The F-35 Lightning II will be the centerpiece of airpower in the 21st century for America and our allies," Secretary England said. "Congratulations to the talented team of aerospace workers both in the United States and from our many international partners on reaching this important milestone."

Gen. Moseley added, "This aircraft represents the fruits of lessons learned over a hundred years of flight and aerial combat. We're excited about bringing it into our inventory, and warfighters around the globe are excited about flying it in defense of freedom."

English Electric, maker of the Lightning jet, later became BAE Systems, a principal industrial partner on the JSF program. With its afterburners lit, the twin-engine jet could reach speeds of 1,500 miles per hour. Like the F-35, the Lightning in its day represented a profound leap ahead in capability compared to the aircraft it replaced. It remained in service until 1988, largely because of its exceptional performance.

Likewise, the P-38 Lightning was built by Lockheed, now Lockheed Martin, the JSF program's prime contractor. During World War II, the P-38 scored the most aerial victories of any U.S. Army Air Forces fighter in the Pacific theater. Designed as a high-altitude interceptor, the sleek P-38 evolved into a versatile aircraft that was also used for dive bombing, level bombing, ground strafing and photo-reconnaissance missions.

The F-35 carries on both the Lightning name and its tradition of excellence. The Lightning II is a 5TH Generation, supersonic stealth fighter designed to replace a wide range of existing aircraft, including AV-8B Harriers, A-10s, F-16s, F/A-18 Hornets and United Kingdom Harrier GR.7s and Sea Harriers. The F-35 will be the most powerful single-engine fighter ever made.

Lockheed Martin is developing the F-35 with its principal industrial partners, Northrop Grumman and BAE Systems. Two separate, interchangeable F-35 engines are under development: the Pratt & Whitney F135 and the GE Rolls-Royce Fighter Engine Team F136.

The inaugural flight of the first F-35, a preproduction conventional takeoff and landing variant, is planned for later this year. Fifteen F-35s will undergo flight test, seven will be used for static testing and another will validate the aircraft's radar signature.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin employs about 135,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture, integration and sustainment of advanced technology systems, products and services. The corporation reported 2005 sales of $37.2 billion.

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

An F-35 electronic media kit is available at: http://www.lockheedmartin.com/wms/findPage.do?dsp=fec&ci=15965&rsbci=13151&fti

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