Lockheed Martin Employees Join Rep. Bill Young In Celebrating 10 Years Of Manufacturing Excellence In Pinellas

Lockheed Martin's manufacturing facility here was opened 10 years ago this month with 80 workers. Today the plant provides about 200 local jobs and supports production of 14 different aircraft, including the most capable and advanced fighters in the U.S. arsenal.

Dignitaries including Rep. Bill Young; Ralph Heath, president of Lockheed Martin Aeronautics; local officials; and others were on hand today to celebrate 10 years of the plant's contributions to major defense programs.

"The materials produced here are vital -- they make a difference to Lockheed Martin and they make a difference to nations around the world," said Heath. "The world's finest military aircraft would not fly if it weren't for the components and canopies made here in Pinellas. We depend on the very talented employees here to build these complex products at the highest quality."

Heath thanked Rep. Young for supporting defense programs that protect the United States and the lives of U.S. service men and women.

Opened in August 1997, the Lockheed Martin Aeronautics - Pinellas facility has 200,000 square feet of air conditioned manufacturing space. The site was started as a Sheet Metal Center of Excellence and quickly began to live up to its expectations.

Core competencies include sheet metal and extrusion fabrication, as well as structural subassembly work. The facility now produces components for 14 different aircraft, including all major Lockheed Martin Aeronautics products: the C-130J, F-22, F-16, F-35, C-5 and P-3. Other customers include Goodrich, Northrop Grumman, Middle River Aircraft and Sikorsky Aerospace.

The facility's most recent product line is aircraft canopies for the F-16 Fighting Falcon, F-22 Raptor and F-35 Lightning II. Canopy components include the "wind shield" of the aircraft -- a clear plastic bubble -- and the frame, ejection pyrotechnics and other structures that support it.

The F-22 is the U.S. Air Force's newest fighter and the most advanced military aircraft ever produced. The F-35 is expected to be one of the largest military aircraft programs in history, including thousands of aircraft to be produced for world air forces over several decades. Lockheed Martin continues to produce F-16s for several nations including Israel, Poland, Greece and Turkey.

"A decade of achievement is a remarkable milestone and a tribute to our people. Our backlog of work continues to grow as a result of U.S. and international requirements for the aircraft we support, which is keeping our employment stable. We have a highly skilled workforce that understands the importance of our task as well as the importance of giving back to our community. We are proud and thankful to be part of the bay area," said Steve Cobb, general manager.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin Corp. employs about 140,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture and integration of advanced technology systems, products and services. The corporation reported 2006 sales of $39.6 billion.

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