# Lockheed Martin Employees Recognized For F-117 Nighthawk Support

Lockheed Martin paid tribute to the thousands of employees who have contributed to the success of the F-117 Nighthawk since the aircraft's beginning 30 years ago during a tribute to excellence ceremony held yesterday.

Lockheed Martin Aeronautics President Ralph Heath recognized the great advancements in technology achieved through development of the F-117. Marking the occasion and their involvement, hundreds of employees, retirees and guests in attendance signed the bomb-bay doors of four F-117s on display and received signed posters from participating "Bandits," as the F-117 pilots are called.

"Today marks an historic tribute to this great aircraft and to the thousands of Lockheed Martin employees who helped develop and maintain this aircraft to the highest levels of readiness and mission success. From its first flight in 1981 through more than 20 years of operational service that includes deployment in three major conflicts, the stealth capabilities of this jet have revolutionized air warfare," said Ralph Heath. "Lockheed Martin's lessons-learned and experience in stealth, associated technologies, and reliability and sustainment have defined the 5TH Generation systems of today -- the F-22 and F-35 fighter aircraft."

Lockheed Martin won the contract to build 59 F-117 fighters at the famed Skunk Works(R) in Burbank, Calif., in 1978. The F-117 flew for the first time on June 18, 1981, only 31 months after the contract was awarded. Deliveries began in 1982 and ended in 1990, and the aircraft achieved initial operational capability in October 1983.

"We appreciate the dedicated effort of our Palmdale employees who have supported this national asset. Their dedication is unsurpassed and reflects the breadth of expertise and talent we have throughout the company in support of our government and the men and women in the armed forces," said George Zielsdorff, vice president of F-117 and U-2 programs for Lockheed Martin.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin employs about 140,000 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 2007 sales of $41.9 billion.

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