First Maintainers For Lockheed Martin F-35 Heading For Test Sites

The first group of maintenance crews for the F-35 Lightning II have successfully completed classroom instruction and certification training in preparation for F-35 test-site stand up at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., and Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Md.

"F-35 flight testing will quickly begin escalating as more and more aircraft come off the line, and we're pleased that our maintainers will be poised at the test sites to keep all the F-35s in top flying condition," said Kimberly Gavaletz, Lockheed Martin vice president of F-35 Autonomic Logistics/Global Sustainment.

In the late May/early June time frame, the first F-35A conventional takeoff and landing (CTOL) test aircraft will deploy temporarily to Edwards Air Force Base for expanded flight test activities. The aircraft will return to Lockheed Martin's Fort Worth plant this summer. The first F-35B short takeoff/vertical landing (STOVL) aircraft will transfer to Naval Air Station Patuxent River by early 2009, where it will begin long-term STOVL-mode flight testing.

F-35 flight-line mechanics from Lockheed Martin, Pratt & Whitney and the United States and United Kingdom military services completed systems training and task certifications for the F-35 CTOL and STOVL variants, including 27 separate pre-deployment certification courses. The training, conducted under the direction of Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman, covers vehicle systems, propulsion, avionics, fiber optics, low observable (stealth), the Autonomic Logistics Information System (maintenance/prognostics/support/logistics) and other aspects of the aircraft and its associated systems.

Approximately 500 certified maintainers will be assigned to the 13 flight-test aircraft that will deploy to Edwards and Patuxent River over the next five years. The first class combining students assigned to both test sites concluded on April 11.

The first F-35A has completed 40 flights and has exceeded performance and reliability expectations. The aircraft is currently in a scheduled period of maintenance and software updates that will enable an expanded flight envelope. All 19 flight-test and ground-test aircraft are in production flow or on the flightline, and assembly has begun on the first two production-model F-35s.

The F-35 is a supersonic, multi-role, 5th generation stealth fighter. Three F-35 variants derived from a common design, developed together and using the same sustainment infrastructure worldwide will replace at least 13 types of aircraft for 11 nations initially, making the Lightning II the most economical fighter program in history.

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.

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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