F-35: Delivering On The Promise To Redefine National Strategic Capabilities

A Lockheed Martin Joint Strike Fighter executive said today that the Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II is living up to the originally conceived ideal of a tri-service combat aircraft that leverages stealth technology, introduces multi-service interoperability, achieves economies of scale to drive down costs and strengthens important international alliances.

Tom Burbage, executive vice president of Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company and general manager of F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) Program Integration, reviewed the F-35 operational requirement and provided his thoughts on the game-changing technologies that are ensuring the delivery of dramatic improvements in fighter capability envisioned when the program was conceived more than a decade ago.

"The F-35 is designed to satisfy a very challenging operational requirement -- to go deep into enemy territory against the most lethal surface-to-air missile threats. The aircraft is also designed to destroy targets through any weather while outnumbered by the most advanced current-generation fighters equipped with highly sophisticated air-to-air missiles," Burbage said. "The F-35 can perform that mission from any base and at a lower cost than legacy programs. It's a daunting expectation but we are on the way to fulfilling it."

The intent of the program was to leverage recent major national investments in technology, introduce true service interoperability and achieve economies of commonality and scale as legacy combat aircraft fleets were replaced, according to Burbage.

In addition to its strategic military importance, the F-35's integrated global production structure will promote worldwide allied collaboration and significant maturation of the global industrial base.

"The ongoing National Security strategy to require coalition based operations had also exposed significant capability gaps between U.S. and allied forces equipment," said Burbage. "To address these gaps, a decision was made to allow participation by selected nations in the development and procurement of the JSF. The sharing of the technology capability with allied nations implies that future coalition combat operations will be more synergistic and much less expensive from a logistics standpoint."

Drawing upon global supply resources and strategically positioning parts and services around the world enable our allies to expand their local economies. The F-35 will strengthen international relationships and fortify political ties among the United States and its allies.

The F-35 is a supersonic, multi-role, 5th generation stealth fighter. Three F-35 variants derive from a common design. Developed together, they use the same sustainment infrastructure worldwide. The fighter will replace at least 13 types of aircraft for 11 nations initially, making the Lightning II the most cost-effective fighter program in history. Two F-35s have entered flight test, two are in ground test and 17 are in various stages of assembly, including the first two production-model jets scheduled for delivery to the U.S. Air Force in 2010.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin is a global security company that 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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