Lockheed Martin Readies Historic Operations & Checkout Facility For New Orion Spacecraft Integration Work

After a two-year, top to bottom renovation, the High Bay Facility of the Operations & Checkout (O&C) Building at NASA'S Kennedy Space Center (KSC) is now ready to begin preparations to build the new Orion crew exploration vehicle -- the flagship of NASA's Constellation Program.

Built in 1964, the O&C facility has a proud history as the final integration and checkout building for U.S. spacecraft used for human spaceflight beginning with the Apollo program. In 2007, after completing support activities for the International Space Station, major upgrades were planned to support future human spaceflight missions. The State of Florida, Lockheed Martin Corporation and NASA committed to invest more than $55 million to create a state-of-the-art facility to support NASA's future endeavors.

"The most significant benefit of these facility upgrades is that we now have on-site manufacturing and assembly of the spacecraft at KSC just before it is put onto the launch stack," said Richard Harris, Lockheed Martin Orion deputy program manager for Production Operations. "This is a first for NASA and human space flight technology today. In addition, this capability saves a tremendous amount of time and cost in preparing for a launch since there is no cross-country shipment of the vehicle requiring additional test and checkout upon arrival at KSC."

"This is another signal to the aerospace industry throughout the nation and internationally that the Space Coast is a location prepared to do business," said Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp. "Our outstanding workforce and talent pool, along with this infrastructure positions the Space Coast to attract additional manufacturing, research, development, and quality processing programs."

According to Linda Weatherman of the Florida Economic Development Council, the renovation investment made a significant economic impact to the local and state economies. The O&C project has provided over 230 jobs in Florida for the design, fabrication and construction activities.

Renovations by Florida's Hensel Phelps, the construction contractor for this project, began in 2007 with the demolition of abandoned systems. The project remained on schedule with new facility designs established concurrently by a team of NASA, supporting contractors and Lockheed Martin engineers.

Extending the economic impact beyond the state of Florida, Lockheed Martin has contracted a significant portion of the Orion manufacturing and assembly operations to United Space Alliance, which will utilize its Florida Shuttle workforce. This includes transportation of Crew Modules, Service Modules and miscellaneous equipment to support Orion's Flight Test Program and Flight Hardware Production. Flight hardware will be fabricated at locations around the country and shipped to the O&C facility for final integration and assembly. Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Louisiana, Maryland, New Mexico, Ohio, Texas, Utah and Virginia are also among those states contributing to this effort.

"The Orion spacecraft will be a complex, state-of-the-art spacecraft with the most capability, flexibility and adaptability of any other space flight vehicle in history," said Cleon Lacefield, Lockheed Martin vice president and Orion program manager. "It's very fitting that the O&C facility will offer unparalleled tooling and assembly technology to enable the Orion team to quickly turnaround the reusable parts of Orion or assemble new components prior to launch. This will certainly help improve the efficiency of NASA'S next generation of spacecraft."

Now that the facility is officially certified, the next phase of activation will take place over the next two years as specially designed tooling stations and other assembly equipment are moved into place to support the first Orion spacecraft assembly activity, which is now scheduled to begin in 2012.

The Constellation program is comprised of spacecraft and surface systems that will carry astronauts to the International Space Station, back to the moon and eventually on to Mars. Lockheed Martin is the prime contractor to NASA for Orion, which is scheduled to make its first crewed flight in 2015.

About Lockheed Martin

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin is a global security company that employs about 146,000 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 2008 sales of $42.7 billion.

http://www.lockheedmartin.com/

About United Space Alliance

United Space Alliance (USA) is supporting Lockheed Martin's Orion project in design and development of hardware and software for both flight and ground. USA's primary roles include: performing the assembly, integration, and processing of the Orion capsule at the Kennedy Space Center; providing operations expertise to the Lockheed Martin design and engineering team to ensure optimum operability and producibility; developing the initial Orion avionics integration test facility at the Johnson Space Center; and providing portions of the onboard flight software. More information about USA can be found at http://www.unitedspacealliance.com/

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