F-35 Lightning II Brings 5th Generation Capabilities To The Navy

A Lockheed Martin executive said Friday that the 5th Generation F-35 Lightning II will help meet the challenges of future forces across the range of military operations.

"The F-35 was designed to operate and survive in high-threat battlespace defined by advanced surface-to-air missile systems, and while outnumbered by top-of-the-line 4th generation fighters - a distinct probability for future combat scenarios faced by naval aviators," said Steve O'Bryan, vice president of Lockheed Martin F-35 Business Development. "The F-35 will incorporate the most advanced net-enabled mission systems, sensor and communications suite ever fielded in a fighter aircraft. It will be a key node in the kind of information-collection and distribution networks so valuable to sea, land and air forces today and in the future."

Speaking Friday at a U.S. Navy League media luncheon at the Lockheed Martin Fighter Demonstration Center in Crystal City, Va., O'Bryan noted that, "The character of warfare isn't static - it isn't simply about lethality or a better sheaf of thunderbolts. In recent conflict we've seen wider distribution of forces and capabilities across more complex environments. This has highlighted the increased value of information exchange and collaboration - functions that the F-35 is designed to participate in and to enable." The luncheon preceded the Navy League Sea Air Space Exposition in National Harbor, Md., May 4-6.

O'Bryan pointed to the pillars of the F-35 program - affordability, survivability, lethality and supportability - and highlighted the F-35's value proposition. "As a 5th generation fighter, the F-35 is redefining the term 'multi-role fighter' by combining unprecedented situational awareness, net-enabled systems, sensor fusion, advanced sustainment, stealth and fighter performance in an affordable and supportable package. These next-generation capabilities will maintain the U.S. Navy as the premier sea force for decades to come.

"The key to affordability is the commonality of the tri-variant design of the F-35, with two interchangeable engines, a sustainment tool set and a common avionics system and air frame," O'Bryan said. "The F-35 provides 'best value' in a package that not only deters hostilities and ensures national sovereignty, but enhances interoperability among the services and allied nations.

"The F-35 will be flown by the U.S. Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps, as well as our closest allies. This, combined with the unmatched interoperability of the F-35, will be essential to link the 1,000-ship Navy and the 100-wing Air Force," O'Bryan added.

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 cost-effective 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 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.

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