Global Partners Building Global Security: F-35 Program Spotlights International Partners

International participants in the Lockheed MartinF-35 Lightning II program have begun purchasing aircraft and making long-range commitments to integrate the fighter into their fleets, a Lockheed Martin executive said Wednesday at the Paris Air Show.

"Since the start of the year, we have seen the United Kingdom commit to the purchase of their first three operational test and evaluation (OT&E) aircraft, Italy approve in principle the establishment of an F-35 final assembly and checkout facility as well as the purchase of 131 F-35s, and the Netherlands approve funds for the first of two OT&E airplanes," said Tom Burbage, Lockheed Martin executive vice president and general manager of F-35 Program Integration. "At the same time, Australia has reaffirmed its requirement for 100 F-35s and Israel has begun planning to purchase 25 F-35s initially, with an option for 50 more."

The F-35 - the world's only international 5th generation fighter - will replace more than 13 aircraft types and enable allies to conduct seamless operations with new levels of capability that are unavailable in current-generation fighters.

Burbage also discussed the F-35's role as the centerpiece of global security cooperation -- beyond its operational service. "In addition to the aircraft itself providing new levels of interoperability among allied operators, the strong industrial participation within the program from partner nations help provide stability during these uncertain economic times," he said.

During the briefing, both Burbage and Maj. Gen. (select) David Heinz, Joint Strike Fighter Program Executive Officer highlighted accomplishments in the F-35 program this year, noting that "2009 has been a year of firsts for the F-35 program."

The year has featured the rollout of the first F-35 equipped with mission systems, the first flight of the second F-35B short takeoff/vertical landing variant, and the first U.S. Marine to pilot an F-35. In preparation for the first vertical landing this fall at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Md., the first F-35B, known as BF-1, tested its propulsion system on a specially instrumented "hover pit" in Fort Worth, Texas, in March, proving that it produces more than enough thrust to carry out all its required missions.

Looking ahead in 2009, flight testing will continue to accelerate, with nine aircraft flying, the stand-up of test sites at Patuxent River and Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., and continued testing of static and durability aircraft. By the close of 2009 the last System Development and Demonstration aircraft will be in final assembly and low-rate initial production lot 1 aircraft will begin rolling out of the Fort Worth factory.

As part of the Wednesday event, a commemorative F-35 coin ceremony was held. Gen. Heinz presented the special coins to representatives of partner nations in honor of each country's technological innovation, cooperation and funding to the F-35 program. Those countries include the United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands, Turkey, Canada, Australia, Denmark and Norway, as well as the United States.

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 nine 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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