Lockheed Martin Delivers First USAF Production F-35 Lightning II

FORT WORTH, Texas, May 9, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- The U.S. Air Force has accepted into its fleet the first of a planned 1,763 production-model Lockheed Martin (NYSE: LMT) F-35 Lightning II stealth fighters.

The signing of formal acceptance documents for the jet, known as AF-7, took place at Lockheed Martin's F-35 final assembly plant in Fort Worth, Texas, Thursday, May 5. The jet flew to Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., on Friday to begin its flight testing program.

"This first aircraft is the beginning of the modernization of U.S. Air Force, Marine and Naval Air power and for our collation partners around the world," said Larry Lawson, Lockheed Martin executive vice president and F-35 program general manager. "The F-35 family of aircraft will bring an incredible increase in capability that our men and women defending us deserve. Today we begin to fulfill the vision of our government and international customers."

F-35s have completed more than 865 flights since flight-testing began in late 2006. In addition to AF-7, eight more production-model F-35s have rolled out and are being prepared for delivery.

The F-35 Lightning II is the most advanced multirole fighter in the world, combining Very Low Observable stealth with fighter speed and agility, fully fused sensor information, network-enabled operations and reduced sustainment costs. The Lightning II's sensor suite is the most powerful and comprehensive of any fighter in history, and will merge with an unprecedented networking capability to give unmatched situational awareness. Supersonic launch of internal weapons, including maximum-speed (Mach 1.6) launch of internal air-to-air missiles, is a feature of all F-35s.

Three distinct variants of the F-35 will replace the A-10 and F-16 for the U.S. Air Force, the F/A-18 for the U.S. Navy, the F/A-18 and AV-B Harrier for the U.S. Marine Corps, and a variety of fighters for at least nine other countries.

Lockheed Martin is developing the F-35 with its principal industrial partners, Northrop Grumman and BAE Systems.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin is a global security company that employs about 126,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture, integration and sustainment of advanced technology systems, products and services. The Corporation's 2010 sales from continuing operations were $45.8 billion.

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