F-35 Program Halts Development Of Alternate Helmet

FORT WORTH, Texas, Oct. 10, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- The F-35 Joint Program Office (JPO) today informed Lockheed Martin (NYSE:LMT) that it decided to halt development of the alternate F-35 helmet and focus exclusively on maturing the Rockwell Collins Elbit Systems of America Vision Systems Generation 2 (Gen 2) helmet currently used in training and testing. The program will recoup approximately $45 million in funds it had originally allocated for the development of the alternate helmet.

In 2011, program and industry officials acknowledged that there were technical issues facing the principle helmet system. To ensure viable combat capability was available when needed, the program began a dual-path development plan as a risk-management strategy in the event maturity issues facing the Gen 2 helmet could not be resolved. BAE Systems began developing the alternate helmet in September 2011.

"The government's decision to proceed exclusively with the principle helmet is indicative of their confidence in the helmet's performance and the successful resolution of previously identified technical challenges," said Lorraine Martin, Lockheed Martin executive vice president and general manager of the F-35 Lightning II Program. "To date, more than 100 F-35 pilots have flown more than 6,000 flights and 10,000 hours with the helmet, and their feedback has been very positive. Lockheed Martin and its suppliers will continue to focus on developing and delivering the helmet's unprecedented capabilities to the warfighter in support of the services' declaration of Initial Operating Capability."

The F-35's Helmet Mounted Display Systems provide pilots with unprecedented situational awareness; all the information pilots need to complete their missions – through all weather, day or night – is projected on the helmet's visor. Additionally, the F-35's Distributed Aperture System streams real-time imagery from six infrared cameras mounted around the aircraft to the helmet, allowing pilots to "look through" the airframe.

Beginning with aircraft in Low Rate Initial Production lot 7, the program will introduce a Gen 3 helmet that features an improved night vision camera, new liquid crystal displays, automated alignment and software enhancements.

The F-35 Lightning II is a 5th generation fighter, combining advanced stealth with fighter speed and agility, fully fused sensor information, network-enabled operations and advanced sustainment. 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 10 other countries.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin is a global security and aerospace company that employs about 116,000 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 net sales for 2012 were $47.2 billion.

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