Lockheed Martin Celebrates 25 Years Of Work On The Royal Navy's Merlin Helicopter Programme

Merlin continues to evolve with new capabilities to be retrofitted, such as electro optical infra-red camera, full motion video, defensive aide's suite and ballistic protection.

HAVANT, England, Oct. 17, 2016 /PRNewswire/ -- Lockheed Martin (NYSE: LMT) has led the celebrations to recognise the 25th anniversary of the Royal Navy's Merlin anti-submarine and anti-surface helicopter. The original contract for the Merlin Mk1 helicopter was awarded on October 9, 1991.

An event, held in Portsmouth's Historic Dockyard, brought together past and present members of the Ministry of Defence (MOD), Royal Navy and industry team members in celebration of the milestone. Memories, experiences, photos and videos of the programme's 25 year journey were shared.

In 1991, the £2.2 billion Merlin Mk1 programme was the largest and most sophisticated systems integration project to date. The contract provided 44 airframes, a state of the art training system and a maintenance and support system to the Royal Navy.

Entering service in 1999 and deployed on operations for the first time in 2000, the Merlin Mk1 significantly enhanced the UK's maritime operational capability with the provision of a new and versatile, anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare capability.

Ten years ago, the Merlin Capability Sustainment Programme (MCSP) began. Building on the successful legacy of the Mk1, MCSP was a £750 million project that created 30 upgraded and enhanced Mk2 helicopters, extending their service with the Royal Navy. Over this decade, employees from both Lockheed Martin and Leonardo have been involved in the design, development and manufacture of the Merlin Mk2.

"Over 25 years of partnership and collaboration, our joint industry-military team has accomplished so much on the Merlin programme," said Stephanie Hill, vice president of Cyber Ships and Advanced Technologies for Lockheed Martin. "Delivering the 30th Mk 2 in July was a great moment, and we are proud to continue equipping the Royal Navy with the tools they need to perform their vital missions."

"Attending the anniversary was a real pleasure and brought back many memories from the past, said Phil Shaw, chief executive of Lockheed Martin India, but ten years ago was heading up the capability sustainment programme for the Royal Navy. "It was absolutely wonderful to catch up with old acquaintances within Lockheed Martin, Leonardo and in the Royal Navy. The number of people that attended is testament to the relationships between the all the parties involved."

The Merlin programme has maintained critical sovereign capabilities for the UK, while creating and maintaining more than 1,000 jobs, with much of the development work on the mission system carried out by British engineers.

The Merlin Mk2 helicopter is an advanced helicopter and is noted for its unmatched versatility. Primarily designed for 'blue water' operations, it has proved equally adept in a littoral 'brown water' environment. As well as its primary role of anti-submarine warfare, the Merlin has successfully demonstrated capabilities in search and rescue, troop transport, vertical replenishment and casualty evacuation.

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