Belgium And Lockheed Martin Celebrate Rollout Of First F-35A For Belgium

FORT WORTH, Texas, Dec. 10, 2023 /PRNewswire/ -- Lockheed Martin [LMT] presented Belgium's first F-35A Lightning II to the Belgian government during a rollout ceremony at Lockheed Martin's F-35 production facility. This event marks a significant milestone in the Belgian Air Force's history and strengthens the alliance between the United States and Belgium, a key NATO ally.

"The introduction of the F-35 within the Belgian Air Force will enable us to continue to fulfil all our missions in the coming decades, in cooperation with our allies and partners in NATO, the EU and beyond," said Chief of Defense for the Belgian Armed Forces, Admiral Michel Hofman.

Building on the strong legacy of the F-16, the F-35 will provide the next generation of air power to ensure the Belgian Air Force can fulfill its NATO missions and protect the alliance's key interests. By serving as the most advanced 21st Century Security solution, the F-35 will connect assets across domains to increase situational awareness for Belgium and its key European partners.

"We congratulate Belgium on this significant achievement," said Lt. Gen. Mike Schmidt, program executive officer, F-35 Joint Program Office. "The growth of the F-35 in Europe strengthens international partnerships, interoperability, and warfighting capability; and emphasizes the importance the aircraft provides as a deterrent against potential adversaries."

"With its unmatched capability, connectivity and interoperability, the 5th Generation F-35 will enable the Belgian Air Force to stay ahead of threats for decades to come," said Greg Ulmer, executive vice president, Lockheed Martin Aeronautics. "Today's milestone would not have been possible without the strong partnership and key contributions from our close partners in Belgian government and industry."

Senior government and military leaders from Belgium and the United States attended the ceremony. Belgium's program of record calls for 34 F-35As. The first aircraft, designated AY-01, will be delivered to the Belgian Air Force next year and will be based at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, where international F-35 pilot and maintainer training takes place.

The F-35 also creates high-quality, long-term employment opportunities for Belgium. Through the Essential Security Interest (ESI) program, Lockheed Martin will bring cutting-edge manufacturing techniques and benefits, expanding Belgian industry's skills and knowledge and providing high-tech jobs for Belgians for decades to come.

F-35s are now operating from 31 bases worldwide. To date, Lockheed Martin has delivered more than 980 F-35s, trained more than 2,250 pilots and 15,125 maintainers, and the F-35 fleet has surpassed 768,000 cumulative flight hours. Lockheed Martin continues to work side by side with F-35 operators to ensure allies remain ahead of the evolving threat.

About Lockheed Martin
Headquartered in Bethesda, Maryland, Lockheed Martin Corporation is a global security and aerospace company that employs more than 116,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture, integration and sustainment of advanced technology systems, products and services.

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