Lockheed Martin And Bulgaria Mark Arrival Of First Bulgaria F-16 Block 70 Jet

GRAF IGNATIEVO AIR BASE, Bulgaria, April 14, 2025– Lockheed Martin and the Bulgarian Ministry of Defence formally celebrated the arrival of the first F-16 Block 70 in Bulgaria on Sunday, commemorating the beginning of F-16 operations in Bulgaria. F-16 Block 70 fighter jets will enable Bulgaria to ensure the protection of its airspace and strengthen European security cooperation across allies.

Bulgaria has ordered 16 total F-16 fighter jets. The first eight will be delivered by the end of 2025.

Mike Shoemaker, vice president and general manager of the Integrated Fighter Group at Lockheed Martin, emphasized during the ceremony, “This is not just a celebration of a new aircraft for the Bulgarian Air Force - it represents a new era of enhanced security, advanced capabilities and strengthened partnerships in the region.”

Shoemaker added: “Lockheed Martin has been proud to serve as a bridge between the United States and Bulgaria as we work together to achieve peace through strength around the globe.”

The F-16 Block 70 jets are equipped with the Northrop Grumman APG-83 AESA Radar, advanced avionics, an extended structural service life of 12,000 hours, and critical safety features like the Automatic Ground Collision Avoidance System (Auto GCAS). Since its integration into the U.S. Air Force in late 2014, the Auto GCAS has been instrumental in saving 13 pilots across 12 F-16 incidents, exemplifying the aircraft's unparalleled safety and performance standards.

Bulgaria’s new F-16s join a global network of more than 700 F-16s operating in Europe today and more than 3,100 operating around the world. Lockheed Martin has a backlog of 114 F-16 Block 70/72 jets to be produced in Greenville, South Carolina, with 26 total jets delivered to-date for international partners.

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