

ROKAF Begins Initial Operational Assessment Of T-50 Fast Jet Trainer

- The Remaining Prerequisite for Production Decision

The Republic of Korea Air Force (ROKAF) began Initial Operational Assessment (IOA) of the T-50, with the first flights on July 28.

The T-50 is being developed by Korea Aerospace Industries (KAI), with the assistance of Lockheed Martin

The T-50 IOA is the last of three key prerequisites for the Initial Production Authorization decision by the government of the Republic of Korea, expected later this year. The other prerequisites are the first 105 flights of developmental flight testing and the initial Integrated Logistics Assessment, both of which have been successfully completed recently.

IOA is similar to Initial Operational Test and Evaluation flying performed in the United States and is used to perform an early evaluation of operational suitability to support an initial production decision.

"This is an important event in the life of the program," said Col. Lee, Hee Woo, director of Development Management of ROKAF. "We have flown the aircraft enough to know we have a solid, reliable aircraft. Now, we are ready to evaluate how well the aircraft will perform operationally as a fast jet trainer."

The period of performance for IOA is estimated to be one month. However, the actual requirements will be determined by the IOA evaluation team during the flight evaluation. Also, this is monsoon season in Korea, which will impact flight operations.

The T-50 IOA will be performed at Sacheon Air Base, South Korea, the location of T-50 production and developmental flight testing. Evaluation will be performed by approximately five non-test pilots who represent the ROKAF training command. T-50 test pilots will serve the roles of both simulated student pilot and safety pilot.

Flight profiles have been established that will be representative of operational flying forecast for the T-50. Evaluation will include the following: typical training scenarios; instructor pilot ability to monitor and fly the aircraft during training flights; aircraft handling and performance characteristics gear up; takeoff and landing characteristics; and suitability of the aircraft to permit a direct transition of new pilots from the T-50 to a high-performance, modern fighter such as the F-16.

Follow-on operational assessment flights (approximately 64 flights) are planned through 2005. These evaluations are for validation of operational capabilities of the current baseline and identification of potential enhancements.

The T-50 Golden Eagle is being developed by KAI for the Republic of Korea Air Force. Lockheed Martin, as principal subcontractor to KAI, is providing technical expertise for the program and is responsible for developing the T-50 avionics system, flight control system and wings. The two companies are cooperatively marketing the T-50 internationally.

The T-50 Full-Scale Development program began in 1997 and will continue through 2005. Initial production authorization is planned for the latter part of 2003 with production deliveries to begin in 2005.

The T-50 will have the maneuverability, endurance and advanced systems to prepare future pilots to fly current and next-generation fighters like advanced F-16s, the F/A-22 and the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. These same characteristics give it an excellent capability as a lead-in fighter trainer and potential light-combat aircraft derivative in many air forces.

Korea Aerospace Industries Ltd. is the Republic of Korea's national aerospace company established in 1999 with the consolidation of Samsung Aerospace, Daewoo Heavy Industries and Hyundai Space and Aircraft Co. KAI lines of business include fixed-wing aircraft, helicopter aircraft and satellites. Its major products are the KF-16, KT-1 basic trainer, T-50, SB427 helicopters, UAVs, aerostructures and KOMPSAT satellite program.

Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Co., a business area of Lockheed Martin, is a leader in the design, development, systems integration, production and support of advanced military aircraft and related technologies. Its customers include the military services of the United States and allied countries throughout the world. Products include the F-16, F/A-22, F-35 JSF, F-117, T-50, C-5, C-27J, C-130, C-130J, P-3, S-3 and U-2.

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