NAS Pax River Facility to Test Lockheed Martin Stealth Fighters for the Navy and Marine Corps

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PATUXENT RIVER, Md., Jan. 30 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- The U.S. Navy has dedicated a $24 million facility at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Md., for testing of the Navy and Marine Corps' newest jets: the Lockheed Martin (NYSE: LMT) F-35B and F-35C Joint Strike Fighter.

Nine of the 15 F-35 flight-test aircraft will undergo evaluation at the Joint Strike Fighter Test and Support Facility at NAS Patuxent River. Arrival of the first jet, a short-takeoff/vertical landing (STOVL) F-35B for the Marine Corps, is planned for early 2008. Testing of the Navy's F-35C, designed for catapult launches and arrested recoveries aboard large aircraft carriers, will begin in 2009. Both versions will be tested in land- and ship-based environments. The stealthy F-35 will be the most powerful single-engine fighter ever fielded.

"We are proud to supply the Navy and the Marines with their first stealth aircraft, which will bring a great leap in capability to both services," said Dan Crowley Lockheed Martin executive vice president and JSF program general manager. "It's clear that this impressive airplane will get an equally impressive test facility at Pax River."

Military, industry and government officials, including U.S. Rep. Steny Hoyer of Maryland, were among the approximately 200 people who attended a dedication of the new complex on Jan. 23. Also attending were Rear Adm. Steven Enewold JSF program director, Doug Pearson Lockheed Martin vice president and director of F-35 integrated test force, and outgoing integrated test force director Paul Metz, who recently announced his retirement.

The JSF program is no stranger to NAS Patuxent River. In February and March of 2001, the Lockheed Martin X-35C logged 73 flights and 252 field carrier-landing practices at the base. The X-35C was the Navy version of Lockheed Martin's successful JSF concept-demonstrator aircraft that contributed to the company winning the F-35 development contract in October 2001.

In addition to the F-35B and F-35C, six F-35A test aircraft will be built and tested primarily at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif. The F-35A is designed to U.S. Air Force specifications. All F-35 aircraft will undergo initial flight testing at Lockheed Martin in Fort Worth, Texas. The first F-35, an Air Force version, is nearing completion at Fort Worth and will fly later this year.

The F-35 is a 5th Generation, supersonic, stealth strike fighter designed to replace current-generation fighters that are nearing the end of their service lives. Lockheed Martin is developing the F-35 with its principal industrial partners Northrop Grumman and BAE Systems. Two propulsion teams, led by Pratt & Whitney and The GE Rolls-Royce Fighter Engine Team, are developing separate, interchangeable engines for the F-35.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin employs about 135,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture, integration and sustainment of advanced technology systems, products and services. The corporation reported 2005 sales of $37.2 billion.

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