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During the final delivery ceremony, celebrating the success of the Boeing [NYSE: BA] Harrier II production program here today, the United States, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom pledged to pursue a joint initiative to mutually advance the interests of their Harrier fleets.

The four nations are also involved in drafting a Memorandum of Understanding, to develop a Harrier II joint program office. Over the next 10 years, the office will manage the Harrier II post-production support program, including spares procurement and upgrades.

The ceremony was held in conjunction with the delivery of the fifth and final remanufactured Harrier II Plus to the Spanish Navy.

The Harrier II Plus was developed through an innovative international collaboration between the United States, Italy and Spain, to provide significant capability improvements to the Harrier II at a fraction of the cost of new aircraft. It is the only short takeoff-vertical landing jet built in the United States.

"Our Marine Harriers more than proved their worth during Operation Iraqi Freedom," said Maj. Gen. James Amos, commanding general of the U.S. Marine 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing and keynote speaker at the ceremony. "Not only did they provide deadly precision strike capability and rapid retargeting via their onboard Litening II FLIRs, (targeting pods) they also showed the world how to fly and operate in a truly expeditionary environment.

"I had my Harriers flying off of highways and bombed-out runways as we advanced on Baghdad for the final showdown," continued Amos. "I simply could not have been more pleased with the reliability of the airplane and its weapons systems...and in the courage and discipline of my AV8 pilots."

In total, Boeing has delivered 336 Harrier IIs to the U.S. Marine Corps, 20 to the Italian navy, and 16 to the Spanish navy. Additionally, Boeing was a subcontractor to BAE Systems for 90 Harrier II aircraft for the United Kingdom Royal Air Force.

During the remanufacture program, Boeing built the forward and forward center fuselage for the aircraft, and BAE Systems built a new aft fuselage. The Naval Aviation Depot at Cherry Point, N.C. modified the existing aircraft wing, vertical fin and horizontal stabilator and cleaned the existing canopy. The aircraft also received a new Rolls Royce Pegasus F402-RR-408 engine and Raytheon APG-65 radar from F/A-18 Hornet aircraft. The remanufacturing process provided a new service life for the aircraft, at significantly less cost than a new aircraft.

"The innovations of this remanufacture program are typical of the Harrier program from the beginning," according to Pat Finneran, vice president and general manager, Naval Aircraft Programs, for Boeing. "This program has provided the Marines and our allies with tactically relevant and sustainable aircraft, which will enable them to continue operating Harriers until at least 2015."

Although the ceremony marked the end of Harrier II production, Boeing will be involved in post-production support during the lifespan of the aircraft.

A unit of The Boeing Company, Integrated Defense Systems is one of the world's largest space and defense businesses. Headquartered in St. Louis, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is a \$25 billion business. It provides systems solutions to its global military, government and commercial customers. It is a leading provider of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance; the world's largest military aircraft manufacturer; the world's largest satellite manufacturer and a leading provider of space-based communications; the primary systems integrator for U.S. missile defense; NASA's largest contractor; and a global leader in launch services.

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For further information:

Kathleen M. Cook

Naval Systems

(314) 233-6818

kathleen.m.cook@boeing.com

Ellen LeMond-Holman

Naval Systems

(314) 232-6496

ellen.j.lemond-holman@boeing.com
