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McDonnell's plan for aerospace training centre near K. Lumpur

MCDONNELL Douglas, the world's leading producer of military aircraft, is developing a strategic partnership with Mara in setting up an aerospace training centre near Kuala Lumpur.

Chairman of the Board of McDonnell Douglas Corporation John McDonnell told Bernama at its St Louis, Missouri, assembly plant on Wednesday that the training centre, which would offer technical courses in maintenance and manufacturing of aircraft, would be created with assistance from Utah State University.

The centre was projected to accommodate up to 720 students, and 250 were expected to graduate from the centre annually.

He said this to Malaysian newsmen following a roll-out ceremony where MDC delivered the first of eight F/A-18D Hornets to the Royal Malaysian Air Force.

Defence Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar received the aircraft on behalf of the Malaysian government.

Under MDC's industrial participation agreement with Malaysia, the aircraft manufacturer is providing Malaysia with know-how for high-speed machining, along with other advanced technologies, including rapid prototyping and composite filament winding for modern aircraft applications.

McDonnell, in his speech, recalled Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's visit to MDC's facilities in St Louis in 1994.

"I can remember one of the things he said as we were taking him through the Phantom Works (MDC's research and development laboratory).

"When he saw a high-speed machining centre that sculpts large parts of the aircraft out of billets of aluminium, he was quite impressed," he said.

He said, and I quote, "I want one of those in our country.

McDonnell said that while MDC was supplying Hornets to the RMAF, Malaysia would be supplying components for the company's MD-80 and MD-90 commercial aircraft.

Malaysia and MDC were still working out on the kind of components Malaysia could produce for the commercial aircraft, "but they will be delivered from Malaysia soon," he said.

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