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McDonnell

MCDONNELL DOUGLAS TO SET UP AEROSPACE TRAINING CENTRE IN MALAYSIA

ST. LOUIS, Missouri, March 20 (Bernama) -- 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 (MDC) John McDonnell said here 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 students were expected to graduate from the centre every year, he said following a roll-out ceremony where MDC delivered the first of eight F/A 18 D Hornets to the Royal Malaysian Royal Air Force (RMAF), here. 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. 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, and I quote, 'I want one of those in our country.'"

McDonnell said that while MDC was supplying F/A 18s to Malaysia, 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," McDonnell said.

Meanwhile, MDC, in its annual report, posted record earnings in 1996 of \$788 million led by the military aircraft operations. Operating revenues in the commercial aircraft segment decreased 15 per cent in 1996, after a 23 per cent increase in 1995. (US\$1=RM2.50)

MDC delivered 24 MD-90 and 12 MD-80 twin jets in 1996, compared with 14 MD-90 and 18 MD-80 twin jets in 1995. Current commercial aircraft production plans for 1997 anticipate MD80/90 twin jet deliveries to be slightly higher than 1996 deliveries.

Analysts say that MDC's commercial aircraft production is in question with the upcoming merger of McDonnell Douglas with Boeing, where Boeing is expected to dominate commercial aircraft production while McDonnell Douglas would focus on military aircraft production and the defence systems business.

The merged company will be named the Boeing company. The McDonnell name will be retained in connection with the defence systems business and products manufactured by MDC's commercial division, Douglas Aircraft Co., will retain the "MD" designation, the report says. -- BERNAMA

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