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**DEFENDING FREEDOM DAILY SINCE 1776**


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## Officials celebrate groundbreaking at Lockheed Martin

By STEVEN ALFORD  
Staff writer

Friday, April 17, 2009

It was quite the event Thursday afternoon at Lockheed Martin's plant, located off North John Redditt Drive, as congressmen, judges, city council members and company executives alike came together to celebrate the groundbreaking on a new section of the facility which will essentially double the size of the plant.

"There's so much going on with the economy in this country, but we're dealing with where we are," said U.S. Rep. Louie Gohmert (R-Tyler). "It gives me so much pride that right here in East Texas we are providing for the defense of the nation. We've got good workers here and it makes sense to bring this expansion to Lufkin."



Steven Alford/The Lufkin Daily News (ENLARGE)

Local officials and Lockheed Martin employees break ground on the company's new section at their Lufkin operations, located off North John Redditt Drive, Thursday afternoon. Pictured left to right are: Jim Wehmeier, director of economic development for Lufkin, Keith Johnson, general manager of Lockheed Martin's Lufkin operations, Rose Boyd, Mayor pro-tem, former Congressman Charlie Wilson, U.S. Rep. Louie Gohmert (R-Tyler), Randy O'Neal, vice president over missile operations at Lockheed Martin, and Wes Suiter, Angelina County judge.

The original plant, constructed in 1995, began with about 50 employees, which has today expanded to include almost 140. The new additions to the facility will add an additional 50,000 square feet, and provide for a modest growth of employment, said Keith Johnson, lead site manager for Lockheed Martin.

Another famous face was on hand to congratulate the company, former Congressman Charlie Wilson, who helped bring the original project to Lufkin.

"This is almost as much fun as when we first announced the plant in '95," Wilson said. "I can't think of another growing industrial plant in Angelina County, and I'm very proud to be here today."

Angelina County Judge Wes Suiter was also on hand to lend his appreciation for the expansion.

"This is a tremendous opportunity for Lufkin and Angelina County," Suiter said. "This isn't part of any government stimulus — this is because of the hard work of Lockheed Martin. They could have built this anywhere, but they chose Lufkin and we are grateful for that."

Randy O'Neal, Vice President over missile operations at Lockheed Martin, concluded the event by thanking all of the dedicated employees who have stuck with the company over the past 14 years and were an integral part of the plant's expansion.

"This whole process has already begun. We are already looking ahead 5 years down the road," O'Neal said. "We've got a huge mountain to climb, but we are proud of our progress and this couldn't be happening at a better location."

Lockheed Martin's Lufkin Operations produces electronics and sub-assemblies for the combat-proven Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) Missile, the Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (GMLRS), the Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) and the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) Weapon System, according to a press release.

The company anticipates steady growth in its Lufkin Operations on these programs over the next few years.

Lockheed Martin's Lufkin Operations was awarded the prestigious James S. Cogswell Award for Outstanding Industrial Security last June

Of the more than 12,000 cleared defense contractor sites in the National Industrial Security Program, only 23 were honored with a Cogswell Award.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin is a global security company that employs about 146,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture, integration and sustainment of advanced technology systems, products and services, a press release stated.

The corporation reported 2008 sales of \$42.7 billion

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