

DCMA AIMO team supports Blue Angel transition

Navy Cmdr. Ty Frautschi | DCMA AIMO

The last “Blue” Blue Angel aircraft, BL001, piloted by Navy Capt. Eric Holmberg, Defense Contract Management Agency Aircraft Integrated Maintenance Operations commander, was recently delivered to the Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Fla.

DCMA Aircraft Integrated Maintenance Office actively manages aircraft overhaul, modification, maintenance and repair in 10 states and oversaw the delivery of more than 700 aircraft last year. DCMA AIMO personnel oversee contract operations, performing safety-of-flight, quality, engineering, contracting and administrative functions for a wide range of modification and repair services, including those performed on F/A-18 Hornet and Superhornet (A through F models) aircraft.

BL001, better known as “Blue-1,” was the 701st F/A-18 aircraft delivered to Navy and Marine Corps squadrons since the contractor began Hornet modification and repair operations in

October 1999. Although one unpainted Blue Angel aircraft still remains, “the milestone delivery of BL001 to the Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron at Naval Air Station Pensacola was made possible through the professionalism, technical expertise and solid teamwork by all involved,” Holmberg said.

The Navy’s Blue Angels have been flying single-seat A- and two-seat B-model F/A-18 Hornets since 1986 but are now exchanging them for newer F/A-18 C- and D-model aircraft. In 2007, the contractor was tasked to convert 10 fleet aircraft to the Blue Angel configuration, a process that includes gun system removal and installation of a smoke trail system, an extended inverted flight fuel system, a civilian instrument landing system and several other modifications required for the unique NFDS mission.

Because the replacement C- and D-model Hornets have been in active fleet status for a substantial time, various repairs were required to ready them for service as “Blue” jets.



Navy Capt. Eric Holmberg, Defense Contract Management Agency Aircraft Integrated Maintenance Operations commander, checks instruments during the delivery of the last Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron, or Blue Angels, aircraft. The Blue Angels enhance Navy recruiting efforts and showcase Navy and Marine Corps aviation expertise. (Photo courtesy of the Blue Angels)

“Some of those repairs constituted significant technical challenges and are a testament to the great DCMA AIMO and contractor teaming effort,” Holmberg said. “The execution and administration of this F/A-18 contract continues to be a model program in many respects. I am convinced this is due in large part to the experienced and mission-focused DCMA AIMO team who are always giving 110 percent.” 

Keystones make connections by visiting Joint Base Lewis-McChord

Martha Bushong | Staff Writer

Barb Brandewie, Defense Contract Management Agency Boeing Seattle Keystone coordinator and earned value specialist, thinks the best learning takes place in context.

“There’s no substitute for sitting in a Stryker armored vehicle, seeing the last wings of an F-22 ship out or standing on the flightline of the C-17 Globemaster III to convey the scope and significance of the work we do at DCMA,” she said.

“(DCMA) personnel get products into the hands of the right people at the right time,” said Brandewie. “The Keystones often ask me questions about the work in the field. . . . The best way to connect them to the end-product would be to actually go and see.”

The group toured facilities at Joint Base Lewis-McChord near Tacoma, Wash. Days before Boeing delivered the Air Force’s 209th Globemaster to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, DCMA Keystones saw how their work ends up in the skies, on the runways and in hangars across this country and overseas.

At McChord, Keystones were briefed on how DCMA and Boeing keep Globemasters flying and ready to perform their global airlift missions. The

group toured one airplane on the flightline where they sat in the cockpit, saw demonstrations of its on-load/off-load capabilities, paratroop drop systems and emergency and maintenance systems.

“I know what an absolute luxury it is to work with a quality product in combat situations,” said Air Force Maj. Steve Roycroft, engineering team chief at DCMA Boeing Seattle. Roycroft believes warfighters have peace of mind knowing DCMA employees handle their behind-the-scenes work with the utmost care. “When we are on a mission, not having to worry about whether a piece of equipment is going to function correctly is the best scenario.”

The Keystones also learned how DCMA inspects and accepts new and reset Stryker vehicles. While on base at Fort Lewis, they watched the handoff of reset Strykers to 4th Brigade, 2nd Battalion soldiers and saw how soldiers load equipment and gear into Strykers.

“This visit was a great way to learn . . . how DCMA is involved in the process, especially getting exposure to things done outside of the office,” said Victoria Lum, DCMA Keystone engineer.



Keystones from Defense Contract Management Agency Boeing Seattle sit inside a Stryker armored vehicle during a visit to the Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., March 16. Pictured from left are Emily Wanninger, Kathryn Scanlan, Victoria Lum, Ted Saibeni and Wayne Brown. (Photo by Bruce Zimmerman, DCMA Seattle)

“We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Bruce Zimmerman, a DCMA retiree who was with us on the tours,” she continued. “As one of the early pioneers of the Keystone Program, Bruce helped the program develop from its inception to its current, more mature stage. I know he must be so pleased to see how it continues to evolve. Keystones are our future workforce; I feel like investing our time and energy now will pay big dividends down the road.” 