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IAM District 776 opened contact negotiations for nearly 4,000 IAM-represented technicians in Fort Worth, TX who work at Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company. The facility will produce the new F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, pictured above.

Lockheed Negotiations Open for Business

The nearly 4,000 technicians who build fighter aircraft at the Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Co. in Ft. Worth, TX are accustomed to the ebb and flow of military contract work.

The members of IAM Local Lodges 776-A, B, and C have built thousands of F-16's since the 1970's. This year, they begin building the military's newest and most advanced fighter jet, the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.

They are just as accustomed to rallying behind their negotiating team when it's time to hammer out the details of a new collective

bargaining agreement.

Armed with an extensive financial profile of the defense giant and information gleaned from face-to-face meetings with members, the District 776 bargaining committee met with Lockheed representatives on February 21 to open the latest round of negotiations.

Local, district and international IAM representatives were there for the formal presentation of proposed contract changes to underscore the importance of these negotiations.

Aircraft manufacturing, both commercial and mili-

tary, is among the IAM's largest membership sectors.

While the initial meeting between the IAM and Lockheed was professional and both sides expressed hope that a satisfactory agreement could be ratified before the current agreement expires on April 9, neither side forgot their two previous negotiations included work stoppages before reaching a settlement.

"This is a very sophisticated and knowledgeable membership," said Aerospace Coordinator John Crowdis, who joins DBR Pat Lane and the District 776 Negotiating Committee. "They know Lockheed's sales and profits are surging and they expect nothing less than a fair contract. They also know they may have to earn it and they're prepared to do so."

Despite record sales and profits and increased military spending, job security remains a top priority for the three IAM-represented bargaining units at Lockheed.

Rising healthcare costs, prescription drug coverage, pensions, wages and work rules round out the top issues at the bargaining table.

"We expect hard bargaining from Lockheed and I know they expect the same from us on behalf of our membership," said Crowdis. "The members here deserve nothing less."