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Inside C2

Southern DAILY

Make Today Different

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Thursday, December 30 2021

Lockheed second quarter profit misses even as space business boosts sales



A RAF Lockheed Martin F-35B fighter jet taxis along a runway after landing at the Royal International Air Tattoo at Fairford, Britain July 8, 2016. REUTERS/Peter Nicholls/File Photo

WASHINGTON, July 26 (Reuters) - U.S. weapons maker Lockheed Martin Corp (LMT.N) said on Monday its space business boosted revenues in the latest quarter, but a classified aeronautics development program caused the company to miss analysts' profit estimate, sending shares down 3.2% in early trading.

Lockheed's second-quarter earnings report comes a year after the global pandemic first hit the defense industry and its supply chain, causing shutdowns, shortages and months of delays.

Fresh support for the industry came last week when the Democrat-controlled U.S. Senate's Armed Services Committee rolled out a draft of its 2022 defense budget which boosted spending by \$25 billion, potentially benefiting defense companies including Lockheed Martin, and signaling defense spending could rise under President Joe Biden.

Lockheed increased its guidance for full-year earnings per share.

Quarterly sales at Lockheed's largest unit, aeronautics - which makes the F-35 fighter jet, rose 2.5% to \$6.6 billion.

But "performance issues" at aeronautics in the quarter led to a loss of \$225 million on "a highly classified program that Lockheed Martin has been working on for a couple of years," Ken Possenriede, Lockheed's chief financial officer, said in a telephone interview.

Lockheed posted \$6.52 in earnings per diluted share for the quarter. Without the \$225 million loss, earning per share would have been \$0.61 cents higher, according to the results.

Analysts on average expected the company to report quarterly earnings of \$6.53 per share, according to Refinitiv data.

China warns of "drastic measures" if Taiwan provokes on independence

BEIJING, Dec 29 (Reuters) - China will take "drastic measures" if Taiwan makes moves towards independence, a Beijing official warned on Wednesday, adding that Taiwan's provocations and outside meddling could intensify next year.

China claims democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory and in the past two years has stepped up military and diplomatic pressure to assert its sovereignty claim, fuelling anger in Taipei and concern in Washington.

China was willing to try its utmost to seek peaceful reunification with Taiwan but would act if any red lines on independence were crossed, Ma Xiaoguang, spokesman of the Taiwan Affairs Office, told a media briefing.

"If separatist forces in Taiwan seeking independence provoke, exert force or even break through any red line, we will have to take drastic measures," Ma said.



Taiwan has emerged as a key factor in strained relations between China and the United States,

the Taiwan Strait in recent months to pressure Taiwan. It has said it will not give in to threats.

While the United States recognises only one China, it is required by law to provide Taiwan with the means to defend itself and has long followed a policy of "strategic ambiguity" on whether it would intervene militarily to protect Taiwan in the event of a Chinese attack.

The defeated Republic of China government fled to Taiwan in 1949 after losing a civil war with the Communists, who established the People's Republic of China.

the island's most important international backer and arms supplier despite the absence of formal diplomatic ties.

China regularly describes the island as the most sensitive issue in its ties with the United States.

Ma said provocation by pro-independence forces and "external intervention" could grow "sharper and more intense" in coming months.

"Next year, the Taiwan Strait situation will become more complex and severe," he said.

Beijing has sent repeated air missions over

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WEA LEE'S GLOBAL NOTES

12/29/2021



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Omicron Is Sweeping The World



Many researchers' reports now show that most Covid-19 vaccines around the world are mostly resistant to the infection of highly infectious Omicron variants. Only Pfizer and Moderna vaccines can provide protection and avoid becoming serious after their booster shot, but many parts of the world do not have these vaccines at present time. This will lead to a global crisis. China now produces more than one-half of the

world's vaccines as of today. Although this wave of the virus has not caused too many severe illnesses and deaths, the global outbreak will soon become a world crisis. President Biden took office almost one year ago. We are still facing the challenge of the pandemic including many other international and domestic issues. Today no matter what

after your community and your neighbors. Do whatever you can to help them.

don't see any response or assistance from the international community.

I saw an article last week that reported on how the Myanmar military regime killed more than 30 villagers in the eastern part of the country. These poor people are hopeless and not just without vaccines. They lost their lives and we

I spent my childhood in this Buddhist land that is rich with many natural resources. Every time when I dream of my early life, I feel so fortunate that our family left this poor land where the people are still suffering to this very day.



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Southern DAILY Make Today Different

Editor's Choice



Theophilus Charles, 70, sits inside his house which was heavily damaged by Hurricane Ida in Houma, Louisiana, August 30, 2021. REUTERS/Adrees Latif



Lava is seen through the window of a kitchen from El Paso following the eruption of a volcano on the Canary Island of La Palma, Spain, September 28, 2021. REUTERS/Jon Nazca



A Palestinian woman is comforted as she reacts while Israeli machinery demolishes her under-construction house, in Hebron, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. REUTERS/Mussa Qawasma



Cows that were stranded in a flooded barn are rescued by people in boats and a sea doo after rainstorms lashed the western Canadian province of British Columbia, triggering landslides and floods in Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada, November 16, 2021. REUTERS/Jennifer Gauthier



An ear of U.S. President Joe Biden's new dog Commander is visible in a window of the Marine One helicopter as Biden and first lady Jill Biden arrive for vacation at Gordons Pond in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. REUTERS/Jonathan Ernst



Members of the Taliban forces fire in the air to disperse the Afghan women during a rally to protest against what the protesters say is Taliban restrictions on women, in Kabul, Afghanistan. REUTERS/Ali Khara

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

BUSINESS

Could Make Vaccines 40% Less Effective Scientists Worldwide Sound The Alarm Over New 'Worst-Ever' Super-Mutant COVID Variant

BOTSWANA Name: B.1.1.529 Cases? Around 100 detected Key mutations: K417N can escape antibodies E484A can escape antibodies N440K can escape antibodies N501Y speeds up spread More spike mutations than any other strain

Key Points

- *The B.1.1.529 variant has a 'very unusual constellation' of mutations and may be more resistant to the vaccine
*There are currently 77 confirmed cases in South Africa, four in Botswana, one in Hong Kong and one in Israel
*However, the real numbers are likely much higher as health authorities establish the full scale of the spread
*Britain, Israel, Singapore, Germany and Ital are among increasing countries to block flights from South Africa
*There are no direct flights to US from any of the countries except South Africa. Early Friday morning, the CDC still listed South Africa as 'Level 1: Low Level of COVID-19' on the country's travel advice page

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

Scientists are increasingly alarmed over a new COVID-19 variant originating in Southern Africa, which on Thursday and Friday forced countries including the U.K., Israel, Italy and Germany to effectively stop travel from the region, but passengers are continuing to arrive in the U.S. Flight restrictions from South Africa to the US were lifted two weeks ago, along with restrictions on around 30 other countries. As of 5:00 a.m. on Friday, the CDC listed South Africa as 'Level 1: Low Level of COVID-19'.

other person while in the same hotel, quarantining. Israel has also identified a case 'in a person who returned from Malawi,' with 'two more cases of people returning from abroad' placed in quarantine, the country's health ministry said Friday. The variant - now named Omicron -- by the World Health Organization has caused an 'exponential' rise in infections in South Africa. Dr. Eric Feigl-Ding, an epidemiologist and senior fellow at the Federation of American Scientists, said initial data from the variant was worrying and border restrictions should be imposed. 'Looks like vaccine evasion could be real with this variant,' he tweeted, pointing out that the two patients in Hong Kong who had the variant were both double-jabbed with the Pfizer vaccine.

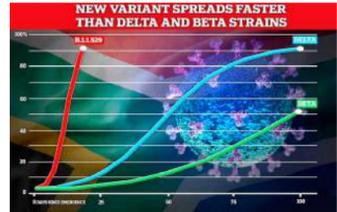


One of the two had recently been in Southern Africa. That person then passed it on to a second person, quarantining in the same hotel. 'It's very airborne,' Feigl-Ding said. 'The hotel guests were in different room across the hallway from each other. Environmental samples found the virus in 25 of 87 swabs across both rooms.'

Botswana has four confirmed cases, South Africa 77 - with the real figure likely in the hundreds - and Hong Kong has two, meaning 83 cases of the variant are confirmed so far. But South African scientists tried to backpedal today saying it was 'likely' that vaccines still offered 'high levels of protection' against hospitalisations and deaths from the variant. Germany, Italy, the Czech Republic and the Netherlands joined Britain, Israel and Singapore in suspending travel from South Africa today and, in a sign of growing alarm, the European Union is also proposing prohibiting travel from the country and its neighbors.

As of 5:00 a.m. EST, the CDC website's travel advice page for South Africa had the country listed as 'Level 1: Low Level of COVID-19', with flights to the US permitted from the African country since November 8.

The levels range from Level unknown, Level 1: Low, Level 2: Moderate, Level 3: High and Level 4: Very High.



The CDC page asks anyone travelling to and from South Africa to be fully vaccinated, or for those who are not to be tested for Covid. It also recommends travellers

follow measures in-place in South Africa, including wearing a mask and social distancing.

South Africa's infection rate spiked 93 per cent in a day yesterday amid fears the strain is driving the surge. Local scientists say it has likely spread to all the country's nine provinces, but there is yet to be a surge in hospitalisations in epicentre Johannesburg. Travellers from South Africa have been allowed entry into the US since November 8, when restrictions barring entry to people from more than 30 countries - implemented at the start of the pandemic - were partially lifted.

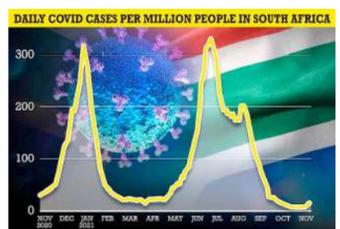
The new rules, which came 19 months after the travel ban was implemented, require international visitors to show both proof of vaccination and a negative Covid test.

'There's a lot we don't understand about this variant,' said Richard Lessells, an infectious disease physician at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban, South Africa, at a press briefing organized by South Africa's health department on Thursday. 'The mutation profile gives us concern, but now we need to do the work to understand the significance of this variant and what it means for the response to the pandemic.'

U.S. stock futures dropped in overnight trading on Thursday as concerns about the variant spread.

Futures for the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell more than 400 points, while those for the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq 100 were both in negative territory.

On Thursday Britain's health secretary, Sajid Javid sounded the alarm over what one senior scientific advisor in the UK termed the 'worst-ever' super-mutant COVID variant.



He said it could make vaccines at least 40 per cent less effective, and as a result he said they had banned flights from South Africa and five other regional countries. Experts explained earlier how the B.1.1.529 variant has more than 30 mutations - the most ever recorded in a variant and twice as many as Delta - that suggest it could be more jab-resistant and transmissible than any version before it.

In response, Javid announced that flights from South Africa, Namibia, Lesotho, Botswana, Eswatini and Zimbabwe will be suspended from midday Friday and all six countries will be added to the red list. South Africa blasted Britain's travel ban as rushed.

Foreign minister Naledi Pandor said: 'Our immediate concern is the damage that this decision will cause to both the tourism industries and businesses of both countries.' A spokesman for the Government said: 'Imposing bans on travellers from countries where a new variant is reported has not yielded a meaningful outcome.'

Israel was the first country to follow suit, also red-listing the six nations, with Singapore, Germany, Italy the Czech Republic and the Netherlands also banning flights from South Africa. A statement from European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said that the EU aims to halt air travel from the region due to concerns over the possible dangers posed by the variant.

Germany's new travel restrictions, starting Friday night, will affect South Africa and 'probably neighbouring nations', Spahn said, with only German nationals allowed entry. They must quarantine for 14 days upon arrival even if vaccinated. In Britain they must quarantine for 11 days in Government hotels for about £2,800.



'The last thing we need now is an introduced new variant that causes even more problems,' Spahn said, with Germany in the grip of a ferocious fourth wave of the pandemic.

In Rome, the government on Friday announced it was banning entry to those who have been in South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia or Eswatini in the past fortnight. Health Minister Roberto Speranza said scientists were studying the new B.1.1.529 variant, 'and in the meantime, we will follow the path of maximum caution'. Asian countries are also preparing to tighten curbs.

(Article continues below)

Southern DAILY Make Today Different

COMMUNITY

Scientists Worldwide Sound The Alarm Over New 'Worst-Ever' Super-Mutant COVID Variant

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

No cases have been detected in the UK so far but everyone who has returned from South Africa in the past 10 days will be contacted and asked to take a test. There are currently 13 direct flights a week from South Africa to the United States - Johannesburg and Cape Town are the only cities in the region from where it is possible to fly direct to the U.S. The 13 flights could hold around 3,900 people, if full. United Airlines currently fly direct from Johannesburg to New York City seven days a week, with the 16-hour flight leaving at 10pm and arriving at 7am in Newark. United also fly direct to New York City from Cape Town three times a week, on Monday, Thursday and Saturday. United flies Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners, which can hold 290 people. Delta fly direct from Johannesburg to Atlanta on Saturday, Monday, and Thursday. They use Airbus A350-900, which can seat between 300 and 350 people.

restrictions placed on arrivals from the European Union, China, Iran, South Africa, Brazil and India, which had largely stopped travel between the countries. Some epidemiologists have argued that putting a travel ban in place for South Africa is counterproductive, because it punishes a country that has been transparent with its data. 'Given how transmissible that the nu variant apparently is, I do not think that halting travel will ultimately be effective in preventing the variant from arriving,' said Jay Bhattacharya, a professor of health policy at Stanford, whose recent research focuses on the epidemiology of COVID-19 as well as an evaluation of policy responses to the epidemic. He told DailyMail.com: 'COVID is a global pandemic. No country can isolate itself forever, and halting travel imposes harm on the kind of international cooperation we will need to end the pandemic. 'A better idea would be for the international community to provide sufficient vaccine supplies to the affected places.' Others, such as Feigl-Ding, insist travel restrictions are necessary.



The UK and Israel on Thursday effectively stopped travel from Southern Africa, and some believe the US may follow suit. Flight 'bans' have been implemented before - although they are rarely an outright ban on a commercial flight from a country. Instead, they are stringent restrictions on who can fly, meaning that the airlines themselves cancel the routes because there are so few people who meet the requirements.

Donald Trump placed restrictions on travel from China to the U.S. in February 2020, and then the border between the U.S. and Canada was closed, and the U.S. and Mexico. This month Joe Biden ended 18 months of

'It's got 32 mutations in the spike protein, which is how the virus spreads. 'And in the province around Johannesburg, there's about 2,500 new cases over the past day, and they think - not proven yet - that this is the predominant variant.'

Siegel said that there were numerous reasons for concern. 'It looks like it's highly contagious,' he said.

'And that is what concerns me, because the other variants that have emerged haven't had a chance against Delta because Delta is so contagious.

'The other issue is, will the vaccine protect against this variant? Will the treatments protect against this variant? We're keeping a really close eye on this one.'

The British expert whose modeling helped instigate the first coronavirus lockdown said that the decision to impose travel restrictions was 'prudent'.

Professor Neil Ferguson, a member of the British government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (Sage), said: 'The B.1.1.529 variant has an unprecedented number of mutations in the spike protein gene, the protein which is the target of most vaccines.'

'There is therefore a concern that this variant may have a greater potential to escape prior immunity than previous variants.'

'However, we do not yet have reliable estimates of the extent to which B.1.1.529 might be either more transmissible or more resistant to vaccines, so it is too early to be able to provide an evidence-based assessment of the risk it



A healthcare worker collects a swab from Bronwen Cook for a PCR test against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) before traveling to London, at O.R. Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg, South Africa, November 26, 2021.

'It is also concerning that this variant appears to be driving a rapid increase in case numbers in South Africa. The Government's move to restrict travel with South Africa is therefore prudent. 'However, we do not yet have reliable estimates of the extent to which B.1.1.529 might be either more transmissible or more resistant to vaccines, so it is too early to be able to provide an evidence-based assessment of the risk it

poses.'

Experts from the UKHSA have been advising ministers on the issue, with a number of scientists expressing serious concern over the variant due to the significant number of mutations in the spike protein.

One senior scientist said: 'One of our major worries is this virus spike protein is so dramatically different to the virus spike that was in the original Wuhan strain, and therefore in our vaccines, that it has a great cause of concern.'

Experts from the World Health Organization (WHO) are meeting with South African officials on Friday at 11:00 GMT to assess the evolving situation in the country.

The variant could eventually be given the moniker 'Nu' - with the most concerning variants given named after the Greek alphabet.

The variant is already in three countries, suggesting it is more widespread than the official tally.

Two cases have been detected in Hong Kong - both of whom had links to South Africa - three have been picked up in Botswana and the remainder are in South Africa.

But a lack of surveillance on continental Africa may be underestimating the true numbers there, scientists warned.

Professor Tulio de Oliveira, a director of COVID surveillance in the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal, told a press conference on Thursday that it has been spotted in nearly every corner of South Africa.



A baby cries as her mother receives her Pfizer vaccine against COVID-19, in Diepsloot Township near Johannesburg, South Africa on October 21.

He admitted he was still 'uncertain' about the impact of the variant on the country's epidemic, with other scientists saying that it might be so evolved that it becomes unstable. But Professor Oliveria explained the new variant is 'clearly very different' from previous strains, including the fact that it has five times more mutations on

a specific part of the spike protein than Delta - meaning it might be better at infecting vaccinated people than the world-dominant strain.

He said that officials 'do expect, unfortunately, to start seeing pressure in the healthcare system in the next few days and weeks.'

Joe Phaahlam, South Africa's Health Minister, warned at the same press conference: 'Here is a mutation variant of serious concern.'

He added: 'We were hopeful that we might have a longer break in between waves - possibly that it would hold off to late December or even next year January.'

Current jabs train the immune system to recognize an older version of the spike, and lots of changes to this protein make it harder for the vaccinated people to fight it off.

What Impact Might B.1.1.529 Have On Vaccines?

Scientists have raised concern that the super Botswana Covid variant may be better able to dodge vaccine-induced immunity than all previous strains - including Delta. UK Health Security Agency scientists say it is the 'worst ever'. It combines mutations previously seen on the Beta variant, which sparked concern last year as it was thought to be more vaccine resistant, and those on the more transmissible Alpha strain that was behind the second wave.

Scientists warn it is 'plausible' that the mutant variant is spreading quickly because it is better able to infect people who have immunity either from vaccines or previous infection.

In South Africa where it is spreading most people already have immunity from previous infection. Some 40 per cent have also received two doses of the Covid jab. But despite the concern lab tests are yet to confirm that the variant is better able to dodge vaccine-triggered immunity than other mutant strains. Very little is known about its virulence and whether someone who catches the mutant strain is more likely to end up in hospital or dying from the disease. (Courtesy https://www.dailymail.co.uk/)

