

F-22 Program Initiates Fatigue Testing

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WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio

On Dec. 21, the F-22 program initiated the fatigue testing necessary to accomplish the next program milestone, according to Air Force officials.

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The successful application of simulated cyclic loads to F-22 Raptor 4000 -- one of two non-flying airframes used by the program for ground testing -- achieves another critical year 2000 Defense Acquisition Board (DAB) criteria. Eleven DAB criteria must be satisfied prior to a decision to enter low-rate initial production of the first ten aircraft. The F-22 program has completed a total of seven DAB criteria and will complete the remainder shortly after the first of the year. The DAB is scheduled to meet Jan. 3 to review criteria completion and make a production decision.

"The first fatigue loads were applied to Raptor 4000's rudders, leading edge flaps, and main weapons bay doors, at the same time various loads were applied to other locations on the airframe similar to those the aircraft might experience during flight," said Chuck Babish, F-22 System Program Office fatigue test lead. Raptor 4000 will now undergo approximately 8,000 hours of fatigue testing through November 2001 with an additional 24,000 hours of testing through 2003.

Lockheed Martin Aeronautical Company's facility in Marietta, Ga. is the site of the testing. Completion of this milestone was hampered at the last minute by unseasonably cold and inclement weather at the Marietta plant.

"Our team met and overcame every conceivable challenge during the last few days -- including frozen water pipes -- to make this achievement happen," said Jeff Rowe, manager of Lockheed's F-22 Structural Lab.

Lockheed Martin, the Boeing Company, Seattle, Wash., and Pratt & Whitney, Hartford, Conn. have joined the U.S. Air Force to develop and produce the revolutionary F-22, which is slated to be operational in late 2005. The world's first stealth air-to-air fighter, the F-22 will be virtually unseen on radar, deadly at long range and unmatched at close-in dogfighting. As a true multi-mission fighter, it will also have superb, precision-strike ground attack capability. A multimode electronically scanned radar, internal weapons carriage, vectored thrust and a sophisticated fully integrated sensor array are only some of the revolutionary advantages that Raptor brings to the air combat arena, according to Air Force officials.

The F-22 program is managed by the F-22 System Program Office, Aeronautical Systems Center, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. Brig. Gen. Jay Jabour is the F-22 System Program Director.

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