

Air Force's F-22 Program Clears Way For Production Decision

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WRIGHT-PATTERSON AFB, Ohio

Air Force officials today announced the completion of the final two requirements -- first flight of Raptor 4006 and initiating radar cross section testing -- which clear the way for an F-22 production decision.

Raptor 4006 flew for 72 minutes today from Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company facilities in Marietta, Ga. Lockheed Martin test pilot Al Norman was at the controls. Raptor 4006 will undergo additional flight-testing at Marietta before joining the F-22 program's flight test fleet at Edwards AFB, Calif., later this month.

"I had every confidence today's flight would be successful," said Brig. Gen. Jay Jabour, F-22 System Program Director. "A carbon copy of Raptor 4004, it posed no technical challenges, but it is great to have this achievement behind us."

The other requirement, initiation of radar cross section (RCS) testing, which validates the aircraft's "stealthiness", was satisfied in the last few weeks. The actual date of the test is classified.

"The RCS characteristics of the F-22 are some of the most advanced in the world," said Jabour. "Combine this stealth capability with the F-22's first look, first shot, first kill capability and you have the premiere fighter aircraft in the world for the next 20 years.

The F-22 will guarantee U.S. and friendly forces control of the skies over the battlefield well into the 21st century. This unequalled air supremacy will reduce the risk to American and friendly forces on land, in the air, and over water in all types of conflicts. The revolutionary fighter will open the way for the follow-on joint forces to fight under more favorable conditions leading to lower American and allied casualties, the general added.

An F-22 was previously checked for its degree of stealth on the ground during the RCS turntable measurement at the Marietta facilities. The aircraft was then flown and checked aerodynamically. The test flight dynamic results can now be compared to the turntable results to gain confidence in the manufacturing methods that produce stealth capabilities.

The F-22 program is pioneering an effort to use the ground based RCS testing versus flight testing the radar cross-section. The data collected from RCS test initiation flight, compiled with earlier data, will aid in proving the acceptability of ground based tests, potentially saving more than \$400 million during the life of the F-22 program, Jabour said.

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

The Boeing Company, Seattle, Wash., and Pratt & Whitney, Hartford, Conn. have also teamed with the Air Force and Lockheed Martin to develop and produce the revolutionary F-22, which is slated to be operational in late 2005.

SOURCE: United States Air Force

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