US Air Force Declares Initial Operating Capability For Lockheed Martin F-22A Raptor Fighter

Lockheed Martin's F-22A Raptor, the world's only 5th generation fighter aircraft, surpassed a monumental milestone today when the United States Air Force declared that the Raptor has reached initial operational capability.

General Ronald E. Keys, Commander of Air Combat Command, made the historic announcement at Langley Air Force Base, Va., from a Raptor hangar near his headquarters. "The F-22A fulfills a long quest to bring 5th generation capabilities of stealth, supercruise, and precision to the warfighter today and for decades to come," said General Keys in an Air Force news release. "If we go to war tomorrow, the Raptor will go with us."

The Air Force is now capable of deploying and supporting 12 F-22A Raptor aircraft anywhere in the world to execute air-to-air and air-to-ground missions. The Raptor is also qualified to perform homeland defense missions when required.

"It's another great day for our nation, the Air Force and certainly for the Raptor industry team," said Larry Lawson, Lockheed Martin Aeronautics executive vice president and F-22 general manager. "Thousands of workers in 42 states throughout our nation can take great pride in the fact that we not only met the customer's requirements, but we exceeded these expectations and produced a revolutionary fighter aircraft for our country. The Raptor is the very first supersonic, stealth fighter that incorporates capabilities never before possible in one weapons system and in the words of the Air Force, achieves 'overwhelming' performance."

"This day culminates the great work of a dedicated, nation-wide industry team," said Ralph D. Heath, president of Lockheed Martin Aeronautics and executive vice president of Lockheed Martin. "Lockheed Martin is honored to be part of this historic milestone and is proud to serve the Air Force and the U.S. government. The American people can rest assured that this industry team produced an aircraft that can meet the challenges our country has to face for the next 40 years, and that provides the ultimate safety possible for the men and women who fly it."

"This has been a great year for the Raptor program," said Lawson. "We had excellent news early in 2005 with results of Initial Operational Test and Evaluation (IOT&E). More good news followed in March when the Department of Defense approved the Raptor for full rate production. The Air Force had a successful deployment of eight Raptors in October to Hill Air Force Base. We look forward to the final report for Follow-On Operational Test and Evaluation (FOT&E) as flying is complete. All of these accomplishments are significant milestones for the program. We've completed final assembly on 67 of the 107 revolutionary stealthy aircraft presently on contract. In short, the F-22A program is healthy, solid and on track -- with superb production and solid aircraft performance."

The F-22 Raptor, the world's most advanced 5th generation fighter, is built by Lockheed Martin in partnership with Boeing and Pratt & Whitney. Approximately 1,000 suppliers in 42 states provide parts and subsystems. F-22 production takes place at Lockheed Martin Aeronautics facilities in Palmdale, Calif.; Meridian, Miss.; Marietta, Ga.; and Fort Worth, Texas, as well as at Boeing's plant in Seattle, Wash. Final assembly and initial flight testing of the Raptor occurs at the Marietta plant facilities.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin employs about 135,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture and integration of advanced technology systems, products and services. The corporation reported 2004 sales of $35.5 billion.

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