# F-22 Raptor Next-Generation Fighter Unveiled

The curtain was drawn aside today -- literally -- on a new era in aerial combat.

The first production F-22 air dominance fighter aircraft for the U.S. Air Force was unveiled in ceremonies this afternoon in preparation for its first flight next July. The rollout ceremony was hosted by the F-22 contractor team -- Lockheed Martin, Boeing, and Pratt & Whitney.

Speakers at the ceremony included U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-GA); Air Force Secretary Sheila Widnall; U.S. Sen. Paul Coverdell (R-GA), U.S. Sen. Max Cleland (D-GA) and U.S. Rep. Bob Barr (R-GA); Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Ronald Fogleman; President of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers George Kourpias; and Lockheed Martin Chairman Norman Augustine.

Gen. Richard Hawley, commander of the Air Force's Air Combat Command -- the ultimate user of the F-22 -- announced the popular name for the next-generation fighter -- Raptor. "This is the day we officially name a remarkable -- in fact a revolutionary -- new multi-mission fighter," said General Hawley in a videotaped statement.

The aircraft displayed at the rollout is the first of nine flyable F-22As to be built under the current Engineering and Manufacturing Development (EMD) contract. The contract also calls for two additional airframes to be built for ground-based static and fatigue testing.

"Rollout is an opportunity for the men and women and the families who have dedicated so much to F-22 to see the first fruits of the labors," said Brig. Gen. Mike Mushala, U.S. Air Force F-22 System Program Office director. "The next exciting step is the return to flight next July."

"The team has worked hard to bring Ship 1 to this point," agreed Tom Burbage, F-22 Team Program Office General Manager, "and it's great to have people see and appreciate the result of all that work."

The F-22 is widely regarded as the most advanced tactical fighter in the world, combining a revolutionary leap in technology and capability with reduced support requirements and maintenance costs. It will replace the aging F-15 as America's front-line air dominance fighter, with deliveries beginning in 2002.

Its combination of stealth, integrated avionics, maneuverability, and supercruise (supersonic flight without afterburner) will give the Raptor "first-look, first-shot, first-kill" capability against any potential enemy aircraft. The F-22 is designed to provide not just air superiority but air dominance, winning quickly and decisively with few U.S. casualties.

The F-22's inherent air-to-ground capabilities also give it true multi-mission effectiveness, complementing the primary air-to-ground capability for which the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) is being designed.

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