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Skunk Works Mailing List

Re: ATF testing

From: betnal@ns.net
 Subject: Re: ATF testing
 Date: Tue, 22 Jun 99 03:14:27 GMT

On 6/21/99 2:55PM, in message <199906212155.OAA22898@gull.prod.itd.earthlink.net>, "James P. Stevenson" <jamesstevenson@sprintmail.com> wrote:

> The entire cost of all of the manned stealth programs is staggering.

Jim,

If you're referring to my use of "staggering" in replying to your post, I wasn't addressing the stealth issue. Frankly, if the F-22 doesn't meet its full stealth goals, that isn't too bad from an operational point of view. It's a fighter; unlike the B-2/F-117 it's not supposed to avoid contact. Although it would be nice if it achieves its promised stealth performance operationally, it won't impact the mission that much if it misses by a bit.

While it's nice to have B-2 level "invisibility", for a fighter, you've got enough stealth if the other guy can't get lock on you until after you've launched. A giant very long wave antenna is not the thing you need to deal with. If it "sees" a fighter, you haven't lost that much. The radar you've got to seriously defeat is the radar that provides guidance for the missile coming your way. This would include the illuminating fighter's (or offboard unit) and the seeker, active-or semi-active, on the missile. If those can't see you, even if you're perfectly visible to the other radars, you have an enormous tactical advantage

(although you have paid too much in \$\$\$ for it), even if the F-22 doesn't achieve its original promises.

As yet there's no indication that the electronics won't perform to par, but even if they don't, that can be fixed--buy someone else's electronics. It won't involve a major redesign of the plane.

BUT, if the F-22 can't fly farther supercruising than the F-15 can in afterburner---THAT'S staggering! Supercruise is frankly the biggest air combat advantage the F-22 has. One of the main things the plane is supposed to do is, while not having a top speed all that high (in fact, it's less than the F-15's and others), its combat speed, the speed it can maintain for sustained periods, is supposed to be over 50% higher than other fighters. Sustainable speed is an enormous advantage. One of the big reasons that Mach 2.5 speeds aren't all that much in demand is that most M2+ fighters can't maintain those speeds for very long. For this reason, combats quickly deteriorate to the high subsonic. The F-22 is supposed to be able to maintain M1.5 for periods comparable to what other aircraft can do at M.9. This affected engine design in a major way, as well as that of the aircraft and its planned tactics. If the F-22 can't go any farther M1.5 supercruising (without 'burner) than the F-15 can at M1.5 (with 'burner), this is catastrophic and means that the F-22's design is fundamentally flawed and major design errors took place. This makes its supercruising capability something we paid dearly for that is virtually worthless.

IF it's true.

Art

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