

US retires F-117 stealth fighter after 27 years

The US Air Force bid farewell to F-117, the world's first attack aircraft employing stealth technology, after it served for 27 years.

Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, which manages the F-117 programme, hosted an informal retirement ceremony with military leaders, base employees and representatives from Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico Tuesday.

The last F-117s scheduled to fly will leave Holloman April 21, stop in Palmdale, California, for another retirement ceremony, then arrive April 22 at their final destination - Tonopah Test Range Airfield in Nevada.

The US Air Force decided to speed up the retirement of the F-117s to free up funding to modernise the rest of the fleet.

The F-117 is being replaced by the F-22 Raptor, but the government said it could bring the F-117 out of retirement if needed.

The aircraft made its first flight at the Tonopah Test Range in June 1981. The programme remained classified until November 1988, when a photo of the jet was first unveiled to the public.

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