



Photo by Airman 1st Class Vanessa LaBoy

Staff Sgt. Armond Cornin, 49th AMXS Corrosion Flight NCOIC, begins to spray the yellow primer coat onto the F-117.

# The 'Dragon' in Raptor's clothing

## An F-117 gets an F/A-22 makeover

by **Laura Pellegrino**  
Sunburst staff writer

It took 10 gallons of dark gray paint, five-and-a-half gallons of light gray paint and three gallons of silicon paint to give one F-117A Nighthawk here an F/A-22 Raptor-style makeover.

Lt. Col. Kevin Sullivan, Detachment 1, 53rd Test and Evaluation Group commander, asked the 49th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron Corrosion Flight to paint their F-117, known as the Dragon, gray to evaluate if it will have a substantial role in daytime combat operations.

"The chief of staff wants to have a 24-hour stealth presence over future battlefields," said Lt. Col. Buck Rogers, the Det. 1, 53rd TEG operations officer. "We know our current black paint scheme wouldn't be a good color for daytime operations."

Preparation for painting began Nov. 17, said Staff Sgt. Armond Cornin, 49th AMXS Corrosion Flight



Photo by Laura Pellegrino

This F-117 was painted gray so it could be tested for daytime combat operations.

NCOIC. AMXS members worked day and night to complete the job by Nov. 26.

With the project complete, the jet will participate in upcoming tests as part of an overarching program called Global Strike Task Force, Rogers said. The jet will fly with the F/A-22 in several tests both locally and deployed.

The Dragon is a test coded aircraft owned by Det. 1, 53rd TEG.

"We use the Dragon for everything from new tactics development to the evaluation of new software or hardware," said Maj. Tre Urso, a Det. 1, 53rd TEG pilot. "Det. 1 has been involved in all the F-117 modifications and upgrades over the years. We've recently finished a very successful test where we developed new night tactics using night vision goggles. Now, we want to evaluate the feasibility of using the F-117 during daylight operations."

According to Rogers, Air Force leadership will approve additional jets for the gray scheme only



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Staff Sgt. Armond Cornin and Casell Davis watch as Airman 1st Class Louis Delgado applies a layer of primer to the underbelly of the F-117.

if the test results show the change is warranted.

Whether or not the rest of the jets are painted, this project is worth the time and effort spent on completing it, Urso said.

"It provides a great opportunity for us to learn about our daytime capabilities and limitations. It also helps us evaluate how the new paints will hold up over time and lets us measure the impact the color modification has on the maintenance troops who maintain the jet. Bottom line, we need to make sure we provide our leaders an accurate assessment of the costs and benefits involved with daytime ops and the gray paint scheme."



Photo by Airman 1st Class Vanessa LaBoy

Airman 1st Class Louis Delgado scratches excess paint from the canopy of an F-117.



Photo by Laura Pellegrino

Members of the 8th Aircraft Maintenance Unit tow the Dragon to its hanger after the paint job is complete.