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Langley Air Force Base in Alaska, one of seven bases in the United

States that will eventually become home to the Raptor.



"This rollout marks another significant milestone for the F-22 program," Lockheed Vice President Nick Cessario told the crowd at Monday's roll-out ceremony. "I know we will all sleep better knowing the F-22 will be flying for at least the next four decades."

The high-priced Raptor has been the object of controversy since its inception. Designed as an air-dominance fighter, the futuristic aircraft was seen by some strategists as better suited for a Cold War-style role rather than as an asset against rogue nations and stateless terrorists that are unlikely to offer a challenge to U.S. control of the skies.

The plane, however, has been living up to its billing in testing and early operational flights.

Lockheed said Raptors from the two operational squadrons at Langley Air Force Base in Virginia turned in some sterling results during the Northern Edge exercises held this summer in Alaska. The F-22 recorded an air-to-air kill score of 140-0 and maintained a 97-percent sortie rate.

During the exercises, the F-22 worked in concert with the F-15, providing air cover while the Eagles completed bombing runs against simulated ground and sea targets.

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