

PIONEERS OF STEALTH®

NEWSLETTER

POS 2025 Reunion - Orlando Florida



POS Visit to Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control - October 2025



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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings Pioneers,

Welcome 2026! Although the Pioneers do not have any planned group events this year, we are contemplating a project or two and, of course, initiating the studies for the 2027 POS Biennial Reunion. More on those later.



But first, 50 members, spouses, and partners attending the 2025 POS Reunion took advantage of the Orlando sunshine, warm weather, and group activities while renewing friendships from over the past 40-plus years. The group events included the Kennedy Space Center Tour, an afternoon food and drink POS Social, Lockheed Martin Missile & Fire Control visit, a Cirque du Soleil performance, POS Business meeting, and of course the Group Banquet finale at Seasons 52. The week went as planned and feedback indicated another reunion success. Debbie and I were pleased to serve as hosts for the event, and many thanks go to the 2025 POS Reunion Planning Team of Skip Hickey, Pete Knauth, Steve Bepko, Jerry Vanden Bosch, Rob Bongiovi, Ralph Salvucci, Jack Twigg, Ron Pomeroy, Frank Campanile, and Kathleen Wilson for their efforts that made every event memorable.

The 2027 Reunion is fast approaching so we must now turn our attention to the next group reunion event location and planning. The Business Meeting held in Orlando served as a good venue to begin discussions as Dick Scofield highlighted that 2027 will be the 80th anniversary of the US Air Force and coincidentally the

50th anniversary of the creation of the AF LO Observables office in the Pentagon. These events create the opportunity to couple the celebrations, such as attending the Air and Space Force Association's (A&SFA) Awards Dinner held annually at National Harbor, MD, in September. Alternatively or additionally, we may consider celebrations being held in Dayton, Ohio, the birthplace of aviation, such as the Dayton Air Show held annually in the late June time frame. So we have some work ahead of us and welcome your inputs.

This year one of the projects we plan to initiate is a Tribute Video to the Pioneers of Stealth Memorial, National Museum of the USAF, Dayton, Ohio. The purpose is to capture and share the POS memorial with Pioneers that could not be there at the dedication, particularly those that donated, through the video camera of a drone. This could be shared through streaming via POS website, separate link, or CD. The product will be professionally scripted, shot, and edited under POS direction. This may also serve as a lead-in to 2027 reunion celebration events, Pete Knauth will be heading up this effort which is currently in the definition and scope planning phase.

As always, your feedback and inputs are welcomed as we progress through future projects planning, execution, and reporting. We hope you have a great 2026, stay healthy, safe and have fun.

Cheers,

John



Air Force Historical Foundation

December 2025 Article



On This Day in Air Force History 1 Dec:



1977: Have Blue 1001, one of two proof-of-concept demonstrators for a stealth fighter, completed its first flight at Groom Lake, Nevada. The Have Blue external shape was predominantly defined by radar rather than aerodynamic engineers. HB 1001 and HB 1002 flew a total of 36 and 52 flights over an 18 month period successfully completing the program test objectives. Both aircraft were lost due to mechanical problems. The Have Blue program was responsible for paving the way for the first operational stealth aircraft, Senior Trend, designated F-117 Nighthawk, and greatly influencing the application of stealth technology application to future USAF combat aircraft. (Article and Image contributed by, Lt. Gen. Dick Scofield, USAF (Ret.)

Why the US Air Force Keeps Using This Fighter Jet Decades After ‘Retiring’ It

By Talia Roepel (Jan 28, 2026, 6:17 pm EST)

The United States Air Force's Lockheed F-117 Nighthawk was retired in 2008, but it still has to go to work until at least 2034. Though it no longer sees combat, the Air Force has found a way to continue taking advantage of this retired fighter jet's utility, technology, and stealth capabilities through training exercises.

The F-117 Nighthawk was a trailblazer in stealth operations around the world. The letter F in its name, meaning Fighter, was deliberately misleading to hide its true purpose. Air combat was not the F-117 specialty, instead, these jets were designed to stealthily enter enemy territory and fire at targets on the ground. The sharp-edged design helps it reflect and absorb radar waves, and it could reach speeds of nearly 700 miles per hour. The Nighthawk is designed for one pilot, and it has a range of over 1,000 miles without refueling.



Photo: Getty Images

The first F-117s were operational in 1983, and though retired in 2008, the jets that remain airworthy are kept at the Tonopah Test Range Airport in Nevada. While the US Air Force looks to the future with the challenge of hypersonic jets, the Nighthawk is sticking around to train the next generation of fighter pilots and help with new Air Force projects.

What the Nighthawk is Doing in Retirement

Though Finland has the most expensive fighter jet in the world, the F-117 Nighthawk continues to prove itself even after retirement. The Air Force prefers to use retired jets for training and testing, rather than active duty units. This is because if things go wrong, there is less risk in working with something that is not relied upon in combat situations, like the F-22 that replaced the Nighthawk.

The F-117 is currently used for training exercises. Specifically, in stealth training, helping pilots and other military



Photo: VanderWolf Images/Shutterstock

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F-117 In Retirement— Continued from Page 4.

personnel learn how to handle the stealth capabilities of enemy fighters. It also works as a test bed for the Air Force. New tech, such as radar systems and infrared tracking, are tried out with this retired jet to see how well they perform

Not all of its retirement is off-limits to the public, though. The Nighthawk is

occasionally on loan to museums as part of the US Air Force Heritage Program. As of this writing, the Hill Aerospace Museum in Utah has an F-117 Nighthawk on display, which has been there since 2020, for the community to learn about.

Legacy of the F-117 Nighthawk



Photo: BGStock72/Shutterstock

The legacy of the F-117 Nighthawk brings to mind trailblazing nuclear-powered aircraft carriers like the USS Nimitz that is nearing its retirement. The stealth capabilities that the Nighthawk pioneered now enable it to help future generations in the Air Force. It was during Operation Desert Storm and Desert Shield that the F-117 made a name for itself, where pilots went by the call sign Bandit.

When the jet was retired, the Lockheed Martin team who created it

signed their names on the bomb bay doors in a ceremony to commemorate the jet's innovation and lasting impact. Though the Nighthawk's combat days are gone, it has not been sitting idle for the last 18 years. Through training and testing, the F-117 is continuing to pave the way for the US Air Force's future. With another eight years of planned use, it will be exciting to watch the continuous significance of this retired fighter jet.



A Video Tribute to Our Memorial: Bringing the Pioneers of Stealth Legacy to Life

The Pioneers of Stealth (POS) are exploring a creative new initiative: collaborating with a professional filmmaker to create a short video tribute celebrating our memorial at the National Museum of the United States Air Force (NMUSAF) in Dayton, Ohio.

This video would serve as a meaningful way to share the memorial's beauty and significance with members—especially our generous memorial donors—who have not yet had the opportunity to visit in person, or who are unable to make the trip. For those who have been there, it would stand as a proud, enduring reminder of our shared contributions to stealth technology.

The video is envisioned as a serene, high-quality production, streaming directly from the POS and NMUSAF websites and likely YouTube as well. We aim to complete it in time for our next reunion.

Key elements under consideration:

Length: 5–7 minutes maximum, to keep it focused and impactful.

Style: Primarily aerial drone footage in high definition (HD), allowing viewers to pause and clearly read the inscriptions on both sides of all monument obelisks.

Approach: No people on camera, no narration—just the stones themselves telling the story, accompanied by carefully selected, appropriate background music (details TBD).

Goal: Let the monuments speak for themselves, evoking reflection on the pioneering programs, people, and innovations they honor.



Photo: Denny Jarvi

We believe this minimalist, contemplative format will powerfully convey the dignity and historical weight of our memorial while making it accessible to our entire community.

What do you think? The POS Project Team eager to hear your feedback as we move forward with planning. Please share any thoughts, suggestions, or questions—such as music ideas, pacing preferences, or additional elements that could enhance the tribute without detracting from its simplicity. Your input will help shape this project into something truly special for all Pioneers of Stealth.

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PIONEERS OF STEALTH
2025 REUNION
ORLANDO FLORIDA



Skip's Stealthy Book Corner

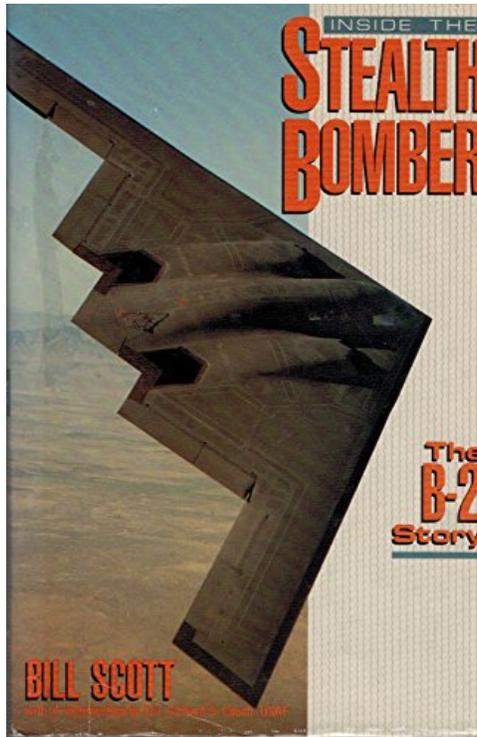
Inside the Stealth Bomber: The B-2 Story

By Bill Scott

with an introduction by Col. Richard S. Couch USAF

The book starts with the first flight of the B-2 from Palmdale to Edwards AFB and the call to "ABORT! ABORT! ABORT!" However, the initial rotation and liftoff went smoothly. There weren't any warning or caution lights glowing in the cockpit and both pilots were intent on their tasks. However, the flight control room at Edwards lost contact with the B-2 and "Lost Comm" was an automatic abort situation, so the Test Director called "Abort! Abort! Abort! Those in the control room and the F-16 Chase pilots heard the call but the B-2 pilots did not because the lower antenna on the fuselage was inoperative. Col. Crouch overheard the F-16 chase pilots questioning the abort call so he switched to the upper antenna and established contact with Edwards, to the relief of all.

The first chapter continues from that first flight back to the very first days of the Carter Administration when it was realized the Soviet Bloc Integrated Air Defense System (IADS) could not be breached



without a catastrophic loss of our bombers. William J. Perry, President Carter's Deputy Secretary of Defense for Research and Development, was aware of the success of the DARPA/USAF Low Observable Technology Demonstration program with Have Blue. Secretary Perry promoted the national security benefits of stealth technology for the F-117 and a new bomber.

This preamble sets the stage for the design and development of the B-2. The book is organized into various phases of the B-2 program. It starts with the process that led to the selection of the flying wing configuration for the Advanced Technology Bomber and ends with the Outlook and Reflections of the author and Colonel Richard Couch.

I enjoyed reading this book. It is a good blend of the managerial and technical challenges met, human interest stories, and anecdotes. This is one I will keep on my book shelf.

Skip Hickey



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LEADERSHIP**

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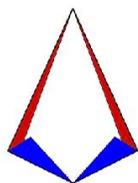
Rob Bongiovi

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Charter**

Purpose. The purpose of the Pioneers of Stealth organization is to perpetuate the spirit and achievements of a relatively small number of government and industry people in the early days of low observables technology and development. These “pioneers” believe the bonds created through their sharing of these successful achievements will always be an important part of their life experiences. They are proud of their accomplishments and enjoy being together to visit and revisit with those who all made valuable contributions to these challenging and revolutionary programs. Maintaining this social relationship is extremely important and a primary objective of this organization. The Pioneers of Stealth also believe that their value to the current defense acquisition establishment is best accomplished by using their strong record of achievements to be advocates and mentors for industry-government teamwork, streamlined management procedures, and minimal oversight and reporting requirements – all factors that significantly contributed to the historic successes of the low observables programs.

Next Issue.....

**Letter From the President
Update on POS Memorial Video**

