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B-2 Spirit Stealth Bomber

Northrop Grumman Corporation (NYSE: NOC) is the U.S. Air Force's prime contractor for the B-2 Spirit stealth bomber, one of the most survivable aircraft in the world and a key component of the nation's long range strike arsenal.

The B-2 is the only aircraft that combines stealth, long range, large payload and precision weapons delivery in a single platform. Its unique capabilities allow it to penetrate an enemy's most sophisticated defenses and hold at risk their most valued and heavily defended targets. The B-2 has demonstrated its capabilities in several combat scenarios, most recently during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Odyssey Dawn.

The B-2 meets the Air Force's requirement for long-range, lethal and survivable systems to project air power anywhere in the world. It can fly 6,000 nautical miles unrefueled and 10,000 nautical miles with just one aerial refueling, giving it the ability to fly to any point on the globe within hours.

Northrop Grumman and its subcontractors are working with the Air Force to modernize the B-2 to ensure that it remains fully mission capable against evolving worldwide threats. These improvements will improve the B-2's lethality; its ability to collect, process and disseminate battlefield information with joint force commanders or other local first responders worldwide; and its ability to receive updated target information during a mission.

Modernization activities include:

- A “smart bomb rack assembly” that gives the B-2 the ability to deliver 80 "smart" (GPS-guided) joint direct attack munitions (JDAM) weapons on a single pass, and increases its capacity to deliver precision guided weapons by a factor of five.
- Integration of a Link 16 line-of-sight tactical communication system that significantly improves B-2 pilots' ability to share critical targeting and threat information and maintain real-time awareness of the battle space.

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- A multi-year radar modernization program that will design and integrate a new active electronically scanned array (AESA) radar antenna on the aircraft. Raytheon Co., which provided the original B-2 radar, is the principal subcontractor on this program.
- Development and integration of an EHF satellite communications system that will allow the B-2 to send and receive battlefield information with joint commanders around the world up to 100 times faster than today.
- Integration of a 30,000-lb-class penetrator weapon that will allow the B-2 to attack and destroy hardened, deeply buried targets.
- Application of a specially formulated surface coating that has significantly reduced B-2 maintenance time and improved the fleet's operational readiness.

The B-2 fleet currently consists of 20 aircraft, 19 of which are based at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., home of the 509th Bomb Wing. One aircraft is assigned to flight-testing at Edwards AFB, Calif. to validate software and weapon systems upgrades. One aircraft, the *Spirit of Kansas*, was lost in February 2008 in a crash that occurred while the aircraft was attempting to take off from Andersen AFB, Guam.

Aircraft in the operational fleet are sent periodically to Northrop Grumman's facility in Palmdale, Calif., for programmed depot maintenance (PDM) as part of an Air Force contract for overall B-2 support. The major PDM task is restoration of the aircraft's outer mold line to its precise specifications. The work, which also includes inspection of landing gear and other structural components, is completed on each aircraft in approximately 13 months. The first cycle of PDM for the 21-aircraft fleet began in December 1999, and was completed in 2009.

(More)

B-2 Specifications

Aircraft Type	Strategic, long-range heavy bomber with low-observable technology and all-altitude capability to penetrate the most sophisticated air defenses in nuclear and conventional missions
Power Plant	Four General Electric F118-GE-100 engines rated in the 19,000-pound thrust class (derived from engines used in the B-1B and the U-2)
Length	69 feet
Height	17 feet
Wingspan	172 feet
Top Speed	High subsonic
Crew	Two, with provisions for a third crew member if future missions require it
Range	6,000 nautical miles unrefueled; 10,000 nautical miles with one refueling
Altitude	Up to 50,000 feet
Maximum Gross Takeoff Weight	336,500 pounds
Payload	More than 40,000 pounds. Can deliver a variety of conventional and nuclear weapons, including precision-guided munitions, and gravity bombs.

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