

FACT SHEET

B-21 Raider

The Air Force needs some new bombers. The B-1B *Lancer* and B-2A *Spirit* are in the twilight of their careers, and the B-21 *Raider*, a new stealth bomber being produced by Northrop Grumman aims to take over the role as the premier bomber for the United States.

Digital design, focused requirements by the Air Force and previous experience by Northrop Grumman in fielding a stealthy flying wing are credited with why the program appears to be on track and on budget.

The B-21 looks very similar to the B-2 because the fundamentals of stealth and long-range penetrating air are built around the concept of a flying wing.



Northrop Grumman is building the *Raider*. As part of the Long Range Strike Bomber program, it is to be a long-range, stealth intercontinental strategic bomber for the USAF, able to deliver conventional and thermonuclear weapons. The Air Force is planning to

replace the Rockwell B-1 Lancer and Northrop Grumman B-2 Spirit with the B-21 by 2040, and could possibly replace the Boeing B-52 Stratofortress after that.

The Air Force began planning for the B-21 in 2011 and awarded the major development contract in 2015. The B-21 is expected to make its first flight in 2023 and enter service by 2027.

Many aspects of the B-21 program are highly classified; the program is designated as a special access program. The Congressional Research Service noted in 2021 that the B-21's technical details and specifications, such as speed, enabling systems, "size, required

stealth, structure, number and type of engines, projected weapons, and onboard sensors remain classified."

The first photos of the aircraft were released on Dec. 2, 2022, taken during a rollout ceremony at Northrop Grumman's production facilities in Palmdale, Calif.

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