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Fort Drum Public Affairs

Air Force F-22s make first landing at Fort Drum airfield for rapid refueling operation

FORT DRUM, N.Y. -- Two F-22 Raptors from Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia, touched ground at Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield for the first time Sept. 21 and, roughly 30 minutes later, they were gone.

The brief visit demonstrated both Fort Drum’s capabilities to expand its airfield operations to support different types of aircraft, as well as the ability of 174th Maintenance Group Detachment 1 to facilitate rapid refueling and armament for unit training missions.

The F22s were using military operating airspace in the region for combat training with F-35 aircraft from the 158th Fighter Wing, located at Vermont Air National Guard Base in Burlington.

After their first engagement, the jets landed, refueled and were “back in the fight,” according to Air Force Maj. Christian Sturick, commander of the 174th Maintenance Group Detachment 1 / Forward Operating Location (FOL).

“For the air crews of the F-35s and F-22s to be able to meet in the airspace to train, fight and practice their tactics is a huge a capability,” he said. “What we are doing here is giving them ability to hot refuel, where they disengage from the fight and refuel very rapidly and get back in the fight immediately.”

Sturick said that the refueling operation at Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield provided a longer training opportunity for the aviation units, which otherwise would have returned to their home stations for refueling.

“We give them that ability to have an embedded Air Force maintenance unit here at Fort Drum,” he said. “My maintainers can refuel them and rearm them, if that’s the case.”

Sturick said that the maintenance detachment has been operating at Fort Drum for 35 years and was permanently assigned at Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield in 1997.

Michael Delaney, WSAA airfield manager, said that the refueling operation also was supported by Fort Drum air traffic control personnel and a fire crew.

While this is the first time that F-22s have landed on the tarmac, he said that Fort Drum has supported unit training from all branches of the armed forces and they continue to look for opportunities to support a wide variety of aircraft.

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Photos available at:

[www.dvidshub.net/news/405851/air-force-f-22s-make-first-landing-fort-drum-airfield-rapid-refueling-operation](http://www.dvidshub.net/news/405851/air-force-f-22s-make-first-landing-fort-drum-airfield-rapid-refueling-operation)

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