Quick Turn at

Just three years after they arrived, the F-22s at Holloman Air Force Base are moving on.

Photography by Jim Haseltine
Text by Aaron Church
A Raptor sextet representing each of Holloman’s F-22 squadrons—the 7th Fighter Squadron, 8th Fighter Squadron, and Reserve associate 301st Fighter Squadron—flies over the Sacramento mountains near the base.
Raptors settled in at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico three years ago, and already it’s the end of an era. As USAF consolidates F-22 operations to a select few bases, Holloman’s combat squadrons will soon be replaced by F-16 training units from Luke AFB, Ariz. First to inactivate this summer, the 8th Fighter Squadron will split its fleet between JB Langley-Eustis, Va., JB Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, and Nellis AFB, Nev. The 7th FS will stay at Holloman awhile longer—seeing the base through its transition to F-16s. Amid the shuffle, departing F-22s and T-38s used for related training will mingle with arriving Vipers and Predators on the flight line. 111 A T-38 flies a training mission to support F-22s from Holloman. 121 F-22s fly in formation. 131 Loaders hang an AIM-120 training missile into one of the F-22’s internal bays to preserve its low radar profile. 141 Lt. Col. Mike Hernandez (l) shares a laugh with Lt. Col. David Raggio after an F-22 training sortie.
A Raptor passes over the gypsum waves of White Sands National Monument, just off Holloman’s runways. An F-22 breaks away from the two-ship training sortie out of Holloman. Canopies open to reduce sweltering in the desert heat, three T-38s hold short of the runway, preparing for takeoff. Like the squires of old, Holloman Talons bear the heraldry of their knight—three Raptors on a fesse argent.
Before an F-22 taxis out of its hangar, a crew chief performs a final preflight check. 

A Raptor, wearing titles of the 44th Fighter Group, lifts off on a local training mission.

Halted short of the runway, a Raptor bears a much subdued version of the 7th Fighter Squadron’s “Screaming Demon” on the intake.

A loaded F-22 taxis through the hangar area—known as “the canyon”—fitted with external fuel tanks.

Maj. Kurt Duffy (l) and crew chief Parris Vaseley go over the log book for a T-38.
A brace of F-22s split during training. Under the right lighting, the gray F-22s reflect like silver. This is a by-product of their stealth coating.

Taxiing out for a sortie, a Talon receives a “good to go” from crew chief Roy Marshall.

Holloman’s “Ghost Park” bespeaks a proud fighter tradition, from the F-84 through to the stealth F-117. Holloman’s T-38s carry a dual identity—each aircraft jointly serves the 7th FS and 8th FS, bearing the colors of both.
A pilot glances back while preparing to accompany Raptors on training.
Disrupting the aircraft’s observable characteristics, external fuel tanks are nonetheless vital to some missions requiring extra range but not necessarily a full suite of stealth characteristics.

An F-22 taxis out for a training mission.
The end-of-runway crew drags away the chocks, signaling the pilot is clear to taxi.
Their iridescent paint and blended surfaces shimmering in the sun, wing-tanks stand out from the Raptor’s fifth generation design. Flaps lowered, a trio of Talons adds jet exhaust to the desert heat. A pilot runs through positive control checks, as a crew chief visually confirms the unfettered movement of a Raptor’s control surfaces. While many bases offer sunshades, Holloman’s Raptors enjoy the rare luxury of climate-controlled hangars purpose-built for the 7th Fighter Squadron’s former resident—the F-117 Nighthawk. Raptors are not retiring, but they will soon join the Nighthawks as aircraft formerly flown at Holloman.