

## Let's Talk About The Secretive RQ-170 Sentinel Photographed In Flight Over California Desert Recently



The RQ-170 Sentinel photographed over the Californian desert a week earlier. (Photo: @point\_mugu\_skies)

### **The drone, obviously in a test setup, was found over the desert south of Edwards Air Force Base.**

The deceptive RQ-170 Sentinel low-observable Unmanned Aerial Vehicle, likewise called the “Beast of Kandahar” (from where it was very first spotted in 2007), just recently made yet another (experienced) look in the Californian skies. The drone, which has actually been identified several times in the last couple of years, was photographed about a week earlier by professional photographer @point\_mugu\_skies, which took place to be in the best location at the correct time.

While, for apparent factors, he could not offer the precise place, the professional photographer stated

the Sentinel was flying over the desert south of Edwards Air Force Base, with the place tagged in the Instagram post as El Mirage Desert. The intense orange markings and the air information boom, together with the area to Edwards AFB, leads us to expect this specific airframe is being utilized for some sort of screening.

Throughout the years, the Sentinel was seen in a minimum of 3 various “liveries”: a white-cream color (like the one seen in Afghanistan and the one on the drone crashed in Iran), a black and cream livery (spotted near Vandenberg AFB), and the darker gray one spotted both recently over the desert and in 2015 at Plant 42.

The screening setup has actually been a consistent in the most recent sightings, such as when it was spotted 2 times while landing at Plant 42 in Palmdale, even if it was missing out on the air information boom. The place of those sightings is considerable too, as Plant 42 is the RQ-170’s birth place, because it was established by Lockheed Martin’s Skunk Works department.

Even if practically 15 years have actually passed considering that the Sentinel was spotted for the very first time, exposing its presence, we still do not understand much about this stealth drone. *The War Zone* tracked the sightings of the drone through the years and, based upon their reports, Edwards AFB may be thought about as the 8th area from where the RQ-170 has actually been run, even if the area where it was photographed recently is at about the very same range from either Edwards and Palmdale.

The other recognized places are Kandahar, Plant 42 and Vandenberg AFB (California), as we currently discussed, Kunsan Air Base (South Korea), Andersen AFB (Guam), Tonopah Test Range Airport and Creech AFB (Nevada). As you might observe, those areas consist of both test objectives and functional objectives which, according to the couple of readily available information, are Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) objectives.

So, let’s go through what we understand about this “shy” airplane. This is what the U.S. Air Force revealed in the main factsheet:

The RQ-170 Sentinel is a low observable unmanned airplane system (UAS) being established, evaluated and fielded by the Air Force. It will offer reconnaissance and monitoring in assistance of the joint forces leader.

The Air Force’s RQ-170 program leverages the Lockheed Martin Advanced Development Programs and federal government efforts to quickly establish and produce a low observable UAS. The RQ-170 will straight support contender leader requires for intelligence, security and reconnaissance to find targets.

The RQ-170 is zipped Air Combat Command’s 432 nd Wing at Creech Air Force Base, Nev., and the 30 th Reconnaissance Squadron at Tonopah Test Range, Nev.

The RQ-170 Sentinel’s flying-wing airframe is smaller sized than the MQ-9 Reaper or the RQ-4

Global Hawk, with the wingspan being approximately 38 feet (116 meters), according to satellite images, and therefore equivalent with the measurements of a fighter jet. Like the Reaper, it is developed to be dismantled and released abroad inside transportation cages transferred by freight airplane like the C-17. This appears to be validated by files about the release to Kunsan, launched through the Freedom Of Information Act (FOIA), which discussed the airframes being airlifted there for their implementation.

Not much is learnt about its efficiencies too, just reports about a 500 kts speed and 50,000 feet optimum elevation. It is likewise reported that the Sentinel may utilize the very same TF-34 engine which gear up the A-10 Thunderbolt II or another likewise sized General Electric engine. The precise size of the RQ-170 fleet is unidentified, however it is approximated that about 20-30 airplane were constructed by the Skunk Works at Plant 42.

Another shot of the RQ-170 over the desert.( Photo: @point\_mugu\_skies)

As for the look, the Sentinel reveals the widely known grilled air inlet on the dorsal location, with 2 "bulges" believed to be real estate SATCOM systems on the sides. On the forward location there is what is thought about to be a modular payload bay for a EO/IR( Electro-Optical/Infra-Red) sensing unit housed in a faceted transparent shroud( similar to the F-35's EOTS) and a conformally-mounted AESA-based( Active Electronically-Scanned Array) radar with SAR (Synthetic Aperture Radar) and GMTI (Ground-Moving Target Indicator) abilities.

This payload remains in line with the main objective of the drone, which allegedly was likewise on overwatch in Pakistan throughout Operation Neptune Spear, the U.S. Navy DEVGRU's raid that caused the death of Osama Bin Laden in 2011. Another function in which the Sentinel is understood to have actually been utilized is targeting and bomb damage control( BDA )for the B-2 Spirit bomber.

Last year, the U.S. Air Force pointed out for the very first time the involvement of the stealth UAV in a Large Force Test Event (LFTE), including F-35A Lightning IIs, F-22 Raptors and a B-2A Spirit stealth bomber and concentrated on sneaky penetration into rejected locations, suppression and damage of opponent air defenses, and electronic attack methods. It's likewise worth keeping in mind that the function of the RQ-170 was not defined, causing speculations about brand-new functions besides ISR objectives.

As *The War Zone* reported, "A spot connected with the 732nd Operations Group, Detachment 1, the instant predecessor to the 44th Reconnaissance Squadron, includes a lightning bolt, which is usually representative of electronic warfare, in addition to 3 drops of blood, which might be a referral to a kinetic attack objective. It likewise included the expression "creating the sword," which may show an objective to assist establish brand-new strategies, methods, and treatments, a few of which might be connected to the work of sneaky unmanned fight air automobiles. "

It was currently thought about most likely that the Sentinel may be able to bring electronic intelligence systems and electronic warfare suites, however this analysis of the spot, if shown to be appropriate, might suggest that the RQ-170 may now have the ability to bring weapons of some sorts too. This,

nevertheless, may be done just at the cost of the ISR payload, as there is no sign that the drone has other arrangements for internal payloads.

In the event of the LTFE, the Air Force likewise validated for the very first time that the 44th Reconnaissance Squadron flies the RQ-170, which is specifically noteworthy considered that this seems the very first authorities verification that this system these flying-wing unmanned airplane. With this verification, it is now openly understood that to systems run RQ-170s, the 30th and 44th Reconnaissance Squadrons, both of which are designated to the 432nd Wing's 732nd Operations Group.

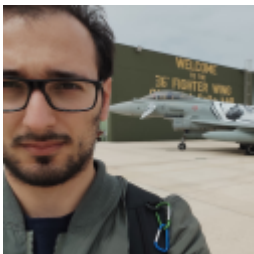
This year the Air Force likewise pointed out for the very first time a RQ-170 implementation in a main press release, even if no additional information were supplied as its operations stay extremely categorized:

Since [Gen. Mark] Kelly's see in October, the 432nd AEW has actually started flying MQ-9 Reaper sorties out of Romania, effectively released and redeployed RQ-170 Sentinel forces, and began on the 25th Attack Group's upcoming head office and operations developing at Shaw AFB, South Carolina. [...]

"RPAs [Remotely Piloted Aircraft] are satisfying the requirements of Combatant Commanders today— in both objected to and non-contested environments," stated Col. Stephen Jones, 432nd Wing/432nd Air Expeditionary Wing leader. "The large variety of objective sets the MQ-9 and RQ-170 are asked to carry out stays our trademark— we do not avoid these difficult jobs; we stay prepared to take them on in all environments."

By the method, did you understand that the RQ-170 likewise has another label? According to a 2010 memorandum from the management of the 432nd Wing, in which base workers was disallowed from launching information about the RQ-170s and their abilities or taking any images of the drones, these flying wing unmanned airplane were described by the label Wraith, instead of the main name, Sentinel. As you might remember, Wraith is likewise the label that was provided to the all-black crowd-sourced livery for an Aggressor F-16 back in 2019.

*Thanks once again to @point\_mugu\_skies for the pictures he sent us and make certain to follow him on Instagram for more!*



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Source: [Let's Talk About The Secretive RQ-170 Sentinel Photographed In Flight Over California Desert Recently](#)