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Aircraft mechanics Jim Sigman (left) and Mike Kaffenberger, of the B-1 avionics unit, work in the last B1-B modified under the Fly-In Program. Kaffenberger worked on the first and last B1-B to get the Global Positioning System modification. (Photo by Margo Wright) | [High-Res Version of this photo](#)

Last B-1B soars through Fly-in Program

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06/29/01 - **TINKER AIR FORCE BASE, Okla. (AFPN)** -- The last of 45 B-1B aircraft soared through the B-1 Fly-in Program recently, ending a two-year Block D program designed to upgrade the aircraft's global positioning and weapons delivery systems.

The Fly-In Program, based on a congressional mandate, upgraded the aircraft with an advanced technology during a restricted timeframe. Program experts accomplished the majority of the maintenance on the aircraft ramp here.

Through Block D GPS modification, maintainers installed or handled more than 37,000 wires and removed 200 aircraft components.

"The modification installation itself went as we had planned," said Ben Doherty, avionics unit chief of the B-1B aircraft production section. "However, the avionic and electrical checkout and preparation for functional check

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flight was much more in-depth than previously planned, based on the number of disturbed systems involved and ... nonprogrammed defects found during the latter stages before flight."

Each aircraft required an average of 8,500 hours of maintenance, experts said; getting the necessary manpower became one of Tinker's early obstacles.

"Our work force increased by an additional 150 folks," said Doherty. "The rapid increase in our avionics, electric, aircraft and sheet metal skills required a concentrated effort to establish both classroom and on-the-job training for the work force we brought in to meet the modification requirements."

In 1999, the modification was initially installed on 10 B-1B's.

"We normally work 18 aircraft in the [programmed depot maintenance] process," said Doherty. "If we would have maintained that schedule, it would've taken approximately another three years to do this modification."

The second challenge for the section was timely installation of the GPS modification, ensuring the aircraft was returned to the warfighter as soon as possible.

"We've accomplished this through a highly motivated work force and by working as a team with our support organizations -- 10th flight test members and the B-1B system support management division system program manager."

Because the Block D GPS modification was a unique situation, after the last aircraft, the Fly-In Program will no longer exist. Any future modifications will be worked normally in the PDM process, said Doherty.

According to Doherty, the Fly-in Program was a success based on the magnitude of what had to be accomplished in the short time given.

"We did have glitches, and some aircraft went home late, based on the additional task and over-and-above-work that was required," he said. "But, the bottom line is that we were able to complete this program in a highly successful manner, returning to the customer an aircraft modified to meet the warfighter's mission."

"Many people thought it was impossible to do this many aircraft in this amount of time," he continued. "We overcame many obstacles to meet our deadlines and the mission."

Even though the Fly-in Program has ended, the B-1B program is full for the remainder of fiscal 2002, with 18 aircraft flying into Tinker each year to receive PDM. The future holds even more changes for the B-1B with several new modifications forecasted.

"The Block E modification will upgrade the computers on the aircraft and Block F will upgrade the electronic counter measures," said Doherty. (Courtesy of Air Force Materiel Command News Service)

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