

Just got back from a briefing by HAFB Commander Kurt A. Cichowski

Media from all over the state was covering the press conference. He was straightforward in his remarks indicating the entire F-117 fleet would be retired by 2008. He noted the Air Force has two times previously sought cutbacks - "but "this is the first time we have seen a plan to retire the entire (50 aircraft) fleet."

Describing the F-117 as "a quarter century old" He then voiced the view that "We need to make the transformation" and modernize the fleet. "It only makes sense to retire the aging aircraft. If we're going to make that decision, now is the time."

He cited the recent Base Realignment Committee Report validated the value current assets of Holloman's. "I don't know might replace the F-117", but then expressed confidence HAFB will have a future system.

Noting the F-22A "is truly a transformational aircraft...the most modern aircraft in the Air Force inventory", the General then added there are several other aircraft configurations that might be considered.

"There is no guarantee, but the Base plays such an important role as an Air Force asset" He indicated he didn't envision the base would not continue to be a viable military installation.

In response to media questions, he could not say when the F-117 retirement procedure would actually begin. "I am just "a one-star General, I can't speak for the Air Force. But we will make the transition as smooth as possible"

He noted the proposed transformation potentially could affect some 5,000 airmen and numerous contractor personnel.

"The next step is up to the United State Congress, he said