Raptor's first lady

Capt. Jammie "Trix" Jamieson is greeted by members of the Boeing F-22 team recently after landing in Seattle for an engineering cross-talk session and tours of the Raptor assembly center and avionics lab.

JOE ORSILLO/BOEING

F-22 aviatrix visits Seattle, values rapport with Boeing team

By Doug Cantwell

Her call sign is Trix. "It's short for aviatrix," she said. "No reference to the colorful breakfast cereal."

In spite of her efforts to keep a low profile, U.S. Air Force Capt. Jammie Jamieson draws crowds wherever her job takes her. As the first woman to fly an operational F-22 Raptor, the Air Force's most advanced fighter, she's an anomaly—but clearly a welcome one.

In Seattle recently with their F-22s for a visit with the Boeing Raptor team, Jamieson and Capt. Matt Byrne, both assigned to the 525th Fighter Squadron at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska, participated in their first engineering cross-talk, which educated the F-22's developers as well as its end-users. The pilots also met many of the 1,200 employees who build the Raptor's wings and aft fuselage, integrate the avionics and software, provide the pilot and maintenance training and part of the fleet's sustainment. The visitors also toured the assembly center and a new avionics integration lab, chatted with employees, signed posters and answered questions.

Doesn't she find this part of her job fatiguing? "Not at all," Jamieson said. "In fact, I find it energizing. These are the guys and gals who really know the ins and outs of the airplane."

EDUCATING EACH OTHER

Jamieson saw the visit with Boeing engineers as a chance to expand her knowledge of the aircraft she depends on—and to educate them.

"As end-users of their product, we gave them our perspective as tacticians who have to prioritize information," she said. "We'd tell them our idea for displaying data in a more useful way, and they'd tell us whether it's doable or not and suggest possible solutions."

At the assembly center, Production Operations Director Dave Pouliot noted that his guests were fascinated to see the inside of a wing under construction. "They found it enlightening to see where system components are located," he said. "They view the wing of a fielded aircraft only, without seeing the plumbing."

The visitors also took keen interest in the composite fabrication process. The wing skins and other Raptor parts are made from hundreds of layers of graphite tape. "It surprised them to find much of the airplane they fly is made from flexible fabric that's been cured into solid components," Pouliot added.

In the new Agile Integration Lab, the pilots got a close-up look at how their avionics and mission software are being modernized. Kelly Haynes, a systems engineer, said the conversation focused on the pilots' wish-lists for the next round of modernization, an ongoing process that keeps the Raptor dominant.

"We were all excited to have Raptors here," Haynes said, "but our customers seemed just as excited to have a face-to-face with the folks who are developing the next increment of mission capabilities." Their ability to execute effectively and come home safely rests largely on superior situational awareness, which makes software upgrades critical.

IT TAKES EVERYBODY

As she stepped into her G-suit before takeoff, Jamieson reflected on the visit. "Seattle has definitely been an eye-opener," she said. "It amazes me how many people it takes to design, develop, produce and maintain this airplane. We're the ultimate end-users of all that effort, but we make up a tiny piece of the whole process. It takes everybody to get us to that point." ■

doug.cantwell@boeing.com