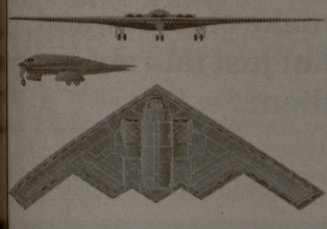


# Bomber flies once more

## B-2 stealth bomber

The B-2 was designed to be able to reach deep into enemy territory and attack heavily defended targets - and then return safely - because it is difficult to detect in flight. It has no vertical tail surfaces and its skin absorbs, rather than reflects, radar signals.



Length: 69 ft.  
Wingspan: 172 ft.  
Height: 17 ft.  
Weight: 100,000 - 110,000 lbs.  
Engines: Four General Electric F118 turbofans

Source: Jane's All The World's Aircraft

WHITEMAN AIR FORCE BASE, Mo. (AP) — The Air Force will resume training missions in its B-2 stealth bombers after grounding the planes earlier this month when an engine shaft assembly broke in flight.

No defects were found in other engine shaft assemblies, but the Air Force planned more frequent inspections and the re-engineering of the part to make it stronger, officials said Tuesday.

Missions involving Whiteman Air Force Base's 13 bombers had been suspended since April 8 after one plane's assembly — connecting an engine to a gear box that powers generators and hydraulic pumps — broke in the air.

The \$2 billion plane was able to return safely using its three other engines.

An investigation revealed that

the housing of the shaft assembly had nearly undetectable cracks that caused the shaft to turn in a slightly elliptical pattern rather than a circle, the Air Force said.

"The shaft is supposed to be turning at 14,000 rotations per minute," Whiteman spokesman Capt. Bruce Sprecher said. "It's supposed to go in a perfect circle; it doesn't take an ellipse at that high speed."

Missions were scheduled to resume Tuesday.

This month, six of the B-2s became part of a Pentagon's nuclear war plan, meaning they could be asked to deliver nuclear weapons.

The flying-wing B-2 bomber was designed to be able to reach deep into enemy territory and attack heavily defended targets. It has no vertical tail surfaces and its skin absorbs, rather than reflects, radar signals, making it difficult to detect.

# Bill faces opposition

AUSTIN (AP) — A central part of a House plan to lower local school property taxes will face opposition in the Senate, according to a key lawmaker.

House members cheered a special committee Wednesday after it voted 11-0 on a bill lowering local school property taxes by about \$2.5 billion a year.

Gov. George W. Bush, who raised the property tax issue more than a year ago, said the bill accomplishes his goals of cutting taxes and spreading the burden of school funding more evenly across the state.

To pay for the tax cuts, the House committee voted to expand the state business tax to most companies, increase some other taxes, including those on cigarettes, and add about 30 goods and services to the list of those subject to state sales taxes. It also would use \$1 billion in additional state funds and proceeds from the lottery for schools.

Another provision of the bill would replace local school taxes on business property with a state business property tax.

The legal limit on that tax rate, now \$1.50 per \$100 in property value, would be lowered to \$1.05 per \$100 for school operation and maintenance.

Residential property still would be taxed locally for maintenance and operation and local school districts could tax business and residential property up to 50 cents per \$100 to pay off debt.

Armbrister, D-Victoria, is chairman of a special Senate committee that would consider the plan if the full House approved it. He called a state business property tax a problem.

"It's not the rate, it's not the amount, it's where you take all of a district's commercial property and ... pool the levy off of that commercial property into Austin to be redistributed to a statewide basis. School districts don't like losing that," he said.

Rep. Paul Sadler, D-Henderson, chairman of the House committee, said the state business property tax is a key part of the bill because it gets rid of the so-called Robin Hood school funding system.

"You can't cut property taxes without getting rid of Robin Hood," Sadler said.

The provision is being opposed by some business and school groups.

Business opponents say separating business and residential property could make it easier to raise business property taxes in the future. Schools argue that the state will take more of their business tax revenue than it will give back.

"They aren't losing anything," Sadler said of the schools.

# Cities learn about terrorist weapons

## Program allows local emergency workers to deal better with hostile warfare.

WASHINGTON (AP) — As the anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing nears, the Pentagon has begun a training program designed to help 120 cities deal with the potential terrorist use of chemical, biological or even nuclear weapons.

Local police, firefighters, medics and other emergency workers will learn to identify such deadly weapons, deal with victims and carry out any decontamination that might be required, officials said Wednesday at a Pentagon briefing.

Under this year's \$42.6 million program, the military will set up a multi-service "Chem-Bio Quick Response Force," of up to 500 people. Members of the force will travel around the country training local officials, and the Pentagon plans to set up a hot line and an Internet site with further help. Specialized training also will be done at some military installations.

The commander of the Army's Chemical Biological Defense Command, Maj. Gen. George Friel, will be in charge of the training program. Friel is based at Aberdeen, Md.

Rep. Curt Weldon, R-Pa., a member of the House National Security Committee, who has pressed for such help for local authorities, called the Pentagon program "a good step ... long overdue, but it's not enough."

"The first responder to terrorism is not the military," Weldon said.

"It's the 1.2 million men and women across the country ... who day in and day out respond to disasters." He said local emergency workers, many of them volunteers, could be overwhelmed before federal assistance could arrive.

Carl Hooker, deputy chief of the Houston Fire Department, welcomed the program.

"There's no way cities can prepare properly for something like that," Hooker said in an interview. "No question about it, it will make us more secure in dealing with a terrorist event."

Pentagon officials said the training will be coordinated through the Federal Emergency Management Agency and make use of experts from the FBI, the Public Health Service, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Energy Department.

But since the military has had expertise in dealing with chemical weapons since World War I, the Pentagon will take the lead in the training, officials said.

By Oct. 1, 27 cities will be assessed for setting up the initial programs. Over the next three years, the officials said, they hope to reach the nation's 120 largest cities — if those cities want to take part.

Each city's needs are different, the officials noted, citing security steps Atlanta took for the Olympics and Washington's preparations for the inauguration.

Denver offered to be the pilot city for the program, and a team arrived there Monday to assess its needs. By the time leaders of the world's top industrialized democracies gather there for an economic summit in June, the initial training work will be well on its way, the officials said.

Besides Denver, the next eight cities to be studied are New York; Los Angeles; Chicago; Washington; Houston; Kansas City, Kan.; San Diego; and Philadelphia.

The remaining cities are Detroit; Dallas; Phoenix; San Antonio; San Jose, Calif.; Baltimore; Indianapolis; San Francisco; Jacksonville, Fla.; Columbus, Ohio; Milwaukee; Memphis, Tenn.; Boston; Seattle; Atlanta; Honolulu; Miami; and Anchorage, Alaska.

The FBI decided which cities needed to be looked at, the officials said, but any community can request assistance.

Congress approved the program in last year's defense budget, and the Clinton administration is seeking \$48.7 million to pay for it in fiscal 1998.

Federal law prohibits the military from participating in law-enforcement activities, such as conducting arrests or doing investigations. However, it does not bar the military from providing training or assistance to law enforcement agencies.

**"No question about it, it will make us more secure in dealing with a terrorist event."**

Carl Hooker  
deputy chief  
Houston Fire Department

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