

The US Air Force is putting a 'super death shield' on fighter jets.

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The U.S. Air Force is planning to equip its existing military aircraft with a range of the most advanced laser weapon systems to enhance combat effectiveness, particularly in defense.

This equipment package relies on the SHIELD laser system from defense giant Lockheed Martin, which involves a fuselage-mounted laser that provides comprehensive protection for fighter jets when facing incoming anti-aircraft missiles at ultra-high speeds. This is particularly advantageous for older fighter jets that cannot utilize stealth capabilities to evade modern air defense systems.

Called SHIELD (Self-Protect High Energy Laser Demonstrator), this is essentially a complex of laser systems mounted on the fuselage (or wings) of fighter aircraft, exclusively developed by the defense industry corporation Lockheed Martin. It is equipped with the ability to identify and shoot down surface-to-air and air-to-air missiles before they can reach and damage the aircraft.



In general, the biggest weakness of today's fighter aircraft lies primarily in their passive defense against increasingly sophisticated anti-aircraft missiles. Typically, pilots will evade by attempting to fly outside the sensor arc of an incoming missile, launching flares to distract infrared missile guidance systems, or deploying aluminum shields, known as "chaff," to confuse radar-guided missiles. However, these are only passive defense

measures. In contrast, lasers are an 'active' anti-missile defense, meaning they directly attack and shoot down missiles to protect the aircraft.

Because it is mounted externally on the aircraft's fuselage, the SHiELD system is completely exposed, occupying space typically reserved for bombs, missiles, or sensors. This characteristic makes SHiELD unsuitable for stealth aircraft like the F-22 Raptor or F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. Therefore, some modern US bomber models will continue to use existing stealth missile defense systems in the future.

Instead, SHiELD will be deployed on slower or older fighter aircraft models that are unlikely to escape the range of newer air defense missile systems, such as the F-15E, F-15C, F-15EX Eagle, F-16 Fighting Falcons, or A-10C Warthog.

Trading the ability to carry an additional missile or bomb for a laser system capable of shooting down multiple anti-aircraft missiles is clearly an undeniable advantage.

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