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FATE OF THE F-22

The Boston Globe

In a conflict we own the air - but for how long?

July 19, 2009

BRYAN BENDER'S "[A dog fight Obama seems bound to lose](#)" helped bring the battle over the F-22 the exposure it needs. In addition to saving jobs, the fight is about protecting our nation. After all, air supremacy by the United States is the reason we no longer fight conventional wars. But air supremacy is not a birthright. And as time goes by, fewer and fewer generations of Americans appreciate what it feels like not to own the air in a conflict. The oldest of the baby boomers was only 6 the last time an American soldier was killed by an enemy aircraft. That was in Korea on April 15, 1953.

Our air supremacy over the last 25 years is due in great part to the F-15, which has never been shot down by enemy fire. This may change. Mark Bowden, author of "Black Hawk Down," writes in the March issue of The Atlantic: "Our technological edge is eroding - Russia, China, India, North Korea, and Pakistan all now fly fighter jets with capabilities equal or superior to those of the F-15."

As you enjoy the summer with your family, take a moment to consider how many attacks the mere existence of the fourth-generation F-15 has prevented and how many its obsolescence may now invite.

How many attacks will a fully funded fifth-generation F-22 program prevent? If it's up to President Obama and Defense Secretary Gates, we'll never know.

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