

## READERS' LETTERS

# Shortfall in production of F-35 fighter increases risk to United States

It strikes me as no coincidence that knowledge of the F-35 production delays became public after the Senate voted to kill the F-22 program, wiping out \$1.75 billion from the defense budget. Don't tell me this is about saving money — please. Compared to the \$10 trillion in Obama administration spending, it amounts to less than pennies in savings. If the Obama administration has spent \$1, the savings from cutting the F-22 program is \$0.000175, or not quite two-tenths of a cent.

If President Barack Obama is about saving jobs, isn't building a plane a job just like building a car is a job? And if the required planes were built without interruption, instead of by Congress's current stop-and-start approach, more efficiency and economies of scale would be met.

My views on the importance of the F-22 and air supremacy were published in The Newport Daily News on July 17. Myths continue on the subject. Here are the facts:

**Myth No. 1:** The F-22 has never flown combat missions over Iraq or Afghanistan since its operational debut in 2004, whereas the Reaper combat drones (\$8 million each) are in action around the clock.

The F-22 was not used in Afghanistan or Iraq because it was not available until December 2005. Air dominance had already been achieved in the Southwest Asian theater of conflict. In response to 9/11, the Taliban in Afghanistan were overthrown three months after the World Trade Center towers fell. The U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003 was accomplished in three weeks. Air dominance was possible because of the absence of air-to-air or surface-to-air threats.

In these two theaters, stealthy air dominance assets were not imperative. Fourth-generation fighters such as the twin-engine F-15 and single-engine workhorse F-16 were effective against a lesser adversary.

The F-22 fortunately has not been needed for combat. In fact, had we been pulled into the Russian-Georgian conflict a year ago, the only capable first-strike aircraft in the U.S. fleet would have been the F-22.

Unlike fighter jets or cruise missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or drones, such as the Predator C Avenger, MQ-9 Reaper, and MZ-8B Fire Scout, can loiter over their targets for more than 20 hours, take photos in which men, women, and children can be clearly distinguished, and deliver laser-guided munitions with low explosive yields. However, they do not have the ballistic missile evading ability of an F-22. They are not a first-strike option. They require cleared air space to operate effectively.

Learn the truth about more myths at [youngresearch.com](http://youngresearch.com).

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