

The F-22 Sets a New Defense Industry Standard

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A new standard has been set with the F-22 — a standard for government waste by design. The *Washington Post* reports “[The Premier U.S. Fighter Jet has Shortcomings](#)” with the Washington media’s typical understatement and lack of reflection when it comes to assessing the utter idiocy of the defense spending process.

The F-22 is not now, and has never been, a necessity for American defense. It is not even a necessity for American offense, or for maintenance of the American empire overseas. But the F-22 is critical to the continuation of Lockheed’s gravy train on the backs of millions of increasingly burdened taxpayers in the 50 states.

To understand the history of the F-22 is to recognize a well-known story of defense system acquisition. A decade ago, [Ivan Eland wrote for the Cato Institute that the F-22 Raptor should be sent to Jurassic Park](#), noting, “The Raptor was intended to combat two futuristic Soviet fighters that were never built.”

Congress, the Pentagon, and Lockheed Martin have missed some important milestones, and not only with the expensive F-22. They apparently missed the peaceful collapse of the Soviet Union over 20 years ago. They apparently didn’t notice that the only enemies the United States has fought since then haven’t had air forces at all, much less a fighter jet capable of air-to-air combat. Wise voices at Cato and elsewhere have continued to make the point that the F-22 is a white elephant—but like the original white elephant, the F-22 is a gift from Congress to the supplicating defense establishment—outrageously expensive to buy, exorbitant to maintain, and utterly useless.

Strangely, the many F-22 shortfalls that U.S. taxpayers will be required to fund in the coming decade include the jet’s inability to operate as designed when it rains and to be used for more than an hour and 40 minutes before experiencing a critical failure. Not being able to fly may actually be a good thing, as the F-22 has an operating cost per hour almost twice that of its F-15 predecessor, at nearly \$50,000 an hour.

In retrospect, we should have bought a real white elephant for each member of Congress, each time they voted to fund the F-22. A visual reminder of the magnificent waste would have been far more beneficial to the security of our country than the F-22, and very likely just as intimidating to any potential enemies. Who, by the way, must be chuckling at our defense predicament *vis-à-vis* the F-22.

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