

Matt Yglesias

Today at 3:14 pm

The Significance of the F-22 Debate



Useless against the Deceptacon threat
(wikimedia)

Chris Preble had a good post up on the Cato blog yesterday [praising Barack Obama's veto threat](#) over the F-22 issue. I continue to hope that folks will stay engaged with this question, because I think it's more important than it first appears. I know that a lot of people, both on the progressive left and the libertarian right, would like to see a more ambitious cutback of the American defense posture than what you see in this initial budget proposal. But viewed in that light I think you need to see the issue on the table right now as whether or not the political system can impose any discipline on the military-industrial complex *at all*. If it can, then bigger change may be possible in the future. If it can't, then it can't.

At any rate, Preble is doing a [talk at New America on the 24th](#) about his [excellent](#) book [The Power Problem: How American Military Dominance Makes Us Less Safe, Less Prosperous, and Less Free](#). It's worth checking out. There hasn't historically been much liberal/libertarian collaboration on these kind of questions, but hopefully there will be in the future. Making change happen is really hard and we need as broad a coalition as possible.

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10 Responses to “The Significance of the F-22 Debate”

1. *Jim W* Says:
[July 17th, 2009 at 3:17 pm](#)

It would be easier if the plane wasn't so cool looking.

I read on another blog some speculation that Obama might accept the F-22 in exchange for a hate crimes bill passing. This sounds totally bizarre to me, so I hope its not true.

2. *Mattyoung* Says:

[July 17th, 2009 at 3:23 pm](#)

The best way to kill a government program is to threaten more progressive income taxes.

The progressives have the problem, they want their own government programs and thus fear to raise taxes on the rich.

3. *joe from Lowell* Says:

[July 17th, 2009 at 3:27 pm](#)

The **progressives** have the problem, they want their own government programs and thus fear to raise taxes on the rich.

Somebody remind me, what's the word for a tax system that raises taxes disproportionately on the rich?

4. *brad2* Says:

[July 17th, 2009 at 3:29 pm](#)

It does look cool.

5. *Anonymous* Says:

[July 17th, 2009 at 3:29 pm](#)

It's spelled Decepticon, Matt.

6. *Ted* Says:

[July 17th, 2009 at 3:32 pm](#)

Interesting post. This is one of those places where the tendency to organize politics around a single left-right axis is very unhelpful.

7. *cmholm* Says:

[July 17th, 2009 at 3:35 pm](#)

There are already a few smaller programs which - at the direction of the Administration - have had stop work orders and significant budget cuts in the last week. But, it's one thing to shitcan the FCS, and a whole 'nother thing to reign in the F-22. Weeeeeee'll see.

One wee fly in the ointment is the DoD's concerns about maintaining an industrial base with which to build stuff. Once an assembly line and subcontractor chain is rolled up and capital redeployed, it's a bear to put back together. Hence, why the EU goes to the hassle and cost of feeding its own smaller programs.

As the Iranis and Israelis have found out the hard way, you can only really depend on yourself to equip your armed forces.

8. *Helter* Says:

[July 17th, 2009 at 3:37 pm](#)

I don't see it as a major issue over whether "the political system can impose any discipline on the military-industrial complex at all." There are at least some fair arguments coming from both sides in Congress on the issue regarding the merits of extending production for another 1-3 years (the fate of the Army's Future Combat System is a much better post child for programs that consume huge resources over years without ending up producing much of military utility). The importance of this debate is whether Obama is going to hang tough and use the veto or whether he caves into Congress. That's the couple of billion dollar question.

9. *rapier* Says:

[July 17th, 2009 at 3:45 pm](#)

But they are so cool. When one does a fly over at the air show everybody feels so proud. That's priceless.

My then two year old niece was traumatized by F14's doing a low pass at an airshow 3 years ago. I always ask her father, a nominal wingnut, what she would have felt like if they were dropping real bombs. I can say without equivocation that he is incapable of empathy. Whoever it is that gets bombed deserves it. Period. Thought about it is not even possible.

No US fighter plane has been in a fight since the end of the Korean war. They have mostly just dropped stuff on the undefended. N Vietnam had some credible ground to air defense. Iran does too. Very credible as well as some not very credible air fighters. It will have to be knocked out when we and Israel and the Saudis attack them. In fact knocking out their air defense will comprise the bulk of the attack. Such will have long term strategic significance in the region. No F22 needed. But they are so cool.

10. *tsg* Says:

[July 17th, 2009 at 4:03 pm](#)

Interesting how many commenters on this site get hard-ons for various high-tech killing machines.

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