



National Security Working Group
Special Report: Obama's Weakening of Air Superiority
Congressman Trent Franks (R-AZ), Chairman

Ironically, the cuts to the defense budget that have been proposed by President Obama come at a time when the government is on an out of control spending spree. While the Obama Administration is projected to grow U.S. obligations to [22%](#) of GDP over the next decade, the Obama budget seriously threatens our ability to sustain our homeland security and overseas obligations by committing a mere 3.01% of GDP to defense.

President Obama's announcement this month foreshadowed the impending cuts to specific programs. Some of these cuts significantly threaten America's ability to guarantee air dominance. Achieving and maintaining dominance in the air during wartime is a trademark of the U.S. military, and many conservatives feel this budget proposal undermines that mission.

As Senator Talent recently [penned](#), "air dominance is the cornerstone mission of the Air Force. Unless the skies are cleared of enemy fighters, the rest of America's military, bombers, non-stealthy strike fighters, ground forces, and naval vessels, cannot operate safely."

Air Force legacy fighters (F-15 and F-16 aircraft) are rapidly approaching the end of their service life. The Obama Administration [said](#) the U.S. "will end production of the F-22 fighter at 187-- representing 183 planes plus four recommended for inclusion in the FY2009 supplemental." As [reported](#) in Air Force Magazine, Retired Gen. Gregory Martin, former head of Air Force Materiel Command and US Air Forces in Europe, says the long-held USAF requirement for 381 new F-22 Raptors was solidly based on national strategy. "The numbers are scenario-dependent but in no case should go lower than 243 because of the rotational need to have an 18-aircraft squadron of F-22s in each of the 10 Air Expeditionary Forces, satisfying regional commander requirements."

Surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), which have been rapidly proliferating can preclude the U.S. from flying and the F-22 is the best aircraft to suppress that threat. An aircraft fleet of 381, as defined by our senior military leaders, is the number we need in order to execute our current National Security Strategy. A fleet of 187 may be enough to fight one near peer competitor but it does not account for attrition or the need to simultaneously fight in another highly dangerous region of the world where SAMs are employed.

Long range bombers, which serve conventional needs in addition to their nuclear application, make a vital contribution to delivering ordnance against enemy targets around the world by providing strategic defense and deterrence. They are less reliant on in-theater basing, offer greater survivability, and allow shorter range aircraft to use the closest bases to theater in base-limited scenarios. In spite of this, the Obama Administration has also [determined](#) the U.S. "...will not pursue a development program for a follow-on Air Force bomber until we have a better understanding of the need." Many conservatives would argue the need is already there.

- [According](#) to General John D.W. Corley, Commander, Air Combat Command, direct attack of mobile or moving targets will grow difficult after 2015 and the new threat environment will be at 'full flush' by 2020.

In spite of these cuts that threaten U.S. air dominance, our peer competitors continue to robustly fund and invest in their own air forces.

- "...intelligence analysts [expect](#) that foreign nations—China and Russia specifically—will by the early 2020s have fielded not one but two new fifth generation fighters comparable to the best in the Air Force stable. These and other potential adversaries also will have sophisticated ground-based air defenses. Even today, those modern air defenses are considered deadly to legacy fighters."

For more information on air dominance, please review these additional resources:

http://www.afa.org/Mitchell/Reports/0908air_dominance.pdf

<http://www.af.mil/factsheets/factsheet.asp?fsID=199>

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