

The F-35 Combat Aircraft: Why a Winner or Loser

Unknown by many civilians, the United States military, especially the Air Force, continually uses more and more advanced technology to defend the United States from “all enemies, foreign and domestic.” With each passing year technology advances; some changes occur through a sort of technological evolution. Initially, after its creation, the United States Air Force had to undergo many rapid changes in order to meet the demands placed on it by this country. This continuous improvement embodies the third Air Force core value, “Excellence in All We Do.” The F-35 aircraft, also known as the Lightning II, is the next advancement in military aircraft, and is yet another product of the United States military forces pursuit of excellence.

Built to replace the Air Force’s A-10 Warthog and the A-16, as well as the Navy’s F-18, the F-35 brings the new combat capabilities that will be necessary in future conflicts as countries seek matches against the United States’ interdicting air forces. A benefit from the F-35 is that it only requires one pilot, yet provides air-to-ground and air-to-air combat capabilities. This effectively allows one pilot in one plane to perform multiple missions potentially in demand by our country. This multi-role capability provides economy of force, requiring fewer troops and allowing manpower to be used elsewhere. The F-35 has been designed to serve in its role for up to fifty years, or until the next technological advancement takes its place, providing sustainability and improving the cost of development and production.

With current budget cuts being implemented across the nation in many different areas, it is understandable that a concerned American citizen and taxpayer would feel that the F-35 \

Project is an unnecessary waste of money and resources. However, one could argue that the assured protection of American assets overseas and at home is worth the cost. The United States Air Force's three core values, "Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do" can be applied in justifying the need for the F-35. There's an old saying: "a chain is only as strong as its weakest link." In the air forces deployed in defense of the nation, there are many weak links. Many planes still used today have been in service for over fifty years and can no longer successfully fulfill their mission without suffering heavy losses due to outdated technology. An example would be the big, slow B-52 which has been in use since the Vietnam War. By deploying the F-35, the United States Air Force and her sister services are maintaining the "integrity" that America's defense needs. The American taxpayer should embrace the motto of "Service Before Self" just as the men and women who defend their country have. While it is not ideal to have to pay the taxes and experience the budget cuts necessary to develop new aircraft and train pilots to fly them, it is a necessary duty that every American should embrace, just as they did in World War II with "victory gardens," war bonds, and ration cards. The final core value, "Excellence in All We Do," has already been mentioned; however, it would serve to remind those who oppose the F-35 project that the pursuit of excellence created the atomic bomb which prevented the loss of hundreds of thousands of ground troops in a planned land invasion of Japan. In fact, the sole purpose behind every advancing technology in our military is to require less manpower and provide national security without jeopardizing the lives of America's sons and daughters.