

Verbatim: The F-22

"The committee believes that ... continued F-22 production is not justified at this time. The committee thus recommends an F-22 'production pause.' ... The committee specifically denies the \$1.8 billion F-22 production funding requested for Fiscal Year 2000."—**House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee, final report on Fiscal 2000 Defense Appropriations, released July 12.**

"The committee remembers vividly how just two years ago the then-Chief of Staff of the Air Force explained ... how his service had consciously decided to give up force structure and manning levels in order to free up additional resources for modernization. Now, that gamble and others taken by this service have come home to roost, leading to what the committee believes is an Air Force personnel and readiness crisis, even while the Air Force still confronts a modernization crisis of considerable size and scope."—**House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee report, released July 12.**

"The F-22 ... made sense when we faced enemies who had the expertise to develop advanced aircraft and the ability to produce large numbers of them. But the events of the past eight years—most especially the engagements we have fought in the Persian Gulf and Kosovo—have made it clear that we must also address other needs that have become more pressing. The most urgent crisis facing the Air Force is finding a way to recruit and train the pilots and support crews who will fly and maintain the technologically advanced aircraft we already have in the air."—**Rep. Jerry Lewis (R-Calif.), subcommittee chairman, July 12.**

"Yesterday's subcommittee vote is totally unacceptable. ... To dominate the wars of the future, we will have to dominate the air. We cannot do that without the F-22."—**Sen. Max Cleland (D-Ga.), Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), statement, July 13.**

"I have not said it's the end of the program, but there's no doubt that it will be the first step of a serious discussion about whether the F-22 is the answer to our air superiority

problems or whether we shouldn't be looking in the final analysis to other alternatives."—**Lewis, Legis-Slate News Service (LNS), July 15.**

"This decision, if enacted, would for all practical purposes kill the F-22 program, the cornerstone of our nation's global airpower in the 21st century."—**Defense Secretary William S. Cohen, letter to Congressional committees, July 16.**

"That program was eating a huge hole in the ability of the Air Force to do anything else to deal with the real world. [USAF] will be afraid to fly it and afraid to lose it."—**Rep. David R. Obey (D-Wis.), LNS, July 15.**

"The Air Force has such tremendous needs in so many other areas—air tankers, airlift transports, aerial reconnaissance—that we believe it is imperative for them to reassess their priorities."—**Lewis, press release, July 16.**

"We need to concentrate on those things that work."—**Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.), supporting continued funding of today's F-15s and F-16s rather than investing in the F-22, New York Times (NYT), July 17.**

"The Air Force's money and everything in the Air Force's mind is focused on the F-22. ... We need to fix it [the Air Force]. ... Now, can we fix it if we put all our money into one basket? No, we can't."—**Rep. C.W. "Bill" Young (R-Fla.), chairman of full House Appropriations Committee, NYT, July 17.**

"It's really a remarkable occurrence, one of the rarest imaginable. I'm absolutely amazed."—**Former Sen. Dale Bumpers (D-Ark.), a longtime F-22 critic, NYT, July 17.**

"We can no longer guarantee that we'll be able to dominate the sky [without the F-22]."—**Maj. Gen. Bruce Carlson, director of Air Force operational requirements, NYT, July 17.**

"I can assure that, if the F-22 is canceled, that technology, which is being developed [and] which would ... be incorporated in the Joint Strike Fighter, will send the costs of the Joint Strike Fighter much higher.

... And so the concept of having a high-low mix, so to speak, of having a very high-performance F-22 and a lower-performing but capable Joint Strike Fighter with a lower cost—that will be eliminated."—**Cohen, SASC testimony, July 20.**

"Neither I, nor anyone in this building, or anyone in the service ... was aware of the effort under way on the part of the committee. The purpose was quite obvious, I think, and that is to avoid any public discussion, public debate, and any ability of the Air Force or contractor to respond to questions raised about the system."—**Cohen, DoD news briefing, July 20.**

"There are many systems being produced today that can challenge the capabilities of the F-15. ... So if we want to give our pilots ... air dominance in the years 2005 to 2015, it seems to me that we ought to continue with the F-22."—**Cohen, news briefing, July 20.**

"As a career naval aviator who appreciates and knows firsthand the value of air superiority, this decision did not come easy for me. Nonetheless, I fully support the committee's decision, knowing that there are other priorities that are being squeezed out and because of the F-22's troubled past."—**Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham (R-Calif.), letter to House colleagues, July 21.**

"I consider this plane absolutely essential for America's inventory of fighter aircraft."—**Sen. John Warner (R-Va.), SASC chairman, remarks at a hearing, July 21.**

"There has been much discussion in the House about whether the Joint Strike Fighter could perform the same role [as that of the F-22], and the answer is, it really cannot."—**Then-acting Secretary of the Air Force F. Whitten Peters, SASC hearing, July 21.**

"If we were to take F-22 out of the inventory, we would be looking at a massive change of direction ... on Joint Strike Fighter."—**Peters, SASC hearing, July 21.**

"The Air Force has a deliberate planning process where we go out for ... a period of over 18 years, and

we look at aircraft out of that period of time ... to see if they will fit within reasonable budget assumptions. And F-22 does, in fact, fit within those assumptions. By comparison, at its highest point F-22 will take no more of the Air Force budget than F-15 did in its day when it was being built up.”—**Peters, SASC hearing, July 21.**

“If we go forward, the additional cost per airplane, on average, is about \$85 million in '99 dollars. ... That price is less than the cost of the modern Eurofighter, Gripen, and similar airplanes that are coming out today which have less capability, which are in the \$95 million to \$100 million price range.”—**Peters, SASC, July 21.**

“It is ironic that we’re talking F-22 because the B-2 was the subject of these same discussions about killing the program, as was the C-17, as was the F-15, and as was the F-16—four platforms that proved to be so valuable in Kosovo.”—**Peters, SASC hearing, July 21.**

“To me, the F-22 is the key to the strategy of airpower for the future. Without the F-22, we’d have to change the level of our forces. We would have to bring back the ‘Wild Weasels’ [aircraft equipped to jam enemy air defenses] and all the other systems that we let go out of production because we knew we were going to have the F-22.”—**Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), chairman of Senate Appropriations Committee, LNS, July 21.**

“I must tell you that I cannot accept a defense bill that kills this cornerstone program.”—**Cohen, Defense Daily, July 21.**

“We are not buying this airplane to fight a war in the year 2000. We are buying it to fight and win America’s wars in 2010 and 2030 or beyond.”—**Carlson, Defense Daily, July 21.**

“We can fund the F-22 without compromising the basic priorities of our national defense within the funds set aside and that is what I will fight to do. I think it would be a mistake to abandon the project. I think it has real potential to add to our national defense. I have always supported it, and I hope that it can be preserved.”—**President Clinton, White House media briefing, July 21.**

“I think beyond any doubt, it will

survive. It is a program that is essential for America’s future defense. It’s as simple as that.”—**Warner, interview with Bloomberg News, July 21.**

“In today’s environment, if you match airplane to airplane, we’re at near parity with the MiG-29, the Su-27—the airplanes that are deployed around the world in large numbers.”—**Carlson, Fort Worth Star-Telegram, July 22.**

“It makes no sense for the Pentagon to proceed with three separate advanced fighter programs when no other country has a chance of threatening America’s air superiority in the foreseeable future.”—**NYT, editorial, July 22.**

“It’s ironic ... that, coming out of what’s been called the most successful air engagement in history, that Congress would even contemplate denying us the hardware that would allow us to maintain this dominance well into the next century.”—**Pentagon spokesman Ken Bacon, press briefing, July 22.**

“Clearly, this is a very important weapon, and it’s not just important to the Air Force. It’s important to all forces that depend on air dominance as one of the keys to success.”—**Bacon, press briefing, July 22.**

“I don’t think we build planes to be cheap. We build planes to be effective.”—**Bacon, press briefing, July 22.**

“Look at the C-17, now regarded by everybody as a huge success. The last story I wrote when I covered the Pentagon in 1980 for the *Wall Street Journal* was about whether the C-17 would be approved, whether it would ever be built because there was so much criticism both of its lack of ability and its high cost. Now we consider it indispensable to our operations. The B-2, obviously the focus of enormous debate for a number of reasons—cost, capability, need over the last couple of decades—has proved to be a decisive weapon in Operation Allied Force.”—**Bacon (Wall Street Journal Pentagon reporter in the late 1970s and early 1980s), press briefing, July 22.**

“While many in the Air Force may question the decision, some of the most pro-defense members of the House are sending an important

message. The Air Force has such tremendous needs in so many other areas—air tankers, airlift transports, aerial reconnaissance—that we believe it is imperative for the Air Force to reassess its priorities.”—**Lewis, House floor statement, July 22.**

“The F-22, no doubt about it, is a beauty of an airplane. It is like a Jaguar or a Cadillac. It would be a great plane to have if we had all of the money in the world, but the problem is that its costs are taking off faster than the airplane is expected to if it is ever constructed.”—**Obey, floor statement, July 22.**

“Make no mistake about it: ... If we cancel the F-22, we are making a decision to stake the lives of American soldiers on inferior equipment because some in Congress think they know more about air warfare than the United States Air Force.”—**Rep. Bob Barr (R-Ga.), floor statement, July 22.**

“I flew the F-15 when I was active in the Air Force. That has been over 25 years ago. Can my colleagues believe that we are trying to retrofit an F-15 that will be in service for over 33 years by the time the F-22 achieves initial operational capability? If a 33-year-old aircraft had been used in Korea, we would have been fighting MiGs with Sopwith Camel biplanes. If a 33-year-old aircraft had been used in the Gulf War, we would have been fighting third-generation Soviet fighters with Vietnam-era F-4s.”—**Rep. Sam Johnson (R-Texas), retired USAF colonel and Vietnam War POW, floor statement, July 22.**

“It is not enough to say that something better may be available in the future. Something better is always available in the future. Serious threats to American air superiority may arise sooner, and the nation’s security cannot tolerate a loss of command of the air. Congress and the Administration must focus on this fundamental reality and fully fund the nation’s only truly stealthy air superiority fighter.”—**Letter from seven former defense secretaries—James Schlesinger, Donald Rumsfeld, Harold Brown, Caspar Weinberger, Frank Carlucci, Richard Cheney, and William Perry, quoted in floor debate, July 22.**

“Just as the Air Force is poised to field an aircraft capable of assuring

air dominance through the first three decades of the next century, the Congress seems poised to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory by killing the F-22. This rash act will commit future generations of airmen to fight the air war with weapons no better than those of our foes.”—**Gen. Richard E. Hawley, recently retired head of Air Combat Command, Washington Times, July 26.**

“If they take the production money out of the F-22, we have to go back and rethink the Joint Strike Fighter. ... If you bust that [relationship], you

start questioning whether the Air Force needs the JSF at all.”—**USAF Chief of Staff Gen. Michael E. Ryan, Wall Street Journal, July 27.**

“I cast aside almost out of hand the suggestion that this pause automatically kills this program. The fact that in a day’s time they [Air Force officials] could come up with an added-on cost of \$5 [billion] or \$6 billion [resulting from a one-year pause in production] says that they will use almost any data, accurate or not, to support their position.”—**Lewis, Defense Daily, July 28.**

“This airplane is not going to break the bank. In its most expensive year, the first year of high-rate production, it will consume less than 6 percent of the Air Force budget and only 1.7 percent of the DoD budget. That’s very much in line with the amounts that were spent on the F-15 back in the late 70s, early 80s on the F-16. ... So these are well within the norm for fighter airplane procurement. And I think this debate has focused so much on costs that people have lost sight of the need for these high-end capabilities.”—**Hawley, PBS “News-Hour,” July 27.** ■