

Executive Memorandum

No. 970
May 13, 2005



Published by The Heritage Foundation

The U.S. Should Consider F/A-22 Sales to Select Allies

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The United States should consider opening the F/A-22 to limited international sales. Exporting this fighter on a limited basis would be good for U.S. national security, the industrial base, and diplomatic relations. While the F/A-22 is not the answer to all of America's—much less the rest of the world's—security concerns, it can play an important role.

On April 15, the Pentagon approved the F/A-22 Raptor for full production. Although this does not increase total production beyond the 179 authorized by Program Budget Directive 753, it is a vote of confidence in the program, which has been under constant question. This decision not only is a positive development for national security and the U.S. Air Force, but could also address the security concerns of America's trusted allies. To this end:

- **Congress** should hold hearings on the feasibility of exporting the F/A-22;
- **The State Department** should begin exploratory talks with potential buyers to establish interest; and
- **The Department of Defense** should work with industry to develop potential modifications that would maximize interoperability, minimize the risk of unwanted technology transfer, and preserve America's future air superiority.

In seeking export opportunities for the F/A-22, the United States has a unique opportunity to support national security, economic, and military transformation goals simultaneously.

Industrial Base Security and Capability. The F/A-22 is already flying and will reach initial operational capability in December 2005. Therefore, much of the costly research and development is completed, and the production infrastructure is already in place. A developed market for an export version of the F/A-22 could strengthen domestic aviation production lines and U.S.

industry in general. Increased production will produce a positive return on investment, will increase competitiveness, and could even decrease unit costs.

Increased Flexibility. One of the primary objectives of U.S. military modernization is force flexibility. The same changing security environment that is driving U.S. military modernization should compel U.S. allies to take similar steps. Ensuring that allies have real capability and can operate side-

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- The United States can simultaneously support security, economic, and military goals with F/A-22 exports to trusted allies.
 - Exporting the F/A-22 to select allies will contribute to regional stability by increasing allies' capabilities to fight alone or with the U.S.
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This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:
www.heritage.org/research/nationalsecurity/em970.cfm

Produced by the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis
Institute for International Studies

Published by The Heritage Foundation
214 Massachusetts Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20002-4999
(202) 546-4400 • heritage.org

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by-side with U.S. forces substantially increases America's military options. Increased capability and interoperability would allow America's allies to respond quickly and decisively when in position or to respond alone where such action is not in the U.S. national interest. Furthermore, the United States will have more flexibility in prepositioning its F/A-22s around the world if its allies maintain their own F/A-22 support infrastructures. Such placement does not decrease the need for the U.S. to invest in other long-range strike capabilities, but it does increase the flexibility of the F/A-22.

U.S. Diplomacy. The National Security Strategy recognizes that diplomacy, as well as military capability, is an important guarantor of American security. Expressing confidence in allies and recognizing them as important, trusted security partners by giving them access to a capability such as an export F/A-22 carries significant political symbolism. This would advance diplomatic goals and gain access and leverage for U.S. national interests outside the purely military sphere.

Regional Security. Exporting the F/A-22 to select allies would contribute to regional stability by increasing their ability to fight along with the United States as well as to take on more missions by themselves. If the United States wants its allies to fight with it, then it should help to minimize their risk. One way to do this is to give them access to leading-edge technology and combat capability, which they may be unable to develop on their own. Demonstrating a commitment to their security in this way would give them confidence both in America's resolve to honor agreements and in their own combat effectiveness.

Interoperability. In an accelerating coalition environment, successfully integrating major combat, stability, and post-conflict operations depends on achieving a high level of interoperability with allies. As America's military becomes more reliant on new technology, the risk of leaving allies even further behind becomes an increasingly significant concern. The combat air components of this risk

could be mitigated through appropriate management of foreign military sales.

Cost and Technology Concerns. Critics will likely argue that U.S. allies will not be interested in buying F/A-22s because of high costs and that offering the F/A-22 for export will lead to unwanted technology transfers. These are the same arguments that were made when the F-15, F-16, and F/A-18 were opened to foreign military sales. However, with more than 20 nations flying or soon to fly the F-16, foreign military sales of advanced aircraft are a well-established and successful fact. According to *Forecast International*, aviation industry experts are projecting deliveries of over 4,000 new combat aircraft and advanced jet trainers globally during the 2005–2014 period—a market estimated at nearly \$158 billion. A superior product offering better capability, although more expensive, will find a place in such a heated market.

Technology migration is a legitimate concern, but one that can be overcome. The most sensitive technologies on the U.S. Air Force version of the F/A-22 either would not be included in any export version or would remain under U.S. control. The U.S. could protect them by strictly limiting who may buy the F/A-22 and by making any export contingent on the clear understanding that F/A-22 technology may not be offered to third parties.

Conclusion. A carefully thought-out export version of the F/A-22 could benefit both the U.S. and its trusted allies. An Industrial College of the Armed Forces study noted in 1993 that “fighter aircraft [foreign military sales]...contribute to the financial, political, and military elements of national power through additional business to the aerospace industry, political leverage to foreign policy decision making, and access and interoperability to the military.” What made a good summary then continues to be good policy today.

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