

# Lockheed Martin's F-35 Lightning II Boondoggle. A \$2 Trillion Pentagon Waste

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*At an estimated lifetime development, production, operational and maintenance cost of \$2 trillion or more (adjusted for inflation), the F-35 perhaps most of all symbolizes notorious Pentagon waste, fraud and abuse – ripping off taxpayers, using the nation's resources irresponsibly, at the expense of vital homeland needs.*

Pentagon hype calls the F-35 “a 5th Generation fighter, combining advanced stealth with fighter speed and agility, fully fused sensor information, network-enabled operations and advanced sustainment” – for Army, Navy and Marine Corps use, as well as for selected allies.

After a decade of development and limited production, it still doesn't work as intended. In service since the 1970s, the F-16 outclasses it. In simulated dogfights, an F-35 test pilot called it “at a distinct energy disadvantage.”

The Pentagon's fifth-generation warplane performs worse than one of its current mainstays it's designed to replace. It remains a troubled aircraft with unresolved problems, a multi-trillion dollar boondoggle, a colossal waste of national resources.

It's unclear if continued development and testing can ever overcome its design flaws. Instead of scrapping a white elephant, limitless billions of dollars continue being poured down a black hole.

Cost overruns are enormous. Each aircraft costs around \$300 million, amounts varying by branch of service, unit costs increasing annually – congressional oversight entirely absent.

Defense contractors notoriously rip off taxpayers, administration and congressional officials complicit in their scamming.

On January 28, [Bloomberg News](#) quoted Defense Department Operational Test and Evaluation director Michael Gilmore, saying F-35s “require a still-to-be-determined list of modifications.”

They “may be unaffordable for the (service branches) as they consider the cost of upgrading these early lots of aircraft while the program continues to increase production rates in a fiscally constrained environment.”

DOD plans a fleet of 2,443 F-35s, plus hundreds more Britain, Italy, Japan and Australia intend buying, maybe Israel and other US allies.

Outrageously, the aircraft is being produced while still in development – deficient and unable to perform its intended mission. One unnamed Pentagon official called what's ongoing “acquisition malpractice.”

Grand theft best explains it, perhaps over \$2 trillion wasted if F-35s never work as intended.

Numerous unresolved problems and design flaws remain. So-called “3F” software intended to assure full combat capability (if it works) won't be completed until at least early 2018, maybe much later, if ever.

According to Gilmore, Air Force officials told a Joint Chiefs of Staff review group in December that beginning full-scale production in April 2019 is unrealistic because of numerous unresolved problems, serious “deficiencies,” including dysfunctional software.

Fuel system defects limit maneuverability. The ejection system can kill pilots weighing 136 pounds or less by breaking their necks.

Russia's still-in-development fifth-generation T-50 (PAK-FA) Sukhoi may outperform the F-35, military experts believe.

Testing will be completed later this year, production to follow, availability for service expected in 2017 – at a small fraction of the F-35's cost.

Retired US Air Force General/deputy chief of staff David Deptula called the T-50 a “pretty sophisticated design (with) greater agility (and a better) aerodynamic design” than the F-35.

Sophisticated Russian military technology matches America's best. In December, US Air Forces in Europe commander General Frank Forenc called its state-of-the-art qualitative and quantitative capability “alarming.”

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*His new book as editor and contributor is titled “Flashpoint in Ukraine: US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III.”*

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