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# A Fighter Jet's Fate Poses a Quandary for Obama

By CHRISTOPHER DREW  
 Published: December 9, 2008

Two of President-elect [Barack Obama's](#) stated goals — cutting wasteful spending and saving or creating millions of jobs — are on a collision course in a looming decision over whether to keep building the F-22 fighter jet.



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But the F-22, a stealthy, supersonic fighter that was designed during the cold war and has never been used in combat, has many critics, and they include [Robert M. Gates](#), who will remain Defense secretary in the [Obama administration](#). Mr. Gates has questioned the relevancy of the F-22, and said the military should focus its resources more on fighting insurgencies like those in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, supporters of the F-22 program — which has cost more than \$65 billion so far — argue that Mr. Obama should extend its production, at least temporarily, to preserve thousands of jobs related to building the jets, which cost \$143 million each.

“To continue F-22 production would be to continue all the fundamental problems we’ve been having over the last 30 years, where each new weapons system costs so much that we end up with a dwindling inventory of planes, ships and tanks,” said Winslow T. Wheeler, an analyst at the Center for Defense Information, a nonprofit group in Washington.

“It’s the first test of whether President Obama is going to go along with business as usual or instead will bring much needed change to the Pentagon,” he added.

Defense experts say his decision, expected early next year, could provide the first sign of whether the economic crisis would force the military to make much harder choices about what kind of wars it should be prepared to fight.

So far, Mr. Obama has been vague about his defense plans,

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Enlarge This Image [Lockheed Martin](#) A Lockheed Martin facility in Marietta, Ga., that builds F-22s.

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