



Centre for Military Studies



International Experiences in the Purchase of Fighter Aircraft

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Overview

- Airpower as a Strategic Instrument
- Context for Buying New Combat Aircraft
- Buy Together & Fly Together
- Costs & Clear Communication
- Mind the Capability Gap
- Conclusions



Context for Buying New Combat Aircraft

- Airpower is a Strategic Instrument
 - Necessary Defensive Capability
 - Recognized Niche Capability for Coalitions
- Current Fleets acquired 1970s–1980s
 - F-15, F-16, F-18, *Tornado*, *JAS-39 Gripen*
 - Replacements Expected *circa* 2000
- 1990s
 - Most Chose *Life Extension Programs*
 - Reduced Defence Spending
 - Expectation of Next Generation Aircraft
- 2000s+
 - Increased Use
 - Delayed Decisions
 - → Rapidly Aging Fleets Reaching End of Useful Service Life



1: Buy Together & Fly Together

- Increasingly Complex & Expensive
 - Few Producers
 - Decades of Development
 - Increasingly Expensive
- Multinational Solutions
 - Foreign Military Sales & Multinational Programs
 - F-16 Program Success
 - Foreign Military Sales Cooperative Program
 - Denmark: Membership Benefits
 - Price, Development, Maintenance, Fleet Management, Training
 - Joint Strike Fighter Program
 - Multinational: Development to Production to Deployment
 - But Still a Work in Progress
 - Maintenance, Training

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Learning from the F-16

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2. Costs & Communications

- Big, Expensive, Complex Programs
 - Require Clear & Consistent Communications
 - Within & Between Ministries
 - Within Government & To Parliament
 - With Public
- The Canadian Experience

Year	Who?	How Much?	What?	Annual
2010	Govt	\$9b	Fly-Away	
2011	PBO	\$29.3b	30 Year Life Cycle	\$1b
2012	AGO	\$40b	36 Year Life Cycle	\$1.1b
2012	KPMG	\$45.8b	42 Year Life Cycle	1.1b



3: Mind the Capability Gap

- Transitions Invite Capability Gaps
 - Choreography of Retiring Old, Introducing New
 - Good Management Can Avoid Gaps
 - Fleet Management for Sustainability
 - Operational Relevance
- Australia & F-111
 - 2003: Retirement moved from 2020 to 2010 due to Sustainment Costs
 - 2007: 24 F/A-18 *Super Hornets* for \$6b, Service 2010-2025



Mind the Capability Gap

- Canada & CF-18
 - Dec 2012 "Reset" of F-35 → Life Extension for CF-18 Fleet
 - \$400m to fly until 2025
 - \$1.5b to fly until 2030
- Denmark & F-16
 - 1980s: Denmark bought 4 Squadrons of F-16s
 - Chronic Pilot Shortage 1985-1997
- Capability Gaps: Not Just Platforms
 - Personnel
 - Maintenance
 - Munitions



Conclusions

- Denmark is Not Alone
 - Wave of Recapitalization
- Multinational Solutions
 - Pursued but not Perfected
- Transparency, Oversight, & Clear Communication
 - Absence Can Derail Programs
- Capability Gaps are Choices
 - Planning & Determination can Close Gaps

